

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done...



**The Prayer Offered Most Often
Is About To be Answered**

by Ron Graff and Lambert Dolphin

**A Book for the Average Reader with Helps and References
for the Serious Student of Bible Prophecy**

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"This, then, is how you should pray:
"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be
your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one. "
(Matthew 6:9-13)

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The Authors

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Lambert Dolphin is a graduate of San Diego State University and Stanford University where he pursued studies in physical, electrical engineering and mathematics. He retired early after 30 years in research physics at a large west coast think tank and went on to pursue Bible teaching, research and writing. After a long search through world religions and many years of restless about unanswered questions in life, Mr. Dolphin became a Christian in 1962. He studied under, and was greatly influenced, by the late pastor and Bible expositor Ray C. Stedman of Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto, California. For more than 25 years he has maintained an active interest in the Middle East and Israel and he travels in that region often.

Lambert and Ron met over the Internet in 1997 and soon discovered they had a strong common interest in Biblical eschatology. Their evangelical beliefs seemed also to be in close harmony in all the important areas of sound Biblical interpretation so they joined forces to write this book.

Both authors maintain active and popular Internet web sites dealing with Bible prophecy and other subjects. You are encouraged to visit these web sites and other recommended sites which are favorites of the authors for further information.

The book has been written a straightforward style which presupposes that the reader will have some basic knowledge of the Bible and of Biblical terms. But the subject of Bible prophecy is actually very complex and detailed. We have therefore added a number of appendices for the serious student, for the pastor, or Bible teacher or individual student who may be seeking guidelines for further study. We deplore the constant flood of sensational "end of the world" prophecy books which only rehash the already familiar, hype up the uncertain news of recent world news, and warm-over old Bible predictions that seem to have never taken place as promised. The test of a prophet in the Old Testament was that all of his predictions must come true 100%, or else he was a false prophet and could be stoned to death. Were this rule applied today, we suspect there would be fewer, but better books dealing the future than now populate our book stores. We do not expect that all our readers will agree with us on all areas, but we hope to stimulate interest in the subject matter which is surely more important now than it has ever been. If the Apostles of the First Century considered the return of Jesus imminent in their time, then how much closer we must now be to that event.

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Preface

Notes and Credits

We want to offer special thanks to Mab Hoover, Diane Plumeri, and Frank Nolton for reading the manuscript and making suggestions.

Quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted. Permission is granted by the publisher of the NIV to quote up to one thousand verses, providing the verses quoted do not amount to a complete book of the Bible nor do the verses quoted account for 50% of the total work in which they are quoted.

Introduction

Surely history is headed somewhere! World population is climbing very steeply, out of control. Can we raise enough food and distribute it equitably 50 years from now to feed 6 billion people? Conflicts between nations are more global. Will someone trigger a nuclear war by accident or out of some insane irrational motivation? With social problems, crimes and violence rising, can we find ways to deal with them? Can we control deadly new diseases which resist all known drugs and therapies? Medical science has brought wonder drugs to alleviate human suffering, but the mortality rate remains a flat 100%. Will a new breed of international terrorists wreak havoc around the world unchecked and unstoppable? People with opposing beliefs and conflicting cultural values are crowded together on a shrinking planet. Can we live next to each other? Will the end of the world begin with a slightly worse than average traffic jam in Los Angeles or with a cascading power failure that can not be reversed? What about a killer asteroid from space? Why not--they are out there in orbit even now. Other species become extinct all the time. Why should man survive? How in the world can we find a way to peace?

The subject of Biblical prophecy is very interesting to most people for a number of reasons. The Bible has been shown to be the only book in history to predict the future with one hundred percent accuracy. In a world full of wrong answers and laughable predictions on every side, an accurate, reliable source of infallible information should be welcome news.

It seems society goes a little bit crazy at the end of every millennium. Many sense that these days, just before and just after the beginning of a new millennium, are of special importance, and this may well be true given the accelerated pace of history of which everyone is well aware. There are endless questions about the ecology, the population, global commerce, and global government all in need of answers that both work and prove true. It is only natural to wonder whether or not the Bible has insight about these issues which will affect us and our future world.

The first prophecy in the Bible comes as early as the third chapter of Genesis. It occurs just after the Fall of man when God speaks to the Man Adam, his wife Eve and the perpetrator of the disaster, a fallen angel named Satan. God announces that down through history a special conflict will exist between womankind and the serpent: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). This cryptic announcement foretells the terrible struggle--which has come to be known as the "conflict of the ages"--between Satan and the Messiah who would come.

Biblical prophecies sometimes deal with future events that lie just over the horizon--they will very soon come to pass. Sometimes Bible predictions point to events hundreds or thousands of years in the future. Very often Bible prophecies have a "double fulfillment." From the context of the prediction it can be seen that there is an application to an immediate historical event that is about to happen, (and indeed it always does come to pass). But later the same kind of situation will arise again in history and find a more complete and accurate fulfillment.

Approximately one-third of the Bible contains prophecies, including the last book, the Revelation, which is devoted entirely to the subject. It is amazing that so little attention is paid to the great prophetic passages in the Bible from the pulpits of the land. The aim of the prophets is to enlighten, to awaken hope, and to turn people from their destructive ways so God may bless them. Knowledge of what the future holds is the best way to prepare us to be ready. We are not at all better off being ignorant of what God had clearly said He was about to do, especially since

He is in charge of things and we are not. God is not a frightening, mean old wizard using smoke and mirrors and taking delight in frightening people. Nor does He usually impress people with displays of power nor in any way use intimidation or force to help people see His point of view. Judgment is God's "strange work" and our Maker judges men only as a last resort when all else fails.

You might wonder if a person can really hope to know the meaning of the prophecies. The Wise Men found the Newborn King because of the accuracy of prophecy that He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:4-5); and those who followed The Messiah did so because they recognized that His life and message were the fulfillment of specific prophecies (Matthew 1:22-23; 8:17; John 1:41; 7:41-42; Acts 9:22). God is always eager to teach His children, to shine new light on His Word, and to help them sort out the relevance of events in the modern world. He does not want us to be ignorant but well-informed, and we ought not to leave such important matters only in the hands of the self-appointed prophecy experts. It is not satisfying to merely take someone else's word about prophecy. Our Father wants to give us His peace and assurance personally.

The book of Revelation starts with a clear promise that it can be understood (Revelation 1:1-3). It is the only book of the Bible which promises a blessing to those who read it! The word "revelation" (apokalupsis in the Greek) means "unveiling." This prophecy is not meant to hide truth, but to reveal it, especially to those who will be living in those momentous days.

It is not possible to understand those prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled without making a very important distinction between three groups of people: Israel, The church, and the "Saints of the Tribulation period." If we keep these distinctions in mind, prophetic events fall nicely into place, but if we confuse them we can not hope to make sense of it all. This book will describe these three groups in detail.

Part I
Israel: Still God's Chosen People

Chapter 1

The Chosen People

The Bible is the revelation of God's will to man. It is a self-disclosure by God giving us information we could not gain from any other source. It begins with the book of Genesis, explaining in just a few chapters, how the human race was brought into existence by the personal activity of the God who created the universe. It shows that the first man and woman were the objects of His love and special attention. They were created "in His image" (Genesis 1:26-27), and were given the privilege of regular communication with Him (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:8) One man and one woman were appointed, not only as the progenitors of our race, but also as God's stewards, His custodians and caretakers over the creation. They were created with the characteristics of mind, emotions, personality, and will. They were made creative, imaginative, inventive, artistic, capable of loving and being loved--and above all, able to worship.

As the account of Genesis continues its simple but profound revelation of God's dealing with our human parents, the problem of evil surfaces. Even though Adam and Eve had been created perfect, they had also been created with the ability to choose, or reject, God's will for them. In theory, they could have chosen to obey God completely, but instead, being tempted by Satan, they partook of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3). Evil did not begin with man but with a rebellion among the angels. The angelic rebellion damaged the created universe and its invisible angelic government. (Isaiah 14:12ff.; Ezekiel 28:12ff.) It also brought about the possibility that man, too, could choose a course of action contrary to the perfect ways of God. This first human sin alienated our original parents from their creator. Instead of looking forward to walking with Him in the garden, they hid themselves from Him (Genesis 3:8-10).

The separation from God that is the result of sin is the greatest of all problems for the human race. God had warned Adam that if he disobeyed, "you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Adam did not die immediately in a physical sense, although the process of aging and eventual death was triggered by this event of rebellion. But Adam died spiritually (Romans 5:12)--the word "death" in the Bible actually means "separation." Thus, when a person dies physically, there is a separation between the physical and the non-physical aspects of his being: his Soul and Spirit. The body is laid to rest where it will return to dust (Genesis 3:19), while the immaterial part of man goes on to wait the judgment, and the eventual destination of heaven or hell (Luke 16:19-31). There is also a spiritual death - separation of man's spirit from the spirit of his Creator. This is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he declared,

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. (Ephesians 2:1-2) Sin, therefore, poses the greatest of all threats to the well-being of our race. Man's fall resulted in his spiritual death. His body was genetically damaged so that all men are mortal because of the sin of Adam. Men cut off from the source of life have no hope--and God IS Life! All life, all forms of life, come from God. Being disconnected from the source of life (for any reason) means an organism will begin to die, and continue to die. Men begin to die as soon as they are born, but God in His love for us did not abandon us in our plight. A god who was simply good might have declared the human experiment a failure, and would have left us to suffer the consequences of our rebellion, or, perhaps, would have put us out of our misery, snuffing out the planet with a momentary explosion, in order to preserve the rest of His creation from possible contamination. A god who was simply just could have easily allowed anarchists and rebels to perish. After all it is His universe not ours.

But God is not simply good, nor simply just. Above all He is holy, and He is a God of love. His very nature is love. (1 John 4:8). In His love, He sought to reestablish a relationship with Adam and Eve by seeking them out. When

they hid from Him, the Lord found them and offered a way back, a way of restoration. That restoration involved wearing the skins of an animal sacrifice. An animal sacrificed by God Himself was the first creature to die. The death of the animal was symbolic of the physical death they deserved to die. It demonstrated a great principle of Scripture that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission (removal) of sin." The concept of a substitutionary atoning sacrifice was introduced. Before they received this gift from God, they were in a state of being spiritually dead--cut off from Him. But when they received it and wore it, they were in effect confessing their sin and their inability to solve the problem for themselves. The death of that first animal on their behalf became a "covering" for their sin (Genesis 3:21). Fig leaves and other forms of clothing would come to be symbols of man's self-righteousness. Sin causes man to lose his own righteousness as the prophets tell us, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6) This would later be the basis for the institution of the system of animal sacrifices. sacrifices and would teach us about "imputed righteousness"--that inherent goodness of Christ with which we are clothed when we place our faith in Him. And the animal sacrifices, in turn, point to a future final sacrifice by the Messiah. That is why Paul continued the explanation in Ephesians this way:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:4-5) The next few chapters of Genesis trace the spread of the human race and its eventual corruption--within less than 2000 years--to the point that God needed to send a flood to destroy the evil. Again, He did not destroy the entire planet, but, in love and grace, God preserved the eight persons who still trusted in Him. Therefore, Noah and his family were saved (Genesis 6-10).

After the Flood, God told men to "be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." (Genesis 9:1) This would require them to gradually migrate in all directions. Those who were migrating East built a city and a tower at Babylon, and established there false religious system in an effort to disobey God and stay together. God confused their languages so they could no longer work together. (Genesis 11)

Chosen to Share the Truth

Several hundred years later people had established cultures in many places. There were some who still retained the truth passed down to them by their fathers from the time of Noah, but there were many who had abandoned that truth. God picked out one man, from the city of Ur of the Chaldees, a place where most people no longer believed in Him. He called Abram (later called Abraham) with these words:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:1-2)

The Covenants

God does not act whimsically or arbitrarily, but deals with individuals and nations on the basis of great contracts or covenants which He Himself initiates. The very name Yahweh is known as the "covenant name" of God. Yahweh is related to the Hebrew verb "to be" and indicates that God is a living Person who enters into personal relationships with individuals and with groups of individuals. Everything God has done in regards to our salvation is based on one or more of the covenants God has made in the past. None of these has been abrogated or annulled.

Even before Abraham's time God had made a covenant with Noah on behalf of the whole human race. That covenant was a promise never again to destroy the earth with a flood. (Genesis 9:8-17)

There are groups of churches today which stress what they call "covenantal theology." We do not disagree with this emphasis on the ways God has chosen to enter into contracts with His peoples. However many of the "covenant churches" would not necessarily agree with our eschatology. The subject of covenants in the Bible is important and complex. The Appendix introduces this subject for the serious student.

Five principle covenants--all still in effect--apply to the nation of Israel. These include the Abrahamic Covenant (later confirmed to Isaac and Jacob), The Mosaic Covenant, the Covenant of The Land, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant.

The Purpose of a "Chosen People": Blessing of All Nations

The Abrahamic Covenant was the promise of a special blessing for Abraham's descendants: a "chosen" people. But it is obviously not for their benefit alone, but that, through them, all people would be blessed!

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3)

The promised benefit to the whole human race was later revealed as the Messiah - - the Deliverer from the penalty of sin. That is, the promise to Abraham was really the promise of one unique seed, Messiah, in whom all the covenants would find their fulfillment (Galatians 3:16). The theological term "eternal covenant" refers to an agreement within the Godhead, made before the foundation of the world, out of which all the covenants with mankind would later flow.

The Promised Land

An important part of the promise to Abraham was that he would be led to a land which God would show him.

Canaan

At the time of Abraham's journey, the land was occupied by various Canaanite tribes, and was therefore known as the land of Canaan. Canaan was the son of Ham, and the grandson of Noah. Following the flood, the descendants of Canaan traveled to the area and settled there. Canaan's sons became the heads of what would become the tribes of Canaan. Canaan himself had evidently participated in his father's sin of mocking and gross disrespect when Noah accidentally became drunk, dishonoring his grandfather (Genesis 9:21-26). Canaan manifested the same moral weakness his father had, but to a greater degree. His descendants, resisting God's grace, became more and more decadent and ungodly as their history unfolded. Eventually these idolatrous peoples were to be deprived of their land. (Deuteronomy 7:1-10)

Israel

Following a long series of conquests of the Canaanite tribes (See the Book of Joshua), the twelve tribes of Israel finally occupied a large portion of the land originally promised to Abraham. In the days of David the land was renamed "Israel" after the new name God had given the patriarch Jacob, whose twelve sons were the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. The tribes were united in one great kingdom until after the reign of David's son Solomon. After Solomon died a power struggle ensued, resulting in a division of the people. The northern ten tribes were still called Israel, but the southern two tribes, and the land which they occupied, was called Judea, after the name of the larger of the two tribes, Judah. This is the name from which the words "Jew" and "Jewish" were derived.

Palestine

The name "Palestine" is not found in the Bible. It has had a variety of meanings. Nelson's Bible Dictionary tells us how the word was first used:

"The word itself originally identified the region as "the land of the Philistines," a war-like tribe that inhabited much of the region alongside the Hebrew people. But the older name for Palestine was CANAAN, the term most frequently used in the Old Testament.

"The term Palestine as a name for the entire land of Canaan, beyond the coastal plains of the Phoenicians, was first used by the fifth century B. C. historian Herodotus. After the Jewish revolt of A. D. 135, the Romans replaced the Latin name Judea with the Latin Palaestina as their name for this province."

As you can see, the name is actually an insult to the Jewish people, denying the name Israel, which it once had, and going back to the Philistines, their earlier opponents.

Before the rebirth of the Nation of Israel in 1948, the name Palestine was virtually synonymous with "The Holy Land." Most writers from the time printed books were first introduced until this generation used the term in a non-political sense for the entire region of the Bible lands. Palestine was a well defined area at the end of World War II. The modern nation of Jordan was carved out of the larger portion of Palestine, and the remainder was the area now known once again as the nation of Israel.

Today the name "Palestine" has a different meaning with highly political connotations. This will be described later in the section on "Modern Israel."

Conditional Nature of The Promise for the Land

Covenants can be conditional or unconditional. As it turns out only one of the covenants applicable to Israel is conditional---the right of the Jews to live in the promised land.

This partly conditional covenant has several elements: (1) dispersion of the Jews was to be a consequence of disobedience. (2) Future repentance will be accomplished by God. (3) God will regather his scattered people and restore them to the land. (4) The people of Israel will be brought to the Lord as a nation. (5) The enemies and oppressors of Israel will be punished. (6) Future national prosperity and preeminence is guaranteed. (See also Deuteronomy. 28, 29.) Because of this covenant, the right of the Jews to live in the land is conditional upon their behavior.

"See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you this day, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)

The Disobedience and Restoration of Israel

Disobedience and Discipline

2 Kings, Chapter 17, documents God's reasons for His temporarily removing the ten Northern tribes from the Land. The Lord indicates that the approaching 70 year Babylonian captivity would allow the Land to enjoy its seventh-year Sabbath rests which had been ignored by the Jews since their entry into the land under the leadership of Joshua.

Moses had given Israel this warning about what would happen if they forsook the Lord:

I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it. (Leviticus 26:33-35)

Second Chronicles records the result of their disobedience:

He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its

desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah. (2 Chronicles 36:20-21)

Repentance

Daniel, who had been among the young men taken captive to Babylon, expressed the repentance that the exiles felt after years of captivity. He had lived out a long and useful life in Babylon serving a succession of governments and administrations, but as an old man he realized the time of the captivity there was about to end when he happened to be reading the scroll of his immediate predecessor Jeremiah:

In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom--in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame--the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you." (Daniel 9:1-8) (See also Daniel 9:15-19)

Rebuilding - Ezra, Nehemiah

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe the leadership of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, who led small numbers of Jews back to the Land at the end of the appointed 70 years in Babylon. A modest Second Temple was constructed and the city walls were rebuilt in answer to Daniel's prayer of intercession (Daniel 9:1-19). The land from that time until now was under Gentile dominion, however. Yeshua would later affirm that Israel's subservience to Gentile powers would continue until He returned, (Luke 21:44). This did not change in 1948 when Israel achieved national independence--Jerusalem is to be overrun and destroyed by foreign armies at least one more time. (Zechariah 14:1-3)

Coming of The Messiah

The Gospel of Matthew was written primarily for Jewish readers. It constantly refers to the Messianic prophecies fulfilled by Yeshua (Jesus) as the rightful King of the Jews. Among these striking fulfillments, Matthew cited Yeshua's virgin birth (1:22-23), the place of His birth in Bethlehem (2:5-6), the flight of His parents to Egypt to spare him from Herod's slaughter of children (2:14-15), His boyhood years in Nazareth (2:23), the beginnings of His public ministry in the area of Galilee (4:13-16), His miraculous healing ministry (8:14-17; 12:17-21), His rejection by non-believers (13:13-15), His entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey (21:1-5), His surrender to His enemies (26:54-56), and His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver (27:3-10).

His agony in the garden, illegal trial in the middle of the night, crucifixion, burial and resurrection are vividly described (26-28). The other three gospels give complementary details.

Fulfillment of Prophecy

A comparison of all the Gospels with the Old Testament record results in over sixty different prophecies fulfilled in Yeshua's birth, life and death. The odds against any person coincidentally fulfilling these prophecies is astronomical! It was this fact that convinced His followers that He truly was the long-awaited Messiah. Here are some examples of this fact:

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ)

Philip found Nathaniel and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:41, 45)

When Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well, He revealed to her that He was Messiah.

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:25-26, 28-29)

The Believing Minority - Apostles and Early Christians

It should always be remembered that the entire first church was Jewish. All of the Twelve Apostles were Jewish. Their first assignment was to preach to "the lost sheep of Israel." (Matthew 10:6) Yeshua was reluctant at first to even share the Gospel with the Canaanite woman who asked for His help because His focus was also the Jewish people. (Matthew 25:22-28).

As the nation began to reject their promised King and Messiah (Matthew 12:14-21), Jesus began to conceal truth from the nation, by speaking in parables (Matthew 13). He focused on training. His disciples for the age which would follow, and on His primary mission of arriving in Jerusalem at the time appointed for His crucifixion. God's plan for ultimate blessings promised to the Gentiles came more into view.

On the night of His betrayal at the "Last Supper"--after Judas had left to finalize his plot to betray the Lord--Jesus brought the 11 disciples, as representatives of true, believing Israel into the "New Covenant" which had been promised to Israel hundreds of years earlier by the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah. This New Covenant was to be the basis of the spread of the gospel message of Jesus by these same men, after they were made Apostles of the church. The nation Israel was to be brought back to God under the terms of this New Covenant, though for a period of time they were to be set aside because of their rejection of Yeshua as Messiah.

Yeshua's official rejection of Israel and His plan for the calling out of a church was announced at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:17-19). A few months later, during His final week in Jerusalem, He announced to the nation and its leaders,

"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes! Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you [Israel] and given to a people [the church] who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone [Messiah] will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." (Matthew 21:42-44)

Yeshua wept over Jerusalem as He realized the terrible fate that would come upon the nation because of their rejection of Him. For the second time the conditional provisions of the Covenant of the Land were to be enforced. This time their exile ("Diaspora") was to last not 70 years but 2000!

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 23:37-39)

The resurrection of Jesus and His appearances to friends and disciples over the next 40 days, reassured them considerably--for they had all forsaken Him when He died (Matthew 26:31). Promising to send them "Another Strengthened" (John 14:15-16), He told His followers to wait ten more days.

Gathering in Jerusalem on the appointed day--the Feast of Pentecost following Passover--the Jewish followers of Yeshua were empowered by the Spirit of God and baptized into a new community of believers known as the church--the Body of Christ. (Ephesians 3:1-21)

All of those who first heard the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) were Jewish (including converts and those dispersed to other countries).

It was only after the persecution of the early church by the Jewish enemies of Yeshua in Jerusalem that they were scattered from there, and began to take the message to the rest of Judea and Samaria, and eventually, to Gentiles living in Israel, and even to other Nations (Acts 8:1; 10:1-48; 13:1-4).

Even when Paul, the "Apostle to The Gentiles" would go to any new place, he would first seek out the Jewish people and proclaim the Gospel to them. (Acts 13:5; 14; 14:1-5; 17:1-5; 18:1-6) Typically, some of the Jews would believe and the rest would not. Only then would he began to preach to the Gentiles. Here is an example from the visit to Antioch in Pisidia:

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. (Acts 13:42-48)

Paul summarized his God-given method in Romans 1:16 where he stated, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Israel's Unbelief

Rejection of Messiah

The second violation of the conditional provisions of the Covenant Of The Land occurred when Israel as a nation rejected her rightful Messiah, Yeshua, when He came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey as legitimate King of Israel (exactly fulfilling Zechariah 9:9)

As he [Jesus] was now drawing near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:37-44)

One might have thought that during the 400 years following the close of the Old Testament (after the book of Malachi was written) the nation would have learned its lessons from history and been ready for the coming of the Promised One. But the priesthood had become thoroughly corrupt and the bulk of the populace wanted relief from Roman Oppression--not release from inner evil, sin and spiritual death. Messiah's rejection as rightful King in the line of David was followed within a few days by His betrayal and execution. When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate the assembled crowd of Jews was given an opportunity to free Jesus who was by all counts completely innocent, or to release a known criminal. In the ensuing clamor the people asked instead for the release of Barabbas,

Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified." And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified." So when Pilate

saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:15-25)

It is wrong for us to label Jews as "Christ-killers" because quite clearly all mankind is involved in the conspiracy which put Jesus to death. Representatives of each of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth had a responsible role in putting Messiah to death. Had the Son of God been born in any other country, in any other time, the results would have been the same. Yet the leaders of the Jews standing before Pilate in that generation were willing to assume responsibility for the blood of Jesus, "Let his blood be upon us." God will evidently require this of the nation in the final days of the coming tribulation.

The resurrection of Jesus three days after his death, and the sudden and dramatic formation of the church of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (50 days after the resurrection) did not turn the heart of the nation to their Messiah. It was only a matter of time until the Jewish followers of Jesus, some thousands in number, were forced to flee Jerusalem. Soon the unbelieving Jews, in their continuing revolt against Rome, provoked the Romans to remove them from the land. As a consequence, the provisional terms of the Covenant Of The Land were invoked for the second time by the Owner of the Land.

After this second dispersion, lasting nearly 2000 years, God allowed His chosen people to return to their land again. The exciting history of the regathering of the Jews from all lands began a hundred years ago---culminating in the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 and the tiny nation's rise to power and a restored place of great power and influence as a modern progressive democracy. Thankfully, God is faithful to His promises in spite our unbelief!

The drama of the Jewish people during their Diaspora is little known to most Christians. It is fascinating reading because it soon becomes clear that God has in fact protected the Jewish people, their religion, values and culture against the great pressures to assimilate, against almost constant terrible anti-Semitism, against horrendous persecution down through the ages. The very existence of the Jews today, the recovery of their language, their regathering to the land of their fathers, and the clear signs of their Messianic expectations, are surely among the greatest miracles one can find on the pages of human history.

Hardening and blindness - Romans 11

In the early years when God had moved to call out a church to His name, and because the majority of Jewish people did not accept Yeshua as Messiah, the Apostle Paul explained that they had become spiritually blind. The same thing happens to any people anywhere in any age who hear truth from God and ignore it. The Jews are representative--not unique--in their demonstration of all of mankind's rebellion against God down through the ages.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. (Romans 11:25)

One might ask if the past hundred years of great economic development, prosperity, and overwhelming military victories against enormous odds, has brought the Jews to a place of contrition and repentance and humility as far as their God is concerned---especially since the restoration of the State of Israel was born out of terrible persecution and hardship?

It is quite true that many thousands of Jews from all over the world have become believers in Yeshua over the past 2000 years, and these have been added to the church (see Ephesians 2:11-3:12 for God's purposes in this present age). It is also true that there is a small remnant of some thousands of believing Jews now resident in the Land of Israel (Romans 11:5). Yet for the most part Israel is a secular state. Most of her citizens are not only indifferent to the God of their Fathers, but openly hostile to any notions that the God of the Land is anything more than an interesting mythological character now outgrown and to be discarded.

People who live in Israel can not help but be reminded of their past because the Sabbath is observed, and the major Biblical feasts are kept by many. Furthermore, archaeology is the national pastime, so there are reminders of early history in the news every day. At the present time about half of the Jews living in the land are "Sabras"--that is, they were born in the land and not immigrants. This younger generation is especially involved in a quest for their roots

and identity, and from among the young men of this generation, well over 100,000 are already diligently studying the Torah in the many yeshivas of the land.

Although God is known for his great patience and long-suffering, it is appropriate to ask how much longer the Holy God of the Covenants will tolerate the present indifference, rebellion and disregard for His Person which typifies the Israel of the past hundred years? Of course we can not speak much more favorably about the disregard for God in our own country these days, especially since most Americans have already heard the truth about God, but never taken it seriously.

Sadly, we have further indications from the New Testament that tell us that not only will Israel continue in its denial of Yeshua as Messiah--they will in fact readily embrace a counterfeit Messiah. Jesus warned His people when he was with them,

You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men. But I know that you have not the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? (John 5:39-44)

Israel is God's model nation, yet in spite of the fact that Israel's history of repeated failure is on public display in the Bible for all to read, God has neither abandoned nor rejected His chosen people. When all the final scores are in concerning all the nations and their animosity and hatred of the one true God, no one will have any cause for boasting. In fact God will judge all the other nations of the world by how they have treated the Jews (Joel 3).

One hundred years of God's grace, kindness, mercy and favor have not turned the nation of Israel towards faith in their God. Nor are they any closer to accepting their true Messiah. Will then God banish the Jews from the land again, perhaps this time permanently?

The answer from Scripture is clear. Israel's final testing will occur in their land and involve the destruction of a majority of the populace, a time of trial compared to which the Nazi holocaust will pale in insignificance.

Modern Israel

Ezekiel, chapters 36 and 37 plainly predicted that the Chosen People would one day be regathered from the various nations of the world, back to their own land, Israel. The Prophet saw a vision of a valley full of dry bones, shaking and coming back together. Once the skeleton was formed, muscles appeared, then skin covered the reconstructed body which is symbolic of the rebirth of Israel.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. (Ezekiel 37:1-8)

The modern nation of Israel came into existence on May 14, 1948 when the British, who had occupied the area of Palestine since the end of World War II withdrew their forces and ended their occupation of the land.

This was not a surprise, since Jewish people had flocked to the land for decades as part of the Zionist movement, begun in the late 1800's. At the end of World War I the British issued the "Balfour Declaration" which endorsed the establishment of "a national home" for the Jewish people in Palestine. During World War II the Nazis killed 6 million Jewish people, (approximately one-third of all Jews living at the time). Because of this, world opinion was in favor of the establishment of a homeland for Jews.

However, all of the nations immediately surrounding the little sliver of land were opposed to the formation of a Jewish state, so, on the very first day of Israel's independence, all of Israel's neighbors declared war against them. Israel miraculously won that war--and four more which have been waged against them during their first fifty years of existence.

The Arab population of the land, who were mostly Moslems, were invited to stay when Israel became a nation. They were offered citizenship if they would stay. Many of them accepted the offer, but the majority fled into buffer areas just inside the borders of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, where they formed Palestinian refugee camps. The neighboring countries would not assimilate them, preferring to use their plight as homeless refugees for political advantage.

Today "Palestinians" are the residents of certain areas of Israel designated by the Oslo Accords of 1963 as areas for self-rule of Palestinian people under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization). There is a great deal of unrest, and occasional terrorist activity, between the residents of these areas and the rest of Israel, all of which threatens to destroy the progress of the "peace process" in the area.

The Nation of Israel has been brought back together as promised in Ezekiel: the skeleton, the muscles, and the skin are in place, but there is still one part of the prophecy which awaits fulfillment. That is the spiritual rebirth of the people. This is symbolized by God breathing life into Israel, even as He did into Adam when he was created.

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'"

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet--a vast army. Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore prophecy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'" (Ezekiel 37:9-14)

Israel has moved back into their ancient lands without any special regard for the God of their Fathers, who was doing this for them. The treatment of the immigrating Jews towards the Arabs living in the land was often harsh and unfair. This is surely because they had returned in a general state of unbelief. They had forgotten for the moment the Law of Moses, and God's standards for treatment of strangers and aliens living in God's land. Much of the rebellion by the Palestinian people against the Jews is based on legitimate complaints, and God, of course, can not overlook this in the long run. He has no favorites and is even-handed in His judgments of all people.

Israel's Glorious Future

As mentioned earlier, God's ultimate intention for the nation Israel is that they should one day live under the more powerful, more effectual conditions of the New Covenant which is the covenant which is now in effect in the worldwide church of Jesus Christ,

This is pictured in Ezekiel 36 this way:

"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." (Ezekiel 36:24-27)

It is after the church is completed that God will turn again to Israel as a nation and focus His activities once again from His unseen headquarters in Jerusalem.

Peter has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written, `After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the

Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.' (Acts 15:14-18)--The quote is from Amos 9:11-12).

In his great discourse on Israel's future the Apostle Paul assures us,

Lest you [believing Gentiles] be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in [to the church], and so [or, "then"] all Israel will be saved; as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. (Romans 11:25-32)

The Old Testament books of prophecy are full of promises of the future blessing of Israel. This will be developed later in the last section on the Millennial Reign of Christ and beyond.

Chapter 2

The Mystery Of The Church

Announcement by Jesus

Toward the end of His public ministry Jesus made an announcement to His disciples about the formation of His "church."

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,

"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:13-18)

The word "church," was the normal Greek word for "assembly." Literally, it meant to "call out," as when the people of the city would be called together for a town meeting. Later the concept of being "called out" would take on special meaning. It would come to mean that the followers of Jesus should consider themselves no longer members of the old fallen world system (cosmos), but they are now citizens of a heavenly country, ambassadors from a far country serving in the world as sojourners and aliens. Down through history every generation of Christians has had to rediscover this pilgrim-nature of our calling.

Like many important teachings of Christ, the Disciples did not understand what Jesus meant at the time when He said that He would build a church which would assault and ultimately conquer the very strongholds of evil (Matthew 16:18). In fact, in the same chapter Jesus also revealed that He would soon die and be raised again on the third day. Peter actually argued with Him about that! (Matthew 16:21-23) It was only after Jesus' resurrection that they remembered His teaching (Luke 24:7-8).

The fact that the church was not described by Christ at this time is significant in the light of His teachings, sometime later, about future things. In His great discourse on the future, known as "The Olivet Discourse" (because it was delivered on The Mount of Olives), He spoke of Israel's future trials, but made no reference to the church. That is why the events of the future seem to be imminent. The entire church period, including the Rapture of the church, were still a mystery, not yet revealed. This vast new body of revealed information, later made known the Apostles (including Paul), would have only confused His disciples had it been given to them in the tumultuous transitional period when God was turning His attention away from the nation of Israel to the out-calling of a world-church.

Beginnings at Pentecost

It is interesting that even during the last week before His crucifixion, while Jesus was giving many important instructions, the subject of the church was not specifically addressed. Everything He taught would later be

applicable to the church, but it was not about the church per se. This, again, was because the nature of the church had not yet been revealed.

During the forty days Jesus spent with the Disciples, between the time of His resurrection and the time of His ascension into Heaven, He still did not give details about the church. But He did tell them to wait for a special gift from the Father.

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:1-11)

This, incidentally corresponds exactly to the Old Testament prophecy of the coming of Messiah at the end of the age. Jesus will return to the same Mount of Olives from which He departed almost 2000 years ago

I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.

Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. (Zechariah 14:2-4)

In obedience to the parting words of their Lord, the fearful, powerless little band of about 120 Jewish followers of Yeshua gathered in the Upper Room. They waited there for about one week until the Day of Pentecost, a Sunday morning, part of a time period on the calendar known as the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Harvest. This was one of the major events of the year for which Jewish men were expected to travel to Jerusalem. Because of this, the city was full of Jewish believers from all over the known world on this great day.

The Book of Acts describes the amazing "gift" from the Father for which the Disciples had been waiting.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:1-12)

This filling with the Holy Spirit was followed by a powerful message by Peter to the crowds that had gathered. He made many references to the Hebrew Scriptures, and showed how Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah (Acts 2:14-40).

Three thousand out of the gathered crowd became believers that day and were all baptized immediately (Acts 2:41).

This was the beginning of the church. As mentioned before, all the first believers were Jewish, and all of them understood that what they were doing was totally compatible with their Jewish history and Scriptures.

The word "church" is very similar to the word "synagogue." The Greek word for church was ekklesia, which means "called out," "an assembly." The Greek for synagogue is sunagoge, meaning "gathering together." Neither of these words are used in the Book of Acts until a little later. ("church" in Acts 5:11 and "synagogue"--implied in Acts 6:9, and actually used in Acts 13:14). When the words were used, it was always clear that the church referred to the new sect of Christians, while the synagogue referred to traditional Jewish groups.

Therefore, there are both similarities and differences between the new "church" and the old "synagogue." The differences were not contradictory. The new group saw itself as a continuation of the old, believing that Yesuha (Jesus) was the fulfillment of the promise of a Messiah.

The Feasts and Fulfilled Prophecy

Since the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost, and this is considered the birthday of the church, it is helpful to study the connection between other major Feasts of Israel and God's prophetic timetable.

Leviticus 23 -is the key passage which describes the original seven feasts.

The Passover Supper (Pesach)- Leviticus 23:4-5

The Feast of Unleavened Bread - Leviticus 23:6-8

The Feast of Firstfruits - Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 23:9-14

The Feast of Weeks - Leviticus 23:16-21, (Also called Pentecost- meaning 50 days after Feast of Firstfruits) (Also called The Feast of Harvest)

Rosh Hashanah - New Year's Day - Leviticus 23:23-24, (Also called The Feast of Trumpets)

Yom Kippur - The Day of Atonement - Leviticus 23:26-32

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) - Leviticus 23:33-34, 42-43; (Also called The Feast of Ingathering)

Since that time several others have been added, such as

Purim and The Feast of Lights (Hanukkah).

These holy days were symbolic of things to come.

"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ." (Colossians 2:16-17)

It is surprising how many of the most important events in Jewish and Christian history have occurred on one of these dates, especially when one notices the correlation between the events and what the corresponding feast originally signified. Grant Jeffrey points out that all of the feasts and fasts of Israel have had significant historical events occur on their anniversaries.

Of the seven prescribed feasts of Moses, the first three all have something to do with the First Coming of Christ, the last three have to do with the Second Coming, and the one in the middle, Pentecost, is the birth date of the church. Let us look at them more closely:

The Passover Supper (Pesach) -- Fourteenth of Nisan

The event known as the "Last Supper" was actually the observance of Passover. Jesus told His disciples,

"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22:15)

All of the Gospels agree that this was the Passover meal. John 13 begins with these words:

"It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." (John 13:1)

Here are the instructions for the first Passover, observed by Moses and the Israelites just before they left the land of Egypt:

The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire--head, legs and inner parts. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD--a lasting ordinance." (Exodus 12:5-14)

This feast was a reminder of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It was mentioned often in their literature, and was to be commemorated yearly forever. It became the perfect occasion for education of the young about the story of their sojourn in Egypt, the Ten Plagues, the Exodus, and their Wilderness experience.

The central issue of the feast is the death of the lamb in the place of the firstborn. When John the Baptist first saw Jesus, he cried out, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) (NIV)

Jesus said this about Himself: "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." (John 10:17-18)

During the Passover meal, Jesus used well-known ceremonies of breaking bread and drinking the cup to institute a "New Covenant" with His followers:

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:19-20)

The Apostle Paul actually called Christ "our Passover lamb" (1 Corinthians 5:7). So we see that it was not a coincidence that Jesus was crucified for our sins during the Passover season. The exact date of His final arrival in Jerusalem and His death on the cross had been foretold by Daniel the prophet approximately 500 years earlier.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread -- Fifteenth of Nisan

This feast was to be celebrated the day after Passover.

Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast. (Exodus 13:3)

This feast marked the beginning of seven days of eating unleavened bread. In Jesus' time, it appears that the Jews had combined the Passover and this first day of unleavened bread.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" (Mark 14:12) Separation from yeast is symbolic of purification from sin. It symbolizes the purification of Christ's disciples. This, of course is the result of His death: believers are delivered from the penalty and power of sin.

The Feast of Firstfruits -- Seventeenth of Nisan

Leviticus 23:9-14

This feast was prescribed in Leviticus 23:9-14, while Israel was still wandering in the wilderness, but it was not to be celebrated until they entered the land. When they did finally enter the Promised Land, Joshua 5 records the sequence of events.

On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover.

The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain.

The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan. (Joshua 5:10-12)

On the fourteenth day of the month they celebrated the Passover. On the next day, the fifteenth, they ate "some of the produce of the land." The word for "produce" is properly translated "old corn" in the King James version because the Hebrew word used was `abuwr, which literally means "passed" or "kept over." The word was used only of stored grain.

On the next day, the sixteenth day of the month, Manna was given for the last time. The next day, the 17th, would have been their first day of food from the new land. The word "produce" in this verse is different from the word used earlier. It is the Hebrew tebuw'ah, meaning "income," or "fruit."

All of this speaks of their new life in the Promised Land.

The resurrection of Jesus was on the third day. It was, therefore, symbolized by this feast. The concept of the "first fruits" is most appropriate since, as Paul explains,

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

As Matthew Henry writes, "It is very observable that our Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the very day that the first-fruits were offered, to show that he was the substance of this shadow."

A Warning about Date Setting!

It is important that the reader does not think, from the remarks on the following three feasts that we can set exact dates for future events. Please see the Appendix- Warnings and Cautions, for a brief discussion of this topic. We do not believe in setting dates, and Jesus warned His disciples against the temptation to do that. However, it does seem likely that, in some way, future events will be tied in to the meaning of these feasts. Using the Passover, and Christ's crucifixion, as an example, it seems that He and His disciples celebrated Passover early in order that His death could take place, and His body could be removed from the cross before the beginning of the sacred day itself. Thus, even if one could have known He was going to die on Passover of that year, they still would not have been able to set the exact date. In the same way, even if we could know that the Rapture would take place on Rosh Hashanah (and we can not know this), we would still not be able to predict with certainty whether it would be the exact day, or near the day, for His own purposes. Furthermore, we can not know whether it will be this year, next year, or twenty years from now. For the past several years, people have presented elaborate schemes "proving" that the Rapture would be in a certain year. All such attempts have only succeeded in causing some people to doubt the whole subject of Biblical prophecy.

Pentecost -- Sixth of Sivan

(50 Days after Feast of Firstfruits)

Also called the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Weeks

Leviticus 23:16, 21 Deuteronomy 16:9-10

It is surely no coincidence that this feast, being next in the order, was the occasion of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church, as explained above. (Acts 2:1-4)

This leaves three of the primary seven feasts for possible symbolic meaning in regard to future prophetic events.

The Feasts and Possible Future Fulfillments

Rosh Hashanah -- First of Tishri - Ancient New Year's Day (Civil)

Also called The Feast of Trumpets

Leviticus 23:23-25,27-32

This day marks the ancient New Year's Day, and the beginning of the holy season of the Seventh Month (which includes the next two feasts). It began with the blowing of the shofar, or trumpet. It was to be a day of rest and sacrifice.

Chuck Missler thinks this was possibly the date of the Birth of Christ. Another strong possibility for Christ's birth is the Feast of Tabernacles, just two weeks later the same year.

This day might point to the future rapture of the church, since it is the next major feast in the Jewish calendar, and because of the prominence of the blowing of the shofar. Again, we do not believe that this theory gives grounds for any actual setting of dates for the Lord's return.

Yom Kippur -- Tenth of Tishri -- The Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16; Leviticus 23:26-32

This is considered the most holy day of the Jewish year. It is a day of public fasting and humiliation as the people of Israel seek atonement for their sins.

When animal sacrifices were still being offered the high priest first sanctified himself by taking a ceremonial bath and putting on white garments. He then sacrificed a bullock to atone for himself and his fellow priests. Then two goats were chosen, one for sacrifice in behalf of the sins of the people, and one to be released into the wilderness. This "scapegoat" was symbolic of the pardon for sin brought through the sacrifice.

Since this is a day of mourning for sin, it is possibly symbolic of that future date when Christ returns to Earth in glory. At that time Israel will mourn when they see their Messiah whom they have pierced

On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. (Zechariah 12:9-10)

This future day of mourning is developed more fully in the third section of the book.

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) --Fifteenth of Tishri

Leviticus 23:33-42

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary describes this feast for us.

This festival was observed on the 15th day of the seventh month to commemorate the wandering of Israel in the wilderness. Features of the celebration included a holy convocation on the first and eighth days, and the offering of many animal sacrifices. The Israelites were also commanded to live in booths made of palm and willow trees during the festival to commemorate their period of wilderness wandering when they lived in temporary shelters. This feast is also known as the Feast of Booths.

This could very well have been the time of year when Jesus was born.

The theme of the feast is appropriate since John 1:14 tells us that, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (Greek skenoo - "to tent or encamp", as God did in the Tabernacle of old). Incidentally, if Jesus was born on this date, His conception would have taken place nine months earlier, about the time of Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights, in December of the previous year. This would lend some credibility to our modern observance of Christmas in December.

As far as future symbolism is concerned, this feast is ideal for the concept of Christ ushering in the Kingdom Age - again, dwelling, or encamping with mankind once again, this time as King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Revelation of the Mystery of the Church through Paul

The "mystery" of the church was revealed to the Apostle Paul, and described by Him in numerous passages of Scripture. In Romans 11:25 he used the word to describe the temporary "hardening" of Israel: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in."

The word "mystery" (Greek musterion) meant a "secret," or something formerly hidden, but now revealed.

In Romans 16:25, Paul calls the Gospel, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, a mystery. In Corinthians 15:51-58, he uses "mystery" to describe the resurrection and the glorified body that believers will receive. Paul taught that it was a mystery (formerly hidden, but now revealed) that all things will eventually be brought together under the headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10).

In Ephesians 3 the Apostle explained in greater detail that the mystery of the church was part of God's purpose all along to make Gentiles heirs together with Israel.

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:2-11)

Again in Ephesians, Paul calls the revelation that the church is the Bride of Christ a mystery (Ephesians 5:32). And he refers to his commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles as a mystery (Ephesians 6:19). This theme is also addressed in Colossians:

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness--the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:25-27)

The Gospel to all nations - "To the Jew first"

The essence, then, of the mystery of the church is that, through this new assembly, God would include all people who would believe, both Jews and Gentiles. They would, in a sense, become one:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26-28 See also Ephesians 2:14)

This spiritual oneness does not blur the distinctions between them. Peter and John (and all the Disciples) became one in Christ, yet no one was confused about which of them was which. Likewise, oneness exists between Christian men and women, but God does not change their gender. Neither did he obliterate the difference between slaves and free men, as seen in the touching story of Philemon. The spiritual oneness superseded the physical differences, but did not eliminate them.

It should also be obvious that the church did not replace Israel, because, as mentioned before, Paul was careful to always take the Gospel to Jewish believers in every new city before sharing it with the Gentiles. He said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 1:16)

The Church: The Body and Bride of Christ

The church is distinguished from Israel in many ways (See Appendix). One example would be that it is called the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:14-27; Ephesians 12:4).

The church is also called the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33), whereas unfaithful Israel was sometimes called an adulterous wife (Jeremiah 16:32; Hosea 1:2). The church has not yet been married, but is a virgin bride preparing for her first wedding. However Israel was in times past the wife of Yahweh whom He finally divorced because of her spiritual adultery. Yet Hosea makes clear God will one day take His wife, Israel, back to Himself, restored and remarried. The common belief that Israel has been permanently set aside by God can easily be refuted from many Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments.

It is vitally important for the followers of Jesus in our age to understand the difference between Israel and the church. Israel as a nation enjoys covenant relationships with God--other nations do not have such covenants with God. God's covenants with the church do not include a plot of land, a temple, an earthly inheritance, etc. They are an entirely different set of promises.

Grafted in temporarily - in Israel's place

In Romans 11, Paul, "the Apostle to the Gentiles" explains to Gentiles that Israel has not been rejected by God, but, because of their hardness, they have suffered temporary spiritual blindness, and that Gentile believers have been grafted in, in the place of some of them. Eventually, believing Israel will be grafted back in (Romans 11:17-25).

The description of Gentile believers as wild olive branches grafted into the true olive tree suggests that Gentiles need to become more Jewish in their thinking and life styles as they grow spiritually. When we meet our Messiah and Savior face to face we shall discover that He is Jewish and was raised in Jewish culture and taught the Hebrew Scriptures. He was a devout and observant Jewish believer. Visits to Israel and cultivated friendships with Jewish people are well worth the effort in freeing us from our own ghetto mentalities and the pagan, idolatrous roots from which we have been freed as Gentiles.

Spiritual Heirs of the covenants

In Ephesians, chapter 2, the Apostle Paul reminds his Gentile readers that before Christ, they were excluded from the covenants given to Israel, but now have been brought near through Christ's blood. The barrier between Jews and Gentiles has been abolished. Both have been reconciled by the Cross, and both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, Gentile believers in Christ have become fellow citizens with Israel (Ephesians 2:11-22).

In the church, Gentiles have also become fellow-heirs with Israel:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

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

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:1-12)

Not to replace Israel

In Romans 11, Paul shows that the church has not replaced Israel:

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. (Romans 11:1)

The institution of the church was not meant by God to replace the earlier institution of Israel as His "chosen people." In the next verse (v.2), he stated plainly, "God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew." And he used the well-known example of Elijah, when he thought he was the only believer, and the Lord told him that he had seven thousand other true believers. Thus, Paul argues that there were many true believers in Israel.

"So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace." (Romans 11:5)

After explaining that the others, who did not believe that Yeshua was Messiah, had been hardened and blinded temporarily, he asks again,

"Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?" And then he answers emphatically, "Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." (Romans 11:11)

One New Man...

Ray C. Stedman notes that all of human history is the story of two men named Adam. We are all descended from Adam Number One, the head of our race, and we are by nature body, soul and spirit. The fall of man brought doom to the race of Adam, but the Second, or Last Adam heads a new race:

For as [all who are] in Adam all die, so [all who are] in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

The church plus Israel is the "one new man" God is building. Paul brings this out in Ephesians:

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)--remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:11-22)

Stedman notes that the church may be compared to the soul of the new man, and Israel the body, with God Himself--the Spirit--indwelling this "one new man." This figure helps us to keep the distinctives clear between Israel's calling (they are an earthly, redeemed people), and the church's destiny (given heavenly promises primarily).

Not to antagonize Israel

Members of the church must not feel superior to the Jewish people, since the time will come that Israel will return to the Lord. This too is part of the mystery once hidden, but now revealed:

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. (Romans 11:25-31)

Chapter 3

Church History

The Book of Acts tells about the history of the early church. The Epistles give instruction to the church. But it is in the book of the Revelation that a prophetic history of the church is given. The whole book is about prophecy, so it is understandable that the messages to the seven churches of Asia were meant not only for the actual churches of that day, but for seven periods of church history that would describe conditions from the beginning of the Church Age to the end of it.

The Book of the Revelation is unique in that the opening verses tell us that what follows was given to Jesus by His Father. Jesus then passed the contents to His beloved Apostle John (now an old man in exile on the island of Patmos off the coast of Asia, or modern Turkey). John recorded for us in vivid language what he saw and heard. The information was imparted to him partly by means of a series of great visions. Information about events transpiring in heaven are juxtaposed with happenings on earth. The book contains interludes and flashbacks, so understanding the order of events in the Revelation takes thoughtful care.

Genesis, the Book of beginnings, unfolds little by bit. Great themes of human history are introduced to us one by one. These themes branch out and are woven as recurring themes in the rest of the Bible. In the book of Revelation all these themes come back together in a great consummation.

The 404 verses of Revelation contain 800 Old Testament references! Many Jewish symbols and ideas which have not been used in the entire New Testament suddenly reappear in Revelation. Because of this, no one can hope to understand this marvelous last book of the Bible without reading the rest of the book--all that has gone before.

The Revelation gives an outline of its contents in Chapter 1, verse 19. "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." This verse may be considered the KEY to the Book. The three parts of the Revelation are:

- 1- What you have seen - The Person of Jesus - 1:1-18
- 2- The Things that are now - The Presence of Jesus Christ in This Age - 1:19-3:22
- 3- The things that will take place - The Program of Jesus Christ For The Future - 4:1-22:21

In this section we will only consider the second of these parts.

The Presence of Jesus Christ in This Age

Following the Ascension of Jesus, Acts Chapter 1, we do not again hear directly from the Lord Jesus Christ until we come to the last book of the Bible. There Jesus is depicted for us in priestly robes walking in the midst of, and judging, His church, during the present age. The aged Apostle John records:

On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing

waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (Revelation 1:10-20)

Insight about the Church: Revelation 1:19-20

These introductory verses portray the seven churches as seven golden lampstands--they were designed to shine the Light (which is God), into the darkness of the world. A message is to be given to each of these seven churches, and the messages to the churches follow a pattern. First, there is a description of Jesus Christ in terms that are especially important to each church. Second, there is affirmation of the good characteristics of the church. Thirdly, there is a warning for each church (except Smyrna, and Philadelphia). Finally, there is a reward promised to those in the church who are overcomers.

Instruction to the Church: Revelation 2:1-3:22

To Ephesus

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:

I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.

You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (Revelation 2:1-7)

Ephesus, the first church, portrays the Apostolic period, from the birth of the church, at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), until approximately AD 100.

During the Apostolic period there were false apostles. The early church was careful to identify true apostles and reject the false. This explains the need for the Apostle Paul to defend his calling as an apostle in 2 Corinthians, chapters 11-13. In chapter 11, verse 13 he also mentions people who were masquerading as false apostles.

Believers of this period also endured great hardships without giving up their faith. Christianity was considered false by the majority of Jewish people who had been blinded because of their unbelief (Romans 11). Those who followed Christ often had to do so against the wishes of their families. Jesus warned His followers that this would happen (Matthew 10:34-39).

Opposition to early Christianity became so strong that believers were scattered and many were imprisoned and even killed. Before he was converted, Paul zealously persecuted the church (Acts 9:1-2, 21).

It is shocking that this early church had lost its "first love" for Christ. It shows that it is possible for any Christian to be distracted from his devotion to the Lord by the cares of the world. Jesus Himself gave the Parable of the Sower which teaches that some new Christians fail to develop deep roots, others are choked by the competing "weeds" that spring up around them, and others grow well and bear good fruit (Matthew 13:3-8).

The good news is that if a person, or even a whole group of people in a church, should lose their first love, they can be restored by repenting. To repent means to turn around and go the other way. Repentance requires honest self-appraisal. One must identify the sins that are separating him from the Lord, and then confess (Greek *homologeō* --"to say the same"). This means that the person agrees with God about the sin. When a person does this, God is faithful to forgive and cleanse him or her from sin (1 John 1:9).

The church of the Apostolic period hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. This is a Greek word which means "conquerors of the people." This is probably a reference to the false apostles mentioned earlier, and their tendency to establish a ruling class over the rest of the people in the church. The proper Scriptural view is that the church is like a body, and different people in the church have different gifts from God, but all are of equal importance to the well-being of the whole spiritual body. There is no hierarchy in the Body of Christ, and no distinction between "clergy" and "laity"--all are called to work together in the ministry as one Body headed by Christ (1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4).

The promise to overcomers of this period is that they will eat of the Tree of Life which is said to now be in Paradise. Adam and Eve ate instead from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil, thus rebelling against God and entering into sin (Genesis 3). Part of the result of this sin was to be banished from the Garden of Eden so that they would not eat of this tree and live forever in their fallen state (Genesis 3:22-24). Nevertheless, an overcomer will be delivered from this fallen state, and will be permitted to partake of this fruit, thus living forever as a redeemed person.

Who then is an overcomer? John himself explains this:

For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:4-5)

To Smyrna

To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.

I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of 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 will not be hurt at all by the second death. (Revelation 2:8-11)

Smyrna was a city, of course, but its name is derived from "myrrh," a valuable spice used in the process of embalming. Myrrh symbolizes death and yet is a sweet fragrance. This is an appropriate word picture for the period of church history characterized by martyrdom. This period lasted from approximately 100 to 312 AD when Constantine established Christianity as the state religion of the empire. During these two centuries there were ten definable periods of persecution of Christians under ten of the Emperors of Rome. To these believers, Jesus identified Himself as the resurrected one!

There is no warning to this church, since it was a church constantly purified by the rigors of persecution. To put it simply, only a strong, dedicated Christian would be willing to die for Christ. A hypocrite would quit the church long before he would risk losing his life. True believers would be faithful unto death, and they would receive a crown of life. This is one of the special believers' crowns mentioned in the Bible. Faithful believers will be able to lay these at the feet of Christ in the future to prove their love for Him (Revelation 4:10).

Jesus had taught earlier,

Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed

upon the housetops. "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him! (Luke 12:2-5)

The promise to overcomers of this period is that, though they might need to die physically, they would not be hurt by the "second death." This subject is revisited in Revelation 20:12-15 where it is equated with eternal punishment and being cast into the Lake of Fire. The Biblical concept of death is not annihilation, but separation. When a person dies physically, the material part (body) is separated from the immaterial (soul and spirit). The person does not cease to exist. Spiritual death is seen in the Scriptures as separation from God (Genesis 3, Ephesians 2:1). Those who are spiritually dead may be brought back to life, that is, be born again. (Ephesians 2:2-10; John 3:3-18). See the Appendix - Do You Know Christ Personally?

To Pergamum

To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.

Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it. (Revelation 2:12-17)

Pergamum, also known as Pergamos, had a colorful history as a major city of Asia Minor. It was steeped in pagan idolatry, serpent worship, and Caesar worship. See Satan's Throne at Pergamum for a description of the influence of ancient Babylonian mysteries on the city.

Pergamum means "thoroughly married." It represents the period of church history when the church became married to the world. Constantine, the Emperor of the Roman Empire probably meant well when he issued a decree that all his subjects should become Christians, but it actually did much damage to the church. The majority of people became Christian in name only, bringing their pagan practices and lifestyles into a compromised church. This merger of the church and state took place with the Edict of Milan in AD 313. This period lasted until about AD 500. During this time the Bishop of Rome assumed the title, Pontifex Maximus.

To this church Jesus revealed Himself as the one with the sharp double-edged sword proceeding from His mouth. Hebrews 4:12 calls God's Word a double-edged sword, able to divide even between soul and spirit. In the same book Jesus is considered God's ultimate Word (Hebrews 1:1-2). In John's own writings Jesus is called The Word (John 1:1,14). If the church would follow Jesus and His Word, they would be able to separate the truth from the pagan influences which had come in like a flood.

The warning to this church is about those who allowed the teaching of Balaam. This refers to a fascinating story from the Old Testament book of Numbers, chapters 22 through 24, where the prophet Balaam was hired by Balak, king of the Moabites, to curse Israel. He tried repeatedly, but God would not allow him to utter a curse against His people. However, he evidently advised Balak to involve the Israelites in worldliness and immorality (Numbers 31:16). Thus Israel could be corrupted from within. This, of course, is exactly what happened to the church during this period of time. They were corrupted by worldliness.

This church was also corrupted by the teaching of the Nicolaitans. These church clerics who lorded it over the people were first encountered above during the period of the church at Ephesus. They had now entrenched their position by their doctrine.

Overcomers are promised hidden manna and a white stone with a new name written upon it. The hidden manna might be the truth of Scripture which was in the process of being hidden by the worldly church. The white stone is a symbol taken from the ancient custom of giving a black stone to one judged guilty, and a white stone to one who is acquitted.

To Thyatira

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come.

To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations- 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'--just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 2:18-29)

Thyatira stands for a dark period of the church from about AD 1000 until the time of the Reformation which began in 1517. During this time such unfortunate historical events, as the inquisitions and the Crusades demonstrated the deepening lack of spirituality of the church. It was also the time when indulgences were sold, whereby people could pay money to supposedly have their sins removed. This led to the posting of Luther's 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church and the beginning of the Reformation.

Even this church received at least a mild commendation for doing some things right, but it also was given a stern warning about the toleration of Jezebel whose practices included false prophecy, immorality, and eating food offered to idols. It seems unlikely that Jezebel was an actual person during this period of time. This is more likely another of the many symbols in the book. Jezebel, an Old Testament queen, was an incredibly wicked person who was known for her idolatry, immorality, and hatred of the true prophets (1 Kings chapters 18 through 21 and 2 Kings 9). This would then symbolize the church hierarchy with its growing spiritual unfaithfulness and idolatry which eventually caused the splitting of the church at the Reformation. It also prefigures the specter of the Woman Riding the Beast in Revelation 17.

The promise to overcomers is to give authority over the nations. This stands in contrast to the deep secrets of Satan which may be a reference to the unholy alliance between the church and various governments. God was not pleased with Papal influence over the nations, but He will be pleased to allow His righteous followers to rule and reign with Christ when He returns as King of Kings (Revelation 19:11-16).

The overcomer will also receive the morning star. Jesus calls Himself the morning star in Revelation 22:16.

To Sardis

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and

the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.

He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 3:1-6)

The Sardis church represents the Reformation church from 1517 until the mid-1700's when the great revivals and modern missions movement began. This was a time when the church had a reputation for being alive, but, as God saw it, they were really dying. History reveals that, though the churches of the Reformation did break away from problems in the Roman Catholic Church, they still did not return to thoroughly Biblical practices, and had many problems of their own, including the union of church and state and the persecution of other reformers such as the Anabaptists who practiced believer's baptism and were pacifists. The Reformation churches did not in general deal with the faulty eschatology held by the Roman Church since early times.

Jesus reveals Himself to this church as the one who holds the Seven Spirits (The Holy Spirit - see Introduction to Revelation), and the seven stars, identified earlier as the angels of the seven churches. These images indicate His sovereignty and His right to tell them to repent and change their ways.

The overcomer will be given white garments and his name will not be blotted out of the Book of Life. It seems that each person's name is already in the Book of Life, but those who are not true believers will have their names blotted out. This book is also mentioned in Revelation 20:12 where those not found in it are cast into the Lake of Fire.

To Philadelphia

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 3:7-13)

Philadelphia is the missionary church. It began in the mid 1700's with the great revivals and the modern missions movement and it gradually lost its power during the early years of the 1900's. Philadelphia means brotherly love. It is this love that causes the desire to evangelize others (Romans 5:5). Jesus is seen as having the keys of David. He was of the line of David, and thus eligible for the throne of Israel. The key is for opening the door of opportunity for missions. No one can close what He has opened. No one can open what He has closed.

There is no warning to this church, but many promises including these: "I am coming soon.", and a promise to keep them from the hour of trial that is coming on the world. These are definite allusions to the Rapture and to its timing:

before the trials of The Tribulation. There is also a warning not to let anyone take their crown. This refers to one of the believers' crowns: possibly the crown of life which was promised to the overcomers of the Smyrna church above.

To the overcomers of this period there is a promise of a new name and permanent residence in the New Jerusalem.

To Laodicea

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I 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." (Revelation 3:14-22)

The Laodicean church is the last church of the seven, and stands for the last of the church periods. The name Laodicea means "rule of the people." It is a picture of a church controlled by the people instead of being controlled by God. It is the church of the Apostasy, or the great "falling away" of believers.

Jesus reveals Himself as ruler of all creation, and as the faithful and true one in contrast to the unfaithfulness of the Laodiceans. He says they are neither spiritually hot or cold, but lukewarm, and that He will spit them out of His mouth. This is shocking news to a people who have a very good feeling about themselves. They say they are rich, but they are poor and wretched and blind. If they were spiritually "hot" they would be like the flaming evangelists of the Philadelphia church. If they were "cold" perhaps they would recognize their spiritual plight. But they are active in their church work, doing what they want instead of what God wants. They are like those about whom Jesus warned--they call Him Lord, but He never knew them (Matthew 7:21-23).

Jesus counsels them to buy gold, symbolic of faith (1 Peter 1:7), white garments, which are like the linen of imputed righteousness with which the Bride of Christ is dressed (Revelation 19:7-8), and eye salve, showing dependence on God's spiritual healing for their blinded eyes.

To this church Jesus says He is standing outside the door, knocking. If they will open the door, He will come in. This is a church full of unsaved people. Since it comes at the end of the church age, it is easy to see that there will still be many who call themselves Christians left behind when the Rapture takes place.

Still, there are overcomers even from this church. Those who will open the door to Christ will be overcomers. To them, Jesus will grant the right to sit with Him on His throne. This is undoubtedly a reference to the future privilege of believers to reign with Christ.

Many Bible commentators note that the Seven churches are representative of various congregations that can be found on the earth at any one time during the entire 2000 year history of the church. These distinctively different congregations each has strengths and weaknesses, and each has a core of faithful believers within them--designated by the word "overcomers." Also, each of the Seven churches has enjoyed its season of prominence as the dominant church during a given period of time. Most scholars who hold to this view believe we are now moving, or have already moved, out of the Philadelphian age into the final stage of church history before the rapture, that of Laodicea.

Chapter 4

The Rapture of the Church

The Next Major Biblical Event in History: The Rapture of the Church

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Meaning of "Rapture"

What follows is a summary discussion of a very important event in Bible prophecy. The Appendix goes into more detail for the benefit of the serious student.

"Rapture" comes from the words "caught up" in I Thessalonians 4:17. In the Greek the word is *harpazo* - "to seize upon by force", "to snatch up." The Latin translators used the word *rapturo*. Some people claim that "rapture" is not a Biblical term. This is untrue, unless they want to say that "God" and "Jesus" are not Biblical Terms. Almost all words in our English Bible are translations of Greek or Hebrew expressions, and are, therefore, not in the Bible in the form we know them. "God" is a proper and meaningful translation of certain words in the original languages, and "Jesus" is a good translation for us of His name (Yeshua, "Joshua," "The Lord Saves," in Hebrew). In the same way, the English word "rapture" which means "to be caught up" is an excellent translation for the Greek *harpazo*.

Three Events That Happen at The Rapture

The scriptures of First Thessalonians 4 and 5 are familiar to most Christians as a description of the so-called "rapture of the church." The rapture can be thought of as a point in eternity which will protrude into our historical time frame at some fixed point on God's calendar. However, as we have seen, God has not given us the date.

Three specific events take place at the time Jesus calls his church out of the world:

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven

- (a) with a cry of command,
- (b) with the archangel's call,
- (c) and with the sound of the trumpet of God.

The "cry of command" from the lips of Jesus is to awake the dead in Christ and to call them forth from their graves as God called his friend Lazarus forth (John 11:43).

Only one archangel is called by name in Scripture. He is Michael whose specific jurisdiction is over the people of Israel. At the time of the Rapture, the archangel will signal to Israel that God has returned the focus of his attention at last to the final redemption of his chosen nation. This event was spoken of by Daniel:

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered." (Daniel 12:1)

The trumpet call, not to be confused with the last of the seven trumpets in Revelation, is a trumpet call associated with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. It will be used to call the living saints at the time of the Rapture to be caught up and transformed together with the just-raised saints of the past. This is described also in 1 Corinthians 15,

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

When an individual dies he or she leaves time and enters eternity. Some scholars think that all believers travel through eternity immediately, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," to arrive at the Rapture the next instant in his or her personal experience. If that is the case, all believers arrive in heaven at the same "time." Thus, "to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8) We may have difficulty picturing this if we do not realize that eternity runs according to an entirely different time than the one-dimensional time frame in which we are constrained to live while in our mortal bodies. For more on the issue of Time, see Appendix: The Complexities Of Time, toward the end of the book.

Other Important Terms

As you probably know, there are many different ways of looking at Biblical prophecy. Here are a few other terms you will hear in discussions about the future.

Millennium - 1000 years of history during which Christ will reign as King of Kings (Rev. 20:2-7).

Premillennialism - The belief that Christ returns visibly and bodily at the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. He will rule the nations from Jerusalem.

Postmillennialism - The belief that Christ will return at the end of the present age to take over the earth. Meantime, He is assumed to reign on earth through the church now. Postmillennialists do not necessarily believe in a literal millennial age. Satan was defeated at the cross and is now bound, hence the final triumph of the church in history is assured.

Amillennialism - The belief that there will no literal 1000 year reign of Christ. Thus Revelation 20 is taken symbolically, not literally, by adherents of this view. Amillennialists generally believe that Israel has been permanently set aside for all time and that God's current plan of salvation involves only the church.

(See also: Definition of common terms found in Eschatology, Appendix)

The authors' understanding of future things is firmly premillennial. A literal interpretation of Scripture requires belief in an actual thousand year period of time during which Christ will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The book of Revelation describes these periods of time clearly: The Church Age (chapters 1-3), The Tribulation (chapters 4-19), The Millennium (chapter 20), and then The New Heaven and Earth (chapters 21-22).

Most of the Bible teachers who write and speak about prophecy are also premillennial. Among them there are various viewpoints about the timing of The Rapture. Here is a brief summary of these positions:

Pre-Tribulation Rapture - That Christ will rapture the church before the Tribulation begins

Mid-Tribulation Rapture - That Christ will rapture the church at the Mid-point of The Tribulation

Post Tribulation Rapture - That Christ will rapture the church at the end of the Tribulation

Pre-Wrath Rapture - That Christ will rapture the church just before the Battle of Armageddon

Partial Rapture - That Christ will rapture those who are ready and leave the rest to go through the Tribulation

Multiple Rapture - That there are more than one raptures, during which Christ receives those who are ready

"Pan-Trib" Position - No clue about future events, but think it will "all pan out in the end"

The last term is not really funny. There are too many people who just claim ignorance of this vital subject. When one pastor was asked recently what his views of prophecy were, he said, "I just don't handle it." Can you imagine? A pastor, who has the responsibility of teaching the whole counsel of God's Word, refusing to "handle" nearly one third of Scripture?!

Those who are "in Christ"

Returning to the rapture passage in 1 Thessalonians 4, the last part of verse 16 and first part of verse 17 say,

"...the dead in Christ shall 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 so we shall ever be with the Lord."

This event is only for those "in Christ." It does not, therefore, include Old Testament Saints. We will study the time of their resurrection later. The point here is that all believers of the church age, and only believers of this age are included--those who have died "in Christ," and those believers who are alive at the time. It should be added that the Rapture does include all Jewish people during this present time who have placed their faith in Jesus as Messiah. They too are part of the church, though they have not lost their identity as descendants of Israel.

Why the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation

We believe that, by far, the strongest Biblical evidence is in favor of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture position. There are many reasons for this. Here are some of the most obvious ones.

Any-moment expectation (Imminence)

In every age Christians have been expecting the return of Our Lord. Twice in the last chapter of the Revelation He tells us, "I am coming quickly." (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20)

Paul referred to this ever-present possibility of Christ's return as "the blessed hope." (Titus 2:13)

He also taught that His coming will be like a thief in the night.

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. (1Thessalonians 5:1-6)

John also spoke often of Christ's appearing:

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3)

The pre-Tribulation position is the best from this point of view. If the Rapture takes place before the Tribulation, we can truly expect it "any day." If it is delayed to the middle or end of the Tribulation, we could not honestly have that expectation now.

Deliverance of the Saints from wrath

Here are some of the passages which indicate that believers of this Church Age will not be left to suffer the outpouring of God's wrath:

"But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36)

...And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (1Thessalonians 5:9)

And if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment... (2 Peter 2:6-9)

In the message to the Church of Philadelphia (Missions Period), God said:

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. (Revelation 3:10)

Please keep in mind that the Bible does not teach that Christians are delivered from persecution, trials and temptations. In fact, the opposite is true. In 2 Timothy 3:12 we are told, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (KJV) The books of James and 1 Peter were written to encourage Christians when they are called upon to go through trials. Paul himself spoke about his "thorn in the flesh" as a trial allowed by God in order that God's strength could be shown through him. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Belief in the pre-Tribulation Rapture has nothing to do with a cowardly desire to escape persecution. Scriptural examples and history itself teach us that, when called upon to suffer for the name of Christ, it is actually a privilege to die for Him. In fact, we are being reminded today that more Christians have been persecuted and even put to death in our own generation than in all other periods of church history combined. For two thousand years God has allowed his people to suffer trials and persecution and even martyrdom. Why, however, should He ask only the final generation of the church to endure an unprecedented time of terrible destruction which is not intended for the church, but as a judgment of unbelieving world?

The belief that the church will be delivered from the Tribulation is based in part on the Biblical pattern that when God pours out His wrath He always gives opportunity for the righteous to escape it. This was true of Noah and his family, of Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Lot, and even of the pagan Ninevites to whom Jonah was sent.

The church is the Bride of Christ. God intends that she join her Bridegroom for a great wedding feast and after that share with Him in ruling the nations. Allowing His bride to suffer through the tribulation is inconsistent with the specific purposes for which He has called out the church from the world, why He has rescued her "from the coming wrath." (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

Some recent teaching about the Tribulation tries to make a distinction between Satan's wrath, which they say characterizes most of the book of Revelation, and God's wrath which is poured out at the Battle of Armageddon. From their point of view, the church could then be subjected to most of the Tribulation, but delivered from the last part. The problem with this position is that it ascribes to Satan the powers of nature: weather conditions, earthquakes, asteroid collisions, and other "terrors in the heavens." Satan, however, has no power to do anything that has not been appointed for him by God. This theory also fails to notice that the church is missing from the Tribulation, as explained toward the end of this chapter. See Appendix: Pretribulation or Prewrath?

Antichrist not revealed until hindering force removed

In 2 Thessalonians we are told that the "man of sin (or lawlessness)" will not be revealed until "He who now restrains" is taken out of the way.

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; (II Thessalonians 2:1-8)

In John 16:7-8 we are told that it is The Holy Spirit who will "convict the world concerning sin..." God The Holy Spirit can never be removed from the earth, but, in the sense that He is effectively restraining sin through Christians in whom He dwells, the time will come, once those Christians are gone, that wickedness will abound. Today Christians are everywhere: in their occupations, in the market place, in the schools, even in government halls. But during the Tribulation, true believers will be persecuted and either killed or driven underground, so that their godly influence will not be felt in the world. When the church is taken in the Rapture, the world will be ripe for Antichrist to step forth with his ungodly plans. True, multitudes of people will turn to Christ and will become true believers in the tribulation period. They will also be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but they will not be permitted to take the place of the missing Christians in society. They will be outcasts, and therefore the Holy Spirit will not have the same restraining influence on the world that He now has. Most, or even all of them, will be quickly put to death by the man of sin.

The Death of the Believer: Time and Eternity

The Apostle Paul adds further to our understanding of what happens when an individual Christian dies:

Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Now we know that if the earthly tent [skenos, the present body is a temporary tent] we live in is destroyed, we have a building [oikodome, a permanent house] from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from

the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. (2 Corinthians 4:14-5:9)

There is no hint here of an intermediate state between dying and going into the presence of the Lord. Indeed the Apostle tells us that our resurrection bodies are already prepared for us, they are waiting for us to "put on" exactly as one would put on a new set of clothes over the old!

Events between The Rapture and Christ's Return

There are certain future events which evidently will take place between the Rapture and Christ's glorious return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Two of them are The Bema Seat Judgment, and The Marriage of the Lamb.

The Bema Seat Judgment

According to 2 Corinthians 5:10, all believers of this age must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Information about this event is also found in Romans 14:10; in 1 Corinthians. 3:10-15; and in 1 Corinthians 4:2-5. This evaluation of every believer is not for the purpose of dealing with sin --which was fully dealt with on the cross by the Lord Jesus. Rather it is a reviewing stand where quality of our Christian performance can be evaluated and rewarded. The motives of the heart will be made known, and most importantly, only the works the believer has undertaken by faith "in the Spirit"--by faith in the indwelling presence of God, will survive. The "works of the flesh" (our self-efforts to serve God) will be taken away and only what God has built into our lives since we came to know Him will go with us into the next life. See Appendix, The Judgment Seat of Christ, for further details.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb - Revelation 19:7-9

During his lifetime on earth, Jesus did not marry. For a man not to marry was very rare in Israel (then as now). Following the typology in the story of Abraham's servant going to a far country to select a bride (Rebekah) for the patriarchs beloved son Isaac, (Genesis 24) we could say that God the Father dispatched the Holy Spirit into the world to call out and prepare a people who would be a suitable bride. The Spirit would also give the church a suitable wedding dowry that she might be a fitting love-gift from the Father to His beloved Son, Jesus. All sorts of people are welcome to be part of Christ's wife, the invitation is open to everyone,

Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

"Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

"Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

""Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" (Luke 14:16-24)

The church can be thought of as the "Second Eve." But whereas the original Eve was one woman, the Bride of Christ consists of millions of men and children! When we are all brought together as a family following the rapture we shall join with our Lord in a great marriage feast.

Christ's Bride is in Heaven before He returns in glory to the earth!

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (Revelation 19:7-9)

Our return with Christ

To understand the events which take place after the Rapture, we need to bear in mind that there is a sequence of events taking place which occurs "in heaven" and there is a parallel sequence of events occurring "on earth." In the book of Revelation note is made of those who "dwell in heaven" and those who dwell on earth" during the tribulation period. The former group "dwelling in heaven" is the church. We who comprise the church will have been given our resurrection bodies and will walk in the company of the Lamb and His holy angels. Those who are (during this same time period) dwelling on earth--include non-believers, but also God's 144,000 Jewish evangelists. (they are regenerated men but do not yet have resurrection bodies), and likewise their converts, who are the saints of the Tribulation period. Many of these saints will become martyrs during the tribulation period, but they will not be given their resurrection bodies until the tribulation ends. (Revelation 20:4)

Appendix L helps to understand better the return of Christ as having two aspects. His silent return for His church at the Rapture is described by the use of the Greek word *parousia* which means "coming alongside and remaining with" someone. We should think of the Rapture as the first phase of the second coming of Christ. He will come for His church, and He will remain with them forever after. But He will also come to be with the 144,000 and with the Tribulation Saints as well during the final seven years of world evangelism, and of Israel's judgment and restoration. After the seven years of the Tribulation has run its course Jesus will step out of hiding, and appears in the sky, bringing us with Him. This event, described by the Greek word *epiphaneia*, which means "shining forth," is the open public unveiling of Jesus--the second coming in power and glory.

All this careful reading of scripture this tells us that heaven is not far away. It is in fact merely another dimension of reality. Earthly, material realities occupy only a small localized region of the realm the Bible calls the heavenly places. The material world is embedded in the spiritual. Therefore Jesus is never far away from any of us. The old notion that when Jesus takes us to heaven we are somehow far removed to a golden land beyond the furthest star is not a Biblical view of heaven at all! We need to adjust our thinking to the view that Jesus will be on the earth during the entire tribulation period, invisible, but probably appearing and disappearing in the same mysterious manner He did during the 40 days following his resurrection and His ascension. On earth, but unseen by unbelievers, Jesus will be the Commander and Chief of the armies of the Lord. He will also direct the 144,000 and their strategic work. Jesus will apparently involve Himself personally in the shepherding of His faithful remnant hidden at Petra during the last half of the Tribulation period. When Jesus returns, He will come not from "outer space," but simply step back into our space-time frame once again, bringing His church with Him.

The title of this book is drawn from the model prayer Jesus gave His disciples. This prayer assures us that Jesus now rules the entire universe. All authority has been given to Him. However, He does not yet reign on the earth. For two thousand years the saints of God have prayed that He might soon come and reign on earth as He already does reign in heaven. In Revelation Chapter 4, a great scroll, which we may think of as the title deed to the earth, is handed to Jesus by His Father. Jesus is called to begin His long awaited reign on earth. He will accomplish this in stages, by first coming for His church, and then by strategically directing and orchestrating all of the events of the end time. Evidently He will establish a beachhead on the planet, a command center for those military operations which will culminate in His final appearance in public as earth's legal King of kings and Lord of lords. His activities during the Tribulation will not be detected by unbelievers, though there will be rumors He has returned. Many events occurring on earth, due to the clandestine operations of the 144,000, will cause earth's inhabitants to be nervous.

For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now-- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-- if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.

"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

"Immediately after the distress of those days "'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:21-30)

If we consider all the parallel events the book of Revelation describes, including the throwing -down of Satan and His hosts to earth during this last three and a half years, then it makes sense that our Commander-and-Chief should establish His battle headquarters for the end time right here on earth. This is where the final conflict will be fought, including the Seed of the Woman winning a final victory over the Seed of the Serpent.

But the church is the Body of Christ and the Head can not be separated from the Body! So we must begin to think of ourselves as present on earth with Jesus during the Tribulation period. Our resurrection bodies will make us invulnerable to sin and death. Furthermore, like our Lord, we will be invisible to the inhabitants of the earth.

When Christ returns, it is with "armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. (Revelation 19:11-14)

This is undoubtedly a picture of the His redeemed (Revelation 3:18) with glorified, immortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:35-50), able to descend from the heavens without the aid of a spacecraft!

We are told in Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. And 1 Thessalonians talks about the "coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."

The book of Revelation tells what we will do, once we have returned with Christ:

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

The Centrality of Israel and Jewish People During The Tribulation

A great body of converted people from all the nations are mentioned several times in the book of the Revelation--after the Rapture of the church. Usually they are called the "Saints." They are believers in Christ--Jews and Gentiles alike, but they are not referred to as the church, nor are any of the usual descriptions of the church attached to them. The apostate church of the period will be corrupt, and will give its influence to Antichrist (Revelation 18), so these Tribulation Saints will not in any way be associated with this apostate church, the great harlot of Revelation 17.

The theme of Israel's place during the tribulation period will be expanded in the third section of the book, but here are some of the key points which illustrate the centrality of Israel and Jewish people during this period of time:

It is synonymous with Daniel's 70th Week - Daniel 9:27; Revelation 13

The 144,000 Sealed from the 12 Tribes of Israel - Revelation 7:1-8

The Two Witnesses - probably Old Testament leaders - Moses and Elijah (or, as some think, Enoch and Elijah) - Revelation 11:1-12

Flight of Israel - Revelation 12

Treaty with Israel, Defilement of the Temple - Revelation 13

Dr. Renald Showers explains the significance of viewing the Tribulation as a period of Israel's history.

"All other views of the Rapture have the church going through at least part of the 70th week, meaning that all other views mix God's 70-weeks program for Israel and Jerusalem together with His program for the church."

Population of The Millennium by mortal believers

The pre-Tribulation Rapture interpretation best explains this important feature of God's future plan. According to Jesus' teaching on the Mount of Olives, there will be a judgment of the nations (Sheep and Goats - Matthew 25:31-46) just before the Millennium, just prior to the commencement of the thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-6). This taking of some and leaving of others is not the Rapture, but it corresponds to the Parable of The Wheat and The Tares (Matthew 13:24-30). In that parable, the tares are collected FIRST, and tied into bundles to be burned (later - The Great White Throne judgment), then the wheat is gathered into the barn. The wheat represents true believers who have survived the Tribulation period, and are thus permitted to enter the Millennial Age.

If the Rapture took place at, or near the end of the Tribulation, all believers would have glorified bodies, and there would be no righteous mortals left to enter the Millennium!

Differences between The Rapture and The 2nd Coming

We believe that much of the confusion about the Rapture is caused by a lack of understanding that Christ comes first for believers, and then comes later in what is properly called the Second Coming, or His Glorious Return as King of Kings. Here are some of the differences between these two events.

The Rapture

Christ comes for His own (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
Believers taken to Father's House (John 14:3)
Seen only by believers (1 Cor. 15:52 Rev. 1:7; 19:11-16)
No reference to Satan
Earth not judged
A Mystery (1 Corinthians 15:51)
14:4)

The 2nd Coming

Christ return with His own (Revelation 19:14)
Believers come to Earth (Matthew 24:30)
Every eye will see Him (Matthew 24:30)
Satan bound (Revelation 20:1-3)
Earth judged (Revelation 20:4-5)
Foretold in Old Testament (Dan. 12:1-3; Zech. 12:10;

One way to better understand the clear distinction between The Rapture and the Second Coming in glory can be seen by carefully considering the different Greek words used for these two events.

Absence of the Church

Finally, and probably most significant of all, is this fact:

The Church is Missing From The Tribulation - Revelation 4-19

In the first three chapters of Revelation, there are constant references to the church and to the Seven Churches. However, starting at chapter 4, verse 1, where John is told to "come up here," the church is obviously absent throughout the Tribulation period. The expression "come up here" does mean leaving the earth in Revelation 11:12 where the translation of the Two Witnesses takes place. (We are not suggesting that the Rapture takes place in chapter 11, only that the same expression, used there, does mean virtually the same thing for the Two Witnesses that the Rapture does to the church.)

There are numerous references to believers in these chapters, but they are not called the church. What might be called the church on the earth during this time is the apostate shell of nominal Christianity, which has lost its true

believers, and has joined with other religions of the world to become a "United Religion," which, in turn will give its power to Antichrist. This apostate church is pictured as a prostitute riding the beast in Revelation 18.

Finally, the absence of the church will undoubtedly account for the lawlessness spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

Chapter 5

Historical Developments: Israel Scattered

The Church Age, and The Rise of Islam

This chapter serves as an annex to Section Two. It traces the major movements of Israel and the church during the past two thousand years. It includes some highlights of the rise of Islam as it affects Israel and the church. Some readers may not be interested in all these details. In that case, we suggest you skip to the beginning of Section Three: The Tribulation Saints.

The birth and growth of the early church was a tumultuous season of change as God began to move in the power of His Spirit to bring men and women into the New Covenant relationship which Jesus had instituted through his disciples at the last supper. The book of Acts tells us about the first three decades of the Works of the Spirit through the Apostles, beginning with Peter's mighty sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Within months the believing community in Jerusalem, (all Jews), who followed Yeshua, numbered several thousand.

The Apostles instituted a division of responsibility in the church by appointing elders to oversee teaching and deacons to be responsible for serving and meeting the immediate physical needs of people in the assembly. Among the newly appointed deacons were two great teachers: Philip the Evangelist and a young man named Stephen. Stephen's stirring speech (Acts 6-7), recounting the history of the Jews to the assembled crowds on the Temple Mount, resulted in his own death by stoning--and this was quickly followed by growing persecution of the "Way" of Yeshua. The opposition came from the traditionally-oriented elements of Jewish leadership.

Jews who had given their allegiance to Yeshua moved in large numbers to other countries beginning what would be later known as the great "Diaspora" of the Jewish people--their exodus from their own land which would prevail for the next 1900 years. Later, as Jewish rebellion against Roman rule continued, the Romans began to forcefully expel the land of its residents, leaving Eretz Israel nearly empty of the Jewish people of all classes and belief.

It was soon obvious to the followers of Yeshua (The early church) that God in His sovereign movement in history was also adding multitudes of Gentiles to the Body of Christ. A young Pharisee named Saul, who had been present when Stephen was killed was suddenly converted on the road to Damascus and within a decade became the mighty Apostle Paul--called specifically by the Lord to spearhead the world wide evangelism of the Gentiles.

Peter meantime led the apostles who were to focus on bringing the good news of Yeshua to Jewish communities beyond the borders of Israel. The other disciples scattered near and far carrying the message of Yeshua to all lands and peoples.

So it was that the focal point of Christianity moved quickly out of Jerusalem to Antioch--about 300 miles to the North--in Syria. While there remained a strong but persecuted church in Jerusalem, the rapid growth of the church was now in Asia Minor, in Africa, Europe and India.

Jewish resistance to Roman rule in Jerusalem increased in cycles until finally Jerusalem became off limits to Jews all together. Most of the Jews in Israel were forced to flee to foreign lands. They remained in these countries for the next 19 centuries in small communities where their culture and values could be preserved.

The history of Israel in the Diaspora is an utterly amazing chapter of world history, virtually unknown by most Christians today, yet it is a subject most worthy of study. Often ill-treated, forcefully converted, persecuted and frequently killed, these amazing people persisted. God watched over them as he had promised through Ezekiel long ago. He would bring them back to the land when the out-calling of the church was complete:

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, your brothers--your brothers who are your blood relatives and the whole house of Israel--are those of whom the people of Jerusalem have said, 'They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession. ' "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.

"Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again. ' They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD." (Ezekiel 11:14-21)

The definitive history of the Christian church has not yet been written--the book of Acts was just the introduction, the whole story remains yet to be told in full. But all the evidence suggests that the end of the age of the church is now very near.

After most of the Jews left their homeland in the second Century of this era, the land fell into disuse. Once cultivated land reverted to desert and fresh water lakes became useless silted marshes. The land was rocky and devoid of mineral resources in the first place, of little use to anyone except wandering tribes of Bedouins with their flocks, and a few caravan-route travelers. The great ancient civilizations that had ruled the ancient world--Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome had long since faded away and the Holy Land settled in to be an unimportant part of the Byzantine empire. The Emperor Constantine had made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire with headquarters in Constantinople. Foreign rule of Israel by the shifting Gentile world powers (as Jesus predicted) continued. Israel was visited by occasional tourists but the surrounding nations were also poor and backward, not at all the great world powers they once had been. Small numbers of Jews continued to live in the land. They succeeded in persevering the Jewish heritage so that it could later blossom again into life in the Return to the land in our day.

In the 7th Century A. D. a new religion, Islam, burst mightily upon the world scene. The prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca about 570 A. D. By the year 608 the main shrine in pagan Mecca, Arabia was there, called the Kaaba. After receiving profound revelations, supposedly from an angel, and stirred by the polytheistic paganism and disorder at the Kaaba, the prophet went forth, rejected by his people, on his Hijra (migration) from Mecca to Medina. The Hijra of Mohammed in 622 marks the beginning of the Islamic era. Two years later Mohammed's followers defeated the Meccans at the Battle of Badr and in 630 Mecca was conquered by Mohammed and became the spiritual center of Islam. The prophet's goal was to unite the factioned tribes under one chief God, whom he called Allah.

The prophet died in 632 and was succeeded by Abu Bakr as the first caliph. The official version of the Koran was established in 650 during the reign of Uthman, 18 years after the prophet's death. By 656 there was considerable civil war within Islam among the "descendants" of Mohammed - disputes of all kinds about who was the legitimate, appointed heir to the faith. Shi'ite extremism in Iraq was part of this revolution and began in 685. These root disputations persist to the present day --Islam is a divided religion in many ways.

During the years 633 to 637 the Arabs conquered Syria and Iraq, followed by Egypt, then Persia in 640 through 643. They because of the charge they believe was given to them by Allah through his prophet Mohammed. Arab armies moved into the Holy Land and were in full control there by 638.

Historian Steve Runciman recounts the conquest of Jerusalem:

On a February day in the year A. D. 638 the Caliph Omar entered Jerusalem, riding upon a white camel. He was dressed in worn, filthy robes, and the army that followed him was rough and unkempt; but its discipline was perfect. At his side was the Patriarch Sophronius, as chief magistrate of the surrendered city. Omar rode straight to the site of the Temple of Solomon, whence his friend Mohammed had ascended into heaven. Watching him stand there, the Patriarch remembered the words of Christ and murmured through his tears: "Behold the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet."

Omar is said to have been shocked at the filth and rubble that lay strewn about the Temple Mount. Because the holy site had been neglected, it is said that he made the Christian Patriarch Sophronius grovel in the muck. Afterward Omar set about clearing the site. He built a wooden mosque on the compound. Most scholars believe the mosque was built on the foundations of an early Christian church.

One well-known historical account contains the following details:

The great mosque of Jerusalem, Al Masjid al Aksa, the " Further Mosque," derives its name from the traditional Night Journey of Mohammed, to which allusion is made in the words of the Koran (xvii. 1): "I declare the glory of Him who transported His servant by night from the Masjid al Haram (the Mosque at Makkah) to the Masjid al Aksa (the Further Mosque) at Jerusalem" - the term "Mosque " being here taken to denote the whole area of the Noble Sanctuary, and not the Main building of the Aksa only, which, in the Prophet's days, did not exist.

According to the received account, Mohammed was on this occasion mounted on the winged steed called Al Burak "the Lightning" and, with the angel Gabriel for escort, was carried from Makkah (Mecca), first to Sinai, and then to Bethlehem, after which they came to Jerusalem. "And when we reached Bait al Makdis, the Holy City," so runs the tradition, "we came to the gate of the mosque (which is the Haram Area), and here Jibrail (Gabriel) caused me to dismount. And he tied up Al Burak to a ring, to which the prophets of old had also tied their steeds. " (Ibn al Athir's Chronicle, ii. 37.) Entering the Haram Area by the gateway, afterwards known as the Gate of the Prophet, Mohammed and Gabriel went up to the Sacred Rock, which of old times had stood in the center of Solomon's Temple; and in its neighborhood meeting the company of the prophets, Mohammed proceeded to perform his prayer-prostrations in the assembly of his predecessors in the prophetic office Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others of God's ancient apostles.

From the Sacred Rock Mohammed, accompanied by Gabriel, next ascended, by a ladder of light, up into heaven;... Passing through the seven heavens, Mohammed ultimately stood in the presence of Allah, from whom he received injunctions as to the prayers his followers were to perform. Thence, after a while, he descended again to earth; and, alighting at the foot of the ladder of light, stood again on the Sacred Rock at Jerusalem. The return journey homeward was made after the same fashion - on the back of the steed Al Burak and the Prophet reached Makkah again before the night had waned. Such, in outline, is the tradition of the Prophet's Night Journey, which especially sanctifies the Rock and the Haram Area in the sight of all true believers.

After the capitulation of Jerusalem to 'Omar in 635 (A. H 14), that Khalif caused a mosque to be built on what was considered to be the ancient site of the Temple (or Masjid) of David. The traditional position of this site, 'Omar (as it is stated) verified, by the re-discovery of the Rock concealed under a dunghill from the description that had been given to him, 'Omar, by the Prophet, of the place where he had made his prayer prostrations in Jerusalem on the occasion of his Night-Journey.

The Dome of the Rock

In A. D. 691 Caliph Abd el-Malik commissioned the best architects to build the Dome of the Rock. His plan was based upon a Fourth Century Christian shrine on the Mount of Olives marking the site of Jesus' Ascension. The Caliph's new shrine was deliberately built as a political, economic, and religious counter attraction to Mecca. Medina and Mecca, the two cities holy to Islam, were under the control of a rival Caliph. Abd El-Malik sought to build up the importance of Jerusalem as an Islamic center for pilgrimage and worship. The holy spot of Judaism was now to be identified with the spot where Mohammed's horse ascended to heaven.

Another indication that Jerusalem was not considered of great importance to the Muslim armies is the fact that it was one of last cities taken by the Syrian Muslims after the death of Mohammed. It was conquered by a mediocre commander, and not by Omar himself. The Arabs first called the city Ilya (Aelia Capitolina) rather than Beit el-Maqdas (the holy house). An early Muslim proverb says, "One prayer in Mecca is valued as ten thousand prayers; a prayer in Medina is valued at one thousand prayers; and a prayer in Jerusalem at five hundred prayers."

Although Abd El-Malik had commissioned the structure, it became known as "The Mosque of Omar. " The structure, however, was not (and is not today) a mosque, but rather a shrine.

Inside the Dome is an outcropping of the bedrock of Mount Moriah, the "Sacred Rock. " On the rock's pock-marked surface is one indentation which is believed to be the footprint left by Mohammed as he leapt into heaven. (Pilgrims over the centuries have whittled off pieces of the rock---the Crusaders especially were known to chip "holy souvenirs" from it.) Mount Moriah is a long, extended hill in Jerusalem, extending north from the City of David and

extending beyond the present North wall of the Old City. That same hill is the traditional site of Abraham's sacrificial altar for Isaac, the threshing floor of Ornan (or Araunah), and the site of the First and the Second Temple.

The Foundation Stone is not solid, beneath it lies a cave and a well, known as "the well of souls."

East of the exposed bedrock in the Dome of the Rock is a tall cupboard where it is believed hairs from the beard of Mohammed are contained. Within the hollowed out chamber of under the rock are the "places of prayer" of Elijah, Abraham, David, and Solomon. The Muslims call this cave the "well of souls" where they believe the dead meet twice a week to pray.

In medieval times this spot was considered to be the "center of the world" and was marked such on maps. Since the rock under the Dome of the Rock, where the cave is, shows the effects of quarrying above the level of the cave, it is logical to hold that the rock stood higher originally and that the threshing floor surrounded the rock and the cave.

The exterior of the Dome is covered with tiles from Persia as well as marble. The "Golden Dome" is not made out of gold but rather anodized aluminum. The original dome was wooden, later covered with brass, and then lead sheathing in 1448. The excess weight of the lead-clad dome caused grave concern for the entire building because of periodic severe earthquakes in Jerusalem and finally the anodized aluminum dome. Most recently, in 1993, a million dollars in gold foil was provided by the government of Saudi Arabia as a gift. As of this writing the installation of the gold leaf has now been completed and the dome is today resplendent in brilliant pure gold.

During the seventeen centuries of the Dome's existence it has undergone many repairs but it has not been substantially changed in overall appearance since its completion in A. D 691. After one of the earliest renovations in A. D 820, Caliph al-Mamun removed the name of Caliph Abd el-Malik from the dedication plate and inserted his own name instead. However he neglected to change the dates and his fraud is there for all to see.

The Dome's beauty

Writing about A. D 985, Mukadassi, the famous Muslim traveler born in Jerusalem, wrote:

At the dawn, when the light of the sun first strikes on the cupola and the drum catches the rays, then is this edifice a marvelous site to behold and one such that in all Islam I have never seen its equal; neither have I heard tell of aught built in pagan times that could rival in grace this Dome of the Rock.

A Denial of Christianity

From the Muslim point of view the Dome of the Rock was an answer to and a denial of the attractions of Christianity and its Scriptures, providing the "faithful" with arguments to be used against Christian theology. The inscriptions are seven hundred and thirty-four feet long in all, amongst the lengthiest inscriptions in the world. There is a great amount of repetition and many quotations from the Koran.

The following extracts are relevant:

Inner Face: South Wall. "In the name of Allah the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no God but Allah alone; he has no co-partner. He is the Kingship and His the praise. He giveth life and He causeth to die, and He hath power over everything."

South-East Wall. "Verily Allah and His angels pronounce blessing upon the Prophet. O ye who have pronounced blessings upon Him and give Him the salutation of peace. O, People of the Book [i. e. the Jews and Christians, always referred to as such by the Muslims] do not go beyond the bounds in your religion and do not say about Allah anything but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is but a messenger of Allah and His word which he cast upon Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe only in Allah and of his messenger, but do not say "Three" [Trinity] and it will be better for you. Allah is only one God. Far be it from His glory that he should have a son."

North Wall. "The Messiah will not deign to be in the service of Allah nor will the angels who stand in his presence. O Allah; pray upon Thy messenger "the servant Jesus - [N-W Wall] the son of Mary and peace be upon him the day of his birth, the day of his death and the day of his being raised alive. That is Jesus, son of Mary - a statement concerning which YOU are in doubt. It is not for Allah to take for Himself any offspring, glory be to Him."

West Wall. "Allah bears witness that there is no God but Him, likewise the angels and the people possessed of knowledge [S-W WALL] - Upholding justice. There is no God but He, the Almighty and All wise. Verily, the religion in Allah's sight is Islam."

Outer Face: West and North-West Walls. "In the name of Allah the Merciful and Compassionate. There is no God but Allah alone. Praise be to Allah who hath not taken to himself offspring. To Him there has never been any person in the sovereignty. Mohammed is the messenger of Allah, may God pray upon Him and accept his intercession."

"Praise be God who has not taken unto himself a son and who has no partner in sovereignty nor has He any protector on account of weakness."

If religious Jews are offended by the presence of this Islamic shrine on their holy mountain, Christians have even more reasons to take offense at these misrepresentations of the character of their God, and the deliberate insults to Biblical revelation which the interior inscriptions clearly intend.

Since it is an historical fact that Mohammed never came to Jerusalem, why is the Temple Mount considered holy to Muslims? One passage from the Koran does link Mohammed with Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. It is the seventeenth Sura, entitled "The Night Journey. " In this Sura there is a dream or vision by Mohammed in which he is carried by night "from the sacred temple to the temple that is more remote, whose precinct we have blessed, that we might show him of our signs."

Islamic tradition identifies the first temple as Mecca and the second as Jerusalem. Mohammed's journey was with the Archangel Gabriel. Muslim belief says they rode together on a winged steed called El Burak ("lightning"). El Burak is not mentioned in the Koran, its first mention is two centuries after Mohammed's death in a document called Hadith, a collection of oral traditions.

After they arrived at the Temple Mount, Mohammed and horse ascended through the seven heavens into Allah's presence. Various spots on the Mount were later indicated as the place where El Burak was tied up before the ascent into the presence of Allah.

A later account of the night journey states:

The prophet of God said: "While I was sleeping within the wall of the Kaaba, came to see me Gabriel and kicked me with his foot, so I sat up, but not seeing anything, I lay again on my bed. He kicked me then once more, and I sat up and did not see a thing, so I lay back on my bed. He then kicked me a third time and I sat up, whereupon he pulled me by the arm and I rose, and went to the door of the temple. There was standing a white beast, between a mule and an ass in size, with two wings on its thighs, digging its hind legs in and placing its forelegs as far as it can see. Gabriel carried me on the beast, and we went together at the same speed." So the Prophet of God journeyed, and with him also Gabriel, until they reached the temple in Jerusalem. He found there Abraham, Moses and Jesus, among other prophets, and he led them in prayers. Then he was given two vessels, one filled with wine and the other with milk, so the prophet of God took the vessel with milk and drank it, leaving the vessel of wine. Seeing that, Gabriel said to him: "You were guided to the true religion [Islam] and so was your nation, for wine is forbidden unto you."

El Aksa Mosque

El Aksa is mentioned in the Koran in a vision of Mohammed's Ascension. It means the "distant place." This refers to its geographical location far from Mecca. El Aksa is regularly referred to as Islam's third holiest shrine after Mecca and Medina. The present mosque is believed to stand over the area where Solomon built his magnificent palace south of the Temple.

The El Aksa Mosque was built between A. D. 709-715 probably by Caliph Waleed, son of Abdel-Malik, the man who constructed the Dome of the Rock. Throughout the years the mosque has been destroyed several times by earthquakes and subsequently rebuilt. The most prominent remains of the original mosque that has survived are a few supporting columns east of the cupola.

The most important reconstruction was after an earthquake in A. D 1034 when the mosque was enlarged to house 5000 worshippers. The builders used capitals and columns of destroyed Byzantine churches in their reconstruction work.

Jewish Hopes Under Islam

The conquering Muslims brought a different attitude with them. In contrast to the Byzantine and Roman conquerors who let the Temple Mount remain in ruins as a proof of the destruction of Jewish nationalism, the Muslims restored worship to the Mount. Yet the worship was not of Yahweh, the God of the Bible, but of Allah.

When the Muslims became the rulers in Jerusalem some matters became easier for the Jews. They were officially allowed to live in the city and there is evidence that on certain holy days they were even permitted on the Temple Mount.

Reports say that the Jews would march in procession around the walls of the Temple Mount on feast days and pray at the gates. A document written in the tenth century indicates that one of the conditions for allowing the Jews to pray at the gates was that the Jewish community would be responsible for keeping the Mount clean. The Jews, the document states, were responsible to sweep the Mount. Other accounts indicate that Jews were employed in the Mosque area and that Jewish craftsmen made lamps for the Mosque.

The Mishna (Berachot 9:5) reveals that the Jews of all ages are required to show reverence for the site of their former temples:

"No man shall behave frivolously when standing near the eastern gate, which looks to the Holy of Holies: he shall not enter the temple mount with his cane, his shoes, his purse, or the dust on his feet, nor shall he use it as a short cut, still less shall he spit there."

Inscriptions have been found at the gates of the Temple Mount that were probably put there by Jewish Pilgrims during the early Arab rule. One such inscription, when translated, reads:

"You Lord of Hosts build this House in the lifetime of Jacob ben-Joseph, Theophylactus, and Sisinia and Anistasia. Amen and amen. "

The names on the inscription indicate they were Jews from a Greek-speaking country. Though the Jews were allowed more access than in the Roman or Byzantine period, they were still far from their desired goal of retaking Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

The Crusaders Capture Jerusalem

In the last 1300 years, with only one exception, the Temple Mount has been in the hands of Muslims. On July 15, 1099 Jerusalem was taken from the Muslims by the Crusaders from Europe. The Crusaders slaughtered the inhabitants of Jerusalem in an unjustified carnage. The Dome of the Rock was converted into a Christian church called the Templum Domini - "Temple of our Lord."

The Crusaders then began to use the El Aksa Mosque as headquarters for the Knights of the Templar who officiated the Temple Compound. A remnant of the Crusader occupation still exists today, the tombs of the assassins of Thomas Beckett the Archbishop of Canterbury (1118-1170). After murdering Beckett the assassins traveled to Jerusalem and took up with the Templar Knights. Their tombs are situated near the main entrance.

The Western world rejoiced that Jerusalem was in the hands of "Christians. " The victory, however, caused Muslims to immediately launch campaigns to regain the city and the Dome from the Christian infidels.

The Crusader occupation was relatively short-lived. The Muslim leader Saladin (Salah al-Din) proclaimed a jihad, or holy war, to retake the land of Palestine. After ninety years of Crusader control, Jerusalem surrendered to Saladin's army on October 2, 1187. In contrast to the brutality of the Crusaders, Saladin treated the defeated Crusaders with kindness and mercy.

The golden cross that was placed on the Dome of the Rock was torn down. Saladin rededicated the Templar's headquarters as a mosque. The Dome was covered with beautiful mosaics and a prayer niche facing Mecca was added.

Jerusalem was back in the hands of the Muslims and Europe was ready to avenge the defeat. A Third Crusade was undertaken (1189-1192) to free Jerusalem from the armies of Saladin. Richard the Lion-hearted led England and other Crusaders in a fruitless attempt to retake the city. To this day, the Temple Mount remains in Muslim control. Jerusalem Lies Desolate

In 1267 the Jewish sage Nahmanides wrote a letter to his son. It contained the following references to the land and the Temple.

What shall I say of this land? The more holy the place the greater the desolation. Jerusalem is the most desolate of all... There are about 2,000 inhabitants ... but there are no Jews, for after the arrival of the Tartars, the Jews fled, and some were killed by the sword. There are now only two brothers, dyers, who buy their dyes from the government. At their place a quorum of worshippers meets on the Sabbath, and we encourage them, and found a ruined house, built on pillars, with a beautiful dome, and made it into a synagogue... People regularly come to Jerusalem, men and women from Damascus and from Aleppo and from all parts of the country, to see the Temple and weep over it. And may He who deemed us worthy to see Jerusalem in her ruins, grant us to see her rebuilt and restored, and the honor of the Divine Presence returned.

An account exists of Napoleon's visit to the Temple Mount of the 9th of Av, the day of the commemoration of the Temple's destruction. When asked what all the crying and wailing was about, Napoleon was told that the Jews were mourning their Temple which had been destroyed 1900 years previously. Touched by the incident the French Monarch said, "a people which weeps and mourns for the loss of its homeland 1800 years ago and does not forget - such a people will never be destroyed. Such a people can rest assured that its homeland will be returned to it."

Jerusalem Under Turkish Rule

The Ottoman Turks, non-Arab Muslims, became the dominant power in the 15th century. In 1453 they captured the city of Constantinople and brought about the final destruction of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine). They renamed the city Istanbul and made it the center of their empire.

In 1517, under Sultan Selim I, the Turks captured Jerusalem and all of Israel. The rule of the Turks over Jerusalem would last exactly four hundred years. The walls which today surround the Old City were built by Suleiman the Magnificent, son of Sultan Selim. Suleiman restored the Al Aksa Mosque and some of the present stained glass windows date from this period.

The Arabs found themselves under the domination of the Turks. For four hundred years of Turkish rule the Arabs did not possess even a single, independent state.

Jews Hope for Return

Even during the Jewish exile extending over many centuries, the people continually expressed hope for a return to Jerusalem, for the rebuilding of the city and of the Temple. Two eighteenth century rabbis, Jacob Emden and Jonathan Eibschutz were fierce rivals. On the subject of returning to Jerusalem, however they saw eye to eye. Emden wrote:

We do not mourn properly over Jerusalem. Were we guilty of this transgression alone, it would be sufficient reason for the extension of the period of our Exile. In my opinion this is the most likely, most apparent and the strongest reason for all of the dreadful terrifying persecutions which have been fallen us in Exile, in all the places of our dispersion. We have been hotly pursued. We have not been granted rest among the nations with our humiliation, affliction and homelessness, because this sense of mourning has left our hearts. While becoming complacent in a land not ours, we have forgotten Jerusalem; we have not taken it to heart. Therefore, "Like one who is dead we have been forgotten. From generation to generation sorrow is added to our sorrow and our pain."

Eibschutz concurred:

One must weep ceaselessly over the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the restoration of the glory of King David, for that is the object of human perfection. If we do not have Jerusalem and the kingdom of the House of David, why should we have life? Since our many transgressions have led to the Destruction and to the desolation of our glorious Temple and the loss of the kingdom of the House of David, the degree which we suffer the absence and the lack of good is known

to all. Surely have we descended from life until death. And the converse is also true: "When the Lord restores the captivity of Zion," we shall ascend from death unto life. Certainly the heart of anyone who possesses the soul of a Jew is broken when he recalls the destruction of Jerusalem.

The hope of the Jews in Diaspora is that one day they would again come to their land, rebuild the Holy City, and their Temple.

Non-Muslims Barred from the Temple Mount

J. T. Barclay in the mid 19th Century wrote about the barring of those from the Mount who were not of the Islamic faith:

When the clock of the Mosque needs repairing, they are compelled, however reluctantly to employ a Frank. But in order to have a clean conscience in the commission of such an abominable piece of sacrilege as the admission upon the sacred premises, they adopt the following expedient. The mechanic selected being thoroughly purged from his uncleanness ablution a certain formula of prayer and incantation is sung over him at the gate. This being satisfactorily concluded, he is considered as exorcised, not only of Christianity (or Judaism, as the case may be), but of humanity also; and is declared to be no longer a man but a donkey. He is then mounted upon the shoulders of the faithful, lest the ground should be polluted by his footsteps; and being carried to the spot where his labours are required, he is set down upon matting within certain prescribed limits; and the operation being performed, he is carried back to the gate, and there, by certain other ceremonies, he is duly undonkeyfied and transmuted back into a man again.

More Jewish Persecution

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish persecution was on the increase. In 1882, as a result of persecution of the Jews in Russia and Romania, the first immigration of Jewish settlers to Palestine began.

In 1891 Arab leaders prepared a petition to the Ottoman government in Constantinople to demand an end to Jewish immigration into Palestine and prohibit Jewish land purchases.

In 1896 Theodor Herzl, the founder of the modern Zionism, promoted the founding of a Jewish State. He argued that the only way in which the "Jewish problem" can be resolved is by establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. Herzl's writing started the Jews on the road back to their promised homeland.

In Sections One and Two we have considered God's dealings with Israel, His "Chosen People," and the church, the mystery age not revealed in the Old Testament. We now turn our attention to the future - to The Tribulation period, the time just beyond the Rapture, which signals the end of the church period.

**Part III Tribulation Saints:
The Destiny of Believers during the Coming Tribulation**

Chapter 6

Believers During The Tribulation

We come now to the third section of this book, and to things that are yet future. After considering the history of Israel, the chosen people, and of the church, we can not help wondering who the true believers of the Tribulation period will be. According to the book of Revelation, starting with Chapter Four, the next period of human history will be a time of trial for the earth. This is generally called "the Tribulation," from Christ's own words in Matthew 24:9. "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name." The word for "tribulation" is the Greek word *thlipsis*. This word literally means "pressure" and can be translated as "affliction, anguish, persecution, or tribulation." (Usually the seven-year period after the Rapture and before the Second Coming is called "the tribulation period," however the last 3.5 years is frequently called "the great tribulation" because of the terrible violence loosed on the earth during the last half of the tribulation period).

If Israel has rejected her Messiah and has been blinded, and if true believers from the church have been taken away, who then are these believers of the Tribulation period?

Saints and Martyrs of The Tribulation Period

Future believers will basically be the same as the believers of today. They will be Christians: people who have put their faith in Jesus Christ - who have repented of their sins, received Christ to come into their lives, and have been "born again," just like the Christians of the Church Age. (Luke 24:46-47; John 1:12; Revelation 3:20; John 3:3-16)

It is true that God works differently in every age. The church, for instance is called the "Body of Christ" and the (virgin) Bride of Christ. All Christians are said to be "members one of another" in a special organic way. The church was not promised a plot of land, nor a temple nor an earthly king and inheritance. God's promises to her are "heavenly" blessings while those given to Israel are "earthly."

Actually, salvation has been offered by God to people of all ages on the same basis: that of grace and faith. God's grace has always preceded man's response, because, as the Bible says, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God." (Romans 3:10-11). We have only glimpses of God's work in other nations down through history. For instance many Ninevites evidently became believers in the one true God because of the preaching of Jonah, yet these peoples were not part of believing Israel, or of the church.

Even in the Garden of Eden God took the initiative to restore our fallen, sinful parents to fellowship. It was God's idea to call Abraham and Moses and David. It has always been God's idea to call and enable every person to believe. Men do not seek God on their own initiative (Romans 3)--God seeks out and saves every one who ever comes to know Him. The proper response to God's call is faith--trust in Him, and actions based on that trust. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, even that faith is a gift from our loving God. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."

In the Old Testament, faith in God involved belief in the promise that He would provide a payment for sin. That is what the sacrificial system was all about. When an animal was being sacrificed, the one offering the sacrifice would place his hand on its head and acknowledge that the innocent animal was dying in his place.

In the New Testament Jesus was shown to be the Messiah and the Savior whose death provided a once-for-all payment for our sin. Messiah's sacrifice was retroactively effective for all those who had believed in the promises that sin would one day be not merely "passed-over" or "covered"--but removed. (John 1:41; 4:25-26; Hebrews 9:26-28; 13:11-12)

Believers of the Tribulation period will undoubtedly have the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9-11), but since they will not be accepted into Antichrist's evil world system, they will not be allowed into public places of influence, as teachers business leaders, and government positions, etc. The Holy Spirit in them will not have the same restraining influence that He had during the church age when believers were united in one body, the Body of Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8).

Believers of the Tribulation will not be affiliated with the organization of the church which remains on earth following the Rapture. That church will be a totally apostate group commonly called "the harlot church." After the Rapture, some churches will be quite empty, and some may not be affected much at all, depending on what percentage of true born-again believers belonged to each church. Many of those who are left behind will actually be relieved to be rid of the fanatical ones who were taken in the Rapture. They will believe whatever lie is proposed by the Evil One to explain this great disappearance. Some churches will close down, and some will merely reorganize and go on with their religious activities. These spiritually dead organizations will not attract new true believers in Christ. They may even turn them in as troublemakers to the evil government of that time. Therefore, the saints and martyrs of the Tribulation period are never called the church (Revelation chapters 4-19). As noted there will indeed exist a "renewed" church on the earth after the rapture, but she will be a counterfeit, apostate organization and will give her power to Antichrist. She is thus depicted as a prostitute riding the beast in Revelation chapter 17.

Are you among those who know Christ personally? If you are not sure, we urge you to turn to Appendix - Do You Know Christ Personally?

Believers in Christ from all nations

The covenant with Abraham and his seed was for the purpose of blessing all nations (Genesis 12:2-3; 22:17-18). It was a promise to an earthly people ("as numerous as the grains of sand by the sea shore") and to a heavenly people ("as numerous as the stars of the sky").

The promise to Abraham was fulfilled specifically in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah, as Paul reminds us in Galatians,

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16)

In the book of Acts we gain a glimpse of this blessing extended to the Gentiles.

"Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: "'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages.'" (Acts 15:14-18)

Sudden belief of many after the Rapture

Since the Rapture will have taken all true Christians, one might ask how there are believer during The Tribulation. There could well be hundreds of thousands of immediate conversions right after the Rapture by those who had heard the Gospel, and, though they were not hardened against it, had not yet actually received Christ as Savior. These people will remember the earnest pleading of friends and family members who had disappeared. They could respond quickly, turning to Christ in prayer, confessing their sins and asking Him to save them.

Thousands of others will not know what to do, but will be convinced in their hearts that their missing loved ones had been taken by Christ. Perhaps some of them will not believe the lie that is put forward by the ungodly media, which may be saying that the Earth has at last been cleansed of its narrow-minded trouble-making Christian extremists.

Officials may even suggest that UFOs had abducted them-- our planet's population has been conditioned for decades now to believe in the existence of UFOs.

These honest seekers will turn to the Bibles and prophecy books that have been left by their missing friends. Their minds and hearts will be open to the Gospel when they read it or hear it explained by the thousands of instant converts. Even if they do not find the truth immediately, they will respond when evangelists like the 144,000 specially sealed Israelites mentioned below, boldly proclaim the Gospel during this period.

Messianic (Jewish) leadership

It is apparent that the spiritual leaders of this period will be "completed" or "fulfilled" Jews, those who have accepted Yeshua as their Messiah. Romans 11 reminds us that they will receive God's mercy when they return to Him.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. (Romans 11:25-32)

The Central Role of Israel

There are many indications that Israel is once again on center stage of history during the Tribulation period. Even now, before that time begins, our newspapers and television programs are preoccupied with the events of the Middle East, and especially of the tiny nation of Israel. The miraculous rebirth of the nation in 1948 was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37!

The importance of Israel in current events was prophesied in Zechariah:

"I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves." (Zechariah 12:2-3)

Israel is also portrayed in the Old Testament as the central nation of major future events. Especially in the Book of Daniel we are told of a "seventieth week," a seven year period, that still belongs to Israel's future.

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

"After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

"He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (Daniel 9:24-27)

In his classic book *The Coming Prince*, Sir Robert Anderson, who was head of Scotland Yard, calculated the exact duration of the first sixty nine of these "weeks" of years. Sixty-nine times seven is four hundred eighty-three. These years were lunar years of exactly 360 days, as in all the Biblical references. Anderson showed that from the decree by Artaxerxes Longimanus to rebuild Jerusalem until the day that Jesus offered Himself as Messiah and was rejected by the officials of Jerusalem (the day of His "Triumphal Entry"), was exactly four hundred eighty-three days!

This leaves one seven year period of Israel's history to be fulfilled before the time of "everlasting righteousness." At the beginning of this last seven year period Antichrist (the "prince" or "ruler" who will come), will make a seven year covenant with Israel, but will break it in the middle by setting up an "abomination" in the newly rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. This time table agrees exactly with the timing of the Book of Revelation. This will be shown later, where certain events which begin when Antichrist sets up a statue of himself in the Temple (Daniel's "abomination that causes desolation"), and last to the end of The Tribulation, are exactly three and one half years long. This is the second half of Daniel's seventieth "week."

This period of upheaval is also characterized in Jeremiah 30:7 as the "Time of Jacob's Trouble."

Perhaps the best way to set the scene for this section is to study the wonderful overview of Israel's history in Revelation chapter 12.

A Symbolic Overview of All of Israel's History

The Book of the Revelation, Chapter 12, presents a great vision of the nation of Israel portrayed as a woman. The vantage point is that of eternity.

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

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:1-17)

In his sermon series on Revelation, Ray Stedman offers the following commentary on this passage,

"There is no mystery to the dragon's identity, for John will disclose that to us in verse 9: "that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray." In the opening verse of chapter 12, the devil is symbolized as a

great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. But he is also "that ancient serpent" the very one who appeared in the Garden of Eden to the first woman, Eve, deceiving her and introducing sin into the human race. Dragons, of course, symbolize satanic worship in many cultures around the world. As John says in verse 9, the career of the devil has been devoted to deceiving the entire human race and leading human beings astray.

"The male child who is born to the woman is the next easiest to identify because verse 5 says that He is the one "who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter." This is one of four references in Revelation to Psalm 2. In verse 9 of that prophetic, messianic psalm we read, "You will rule them with an iron scepter."

"Though the book of Revelation is truly rooted in the entire Old Testament, it would be a valid analogy to compare Revelation to an oak tree that grows and expands out of the acorn of Psalm 2. In this Psalm we read that the One enthroned in heaven says, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill," and that this King will rule the nations with an iron scepter. Clearly this is a reference to the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ during the Millennium, as is pictured for us in the book of Revelation. The reference to an iron scepter (in Psalm 2 and Revelation 12:5) always indicates a millennial scene. The iron scepter speaks of strict justice. The Millennium will be a time of worldwide blessing and prosperity when the curse of sin will be at least partly removed from the natural world. But sin will still manifest itself to some degree--hence the iron scepter of Christ. As we shall see in Revelation 20, righteousness will reign on earth during the Millennium, but it will have to be enforced.

"After the Millennium the new heaven and the new earth will appear. At that time Christ will no longer reign with a scepter of iron. Nothing evil can enter into the new heaven and the new earth. When sin is finally extinguished forever, the defining characteristic of Christ will no longer be His iron reign but tender, shepherd-like love as He ministers personally and kindly to His redeemed people.

"That brings us to the mystery of the woman. Why is she clothed with the sun? Why is the moon under her feet? Why are twelve stars arranged in a crown over her head? There are several theories as to whom or what this symbolic woman represents. Roman Catholic scholars have concluded that she is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Having understood that the child who will rule the nation with an iron scepter is Jesus, it certainly makes sense that the mother of that child would be Mary. The problem with this theory, however, is that there is no way you can fit Mary into verse 6 where we read that she "fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she will be taken care of for 1,260 days." That never happened to Mary, and never will. The woman in Revelation 12 does not represent a single individual but rather a community of people.

"Some Bible scholars say she symbolizes the church. Certainly there is some substantiation for this view, in that the church is pictured at the close of Revelation as a woman, the bride of Christ. But as with the previous theory this view has an insurmountable problem: It is impossible for the woman to represent the church because she is depicted as giving birth to Jesus. The church did not produce Jesus; Jesus produced the church! The church was "born" out of the wounded side of Jesus.

"What, then, is the true identity of this woman of mystery"? Let us examine the clues one by one and see where they lead. The clues are significant: The woman is clothed with the sun, the moon is under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars is on her head. There is only one other place in Scripture where you find all these symbols clustered together in one place: Genesis 37, the story of Joseph the boy-dreamer. He dreamed one night that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down before him. The sun, moon, and stars represented his father, mother, and eleven brothers, respectively. Eventually this dream would come true--but not until after those eleven brothers sold Joseph into slavery, not until after Joseph overcame trials of false accusation and unjust imprisonment, not until after Joseph became second in command over all of Egypt.

"The symbols of the sun, moon, and stars make it clear: The woman represents the people of Israel, all of whom are descendants of Joseph's father Jacob. Joseph himself would be the twelfth star. In Romans 9:5 Paul said of the people of Israel, "from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ." That is why Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, "Salvation is from the Jews." Even the salvation of the Gentiles comes by way of the Jews, because it is the Jewish race that produced Jesus Christ. So here again, in the symbolism of the woman clothed in the sun with the stars at her head and the moon at her feet, we have a picture of Israel coming again into prominence in the last days.

"To understand the vivid images and symbols of Revelation 12 we should remember that we are viewing earthly scenes from heaven's point of view. In Revelation 4 we saw that John was caught up into heaven and shown all the things that follow in Revelation 4 through 19. When you look at earthly events from heaven's standpoint, time is never a factor. This vision does not present a sequence or an ordered chronology. It presents occurrences arranged according to their meaning and importance from a heavenly, eternal perspective. Events that may be widely separated in time may be clustered together in eternity's view. From heaven's perspective we are shown what happens, not when it happens. If we approach this chapter--and indeed all of Revelation--with this point of view, symbols that once seemed murky and obscure will pop into focus.

"What we have in Revelation 12 is a kind of tableau, like a scene in a wax museum, of three-dimensional figures frozen in place at the climactic moment of a dramatic event. Satan, the great dragon, is crouched with its fangs bared and its eyes smoldering, watching Israel as she prepares to give birth to her long-promised Son. Israel is pregnant and crying out in her labor pains. The dragon's intention is clear: it seeks to devour Jesus as soon as He emerges from the womb of Israel and makes His appearance upon the earth. What is the historical reality represented by this grim and symbol-laden tableau?

"This scene takes us back to the historical birth of Jesus, to the time of the Roman Empire and its subjugation of Israel. It takes us back to time of King Herod the Great and the demonic malice and enmity filled his heart when he learned of the birth of Jesus. It is easy to see events of that time in the symbolic tableau of Revelation 12:1-4. The dragon of world power in Jesus' day was the Roman Empire which, in the Jewish land of Judea, was represented by the person of Rome's puppet king Herod the Great. Though in his early career Herod had been a comparatively progressive and benevolent despot, his notorious cruel streak and murderous paranoia were already in full evidence by the time Christ was born. In a fit of jealous rage Herod murdered his favorite among his eight wives, as well as several of her family members. He later murdered his own firstborn son Antipas. So his attempt to kill the newborn Son of God by slaughtering the infants of Bethlehem was true to form for this brutal and unfeeling man. Like a dragon, he lay in wait for the child to be born--then pounced, beast-like, spilling blood as if it were water. But God intervened, sparing the infant Jesus from the maw of the dragon. Warned by the appearance of an angel in a dream, Joseph and Mary took Jesus on a secret journey to Egypt beyond the reach of Herod.

"This brings us to verse 5. It is at this point in the symbolic allegory of the dragon, the woman, and the child that we come upon a startling statement. John writes, "She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne." Completely ignoring any chronology or .sequence of historical events, this symbolic scene takes a sudden jump from the birth of Jesus to His ascension some 30 years later, skipping over His life, ministry, death, and resurrection in a single breath. In this image, John is shown only the birth and ascension into heaven of Jesus. This symbol encompasses both the beginning and the ending of His earthly ministry.

But a problem of interpretation arises at this point. The problem is this: The clear implication of Revelation 12:5 is that Jesus was "snatched up to God" in order to deliver Him from harm, from the reach of the dragon. Yet we know from reading the gospels and the book of Acts that Jesus' ascension was by no means an escape from harm. Rather it was a triumphal exit following His victory over death. The resurrected Lord was completely beyond the reach of His enemies, and there was no harm anyone could do to Him. Why, then, does this tableau in Revelation 12 depict Jesus as having been "snatched up to God" as a child is snatched out of the path of an onrushing car?

"Here is where the interpretation of Revelation becomes sensitive, because of the non-linear, non-chronological nature of the vision. The interpretation is this: There is an aspect of our Lord Jesus Christ which does find deliverance from danger, from the rage of the red dragon, by being snatched away into heaven. By this I mean the Body of Christ that is on the earth today--that is, the church. Throughout the New Testament, the Lord and His church are regarded as one. When Saul (later the apostle Paul) was confronted by an appearance of Christ on the Damascus Road, Jesus said to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul had never even met Jesus--but he was persecuting the church. When Jesus spoke to Saul of His church He identified completely with that church. If Saul was persecuting the Lord's church, Saul was persecuting Him, because they were one. Paul later wrote to the Corinthians, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." The church, he said, is a body, and "the body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ." The church and the Lord together are the body of Christ. So when we come to Revelation 12 and see that the child, representing Christ, was "snatched up to God and to his throne," it becomes clear that this is a reference to the removal of the church from the world and from the threatening presence of the dragon "

It should be remembered that Christ Himself ascended into the heavens (Acts 1:9-11). This passage might only have that ascension in view. However if, as Stedman suggests, this is a reference to the Rapture of the church, it is still an event which will take place before the Tribulation, when Israel will be driven into the wilderness. Thus, even if the church is in view, it is not a violation of the concept that the church is never mentioned during the Tribulation period.

Ray Stedman continues:

"Verse 6 carries us on into the Tribulation period. In leaping immediately from the birth of Christ to the removal of the church and the beginning of the Tribulation, these verses in Revelation 12 completely eclipse all the centuries of the church age in which we now live. In verse 6, the woman (representing the people of Israel) flees into the desert to a

place prepared for her by God. There she is taken care of for a period of 1,260 days--a significant time period, as can be seen in the previous chapter. In Revelation 11, the two witnesses will prophesy for a period of 1,260 days--the last 3 1/2 years of the seven-year Tribulation period. So it would be reasonable and consistent to conclude that the desert exile of the believing Jewish people (represented by the woman) would also take place during the same 3 1/2-year period in which the two witnesses prophesy against the Antichrist.

"Notice, too, that a subtle shift has taken place in the symbolism represented by the woman. In verses 1 through 4 the woman represented the Jewish nation which was to bring forth Jesus, the Son of God. In verse 5 the child is born and is snatched up to God's throne. In verse 6 the woman flees into the desert to escape the persecution of the Antichrist and the Tribulation. The fleeing woman, then, represents not the Jewish people as a whole--for many Jews will be deceived by the Antichrist--but the believing remnant of the Jews, those who have trusted in the Messiah and have refused to submit to the rule of the Antichrist.

"This woman, you recall, represents not all Jews of the last days but only the believing remnant. Those Jews who have not believed are suffering under the judgments that are foretold in the Old Testament prophecies. This is "the time of Jacob's trouble," when apostate Jews are cruelly eliminated by the dragon and the faithful remnant is pursued and persecuted. The remnant escapes to the desert, and the swiftness of their flight from danger is symbolized by the eagle's wings.

"Many Bible scholars believe the faithful Jews of the last days will flee to the city of Petra, south of the Dead Sea--a strangely beautiful city hewn out of the rock of the earth that is presently an attraction for tourists and archeologists in the Holy Land. Perhaps this is true, but no one can say with certainty.

"What is important in these verses is that God will care for this believing remnant in a supernatural way. They will be borne out of danger on the metaphorical wings of an eagle. It is no coincidence that this is the very same metaphor God used when the nation of Israel was led out of Egypt by Moses. "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt," God said to Israel through His servant Moses, "and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." (Exodus 19:4) This is a picture of God's loving protection and care for the people who are His faithful remnant in that day.

"The symbolism of the river of water which the serpent spews in an effort to overtake the woman is likely an image of a vast host of soldiers sent by the Antichrist to overtake and destroy the faithful of Israel in the last days. But God will protect His faithful remnant, probably by means of a natural cataclysm--perhaps an earthquake--that causes the destruction of the Antichrist's armies and the frustration of his plans.

"The Antichrist will be diverted from attacking the faithful Jews of Israel (symbolized by the woman), and will instead turn his attention to "the rest of her offspring" and make war against them. Who is John describing in this phrase? Most likely "the rest of her offspring" refers to "Christ's commandos," the 144,000 Jews we first met in Revelation 7 and will meet again in Revelation 14. They are the special band of believing Jews who move out into the four corners of the world, preaching the gospel of the kingdom to all the nations. The devil gives his final attention to destroying this group because of their powerful and effective witness to the world. The rage of the devil is increasing as he grows more and more desperate, knowing that his time is short. Like any wild and dangerous beast, the devil becomes more deadly and ferocious as he is backed into a corner." (<http://pbc.org/dp/stedman/revelation>).

Chapter 7

Satan's Final Empire: The New World Order

Rise of Satan's final Empire

What will happen to Israel in the future is not done in a vacuum. The whole Earth will be going through great changes during this Tribulation period. All of this is a culmination of Satan's evil plans for world government. This is described in the Book of Daniel in several dreams and visions.

Fulfillment of the visions of Daniel

"You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue--an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.

While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:31-35)

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had terrifying dreams and did not know what they meant. His magicians, astrologers and fortunetellers could not help him interpret them. Daniel was of the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar's forces had carried off from Israel to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar called for Daniel to see if he could explain the dreams to him.

First God showed Daniel what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed. Then He showed Daniel what the dreams meant.

Since Nebuchadnezzar was the head of the Babylonian empire (which virtually ruled the then-known world), he was the head of gold. But the prophecy meant that another empire would arise that would overtake them. Every ruler would like to think that he will never be defeated, but that does not happen. Historically, there was another world empire which came after Babylon. That empire was Medo-Persia. There were of scores of other, minor kingdoms. Some of them were small empires over a certain number of countries for a period of time. But what Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream were world empires. From the time of Nebuchadnezzar until now there were to be only four of them, including his Babylon. The second empire was silver, meaning that it was inferior to the first in some ways, and it had two parts, like two arms: the Medes and the Persians. Then there was another empire (refer to Harmony of Prophecy chart).

The Babylonians gave way to the Medo-Persians, and the Medo-Persians gave way to the Greeks, and the Greeks gave way to the Romans. It was the Romans who were in power at the time of Christ. There had been almost an unbroken succession of world empires from Nebuchadnezzar until the time of Christ. Nebuchadnezzar's dream indicated that one empire would be replaced by another. The iron legs, feet and toes of the statue represented the future empire of Rome.

Since the Roman Empire ceased to exist as a real empire, how many world empires have existed? Can you think of any? Not really. There have been some serious attempts. Charlemagne, Napoleon, and Hitler, tried to conquer their world. None of them succeeded. The Bible says there are only four of these world empires, and then a final form of the fourth one--feet made partly of iron and partly of clay.

What would the iron and clay mean? It is a Revived Roman Empire--partly of the old iron of the ancient Roman empire, and partly of clay, something weaker and brittle. It would include some of the old areas, but it would not be as strong and monolithic as the old Roman Empire. When the stone comes out of Heaven and lands on these feet they will break. The stone from Heaven represents the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of Kings to destroy Antichrist's empire and to set up the Millennial Kingdom.

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.

And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'

After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast--terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. (Daniel 7:1-9)

In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me. In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal. I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later. I watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power.

The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low. Because of rebellion, the host and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground. (Daniel 8:1-12)

Daniel had one dream and one vision. They were about four kinds of creatures that represented these same four empires of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream. When we compare them we see many similarities. These dreams were given to confirm what Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream: that there would be a succession of four empires, and that they would become successively more fierce. In Daniel's visions there is also an element of a personal power--an individual who is extremely powerful, who comes on the scene at the end. This is Antichrist. The first specific teachings about Antichrist are from Daniel, chapters 7 to 9. Chapter 9 gives details of Antichrist's treaty with Israel which he breaks in the middle. He will then set up a statue of himself to be worshipped in the Temple.

The interesting thing to notice here is that, in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, there are ten toes on the feet, and in Daniel's dream, the final form of a world government had ten horns. So the number ten is very significant in the last form of world governments which is still future.

We are looking for another empire that will come out of ten nations and then become a world power.

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (Matthew 4:8-11)

What business does the Devil have offering Jesus, God the Son, the Creator of the World, these kingdoms? Was that nonsense? Or was it a legitimate offer? Satan is called "The god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), "The prince of this world" (John 12:31), and "The prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Because of the fall of man and the corruption that resulted from the fall, the Devil does have control of the kingdoms of the world today. That is not to say that every single nation is corrupt. There was a time in our country that we were not influenced much by the Devil. Godly people came here to begin a nation under God with religious freedom. In those days, before we had a federal government, there were states, like William Penn's "Holy Experiment" in Pennsylvania, that were almost theocracies. A theocracy is a government where God rules literally. But, for the most part, nations become ungodly. The people forget their blessings from God. Leaders become corrupt, and even a good nation like ours drifts, until they no longer seek and receive God's blessing. We have reached the point where many people say America is a "post-Christian" nation. It hurts to admit this. The good news is that we can return to our devotion to the Lord. We could have a revival. Many people feel there is a great renewal of faith brewing in our nation. However, America is not the Christian nation it once was.

In terms of world empires, there have only been, since Nebuchadnezzar, four world empires, and all of them have been dominated by evil. Your history teachers have probably told you this is true even if they were not Christians. These evil empires tolerated immorality and became corrupt. They were brutal. And they collapsed internally because of their sin and corruption. The Devil had a right to offer these kingdoms to Jesus. But why would Jesus want those corrupted kingdoms? Jesus is going to come back as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to set things up as they ought to be. He doesn't need the Devil's help, and He doesn't need the Devil's kingdoms. He would never have accepted that offer, but the Devil thought that was his "best card." Unfortunately, Satan does have control over the corrupt kingdoms of the world today.

A New World Order

We have already studied the rise and fall of various world empires under Satan's control and the emerging final form of that political structure. We have also traced the course of false world religions from the time of Nimrod in Babel through the period of The Tribulation. Now we examine the secret societies which have controlled wealth and power from behind the scenes, and the sinister religious connections with these secret societies. Some have referred to this power behind the scenes as the Invisible Government.

Matthew 24:37 - As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Jeremiah 6:14 and 8:11 - 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 - While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Note: The implication in this section that there is a conspiracy to produce a universal government is accepted by many prophecy scholars, but rejected by others. There is no doubt that there will be a One-World Government, but there are differing views on the processes that lead to it. Some have called this an "open conspiracy," meaning one that is not totally hidden, but is more of a one-world agenda by the rich and powerful. This elite group publish their

ideas, but the public is never made aware of their ultimate plans. For balance here, See Appendix - Warnings and Cautions.

Kabbalism

This was an ancient system of Jewish theosophy and mysticism which still has adherents today. It denies the inspiration of Scripture and blends metaphysical and occult practices, trying to mesh them with the Old Testament. Gnosticism

This system of belief flourished during the time of the writing of the New Testament. It is a dualistic philosophy that there are two equally powerful forces in the universe- one good and one evil.

Knights Templars Knights of the Temple

This fraternity arose during period of the Crusades. Some may have meant well at the beginning, but it was so corrupted that it became a great blight on Christian history and a serious stumbling block between Christians and Jews and between Christians and Moslems.

Here is a brief history of this movement:

- 1118 - Established in Jerusalem by 9 French knights.
- 1128 - Taken under the protection of the Pope.
- 1187 - Moved to Acre (when Saladin conquered Jerusalem).
- 1291 - Moved to Cyprus (when Acre fell to Muslims). By then they had become influential bankers of Europe.

They especially influenced Spain, France, England.

(Their work might have been good at first, but, according to occult historian Edith Starr Miller, it was influenced by Gnostics in Jerusalem and the Sect of Assassins, which practiced phallicism or sex-worship and Satanism, and venerated "The Baphomet," the idol of the Luciferians).

- Philip IV of France sentenced many of them to death, charging them with conspiracy, heresy and Satan worship.
- 1314 (Mar. 18) - The Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, was burned at the stake. (The Masonic order for young men is named after him! Why would they?)

Rosecrucians Order of the Rose-Croix

In the early 1300's, the surviving Knights Templars merged with them since they were not allowed to continue their own organization.

Their beliefs and practices were very secret through the 1600's. They may have been the pre-cursors of the Masonic Orders. The names of the last three Masonic degrees of the York Rite are: Knight of the Red Cross (means the same thing as Rose-Croix), Knight of Malta, Knight Templar. The 18th Degree of Scottish Rite of the Masonic Order is called the Sovereign Prince of Rose-Croix.

In 1717 the world's first Grand Lodge of the Masonic Order was established in London. According to Gary Kah, it had Rosecrucians deep within its structure. These were the Princes of Freemasonry.

The Illuminati

The Illuminati were an order within an order of Freemasons. This order was founded on May 1, 1776 by Adam Weishaupt, a college professor in Ingolstadt, Bavaria, a part of modern Germany.

Gary Kah cites John Robinson, 18th Century historian and prominent Mason, that the express aim of the Order was to abolish Christianity and overturn government.

Weishaupt said the name is derived from Lucifer, and means "Holders of the Light." Lucifer is one of the names of Satan in our Bible. He was created as an angel of light (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:14; 2 Corinthians 11:14), then he rebelled against God and fell.

At the Masonic Congress of Wilhelmsbad, in July, 1782 the Illuminati reached the zenith of their power. This conference solidified Weishaupt and his order as undisputed head of the occult one-world movement. Weishaupt also forged an alliance with the growing Rothschild banker network.

The Illuminati were banned in Bavaria in 1786 as subversive. Their work was apparently exposed by an act of God when a messenger carrying secret information to members of the Illuminati was struck by lightning. His documents were exposed, and used as the basis of action by the government of Bavaria to ban the organization. Copies of this information was sent to heads of government all over Europe, but most people did not take it seriously. These people continued to exert influence through the network of illuminated Masonic Lodges already in place, especially through the Grand Orient Lodge of France.

Kah says that The Illuminati were condemned by George Washington in 1798. Our first president was a Mason, but he was a godly man. He was a surveyor, and would naturally belong to Masonic trades. But there is no evidence that he personally was involved in any of the unfortunate secret aspects of the founding of our nation and its capital, such as the city of Washington D.C. being laid out in the form of a pentagram. He wrote, "I have heard much of the nefarious and dangerous plan and doctrines of the Illuminati. It was not my intention to doubt that the doctrine of the Illuminati and the principles of Jacobinism had not spread in the United States." (From The Writings of George Washington, V. 20: Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941).

This discussion is about orders within orders in Freemasonry, and about the illuminated orders in particular. However, that does not necessarily mean that all Masons believe the same thing. There is so much about secret societies that we do not know. But we do know about the terrible corruption that permeated some aspects of Freemasonry from the time of the Illuminati. We might expect a person who is a high order Mason to say, "Honestly, we don't have any of this stuff in our literature." There may be some branches of Masonic Orders that are not corrupted, but there are some, and maybe all of them that do have these beliefs. Some of our own close relatives were Masons, and we don't think they had any idea about these things. They didn't go high enough in the organization to discover the deeper truth. Like most people, they were in it for the business networking and the idea of good works. Masons have a great image as humanitarians.

Another aspect of this study is in answer to the question, "Why would the rich and powerful people want to control the world?" You would think they would be satisfied with their millions and just retire to enjoy the good life on the French Riviera or something. But history teaches us they did not just enjoy life. Historically, as people become richer, they also become greedy for power. They want to control more and more. Finally, some of these rich and powerful people reached the obvious conclusion that they would like to control the world. Some of these people have conspired together to do just that. They have planned how they or their descendants can literally control the whole world.

Taylor Caldwell's Captains and The Kings was a very artful novel about an immigrant who made good here in the United States against terrible odds. The underlying theme of the book was that the really powerful people in the United States were not the people in congress, but the ones who bought congressmen. They were the ones who held something over congressmen's heads so they could manipulate them. Truthfully, this is not so hard to believe today. There are some notable exceptions. But, since it costs huge amounts of money to successfully run for congress, it is obvious that the rich can have great influence on campaigns, and therefore, on the allegiance of the politicians they have helped. Today there are laws about campaign practices, but there are ways of getting around them. No one

admits that they are "owned" by anyone, but if one of a congressman's big backers calls and asks him to vote a certain way, he will have to seriously consider doing it.

Today you could not prove that any organization is the Illuminati, but the principles they established are very much alive in the various organizations we will consider.

The Scottish Rite of the Masonic Order

The Scottish Rite of the Masonic Order was established in 1801 in Charleston, South Carolina. It later moved to Washington D.C. A Masonic publication, *Facts of Scottish Rite*, states that all regular Supreme Councils have descended from it.

The Pladian Rite

The Paladian Rite was established in 1870 by Albert Pike, the leader of Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in the United States and Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian revolutionary leader and worldwide director of illumined Freemasonry from 1834 to 1872. The purpose of the Paladian Rite was to be behind the scenes and control all the other Masonic groups. Most people don't know much about this group. According to Gary Kah, Mazzini wrote to Pike that this would be the supreme rite; that it would be somewhat unknown, but through it, the hand-picked high degree Masons who became a part of it would secretly govern all Freemasonry.

On July 14, 1889, Pike instructed twenty-three Supreme Councils of the world to tell people that Masons worship a God, but one who is adored without superstition. Further, they were told to explain to Masons only of the 30th through 32nd degrees that the "Masonic religion" should be kept in the "purity of the Luciferic doctrine."

Kah then goes on to claim that the belief in Lucifer is not revealed until a higher level. He quotes from A.C. De La Rive's, *La Femme et L'Enfant dans la Franc-Maconnerie Universelle*, who recorded Pike's instructions on that date. Pike claimed that Lucifer was the good God of Light, and Adonay (The God of the Christians) is a cruel and barbaric God of darkness and evil. He believed in the dual god theory of Zoroaster, and the Gnostics and Templars after them. According to this view these two gods are always fighting.

How could more terrible words ever be penned by a person who supposedly knows the message of the Bible?

Notice that they do not equate Satan and Lucifer. This is also true of the New Age religion. Those who follow Lucifer usually think that he is actually the good god, and the whole idea of Satan is just a myth and a heresy.

Kah also shows the connection between these beliefs and communism. Mazzini and Karl Marx were closely associated. He says that the early Russian revolutionaries called themselves Spartacists, after Adam Weishaupt's Illuminati pseudonym. They were later called Bolsheviks. Still later they became known as Communists.
Recent Developments Toward A New World Order

The Federal Reserve System

The Federal Reserve System is not a government institution, but a privately held corporation owned by stockholders. The top eight stockholders are Rothschild Banks of London and Berlin; Lazard Brothers Banks of Paris; Israel Moses Seif Banks of Italy; Warburg Bank of Hamburg and Amsterdam; Lehman Brothers Bank of New York; Kuhn, Loeb Bank of New York; Chase Manhattan Bank of New York; and Goldman, Sachs Bank of New York.

Jacob Schiff came to America from Germany with specific directives from Rothschild, the major banking mogul of England and Germany: to gain control of the U.S. money system. He bought into a banking house he could control: Kuen & Loeb. He married Loeb's daughter, Theresa, eventually bought out Kuen's interest, and moved to New York as sole owner. He posed as a philanthropist and man of holiness. He won over J.P. Morgan and others by offering help from Rothschild financing. These people were having a heyday with their businesses, but they were at a point where they needed a lot of capital to expand their businesses. Through loans to these people he gained great financial power. He also had to convince congressmen to enact the Federal Reserve Act. Some say that he used racial strife to plant liberals in congress and control media.

The Federal Reserve Act was originally voted down as unconstitutional (Art. 1, Sect. 8 - the power of issuing money and regulating value belongs to Congress). It was later reintroduced in another form, when many opponents of such a system had left for Christmas holidays, and was rammed through Congress on Dec. 23, 1913.

Now this private enterprise can control how much money will be printed and what the interest rates will be. Therefore, the powerful elite can know what to do about buying and selling, etc., while the rest of us are influenced negatively by their policies. They can drive prices up and down. They have an unfair control of what they can do with our fortunes.

The Council On Foreign Relations

World War I lasted from 1914 to 1918. The United States' was involved during the last two years. Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State, Colonel Edward Mandell House, supported the Federal Reserve Act and planned the League of Nations. According to Walter Millis, in his Road To War: America, 1914-1917, Colonel House's justification for allowing Americans to enter this carnage was the hope of establishing a new world order of peace and security.

Colonel House was also a prime mover in the formation of the Council on Foreign Relations in 1919.

Virtually all the literature about a conspiracy in the last thirty years has mentioned the Council on Foreign Relations as a key element. Most people know very little about the organization because they are very private. Their agenda has been supra-national (above or beyond national interests) from the beginning. They are seldom mentioned in the press even though a great number of prominent Americans are involved in it.

Most Presidents and nearly all Secretaries of State in our generation have belonged to the CFR. Even the strong "Christian" presidents have generally filled their cabinets with CFR members. George Bush was a good example of this.

The CFR has several branches. They are the Institute For Pacific Relations - New York; the Centre d'Etudes de Politique Etrangere - Paris; and the Institut fur Auswartige Politik - Hamburg.

The CFR is now so old that many other organizations have been formed to carry out their objectives. The network of influences controlled by these people, including the major networks, is unbelievable.

Some of their purposes are hair-raising. For instance, Study Number 7, CFR position paper 11/25/1959 - stated its purpose was to advocate the "building [of] a new international order [which] may be responsible to world aspirations for peace...including states labeling themselves as Socialist." Today we might not be so alarmed about this, but when it first came out in 1959 it was pretty shocking to propose a new international order and unity between socialist and capitalist countries.

The League Of Nations

The League of Nations was established in 1920 in Geneva, Switzerland. It was an attempt to move toward a one-world government, but it failed because the Congress of the United States disagreed with its purpose and would not allow us to join it.

This global experiment came out of the same period of time as World War I. President Woodrow Wilson, and his Secretary of State, Colonel House, who was the champion of one-world thinking of his time worked for its establishment. It probably was a result of a euphoric feeling on the part of the people who had believed in these things for a long time, that the time was right for going public with their ideals. We saw the exact same thing during the Gulf War when President Bush started talking about "The new world order." You may not have heard a president say those words before (some say Kennedy and Nixon did, but if so, it wasn't obvious). President Bush used the expression over 200 times. The need was obvious to them for a world police force. It was very interesting that he suddenly stopped using the expression. Apparently the secret powers said, in essence, "Don't tell the people yet. They aren't quite ready."

Pyramid On The One Dollar Bill

The pyramid was placed on the back of our dollar bills during the term of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. This is the Masonic pyramid. It was always on our Great Seal, but most people weren't aware of it. It was only after we lost our "real money," Silver Certificates, which were based on actual reserves of Gold and Silver, and were given Federal Reserve Notes instead which were easily inflated, that the pyramid side of the Great Seal was put on the dollar bill. It has 13 courses. The all-seeing eye goes back to Egyptian idolatry of Osiris, and ultimately to Lucifer. It is not the eye of God. In the early orders, there is frequent mention of God, but not much about Jesus. It is only later that one learns who their god is. There are constant references to mythological characters and gods of other religions. President Roosevelt was himself a thirty-third degree Mason and a close associate of the CFR.

The words *Novus Ordo Seclorum*- "New Order of the Ages" in Latin--appear on the dollar bill. Basically this has the same meaning as "The New World Order." Many feel that the big banking houses of Europe saw the United States as a new world where they purposely sent their representatives so that it could be the kingpin of their future one-world government.

The United Nations

The United Nations grew out of the world conditions leading to the start of World War II. By then the Council on Foreign Relations wielded great control of the State Department and of our foreign policy.

Hitler was financed by The Warburgs, The Rothschilds, and others. This demonstrates the practice of actually fomenting war by enabling it, financing both sides of various wars to keep the people in a state of unrest, waiting for a peacemaker and a one-world government.

Ten of the original 14 founding council members of the United Nations were also members of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Alger Hiss was the Secretary General of the U.N.'s founding conference. He was later exposed as a Soviet spy.

Donald McAlvany states that when Hiss and the others formed the U.N., they established the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, which would have jurisdiction over all future U.N. military operations, in a way that the head of the department will always be a Soviet citizen, military officer, or person designated by the Soviets. He goes on to note that has been faithfully followed for the past 47 years.

To keep the United States involved, the land was donated by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

The United Nations is the parent organization of the World Bank Group consisting of these agencies: The International Monetary Fund (IMF), established in 1944, the International Finance Corporation, begun in 1956, and the International Development Association, founded in 1960. According to the Grolier Electronic Encyclopedia, 159 nations held membership in the World Bank in 1990.

The United Nations also has a World Court, otherwise known as the International Court of Justice created by the charter of the United Nations in 1945. At present the decisions of the World Court are not always honored, but as the military strength of the U.N. grows, the actions of its court will also become more binding.

Once we have surrendered our power to the United Nations, we will have no power to stand for our uniquely American ideals.

The Gulf War and Bosnia air strikes are examples of U.N. police work, using U.S. as world cops. The United Nations appears to be ineffective in keeping peace. It may be that they are purposely using wars and rumors of wars, economic instability, and environmental crises to finally bring the world to the place where we will say, "OK, if you have the plan and the power to bring order, we will accept it because things have been so bad." Purposely allowing things to get worse now will help them achieve their objectives at the proper time. At last, hope for all these political, economic and ecological issues will be offered when it is time for a one-world government.

In 1995, delegates from more than 170 sovereign nations attended the U.N. 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China. This was the most anti-family conference in the history of the world. China was a terrible site for any conference on human rights, and especially on the rights of women, because of their discrimination against women. Their policies only allow one child per family, so nearly all baby girls are aborted. One of their topics was: Gender Feminism- a new way of looking at human sexuality. The way some of them see it, we end up with 5 sexes: male, female, homosexual, lesbian, and transsexual - all equally good. You decide what you are. They also promoted safe sex, condoms, and abortion. For the most part the churches were silent.

The Bilderbergers

The Bilderbergers were established in 1954 in The Netherlands. This is a similar organization to the Council on Foreign Relations. It has approximately 100 power-elite members from various nations of NATO.

Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands sees that the purpose of the group is to educate people so that they will be willing to relinquish part of their sovereignty to a "supranational body."

George McGhee, the former U.S. ambassador to West Germany, revealed that the Treaty of Rome which initiated the Common Market was fostered by the Bilderberg meetings.

Here are just a few prominent American Bilderbergers: David and Nelson Rockefeller, Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert McNamara, and Gerald Ford.

The World Constitution

The World Constitution and Parliament Association was organized in 1959 in Lakewood, Colorado. Three sessions have been held since 1982. At the third, a Provisional World Presidium and World Cabinet were appointed to serve as the equivalent of an executive branch for the emerging world government.

Gary Kah says that The WCPA's plan includes a ten region world government. He notes that this has been taken straight out of the handbook of the Club of Rome.

The Club of Rome

The Club of Rome, formed in 1968 in the city of Rome seems to be another level of informal hierarchy for the planning of a one-world government. Their report entitled Regionalized and Adaptive Model of the Global World System, divides the world into ten political/economic regions.

Environmental Issues

In December of 1970 The Environmental Protection Agency began operating. In 1992 alone EPA regulations cost taxpayers over \$130 billion (over \$1000 per family per year).

An international Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro in June of 1992. This event, sponsored by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, was the largest event of its kind in history. One hundred sixty heads of state, including George Bush, attended this event which some are calling the launching pad for a quantum leap into the New World Order and the New Age."

The continuing emphasis on environmental problems such as acid rain and depletion of the ozone layer may be part of the long-range strategy to prepare the people of the globe to accept a universal government.

The Trilateral Commission

The Trilateral Commission was founded in 1973 in New York. It deals with issues concerning North America, Western Europe, and Japan. This group was formed by David Rockefeller. Zbigniew Brzezinski was its first director.

George McAlvaney claims that Zbigniew Brzezinski and many other "New Agers" are part of the New World Order movement. He says they bring with them an occultic dimension to views.

Dissolution of the USSR

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 seemed very strange. It almost looked "orchestrated" by one-world leaders when Mikhail Gorbachev suddenly allowed major shifts in soviet policy leading to a bloodless revolution.

Russia is still a major nuclear threat to the world, and recent events in the former Soviet Union indicate a possible return to Communism.

The Gulf War

After the Gulf War of 1991, President George Bush, in a nation-wide address said, "This is an historic moment. We have in the past year made great progress in ending the long era of the cold war. We have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a New World Order, a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of the nations. When we are successful, and we will be, we have a real chance at the New World Order, an order in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfill the promise and vision of the UN. founders."

We saw this speech on live television. It was unbelievable because this was the first time we had heard a high official speak of the future in those terms. Now it seems common enough, but it had really been kept under wraps until that time. It simply wasn't something we ordinarily heard. This is their agenda: to have a global economy, a global politic, and a global religion. They do not know that Antichrist will take over all of that, but this is exactly what the Bible has prophesied; that Antichrist will take over this system once it is in place. It is a sad scenario, but it is great to be on the winning side. As the darkness gets darker, the light gets brighter. We see that in the polarizing of churches. For example, some are in favor of accepting homosexuals, others are opposed to it. Never before in our generation have we seen so many signs of a coming revival. If revival comes to the United States, it will push back this timetable. And that would be great! Most of us would be glad if Jesus came today, but we would also be glad if we could win a few million more to Christ!.

European Union

We now have what you might call a United States of Europe. The first step toward the formation of a European superstate was the Benelux Agreement on June 8, 1948. This was a treaty between three very small countries, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Several years later, in 1957, in the city of Rome, and with a document called "The Treaty of Rome," those three countries joined with three other countries, Italy, France, and Germany to make the EEC (European Economic Community) which we call the Common Market. Today the organization is known as the EU (European Union) In 1973 the United Kingdom or England came in along with Ireland and Denmark, making a total of nine nations. In 1981 Greece became the tenth member of the union. And since then Spain, Portugal, Austria, Sweden, and Finland have also joined.

At the beginning of 1998 there are 15 member nations and another ten or more hoping to join the EU. As shown before, the Bible indicates that the number 10 is significant in this union. There are many ways the Lord could bring about a 10 nation (or 10 region) fulfillment of the prophecy. It would be fairly simple for some of the smaller nations to join together. The original three could become one, or The United Kingdom could join with Ireland. One or more of the countries could just drop out. In any case, according to the Bible, once a coalition of ten nations begins, it will spread to the whole earth. It just needs to start with the ten. There is also the intrigue of the individual ruler, who is another horn and another king. He seems to come out of this alliance somewhere and, in intrigue, conquers other nations. This relates to Antichrist, and he could be personally responsible for the pruning down of the 15 nations to 10.

There are other theories about the fulfillment of this Revived Roman Empire. Another popular theory involves the United Nations. A decade or so ago, those who study prophecy did not put much emphasis on the United Nations because it seemed that everything they tried was a failure, and no one took their actions seriously. However, since

the Gulf War, and the bandying about of the expression "The New World Order," and the fact that the United Nations seems to be the police force of the world at this point in history, many people think that the United Nations could be the fulfillment of the prophecy of a last great empire. In the book "The Great Seal of the United States" there is mention of the Club of Rome, and how in their plans for a one world government they have proposed that through the United Nations, the whole world would be divided into ten economic regions which they call kingdoms. Through these regions the whole world would be controlled economically. This is a very interesting scenario since the number ten is the exact number needed, and the whole purpose of the United Nations, if it ever attains what it wants to do, could be the fulfillment of this prophecy. So there are at least two possible ways that the prophecies of a final empire could be fulfilled. Of course, The Lord could even find other ways of bringing His purposes to pass.

Economic Instability in the U.S. and the World

The total debt in America (Federal, municipal, corporate, real estate & consumer debt) in 1980 was about \$2 1/2 Trillion. Presently it is over \$17 Trillion! This means it has increased more than 600% in 15 years! We have a collapsing economy that is not capable of repaying that debt! This indebtedness exceeds the total real estate and corporate equities of the entire country! We're insolvent. We owe European bankers. The Federal government must borrow over a trillion dollars in the next 12 months - more than a billion dollars per day, just to pay the interest.

When the United States gets into financial trouble it causes world-wide economic instability. We really do have an insurmountable problem, based on the inability to pay back our debt right now. What can we do now? Some are saying we will have hyper inflation- printing more and more money to pay old debts. This is what ruined the economy of Germany before World War II. The effect of this is that people's hard-earned savings will become practically useless. In Germany people had to take a wheelbarrow full of money to the store just to buy a few groceries.

Every time you charge interest you create a problem. Money has not been printed to cover that interest, so there isn't enough money to cover all the debts. Picture this simple example. Suppose there was \$1000 in real money printed, and half of it was loaned out at 10% interest. The total amount of money now held or due would be \$1050, but there would only be \$1000 to cover it!. Imagine how this problem is compounded by the constant lending of the same money. Another way of looking at this is that if everyone demanded the money due them there would only be a fraction of that total amount available to meet that demand.

The Bible says we are not to charge interest. (Exodus 22:25; 25:36; Nehemiah 5:7-11; Psalm 15:5)

If we were strong enough morally, to stand alone, we could conceivably let the rest of the world do whatever crazy things they want to do, but we don't have that luxury, because we owe so much to foreign banks.

Our financial weakness also gives rise to trade wars and what might be unfavorable trade agreements, such as NAFTA and GATT. The GATT agreement is a 22,000 page document which includes provision for a World Trade Organization (with no practical means of withdrawal).

United Religions

An organization was formed in 1997 which has the express goal of forming a world body of religions patterned after the model of the United Nations. They are in the process of developing a charter and have asked people of all faiths to participate in enrolling other people in the effort, in "visioning," or imagining what the U.R. can be and do, in acting locally to bring this organization about, and in offering written charter elements for consideration.

To help explain the purpose of the movement and its connection to the New World Order, Marcus Braybrooke, evidently one of the chief advocates of the idea, gives this statement:

It is said of the United Religions Organization that 'the prime purpose for uniting the world's religions into a global organization is to eliminate violence in the name of religion, race or ethnicity. An organization that makes this its primary task will have plenty of work to do. I hope any new organization will have a distinct focus, whilst recognizing that its long term objectives will only be achieved if it works closely with many other related bodies. Until religions clearly renounce violence, their creative contribution to building a new world order will be ignored.

To many people today, religion is a threat rather than a promise and the public perception of religion as a cause of division and hostility is a disincentive to faith. If a United Religions Organization can purge the religions of what distorts and corrupts their witness, it can unblock the channels through which the healing wisdom of the great spiritual traditions will flow into our world.

For the present, they suggest that everyone who is interested in the concept link themselves together by daily recitation of this prayer.

"Supreme One, who has made of one blood all peoples to dwell upon the earth, our thanks and praise for deepening the understanding of those of all races, languages, customs and religions and for teaching us to accept each other in the light of your own all-embracing love. Thank you also for the vision of all the human family united in caring partnership and stewardship for the sake of all life and the earth."

Their agenda calls for actually writing the first draft of their charter in June of 1998, and after two years of discussion and refinement, to have representatives sign it on June 26, 2000 while a walking pilgrimage for peace among religions takes place in villages, towns, and cities throughout the world.

The point of this discussion is to show the rapid erosion of international boundaries in our century and the inexorable, and unavoidable pressures forcing world leaders towards an international police force, world-wide economic controls, and a central governmental authority which transcends the old boundaries of what were once called "sovereign" states.

International commerce and trade, now largely electronically conducted, ignores national boundaries. A crisis in one stock market quickly affects the rest of the world. Governments are powerless to oversee or control all this international banking and currency flow.

More and more we are becoming aware that the evening news is virtually the same on every channel or in every newspaper. The daily news is evidently being carefully written by some master craftsman behind the scenes. Political leaders around the world appear more and more to be mere puppets placed in office by greater powers who are really directing world events. We can't always see the controlling strings but it seems undeniable that they are there.

Rapid international travel by millions means that a deadly virus in a remote part of the world can be loose half way round the world in a matter of hours. Terrorists representing not necessarily the interests of foreign nations but their own ideologies have access to, and can easily import deadly chemical and biological weapons unseen and undetected through the porous borders of most nations. Until this century it was unthinkable that we could have great world wars which affected every nation everywhere, or that our nation should fly troops and fight wars half way round the planet on foreign soil, apparently to protect our very survival or our economic well-being and safety.

The Apostle John closes his first epistle with the words, "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one." (1 John 5:19)

We ought not to be surprised about an emerging world-wide conspiracy against God, which is surely like that which occurred at the time of the building of the Tower of Babel. What has always existed in the darkness of the present age is now coming into the light and therefore is more and more visible to the discerning eye.

The Bible does indeed picture the organized political, commercial, military structure of the present world as controlled by Satan, the "god of this world."

The Greek word *kosmos*, meaning "ornament, decoration, arrangement" gives us our English word "cosmetics." Hence the "world" involves a concern for external appearances more than inner content and quality. As used in the New Testament, the world does not refer to nature, but to the world-system, to society and human culture. The world system is outwardly religious, scientific, cultured and elegant. Inwardly it seethes with national and commercial rivalries.

The general characteristics of "the world" as the term is used in the Bible when referring to the fallen "world system" may be described roughly as follows. The world:

- Produces conformity to cultural norms or traditions and stifles individuality.
- Makes use of force, greed, ambition and warfare to accomplish objectives.
- Offers financial reward at the cost of one's soul.
- Cares nothing for the worth of the individual or his uniqueness.
- Promotes myths and illusions which appeal to human vanity and pride
- Diverts attention from spiritual values by appeals to pursue pleasure, pride (vainglory), or to power.
- Encourages permissive sexual, moral and ethical values to encourage self-indulgence.
- Establishes superficiality of life and appeal to immediate pleasure rather than long-term goals.
- Ignores eternal values and invisible realities.
- Offers false philosophies and value systems to support its goals.
- Exalts man, his abilities and his supposed "progress"---e.g. through the myth of social evolution.
- Glosses over and hides suffering, death, poverty the depravity of man, and accountability to God.
- Seeks to unify mankind under an atheistic humanistic or pantheistic banner.
- Emphasizes pluralism and denies Biblical absolutes.
- Teaches human progress and advancement through better education or social welfare

Because of the thorough corruption of the entire world system, God's program does not involve reform of the existing world order (as some Bible teachers have taught) but its total replacement by an entirely new world government under Messiah:

Nebuchadnezzar's great vision of Gentile world powers (Daniel 2) depicted as a great statue concludes with the smashing of that statue and its complete replacement,

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands--a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy." (Daniel 2:44,45)

Similar language describes God's judgment of what is later to be called "political Babylon" and "religious Babylon"--the same world system using different symbolism--in Revelation 17 and 18, where the figure is that of a great prostitute depicting mankind's deep seated, centuries-old spiritual adultery against the rightful God of our planet.

Chapter 8

The First Half Of The Tribulation

The fourth Chapter of the book of the Revelation begins with two often-quoted Greek words:

Meta tauta

which means "after these things." The authors join company with a good number of conservative Bible scholars who see these words as marking a major division in the last book of the Bible. John was told to

"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later." (Rev. 1:19)

Chapters 1 through 3 of Revelation accomplish the first two subjects. "What you have seen," referred to the visions of chapter one. "What is now" points to the contents of Chapters 2 and 3 which traces the progress of the church in its different forms and stages of history. Beginning with Chapter 4, verse one, the scene shifts to heaven and to events that are yet to come--future for John in the first Century, and for us as well in our day.

John sees in a vision a great worship scene of elders and angels around the throne of God the Father. They are engaged in worship and adoration of the Father and they sing a hymn of praise to the One who has created and who sustains the universe. The One seated on the throne holds a mysterious scroll, written on both sides--not one side as would be usual--and sealed with seven wax seals, instead of the usual one.

The seven-sealed scroll is a document of great importance and a search is made for a person worthy to receive this scroll from the Father's hand--for evidently the contents of the scroll contain delegated authority for the unfolding of the final chapters of this age. Some have called the scroll, "the title deed to the earth."

The only one found worthy to open the scroll is Christ Jesus, who is described here in symbols which combine the Old Testament figure of the Lion out of the Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8) and the New Testament figure of the submissive lamb who has been slain voluntarily for the sins of the world. (John 1:29). The Messiah, son of God, takes the scroll from His Father's hand.

Immediately the worship shifts to a new song of praise centered around Jesus. He is the one who has ransomed men "from every tribe and tongue and nation," and the only one worthy to receive such important delegated authority.

The unfolding of the fate of the earth is now totally in the hands of Jesus who proceeds to open the seven-sealed scroll, one seal at a time. The message of the scroll pertains to judgment about to fall upon an evil, unbelieving world, from which the true church has already been removed.

The First Four Seals

There are seven seals in all, describing major aspects and events of the Tribulation period. The first four are depicted as riders on four horses of different colors. Horses in the Bible often depict angelic activity (this images occurs in Zechariah for instance). Swift angelic messengers in the invisible spiritual realm rapidly carry out and bring into effect a series of world-wide changes in society on earth. The "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" have been universal portents of coming evil in art and literature down through all of history.

The First Seal - The Man of Sin revealed

I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"

I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. (Revelation 6:1-2)

The first significant event of the future Tribulation will be the emergence of Antichrist, symbolized here as the rider on a white horse. In the Bible, there is another rider on a white horse at the opposite end of the Tribulation. In the second case, Revelation 19:11-21, Jesus Christ is clearly the conquering hero on the white horse. But in this first instance, a human who is energized by Satan begins his campaign of world conquest. He does not appear as a horrible or evil monster, but as a benevolent dictator. He is seen as a messiah, who has come to solve the world's great problems.

It is possible that his authority to control the world will come into effect silently without open war. Ray Stedman writes,

He is given a bow, but no mention is made of arrows. This appears to be a bloodless conquest he launches. When you ask, "What is this describing?" I think it is clear that it suggests some kind of overpowering of the minds and wills of men, without physical destruction. How is that done? The answer is: by some form of deceit, by lying that misleads and deceives men and thus overcomes them without the shedding of blood. It is noteworthy that in Matthew 24, the first word Jesus speaks to his disciples is, "Watch out that no one deceives you." You will find references to the possibility of deception throughout that chapter.

We are bemused by delusions today. We are hardly aware of how much we are being deceived all the time. Turn on the television and fraudulent ideas, along with a mixture of truth, are immediately poured into your brain. Pick up a magazine or read a newspaper and you will find they make false claims that certain acquisitions will produce great blessing and liberty for you. But trying them will soon tell you that it is a lie. They do not work. We are constantly offered much of promise but which are totally unable to deliver....What this rider on the white horse tells us, however, is that the worst is yet to come. We are living amidst great deceit, it is true, but it is not as bad as it is going to be. There is coming an even greater lie."

The Second Seal - War

When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"

Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword. (Revelation 6:3-4)

The second symbolic rider comes on a red horse. This speaks of the ravages of a great world-wide war. It is not likely that this war is started by Antichrist, since, as the previous verses indicate, he is seen as a messianic hero.

One possibility for this war was given by Ray Stedman in his message called "Four Terrible Horsemen:"

This rider is easy to recognize. It is war, of course, but not war between great armies--at least not at first. The word for "slay" is really the word "slaughter." It is a reference to civil war or civil anarchy where mobs of people group together to attack and destroy other peoples whom they do not like... We have had further examples of it in El Salvador, in Nicaragua, and in the gang wars raging in the streets of Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, and other places. It is a murderous slaying of others by people unrestrained by any control.

Another possibility is that this is the war of Ezekiel 38 and 39 which results in fiery destruction of the aggressors from the north when they try to conquer Israel. This could very possibly escalate to nuclear warfare which involves more than one of the present-day nuclear powers. Antichrist could take credit for the destruction of Israel's invaders, or at least take advantage of the situation, to bring about the seven-year peace treaty between himself and Israel which was prophesied by Daniel. If this is the case, this war would take place at the very beginning of the seven years of the Tribulation.

Wars and rumors of wars is considered one of the "Signs of the Times." Matthew 24:6 states,

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."

The parallel passage in Mark 13:7 warns,

"When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."

People of all ages have been subjected to the horrors of war, but in our generation we have had an almost constant pre-occupation with either war, or "rumors of war"--such as the Cold War with the former Soviet Union. There are usually several wars going on at various places in the world at the same time. There have been as many as forty at one time in our lifetime.

World War I was called "The War to end all war." It did not end war, it only taught us more about how to fight in a more deadly way, using the air to deliver death from the sky.

World War II brought the world to the brink of nuclear destruction, introducing the first use of the atomic bomb. The Korean War and The Vietnam War were very disheartening because of the great loss of life without gaining a definite victory. The Vietnam War was especially frustrating to Americans causing great internal strife at home as well as the loss of lives abroad.

Cold War has also been a sad reality in our generation. In 1985 a full page ad in the newspapers compared all the bombs of World War II, (a total of 3 megatons) with the nuclear firepower the United States and Soviet Union had. The two nations, it was reported in 1985, by then had enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world 56 times!

The Persian Gulf War brought us the ability to "be there" as an audience in the thick of the battle by way of television--even as bombs were dropped. This war also introduced us to "smart weapons" that could find their way to the exact buildings great distances away for which they were programmed.

Even now there are wars and skirmishes in many parts of the globe, including those in Bosnia, Israel, Haiti, Ireland, Somalia, and the Sudan.

Instability is increased in the Middle East by constant acts of terrorism, especially by Hamas, the militant Moslem group which is trying to destroy the steps toward peace that have been taken in the area.

Russia and the former Soviet countries continue to be very unstable. According to Chuck Missler, President Clinton has said no Russian missiles are aimed at us. But it only takes few seconds to re-aim, and only 30 minutes to attack. We no longer have the infrastructure to tool up for sudden war.

Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union our defense policy was called MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction), meaning that we did not have anything that could actually destroy incoming missiles with atomic warheads, but were counting on the fact that no one would attack us since they would be destroyed in retaliation. Today there are 13 countries with nuclear capability, and 23 countries with Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles. Our strategic deterrent is our Trident submarine, but the Russians have a silent, superior submarine, the Typhoon, with 20 tubes. Each tube can launch a missile with 10 independently tractable warheads. This means that one Typhoon submarine can hold 200 cities hostage!

Terrorism has been spreading all over the world. The Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995 was a wake-up call to our own country that it can happen here as well. Chemical warfare and biological warfare are always lurking in the background as a threat in the hands of terrorists. The nerve gas Sarin was used in the subways of Japan to kill many innocent passengers in 1995. Several countries know how to use deadly strains of biological killers in bombs, including Anthrax, cholera, salmonella, and botulism.

We have never had a time in our generation when we have been free from war. We have all been held hostage by the threat of nuclear war and the possibility that a madman might "push the button."

War has been more common down through history than we might at first suppose. One popular quote describes it this way:

"The Norwegian Academy of Sciences has determined that since 3600 BC there have been 14,531 wars and only 292 years of peace. This is approximately 2.6 wars per year, and one year of 'peace' out of every two decades, or a little over 36 hours of peace per month, or about a minute of peace every four hours."

When the seals are opened God will release, step by step, the last restraints holding back the evil that already exists in men's hearts. Even now in our violent age bad men, as well as good, enjoy "common grace" from God--and a great deal of protection every day of our lives, all from God's benevolent hand. We ought to be thankful every day for this restraining hand of God which allows us to live in comfort most of the time. But the end time is a season in which evil is allowed to run its full course, unchecked and unimpeded--except for God's final intervention.

The Third Seal - Famine

When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.

Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!" (Revelation 6:5-6)

This third seal and third rider appears on a black horse which symbolizes terrible famine, probably as a result of the previous world-wide warfare. Famine results from war directly when crops are destroyed by the warfare, and indirectly when the process of farming and distribution of food is disrupted by blockades and the diversion of manpower and resources for the war effort.

The result is an extensive and ruinous famine. The price of food will be prohibitive. The economic impact of this famine will undoubtedly prepare the people of the world to be willing to have a benevolent dictator.

Matthew 24:7, Mark 13:8 and Luke 21:11 all mention famines and plagues (pestilence) as factors that would characterize the end times.

Famine is usually the result of changes in weather patterns or of war. Both of these are characteristic of our times. For most of our generation there have been great numbers of deaths, especially of the young because of famine. At times this problem reaches staggering proportions: 40,000 babies starve to death every day.

Ray Stedman suggests another type of shortage. The shortage of all necessities which comes as a result of runaway inflation.

Most scholars take this to be a reference to widespread famine on the earth. They say that the scales symbolize food being weighed out carefully. It is in such short supply that it must be rationed. Even then no one can get very much because it takes a day's wages to earn a single quart of wheat or, because it is cheaper, three quarts of barley. This would only be enough food for one person for a day. You would work all day long and all you would be able to earn at best would be enough for your own physical needs. There would be nothing for your family or for anyone else. But the luxuries, the oil and the wine, are left untouched.

But perhaps this is not referring to famine because in the next seal, as we will see, famine is specifically mentioned as part of that judgment. What else causes terrible shortages and creates high prices so that people cannot buy adequate amounts of food? It is inflation: economics out of control. That is what runaway inflation does. It makes money worthless. That in turn becomes an excuse for the rigid controls over buying and selling which we find in chapter 13

when, under the reign of Antichrist, the whole world is subjected to enormously restrictive controls so that "no one can buy or sell without the mark of the beast."

The Fourth Seal - Plagues and Death

When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:7-8)

The color of the fourth horse is translated many ways. Some Bible versions translate it as "pale," others as "ashen," or "pale green." The Greek word is *chloros*, "greenish." It is the root of the well known "chlorophyll", the tiny green chemical converters in the leaves of most plants. Chlorine gas was deadly in warfare during the first World War.

Chloros also suggests deadly chlorine gas which is pale green in color and quickly fatal to all who breath it. The intended picture here is a sickly pale green which symbolizes death as a result of the former terrors of war and famine and the added threats of plague and wild beasts. All of this is the result of a world becoming progressively damaged, corrupted and neglected.

Once again we consider Stedman's commentary on this section:

This rider is named "Death"; and floating along behind, was a figure that is identified as "Hades," or Hell. Death takes the body and Hades takes the soul. As someone has put it, "Death rides the horse, but Hades follows with the hearse." There are four forms of death that are related to this attack. First, the sword, which here is not war but murder; individual assault upon one another. It is people taking the law into their own hands and murdering other people without regard to justice or law.

Many people are fearful about the senseless violent crime of our days. Gang warfare, riots, carjackings, follow-home robberies, ATM muggings, and drive-by shootings have become commonplace. Just imagine the wanton looting and killing that could be ahead in a world already decimated by the events of the first three seals!

There have always been plagues, but they do seem to be increasing in our times. Cancer is an ever-growing threat, AIDS is a new disease or the most sobering proportions. So far there is no cure for this plague. Alzheimer's is a new, incurable ailment of the elderly. We are constantly hearing of serious outbreaks of such diseases as the Ebola Virus which can destroy whole towns. There have been recent outbreaks of a rare flesh-eating Strep disease which disfigures or even kills its victims in a matter of hours. Resistant strains of "conquered diseases," such as tuberculosis are now appearing. Some people are even wondering if some of these problems are the result of genetic engineering. Recent information about the rampant production of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction also help us picture the disastrous effects of these plagues.

A Seven Year Treaty With Israel

The seven year period following the parousia (the Rapture) and preceding the *epiphaneia* (the Second Coming in power and glory), is normally divided into two halves. The first three and a half years are characterized by some degree of apparent world peace as the false Messiah (Revelation 13:11-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10, Matthew 24:15) in Israel negotiates a favorable Middle Eastern peace treaty. That peace treaty, described by Isaiah as Israel's "covenant with death," will fail--and terrible war will break out in Israel. The second half of the tribulation period is usually called "The Great Tribulation" (Matthew 24:21) or "the Day of the Lord." Jeremiah calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble," (Jeremiah 30-31, Daniel 12:1)

Trust in a counterfeit messiah

The Book of Daniel, chapter 9, tells of a future seven year period when "the ruler who will come" will confirm a covenant, presumably with Israel.

After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (Daniel 9:26-27)

This "ruler who will come" is the Man of Sin. As mentioned above, he will probably use the wars of the Second Seal as the occasion for instituting this treaty.

Jesus may have been alluding to this future event when He said, "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him." (John 5:43)

The 144,000 Called

Revelation Chapter Seven describes the calling out of 144,000 select Jewish evangelists from the nation Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation period, probably soon after the Rapture of the church.

12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel

As you can see from the following passage, the 144,000 are specifically God's chosen people, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."

Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

**From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000,
from the tribe of Gad 12,000,**

from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000,

from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,

**from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.
(Revelation 7:3-8)**

Sealed - for what?

Immediately after the verses about the calling of the 144,000, this information is added. It depicts the result of the sealing of these people: the evangelization of multitudes of people.

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."
(Revelation 7:9-10)

The 144,000 will vigorously evangelize Israel, completing the task begun by the disciples of Jesus, within Israel but also extending their field to all the nations. The result of their bold and fearless evangelism program will be hundreds of thousands of converts to Jesus Christ.

Chapter 9

The Rebuilt Temple

The major Biblical prophecies relevant to the Tribulation indicate that there will be a Temple in Jerusalem, at least by the middle of the seven year tribulation period. In this chapter we will discuss the history of the Temple and consider what would be necessary to rebuild the structure in the near future.

Background: Jerusalem

When the sons of Noah spread out, Shem, the father of all the Semitic people may well have gone to the area we now call Jerusalem. The earliest mention of the area was when Abraham was returning from a battle with Sodom (Genesis chapter 14). He met Melchizedek, King of Salem. Salem is the oldest name for the city. The root word means "peace." Melchizedek means "king of righteousness." So this is probably a title rather than a proper name. Melchizedek is important also because the dual offices of King and Priest of El Elyon ("God Most High") were resident in this one man.

The priesthood Jesus Christ would later institute for His church is modeled after Melchizedek as the book of Hebrews tells us. During Israel's history the office of king and priest were always separate. But Zechariah the prophet looked forward to a future day when these offices will be combined in Messiah.

It may be demonstrated from the life-spans and genealogies in Genesis that Shem should still have been living at that time. Some scholars believe that Melchizedek was actually Shem.

All of Noah's sons and their wives were believers in the One true God (or they would not have been saved on the Ark). In one or two generations most of their offspring had already "forgotten" about God and gone their own way following a rebellion against the rule of God championed by Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-12).

Remaining a godly, wise follower of Yahweh, Shem lived to the age of 600 years and surely would have been the most revered of the ancient fathers at that time.

Jewish legends claim that God stood on the Foundation Stone of what later would be the Holy of Holies of Jerusalem's temples when He created the world. Eden, these rabbis remind us, was to the East, so Adam was probably formed of the clay of the ground in what is now Eretz Israel. In any case Jerusalem was already a center for the worship of the Lord under the leadership of Melchizedek.

Jerusalem seems to have been chosen by God long before the Jewish people came into existence. It is mentioned by name nearly 800 times in the Bible! In the Psalms God is said to dwell (present tense) in that city, and a number of Psalms highlight the central importance of the "City of Peace" in God's eternal plans for mankind.

Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore. The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil. Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, to those who are upright in heart. But those who turn to crooked ways the LORD will banish with the evildoers. Peace be upon Israel. (Psalm 125)

The city, also called Jebus (Joshua 18:28; Judges 19:10; 1Chronicles 11:4), had become a pagan city by the time of the occupation of the land by the Hebrews under the leadership of Joshua when they returned from Egypt.

There is reason to suspect that source documents existed from before the Flood of Noah--perhaps "Adam's Diary" and the records of his sons in the line of Seth down to Noah. It is possible that these records were preserved on the

Ark by Noah and handed down to Seth for safekeeping. Perhaps Seth left these ancient documents in the care of Melchizedek? We simply do not know, but the speculation is interesting, because when we first meet Abram in Genesis he is 70 years old and living in Ur of the Chaldees. His father and his family had evidently lapsed into the idolatry of the region and God had to call him back so that he was restored into the godly line of Seth--the promised line of descent which would lead to Messiah.

Did Melchizedek transmit to Abraham ancient written documents or carefully preserved oral legends that eventually were handed by Abraham's descendants on down to Moses? Did Moses write the Pentateuch with the help of some source documents of which we are now unaware? No one knows. We will have to ask Moses when we meet him!

The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was the precursor of the Temple. Detailed information about the Tabernacle is found in Exodus chapters 25 through 27.

Instruction for the Tabernacle was given to Moses at the same time as the giving of the Ten Commandments. It was a portable place of worship which would serve as the place where God met with his people. It was small but very lavish, with gold and silver work, and elaborate hangings and curtains, some of which were woven with beautiful patterns. It was completely portable, so that it could be broken down on short notice and moved with the nation as they followed the Lord.

All of the articles of the Tabernacle are types or pre-figures of Christ.

The Outer Court

The Brazen Altar is a picture of Christ's sacrifice as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The Laver is symbolic of confession and regular spiritual cleansing.

The Holy Place

The Golden Lampstand pictures Jesus as the Light of the World.

The Table of Shewbread is symbolic of Jesus as the Bread of Life.

The Altar of Incense (drawing attention to the importance of prayer), reminds us that Jesus is our intercessor and Great High Priest.

The Holy of Holies

The Ark of The Covenant is a type of Jesus as the presence of God with us.

The History of The Temple

Solomon's Temple

This first temple was built in the 10th century BC. right after Solomon became king. David had wanted to build it, but was not allowed by God because of the bloodshed in his past. Nevertheless, he collected all the materials for the Temple, so that, as soon as his son Solomon became king, he could construct it. It was erected on the property bought by David from Araunah (2 Samuel 24). The site had been a threshing floor, a place where grain was winnowed by tossing it up into the air. The wind would carry the chaff away while the heavier grain would fall back down. Eventually there would be a pile of grain in the center and a large section of chaff further away. The chaff could be raked up and burned, and the grain could be put into baskets. This threshing floor was probably on a higher part of Mount Moriah where the winds were strongest. Here, a thousand years earlier, Abraham had demonstrated his faith by being willing to offer Isaac, though he was not required to carry it out (Genesis 22). This is a beautiful preview of the willingness of our Heavenly Father to sacrifice His own son, Jesus, for the sins of the world

What is especially remarkable is the connection between Mount Moriah and the Temple Mount with the hill of Calvary where Jesus was crucified. When Solomon built the Temple, stones were quarried from the western side of the same mountain, and from underneath the mountain. At the North end the stones quarried to build the temple cut a large gorge, leaving the northernmost portion of the mountain standing alone. In Jesus' day this portion was called Golgotha, "the place of the skull"! Even today if you visit Jerusalem, the visitor can see the high steep cliff where the bedrock of the mountain was cut away. There is a man-made valley between that cliff and Golgotha, about two blocks away. Damascus Street, the old Damascus Road passes through this cut just outside the North wall of the Old City.

Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

The Second Temple

This modest structure was built by Zerubbabel with encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah near the end of the 6th century BC. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah recount the drama of the return of a Jewish remnant from Persia and the rebuilding of the Temple as well as the city of Jerusalem. These are great stories of courage and dedication, but the Temple was smaller and much less beautiful than the original. It is said that some who remembered the original temple wept when they saw it. (Ezra 3:12) This Second Temple was desecrated by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), the Seleucid ruler who had a pig slaughtered on the altar, and set up an image of a pagan god in the Holy of Holies. This is the event which triggered the rise of the Hasmonean family of the Macabees. They eventually took Jerusalem and the Temple back and ruled there independently for a few years. The Jewish celebration of Hanukah comes from this time of restoration and renewal in their national history.

Herod's Temple

The reconstruction of the second temple was begun by Herod the Great about 20 BC. It was an enhancement of the Second Temple. Herod was an ungodly foreigner, an Edomite (Idumean), who had been given the kingship by the Romans. He was the greatest builder in the world during that period of time. Herod built seven palaces and forts, and the work on the Temple was truly magnificent. The stones (ashlars) used were huge, and every one had a border (embossing) carved around it. The work on the temple and courts continued long after his death until it was finished in 63 AD. It was about twice the size of the Second Temple. Some call it the Third Temple, but Jews do not think of it as other than their Second Temple. It had already been 46 years in the rebuilding process when Jesus ministered there (John 2:19). Neither Herod nor most of the Jewish leaders were at all godly during this period. The Temple was built for show and for political reasons, but a faithful remnant of priests and Jews worshipped Yahweh there nevertheless, in accordance with the teachings of the Torah.

The Gospels tell us of a few godly priests and citizens at the Temple during the childhood of Jesus and give us brief glimpses of temple life in that day, and Jesus' involvement there:

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:21-38)

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house? But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. (Luke 2:43-51)

Herod's Temple evidently did not have God's blessing

Expressing His grave displeasure at the desecrating of the Temple, Jesus cast out the money changers on two occasions--at the beginning of his ministry and again at the start of his final week in the city before his death. On that second occasion Mark tells us He would not allow anything to be carried in or out of the Temple. Thus He also stopped the continual temple sacrifices, in effect declaring them null and void. Within a few days, at Passover, the true Lamb of God would die one death for all, offering himself as the foreordained perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. All the temple sacrifices were but shadows. Indeed, when Jesus died, the veil of the Temple was torn from the top to the bottom (Matthew 27:51) thus signifying that Jesus had made a way for all men to come into the holiest place of intimate presence with God because of His perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 9).

The Destruction of The Temple

The destruction of the Temple was prophesied by Jesus.

And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." (Luke 21:5-6)

Herod's Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. It was torn down by four Roman legions under the command of Titus. The Jewish people have not been able to practice animal sacrifices since that time, although the Muslims do so every year in Mecca! The Temple was burned, so the gold melted and ran into the cracks in the stones. That is why the destruction was so great. The conquerors literally removed every possible stone in order to find all the gold.

From that time until the present, the Temple Mount and all of Jerusalem has been under the control of various people. The Romans built a temple to a pagan god there. Later a Christian church was built. When the Moslems took control they built a mosque.

The Temple Mount Today

The 35 acre site is under the control of The Supreme Moslem Council--the Waqf, under the Hussein family of Jordan. Even though Israel took all of Jerusalem in 1967, this concession was made by Moshe Dyan to keep peace.

Jews are not allowed on the Temple Mount by either their laws or by the Moslems.

Two Moslem Holy Places

The Dome Of The Rock

This is sometimes called The Mosque of Omar. It isn't really a mosque, but a shrine, built over the rock venerated by the Moslems. The rock under the dome is called as-Sakhra. It is where Mohammed is said to have ascended to heaven on his "Night Journey". Actually Mohammed was never there, but in the Koran, in the seventeenth Sura a dream or vision is recorded in which he was carried from the temple in Mecca to the one in Jerusalem.

It is possible that this rock is the place where the Holy of Holies was located. As shown below, there are other theories about the location of this most sacred portion of the Temple which held the Ark of the Covenant.

Al Aqsa Mosque

Its name means "the distant place." It is Islam's third most holy place, after Mecca and Medina. This is the building where the Moslems actually worship.

The Western Wall

The Western Wall, formerly called "The Wailing Wall" is the one part of the old Temple area that is still standing, and that is only because it is a retaining wall. This wall was not part of the Temple itself, so it is not a violation of the prophecy that these stones still stand. This is considered the holiest place on the earth to Jewish People today. They are allowed to worship there, but are prohibited by their own rabbinical rulings and by the Moslems to go onto the Temple Mount itself.

The Rabbinical Tunnel opened recently to tourism allows one to walk under the city Northward from the Western Wall prayer area (Ha Kotel). In this tunnel, at the walled-off entrance to Cistern 30, devout Jews who believe the Temple stood where the Dome of the Rock now stands, can get somewhat closer to their favorite Temple site. Therefore a small synagogue area has been placed there.

The Dome of the Tablets / Dome of the Spirits

This neglected portion of the Temple Mount is covered by a simple cupola, without a sign or anything that would indicate its importance, but, as can be seen by the discussion below about the future location of the Temple, it may well be the location of the Holy of Holies! The Arabic name does suggest both the Tablets of Moses which were placed within the Ark, or the Shekinah, or Spirit of God.

Necessity for a Temple

There are at least two reasons why we expect the Temple to be built again:

Because of Israel's Desires

Jewish law requires the Temple be rebuilt where it once was. One third of the Torah's 613 commandments involve rituals that require the Temple be rebuilt.

Because of Bible Prophecy

The Man of Sin will desecrate the Temple at mid-point of The Tribulation. This subject is explored more fully in the section about The Mark of The Beast.

Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. (Matthew 24:15-18)

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate. (Daniel 9:27)

This is part of Daniel's vision about a period of time described as "seventy sevens" (or weeks), which amounts to 490 years. The first 483 years (69 times 7) were fulfilled exactly on the day that Jesus entered the City of Jerusalem riding on a donkey, and offering Himself as king. According to Daniel's vision, there is yet to come a seventieth week, the last seven years, which is separated from the others. The Man of Sin, who is called the "ruler who will come" in Daniel 9:26, will make a treaty with Israel to protect her for seven years, but will break the covenant in the middle of the treaty.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NAS)

New Testament References to the Future Temple

In addition to Jesus' mentioning the future desecration of a temple in Jerusalem at the end of the age in which we now live (Matthew 24, Luke 21), the Apostle Paul speaks of this same event in his Second letter to the Thessalonian church. Paul calls the desecrator "the man of sin." Thirdly, seeing ahead into the distant future, the aged Apostle John wrote about this same Third Temple which has never yet been built:

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. (Revelation 11:1-2)

As a side note, a very large temple is described in great detail in the closing chapters of the book of Ezekiel. This building and its courts has never yet been built and is too large to fit on the present Temple Mount site. For a description of Ezekiel's temple and a discussion of when and why it will be built see *Messiah's Coming Temple: Ezekiel's Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple* by John W. Schmitt and J. Carl Laney.

Location of The Future Temple

Since the Bible teaches that the Temple will be rebuilt, and it is obvious that it must be in the general area of the Temple Mount, there is much speculation about exactly where the Temple might be situated. There are several possibilities for the place where the Temple will be rebuilt. Here are the main theories, summarized briefly. (Detailed information on all these theories is found on the Temple Mount web site, <http://templemount.org>).

Where The Dome Of The Rock stands

That the First and Second Temples stood where the Dome of the Rock now stands is the traditional, conventional view. Former Jerusalem District Archaeologist Dan Bahat represents this point of view with considerable authority and knowledge. Everyone used to assume that the Dome of the Rock had to be torn down before the Temple could be built, because the rock was thought to be either the place of the Holy of Holies or of the Altar of Sacrifice. However, it is unthinkable to Muslims to have anyone harm or destroy this shrine without bringing the greatest of all jihads, or "holy wars" by all of Israel's Muslim neighbors.

North of The Dome of the Rock

This theory, proposed by Physicist Asher Kauffman, suggests that the new Temple could be built north of the Dome of the Rock without tearing it down. Asher Kaufman is a faculty member in physics at Hebrew University and a devout observant Jew who was born in Scotland. He has explored the Temple Mount more than 100 times since 1974.

This view is based on the known location of the Eastern Gate ("The Golden Gate"), the location of the Dome of the Tablets, and various alignments of ancient stones on the Mount. Due East of the Dome of the Tablets is the Eastern Gate which may have been the very gate Jesus entered when He offered Himself as Messiah and was ultimately rejected by the religious authorities of Jerusalem. It is thought to be the gate of the future coming of Messiah into Jerusalem, so the Turkish Muslims walled it up completely in the hopes of keeping this prophecy from being fulfilled. Verification of the ancient position of the Eastern Gate was made recently with the discovery of an arch from an older gate directly below the existing one. The older gate may even date back to the time of Solomon. The Dome of The Tablets is a cupola, also called Dome of the Spirits in Arabic.

Whether or not there are other ancient gates in the East wall is not known because of the depth of the rubble in the area, and a Muslim cemetery conveniently located along the Eastern wall, both to stop excavation there and to deter a holy priest such as Messiah from entering the area from that direction. Muslim, Christian and Jewish cemeteries are found all along the Kidron Valley and up the adjacent Mount of Olives. All three religions have legends about the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment being located there.

Joel Chapter 3 vividly describes that Great Day,

'In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine that they might drink.

'Now what have you against me, O Tyre and Sidon and all you regions of Philistia? Are you repaying me for something I have done? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your own heads what you have done. For you took my silver and my gold and carried off my finest treasures to your temples. You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, that you might send them far from their homeland.

'See, I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them, and I will return on your own heads what you have done. I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabaeans, a nation far away.' The LORD has spoken. Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, 'I am strong!'

Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, O LORD! 'Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow--so great is their wickedness!' Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine.

The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel. 'Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her.

'In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias. But Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood.

Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations. Their bloodguilt, which I have not pardoned, I will pardon.' The LORD dwells in Zion! {Joel 3:1-21}

The newly discovered Western Gate, underneath the present city is also interesting since it is on the same basic line which could be drawn through the temple area.

This theory would place the Dome of The Rock in the outer court, the Court of The Gentiles. Perhaps this is why Revelation 11:1-2 says:

And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it. And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not

measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months."

This could be the key to peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Both want Jerusalem for their capitals. Both want control of the Temple area. If an agreement could be made to allow the Palestinians to have a part of Jerusalem, including the portion of the Temple Mount where their holy places stand, and Israel would have the rest of Jerusalem, including the place where they can build the Temple, the peace process might be completed.

South of The Dome Of The Rock

This view is advocated by Tuvia Sagiv in his paper *"The Hidden Secrets of The Temple Mount,"* 1992. This is Chuck Missler's preferred view now for several reasons.

Ancient accounts that the Temple was visible from certain places, not from others, suggest that it was further south at slightly lower altitude.

- Radar discovery of proper "voids" beneath the pavement in the southern part of the Temple Mount.
- Level of ancient aqueducts.
- Aerial infrared pictures of the Dome of The Rock showing a pentagonal structure below the shrine, raising the possibility that this was part of the Antonia Fortress which was north of the Temple. Pentagonal structures were uncommon in Israel, and when found have occultic significance, so the site of the Dome of the Rock may have been a Canaanite High Place and a shrine to Ashtoreth.
- There is reason to believe the caves under the Dome may have been an ancient burial site in which case a holy temple could never have been built there.

One big problem with this view is that it would place the Temple between the Dome of The Rock and the Mosque of Al Aqsa, which would be more awkward than if it were built on the north. Sagiv's historical research suggests that Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem rather thoroughly after excluding the Jews so that the buildings on the Temple Mount may reflect more of Hadrian's work than that of Herod the Great as has been supposed until recently.

The Ark Of The Covenant

There are also several interesting theories about the present location of the Ark of The Covenant. These include:

Under the Temple Mount

Jewish scholars believe that it is quite possible for it to be under the Court of Wood of Solomon's Temple, near the Western Wall ("The Wailing Wall").

In Ethiopia

In an underground Temple beneath the ancient church of Zion in Aksum, northern Ethiopia, it is said that there are seven concentric rings of interior circular walls. The Ark of The Covenant is supposedly in the innermost ring, "The Holy of Holies."

According to Grant Jeffrey, The Ethiopian monarchy is the oldest continual royal dynasty in history. It began with the Queen of Sheba and her son, Menelik I. Menelik I was the offspring of her marriage to King Solomon of Israel. This royal dynasty has lasted for three thousand years. The late Emperor Haile Selassie was part of this dynasty.

Emperor Haile Selassie, in our generation, called himself "The Conquering Lion of Judah."

Ethiopian tradition explains that the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Ethiopia by Prince Menelik, who was raised until he was 16 years old in Jerusalem. Solomon had a copy of the Ark made for Menelik, but he supposedly took the original because of Solomon's apostasy.

The history of both the Ethiopian Jewish community (the Falashas) and the history of the ancient Christian Coptic community in that country are fascinating and certainly go back two or three thousand years.

Mount Nebo

The apocryphal book of II Maccabees says that Jeremiah the prophet hid the Ark in a cave on Mt. Nebo (Jordan) at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the City when the prophet was kidnapped by his own countrymen and taken to Egypt. This legend has little else to support it.

Jeremiah 3:16 says that when Messiah returns the Ark will be remembered no more. So it is also possible the Ark was destroyed long centuries ago and does not exist now.

Preparations For The Temple

Some people in Israel are convinced that the Temple will be rebuilt soon, and are preparing to help make it a reality. Here are some of the signs of this preparation:

Training

The Seminary of Aterat HaKohanim (Glory of the Priests) is currently training priests and Levites in priestly rituals and animal sacrifice. Between this seminary and another one, Hal Lindsey says that there are about 200 descendants of Levi in training now.

On March 2, 1998, an ultra-orthodox sect, The Movement To Establish The Temple, issued a call for parents of the Levitical families to place their very young children in a special compound where they can be raised in isolation so that they never come in contact with death. They say that when it is time to begin construction of the new Temples, such a person, at least 13 years old, must administer the rites of purification, using the ashes of the Red Heifer.

Materials

By 1994 more than 30 of the necessary vessels for animal sacrifice had been made for resumption of animal sacrifice. At that time about 65 still needed to be made.

Robes have been made for the High Priest and many other priests in the exact way prescribed by the Torah, including hand-spun flax.

Ashes of a Red Heifer

According to Numbers 19:1-9, it is necessary to use the sacrificial ashes of a young red cow which has not yet reproduced for ritual cleansing of the Temple.

Until recently, this was considered a serious hurdle to the establishment of a new Temple. There had been some hopes of finding ancient ashes among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but when that no longer seemed likely, representatives of the Temple Institute started looking throughout Europe for pure red cattle. They found that they do exist. There is a breed called the Red Angus, but they were not sure whether or not the existing specimens would be pure enough to qualify.

An American rancher was known to have a herd of these red cattle, which he hoped could be used.

In May of 1997 a shocking announcement was made that a red heifer had been born unexpectedly in Israel! Examination of the animal revealed that, though it was born to parents which were not red, it's features would

qualify it to be used in this way when it is of age. In early 1998 a few white hairs developed on its tail, making it no longer acceptable, but there is optimism that a suitable heifer will become available in the near future.

Another interesting twist in this matter is the successful cloning of sheep recently, opening the way for possible genetic engineering of a red heifer if it is necessary.

Timing

Using modern building skills, it would not take longer than the 3 1/2 years of the first half of The Tribulation to finish the building. Some Temple advocates have even said the project could be done in less than a year. It is believed that cedar from Lebanon was obtained in the war in 1982 and hidden for future use in building of the Temple.

For more information and latest developments regarding the Temple Mount visit the Temple Mount Web Site.

Chapter 10

The Great Tribulation

"So when you see standing in the holy place `the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel --let the reader understand-- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now --and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:16-22)

The event which will precipitate a last desperate flight of the believing remnant of the Jewish people from Jerusalem and Judea will be "The Abomination of Desolation" which was predicted in Daniel 9:27 at the midpoint of the seven year peace treaty. This abomination was also mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:15-28 as the first major event of the "Great Tribulation" ("great distress" in the NIV). The blasphemous announcement by this false messiah in the Temple Holy of Holies will also mark the one clear "sign of the end of Age" given to us by the Lord Himself (Matthew 24).

The term "Antichrist" is widely used today. It is in his epistles that John uses this word to refer to a succession of evil world rulers, one of whom would be the final antichrist. "*Anti*" can mean "against" or "opposed to" in Greek, but it also can mean "instead of." Thus this man is a clever counterfeit of God's Messiah (*christos* means messiah or "annointed one).

Actually, two great world leaders, prominent on the world stage for the final seven years of the world-wide tribulation period, are described for us in Revelation Chapter 13 . The imagery used is that of two wild beasts. The man who desecrates the temple is evidently the second of these two men also called "the false prophet." Jesus warned the Jews that such a man would come among them at the end of the age. He said, "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive." (John 5:43)

This man was also predicted by Zechariah.

Then the LORD said to me, "Take again the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For I am going to raise up a shepherd over the land who will not care for the lost, or seek the young, or heal the injured, or feed the healthy, but will eat the meat of the choice sheep, tearing off their hoofs.

"Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!" (Zechariah 11:15-17)

Thus it is clear that this second three and one half years of the Tribulation are the worst years. This also corresponds to the Old Testament prophecy of the "Time of Jacob's Trouble" (Jeremiah 30:1-7). Secular Jews, who constitute the majority of the people of Israel today, will not heed the ancient warning of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, nor heed His 144,000 end-of-the-age witnesses who will surely warn the world afresh. Indeed most of the world will probably herald--with approval--the public announcement that a great and powerful world leader has found a formula for world peace. This same man will claim that he is also God incarnate, and his claims will be accepted. It will be a time of unprecedented world-wide deception as Jesus has already warned. Paul reasserts this in His warning in His description of this event in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

The Abomination of Desolation in the Temple

What is this "Abomination of Desolation"? In addition to the Scriptures given above, there is this description of this

detestable event in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion [apostasia] occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

According to Revelation 13, Antichrist, who will be energized by the Devil, will be considered so wonderful that many of the people of the earth will voluntarily offer to worship him. They will see him as a benevolent dictator. Not content with this, at the height of his power, he will make it mandatory for everyone to give him homage. In order to enforce this, he will have his religious leader, The False Prophet will set up an image of the Beast in the newly rebuilt temple. The image (an idol) must also be worshipped. The two Leaders will also institute a system of economic dictatorship that allows only those who agree to worship him to receive a mark (666). Without the mark, no one will be able to buy or sell anything. Those who believe in Jesus Christ will not be willing to accept the mark. No one who does receive the mark will ever be able or willing to repent and become a true Christian (Revelation 14:9-11; 20:4). Those who refuse the mark will be forced underground, living with other true believers in out of the way places. If they are caught they will be put to death for treason against Antichrist's world government. (Revelation 13:10; 20:4)

The final form of world government in this tribulation period will have two aspects: Military, political and economic power will revolve around the first Beast. Subservient to him will be the harlot church. In Israel a powerful religious coalition will be led by the Second Beast. Both of these Leaders are Satan's masterpieces for deceiving the world. Both are energized by Satan, who until now has never found a complete way of expressing himself in human form ruling the earth.

There is another earth-shaking event which will take place at the same time. According to Revelation 13:16-18, a one-world economy will be established, and only those who follow Antichrist's leadership and worship him will be permitted to buy or sell.

He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

The Mark of The Beast

The false Messiah (Paul's "man of sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12) will enter the Third Temple in Jerusalem and declare himself to be God. That event Jesus had said in the Olivet Discourse, would bring great peril to the residents of Jerusalem. The peril for believers in Yeshua at that time period will include the immediate danger of military invasion of Jerusalem by foreign armies (Luke 21:20). The believing remnant of Jews, who are in Jerusalem at the time the false messiah makes this move, will also be in grave danger of their lives because of Antichrist's vigorous persecution of believers, that is, those few Jews who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Yeshua.

Earth's last Caesar will rise to the position of virtual dictator of the earth. With the help of the "False Prophet," he will require people to receive a "mark" on their right hand or forehead in order to be able to buy or sell (Revelation 13:7-18). There are at least three powers at work in the world even now that make this possible:

Political power

According to Revelation 13:5-7, and 16-18, the first beast will lead the development of the emerging one-world government, or New World Order which has been planned for centuries by the super rich behind the scenes. These power brokers are used to controlling who will be chosen for political positions, based on their ability to manipulate their pawns in high places. They will present Antichrist as a benevolent dictator. They will undoubtedly think that

they can control him for their own advantage. But he will be very powerful, drawing his energy from the Devil. He will do as he pleases, though it is likely that much of what he does will also please the powerful elite group who have given him support.

Religious power

As can be seen even in our own American politics, support from religious groups can be very helpful to a politician. Revelation 13:11-15 tells about a False Prophet who is most likely the head of a one-world religion. This religious unity will finally be possible because after The Rapture, born-again Christians will be absent from public life. Even in the churches, those who are left are those who have never had a personal relationship with Christ. These people, for the most part, will not take the Bible literally. They will be willing to give up their doctrines for the sake of unity. The New Age Religion may be the uniting force behind this since it already draws heavily from various religions. The head of this union could be the leader of the World Council of Churches or of an apostate denomination.

Technological power

According to Revelation 13, Antichrist, who will be energized by the Devil, (who is called the "god of this age" in 2 Corinthians 4:4) will be considered so wonderful that many of the people of the earth will voluntarily offer to worship him. They will see him as a benevolent dictator. Not content with this, at the height of his power, he will make it mandatory for everyone to give him homage. In order to enforce this, he will have his religious leader, the False Prophet set up an image of the first beast

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. (Revelation 13:11-15)

This "living image" will probably be a technological deception; perhaps some marvelous new holographic image, a genetically-engineered clone, or some other bio-tech "invention." In any case, it is clear that it represents Antichrist, and it must be worshipped.

Modern technology has made it possible, not only to produce this deception, but to also do what the Bible predicts about literally controlling the right of individuals to buy and sell.

He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. (Revelation 13:16-17)

Computers

Before computers were such a vital part of our lives it was hard to imagine how this prophecy could be enforced. In our generation we have seen the development of all the parts of the electronic system necessary for one person to wield total economic control.

Daniel 12:4 says,

"But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

We are living in "The Information Age." In our generation science and knowledge have increased at a rate never imagined by our forefathers. Yet, this knowledge explosion was predicted by Daniel 2500 years ago! We live in a time of unprecedented invention, space exploration, and, above all, development and use of the computer. The advent of small, inexpensive, and powerful microcomputers had caused nearly every field of science and technology

to take quantum leaps forward. Here are just a few of the new and emerging tools and methods making more information available.

The Personal Computer

In 1976 the Apple I computer was introduced at the retail of \$666.66. Since then computers have become a necessary business and household appliance. The ever-present, ever-improving personal computer has become the primary tool of creativity. Practically everything that was once done by pencil and paper, drafting tools, and artistry is now being done faster, easier, and better with the help of the computer. A person of average income may now own a computer which is more powerful than the million dollar main-frames of just a few years ago. Beautiful color, digital stereophonic sound, CD ROM libraries of knowledge, modem connectivity to the entire world via information services and the Internet, and an exploding source of helpful, inexpensive software all make this device a necessity for many people today. Smaller, more powerful laptop, notebook, and even hand-held computers make it possible for people to take this essential productivity tool with them wherever they go.

Intel says they are working on microprocessors that will operate, not at today's processor speed of 200 megahertz (million cycles per second), but, by the year 2011, it will run at 10 gigahertz (billion cycles per second). That's 10,000 megahertz instead of 200! The February issue of Fortune Magazine says it will have 1 billion components! You see, Andy Groves, Intel's CEO predicted that the power of a computer chip would double every 18 months, and so far, Intel has lived up to that "law."

Computers and all of the related technologies will continue to improve. Toshiba has developed a computer chip just a little larger than the current 4 megabyte chips which will hold 1 Gigabyte (1 billion bytes). Computer scientists are working on optical microprocessing, using light and fiber optics--instead of electricity and wires--to increase the speed by another factor of 1000 or more. Experimental work is being done on the concept of biochips, living, self-repairing, and incredibly compact memory devices.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence is also a field which is improving steadily. It gained new respect and interest in February, 1996 when Garry Kasparov, reigning chess champion of the world, lost the first of five games against IBM's "Deep Blue" computer.

Supercomputers

With the advent of supercomputers, we can now understand how a world-wide economic system could be possible.

Behind the scenes, giant companies and government agencies now have supercomputers. If the average person now has the power of yesteryear's main frame computers in his lap-top personal computer, imagine the increased capabilities that exist in the largest state of the art computers! While microcomputers work at the speed of millions of operations per seconds, super computers, using what they call parallel processing can now do billions of operations per second. Today's supercomputers are so fast that they could perform thousands of operations each second on the files of each person in the world! This means that, given the necessary connections, one giant computer could easily track the financial affairs of every person on earth. Such a system could permit or forbid buying and selling just as prophesied in Revelation 13

Credit Cards, Debit Cards, Smart Cards

For at least twenty years now the banking industry has been pressing for the use of electronic funds transfer. Those who wish to do so may have their paychecks deposited electronically into their accounts, pay their bills automatically by electronic funds transfer, or use their personal computer to make these payments. You can buy most of what you need by use of your ATM debit cards. Service stations have "Pay Point" devices which allow the use of either credit cards or debit cards to buy your gas without the help of an attendant. At your supermarket you may pay for your groceries the same way. In fact, if you need cash, you can get it out of your bank account at the same time. Just enter an extra \$20 or so while you are checking out and the checker will gladly give you the cash

because that helps them keep the amount of money on hand, discouraging robbers. Pretty soon you won't want cash anyway. Even your favorite fast food place will have these devices too.

The real big news now is what is happening with smart cards. Smart cards are different from the cards most of us have in our wallets. They are already very popular in Europe. They look the same, except a little thicker. Some of them have small contacts in the middle of the card, but many now use radio waves so they don't need contacts. Inside the card there is actually a little computer, with a tiny battery, and up to 1 megabyte of memory. This already makes them more powerful than the earlier personal computers, and we can be sure they will keep getting better. Cards were introduced in 1997 which can be loaded with programs not even written yet. This will make them so useful that the average person will feel he or she just has to have one.

With a smart card you can do all kinds of things you can't do with a magnetic stripe card like the ones we have now. Smart Cards can literally transfer money from your account into the card. The electronic money is placed in one or more "wallets" or "purses" in the card. It can be used to operate vending machines, pay tolls, and whatever else people need. Why should you carry cash? As soon as muggers realize that people don't carry cash, your life will be safer won't it?

These cards will manage all your PINs and passwords, so you won't worry about forgetting them. Smart Cards will also manage loyalty programs, from your frequent flier miles to your savings bonus at your local grocery store. In the future, those who don't have a smart card will just lose out on the sales and other benefits that are available.

We are moving quickly toward a cashless society which may be easily controlled by a world dictator. The coming Antichrist will be such a dictator. The technology is now in place for him to accomplish his evil plan of economic control

The smart card manufacturers are beginning to band together so they have a standardized platform. They call it MULTOS. They call this "the smart card getting smarter," because now the machine that can read one card will be able to read all the cards. In the United States the major credit card companies are getting ready to switch over.

Another big advance in this area is the smart card reader on your computer keyboard or in the floppy disk drive. It allows your computer to read your card and act like a personal ATM. It will not be able to put out money, but that will be unnecessary, because the card itself takes the place of money. In other words, money from your bank account can be transferred into your smart card right in the convenience of your own home or office. This is something that the ordinary person will be able to afford. Some type of smart card reader will likely become as a standard peripheral on new computer systems. You will also be able to buy or sell (download or even upload money) from another person, right at your own computer.

Implanted Transponders

One of the biggest problems in all of this electronic wonderland is the loss and theft of cards and the problem of verifying that the person with the card is authorized to use it. All of this could be solved by inserting tiny electronic transponders (chip implants) as they already do in livestock all over the world, and as they are beginning to do in household pets. In our area we can have one of these devices implanted in our dog by a simple, nearly painless hypodermic needle, then if he is ever lost, the governmental authorities can just wave a wand over the dog's back and their computer will tell them all they need to know about him.

They have not been putting them into people as a rule. They are only about the size of a grain of rice. They don't need batteries. They have a little coil, and a pre-programmed number, all encapsulated in glass. This can be inserted under your skin with a special hypodermic needle. It won't get infected, and you would hardly know it is there. But scanning devices will know it's there. It could be used to tie into your bank accounts, or whatever they want to do with it.

In the future, they could perfect this so that it can actually be your smart card. The technology is not yet that advanced. But the advantage of something like this is that you wouldn't have to remember to take your wallet with you, it will always be a part of you. You couldn't lose it. When you want to get money out, you could just go to your personal computer, wave your hand in front of it, and transfer what you need into the device. You could pay

your bills the same way. You could start your car that way because it could take the place of your keys. These are all possibilities for the future. None of it is necessary for Antichrist to take over. We have enough in place right now.

Here's something that uses the same technology in a much more acceptable form. You may already have these. It is known as the Mobil Speed Pass. It has the same type of device in it that responds to the radio waves and sends back a number. You just drive up, and when you come within five feet of the gas pump, it gets ready to service you. It knows who you are and how to charge your purchase. You still have to get out and put the nozzle in your tank, but the rest is automatic! You don't pull your wallet out. You don't punch in a PIN number. You just wave this little thing and it happens. If you don't want one of these on your key ring, you can get another device from the same company that just sticks on your back window and does the same thing without even handling it. They even make a card version for your wallet, but you don't have to take it out, it just happens.

Biometrics

Fingerprints, palm prints, face and eye prints (retinal imaging) are some of the high tech methods now used to verify a person's identity. These, of course, cannot be stolen or lost. How far away from public acceptance of these devices are we? We may be closer than we think!

Other technologies are also leading in the same direction. There is a face recognition device you can hook up to your personal computer, and throw away your passwords, because, with this device, your computer knows it is you. There is also a little scanner for your fingerprint that does the same thing. It's called BioMouse.

There is a movement in many countries, including the United States, to create a national registry and tracking system in which every citizen will have some form of biometric identification as described above. This plan would give the government the right to approve all employment. One attempt at such control was Senate bill S 269 - The Immigrant Control and Financial Responsibility Act of 1995.

Satellites

New methods of transmitting data, such as satellites which can link the whole world together instantly, sending and receiving unbelievable amounts of data simultaneously. GPS (Global Positioning System) is now in place and in use, allowing world-wide satellite tracking of items with small transmitters. These systems are accurate to within a few feet.

Fiber Optics

Fiber optic "wires" now service our businesses and many homes. These cables, which use light instead of electricity, are able to carry thousands of conversations, video images, and data transfers all at the same time. One small Fiber Optic cable can replace 10,000 ordinary telephone lines!

Many phone services now employ the ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) system. This concept not only perfects the quality of the voice on the phone, but allows the connection of several devices to the outside world simultaneously, including television, FAX, copier, computers. It also adds the capability of "smart phones" which will transmit digital data about the users along with the voice or video connection. With such a system, the business you are calling could answer the phone using your name, and already having your account information on the screen in front of them. The potential for transmission of unwanted information is an obvious danger from this emerging technology.

Interactive Television and the Internet

Information service companies, such as CompuServe and America On Line provide an amazing assortment of "on line" information, such as news and historical data bases, games and other entertainment, down-loadable software, literature, and art, electronic mail, special interest data bases and "chat" rooms where one may type messages to one another in real time. Shopping on-line is becoming very popular as well.

Another aspect of what is often called cyberspace is the Internet. It has been around for several decades. It is a high speed data transmission system, now often called the information "super highway". It was used by major corporations and universities to connect their main-frame computers together. It is just now becoming very popular and extremely useful. Education, businesses, government, and even churches are rapidly turning to this medium of information exchange. Easy navigation of this world-wide network is being made possible by such innovations as the "World-Wide Web." Color, sound, animation, and even video have been added to the capabilities of the "net." Connection to the Internet is one of the options on many information services. Individuals may also choose to subscribe to local Internet services which do not provide their own information, but simply connect the user's computer (via the phone lines) to the Internet

They are now working on a new generation of the Internet. It is called Internet II, and it is described as vBNS (very high speed Backbone Network Service). MCI is the provider for a super-fast information network mandated in 1993 by the National Science Foundation. Part of it is already in place, using speeds of 155 million bits per second. When fully functional, it will connect the Supercomputing Centers at speeds of up to 2.5 billion bits (2.5 gigabits) per second. At this speed the new network could transmit the contents of two public libraries per second!

The Internet of the future won't even be limited by fiber optic cables. Last March Bill Gates, who is the richest man in the world, and easily the most powerful person in all the world of technology, went into a partnership with another man and announced the "Internet In The Sky" which they will begin in the year 2000 and it will be fully functional by the year 2002. Actually, the first of these satellites was sent into orbit in March of 1998. It will consist of 840 low-altitude satellites that will be connected in 21 orbits, with 40 satellites in every orbit. They have an animation on their Teledesic website. It will like a big moving net around the entire earth. What this means is, that anywhere on the face of the planet a person with an inexpensive portable wireless Internet communicator, can communicate with anyone else on the earth. It could be at the top of the Himalayas or at the Dead Sea.

Control of Travel

Toll booths register and deduct payment from vehicles passing through their scanners. Smart highway projects are in the planning stages to literally guide vehicles from one point to another on safer highways. Obviously, those in the future who have not paid, or who are not allowed to buy and sell can be kept off these highways!

Control of the Media

Another very significant development in the world of modern technology is the recent merger of huge communications and media corporations. In August, 1995 Disney and ABC agreed to the largest merger in history, and the next day a merger of Westinghouse with CBS was announced.. These things lead us closer to a one-world economy. Smaller operations will continue to be swallowed up by larger ones so they have more control.

Programmable Tattoos

There now exists a "Programmable Tattoo" which can be implanted under your wrist. It is actually an LCD display panel that can serve as a watch to tell the time, or give reports on your vital functions like blood pressure or insulin count: anything you need to know about yourself. The people who have the patents on this are from a company called Interval Research Corporation. You may not have heard of them. They say they don't even know what they want to do with this invention yet. Interval was co-founded by Paul Allen, who was also co-founder of Microsoft. Most of the things they are doing right now, they are keeping secret. There is an "interval," you see. They are thinking that five, ten, or twenty years in the future, all the things they are developing will be put into service. Maybe they will be put into service when the Mark of The Beast is ready.

The Actual Mark

Two beasts, or great world-leaders are in view in Revelation Chapter 13.

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast [the political-military leader of the Western Federation of nations] on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in

full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the [first] beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666." (Revelation 13:11-18)

At this point in time these two powerful leaders--one religious, the other political and military--will have arranged world-wide control over buying and selling. The fate of the world will apparently rest solely with them.

Computers do all kind of wonderful things, but, because of the way they work, everything they do must be converted to numbers. Every letter on this screen, every colored pixel, every tone produced by the computer (including your favorite music CD) is saved and processed as a number.

Now that modern technology has reached the stage where it is truly feasible for Antichrist to exert economic dictatorship it is increasingly important for everyone to have a distinctive number. Most of us have several numbers already: our Social Security number, drivers' license number, phone, FAX and pager numbers, credit card numbers, and so on. See Modern Technologies.

What does Antichrist's personal number, 666 mean? Please notice that the Scripture says plainly that it is "the number of his name." This is significant because the issue in this future story is that of worship. People must vow their devotion to this worst of all the false Christs by allowing either his name, or else the number of his name to be placed on them in a prominent place as a symbol of their allegiance.

There are many possible ways of converting a name to a number. Here are some of them:

Assignment

This is how you received your Social Security number, or credit card numbers. When it was time to be "numbered" the next number in a sequence was assigned. Some systems pick numbers randomly instead of sequentially, and check to make sure no one else has that number before issuing it.

Choice

This is the process if you, or someone else, should choose a number to represent you. This is sometimes done for jerseys of famous athletes. Other examples of this are when you order a personalized license plate for your car or pick your own phone number.

Conversion

Returning to the fact that our lives are run, or at least monitored, by computers, there is another way of deriving a number from a name. There are several different numbering systems used by computers to convert any given letter to a number. One of these is the ASCII code (A=65, B=66, etc.) Using this system, and adding up the total of the values of the letters, it is interesting that some names do add up to 666. Some famous names produce this result.

Another type of conversion is based on the alphabet (A=1, B=2, etc.) Such a system would not produce a number as big as 666, so some have suggested converting this way and then multiplying by the "number of man", which some suppose is 6 - one short of the number of completion. Again, some notable people's names produce 666 in this way.

There are also various techniques for coding this number. These include:

Printing

Checks, Invoices, and many other documents which need to be recognized and handled by people simply print the number. Data processing clerks or scanning devices convert these numbers back into the numbers

needed by the computers.

Magnetic strip

Credit cards and debit cards (and a host of other identifying devices) use these little strips of magnetic tape to store your number and other information.

Transponders

A tiny electronic chip which may be injected into an animal or a human will respond to the stimulus of a certain kind of scanner by transmitting your numerical data.

Bar Code

Laser scanners use the bar codes on products to print your sales receipt. The number on the package is converted to a name, a price, and at the same time it is subtracted from inventory and placed on the store's next re-order form.

It has been noticed by some that the UPC bar codes are generally divided into two parts by three bars, one at the beginning, one at the end, and one in the middle. These marks may be longer than the numbers, but they may look the same as one of the codes for the number six. Thus, some bar-codes do have the number 666 built into it. This may or may not have any significance in future understanding of prophecy.

We have been warned that we can not know who Antichrist is until he is revealed, after the Restrainer (The Holy Spirit) is no longer holding back sin (2 Thessalonians 2:1-11). But those who are alive during that time might recognize him partly by this number. It will be wise and proper for those living during that time to "calculate" his number (verse 18).

It should also be noted that, even though it is logical for us to have our own numbers, and that, for security reasons, these numbers might even be tattooed on or implanted in us, the number that will be displayed on the hand or forehead will not be our number, but Antichrist's. Those who are more bold in their devotion to him will not have his number, but his actual name!

Implanted chips are improved security measures are by no means seen as sinister by most people today. There is a great advantage to having one's medical history and record carried on a memory chip on one's person for ready access in case of a heart attack or accident. All of us want the best possible security for our bank accounts and investments. Anti-terrorism protection makes sense to everyone who travels even if it must come at the cost of some potential abuse by government and better surveillance of the whereabouts and movements of all the populace. It is vitally important for us to have the best possible security against international terrorists who will not necessarily be rational individuals, nor be in the employ of anyone but themselves. Military and diplomatic secrets need the best possible protection we can give them. It is necessary for us to find out all we can by spying behind the scenes when we have fiendishly evil men to deal with such as Saddam Hussein.

What we are assured of by the Bible is that these sophisticated tools will be usurped and used against God-fearing people during the tribulation period, because the world government of that time period will be entirely under Satanic control and the restraining influence of the church will no longer restrain evil at all levels of society.

Chapter 11

Petra

The Flight of the Remnant from Jerusalem at Mid-Tribulation

Earlier it was pointed out that Revelation 12 is a symbolic overview of all of Israel's history. In Revelation 12:6 we read, "The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days." The woman is symbolic of Israel. 1260 days is exactly three and one half years--the standard lunar (prophetic) years of the Bible, with 360 days each.

Later in the same chapter, this event is described this way:

The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.

But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. (Revelation 12:14-16)

This also corresponds to Jesus' warning in His Olivet Discourse, a sermon by Jesus to his disciples known as the "Olivet Discourse"--so-called because Jesus was seated with his disciples on the Mt. of Olives opposite the Second Temple when he gave this sweeping outline of the future.

So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:15-22)

Jerusalem Surrounded by Armies

The parallel passage in Luke 21 adds what Matthew does not tell us, that Jerusalem will be surrounded by hostile armies at the time of the end.

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.

How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-24)

This same scene is depicted by the Old Testament prophet Zechariah,

Behold, a day of the LORD is coming, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the

**city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.
(Zechariah 14:1-3)**

Jerusalem, "trodden down by the Gentiles" again and again since the time of the Babylonian captivity is yet to suffer one last final, terrible invasion by the Gentiles.

Flight of Jews from Judea

The prophet Joel foresaw this calamity.

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand--a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste--nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountain tops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle.

At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defenses without breaking ranks. They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. (Joel 2:1-10)

The size of this believing remnant at the mid-tribulation point is open to discussion, but for the sake of argument it would seem to be some thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of believing Jews who are warned to flee from Jerusalem.

The words and teachings of Jesus to His people Israel were not heeded when He was with them during His First Advent. We can not expect the entire nation to take this warning to leave Jerusalem seriously even though it will no doubt be heralded again by a new generation of prophets in the end time. Those Jews in Israel who have come to know Yeshua personally during the first half of the tribulation will be responsive and it is to this believing remnant that Jesus makes His appeal.

Ray Stedman remarks on this event,

Who are they who must flee so urgently when the last days begin? Who dare not hesitate long enough even to go back into the house to pick up a wrap, but must immediately head for the hills? There is no need to wonder, for the Lord says plainly, "those who are in Judea" Now Judea is a geographical part of the land of Israel, ancient Palestine. It comprises the hill country surrounding the city of Jerusalem and includes the city as well. It is to the residents of Jerusalem and Judea that this warning is addressed.

Furthermore, the Lord's mention of the Sabbath establishes the fact that these residents of Judea are Jews. He urges them to pray that their flight will not be in the winter, with its distress of cold, or on the Sabbath, with its travel limitations, for Jews are allowed to travel only a short distance on a Sabbath day. Later in this passage these Jews are called "the elect" ("for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened"), and this makes clear they are believing Jews, that is, men and women of faith who know and love Jesus Christ as Lord and are prepared to live or die for him. They are not Christians in the usual sense of that term, referring to those who are members of the church, for we are told that in the church there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. Jews are not to be distinguished from Gentiles within the church. These distinctions, we are precisely told by the apostle Paul, have been invalidated in the church. The "middle wall of partition" has been eliminated; there are no distinctions of background, race or religious training that are recognized within the church of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Christians, we are told, are free from the law and no longer observe special days, special feasts, new moons and Sabbaths. In his letter to the Colossians the apostle Paul clearly speaks of the fact that the Sabbaths were included in those shadows which were done away in Christ. But here the Sabbath distinctly will be a restricting factor in the flight of these people. Here then will be a class of people who cannot be identified with the present day church. They will be Jewish believers in Christ who will be converted after the removal of the church and before the time of the Great Tribulation.

As Ray Stedman has noted, Jesus does not tell the residents of Tel Aviv or Haifa to flee. The greatest danger is in Jerusalem and the peril is so great that the true believers in Yahweh must leave town immediately. They are called to

flee to the mountains, and since Jerusalem is already in the mountains of Judea, the flight will evidently be down to Jericho, then across into Jordan.

Most Bible scholars believe this godly remnant will find refuge in the ancient rock-hewn cliff city of Petra, and in the surrounding region in the land of that once belonged to the descendants of Esau, that is Edom (Southern Jordan). The remnant will survive there, protected by God, for three and a half years. Meantime terrible destruction will come upon the land of Israel--which will be the center focal point of war. The entire world will suffer terrible destructive judgments, all from the Lord on that Day--but the believing refugees who constitute what the Bible calls "true Israel" will be safe in the sheep-fold around Bozrah and environs.

Believers' Underground

These fleeing refugees from Jerusalem will become a part of a believer's underground in those days. True believers in Yeshua as they are converted by the vigorous world-wide evangelistic campaign of the 144,000 will not be allowed the privileges of citizenship and commerce in Antichrist's world government, as we have noted. They will refuse to participate in worship of the beast, and consequently will not be allowed to buy or sell anything. Therefore, they will be forced to hide in secret places, or die, as the early Christians did when the church was young.

Christians went underground during the persecutions in Rome. They literally lived in the vast network of catacombs beneath the city of Rome. Visitors to Rome today can visit the places where they lived, including large cavernous rooms where they met for worship and prayer, and hundreds of tombs carved into the sides of the tunnels for those who died during this time.

Groups of "underground" believers during the Tribulation Period will no doubt form their own alliances for survival, including sharing of resources, bartering, and standing guard for one another. They may well have the use of the Internet, satellite communication, and other high tech methods in their struggle.

According to Revelation 12, which records the cosmic drama of Israel and the Dragon, Antichrist will be thwarted in his attempt to capture the fleeing remnant of Israel and will be enraged at "the rest of her offspring" who are described as true believers in Yeshua (Revelation 12:14-17). Evidently this latter group will be converts from all the Gentile nations.

It is possible that the underground followers of Yeshua during The Tribulation period will receive special divine guidance and help from this place to which Israel will flee, because it will be protected by God. Petra is certainly one of the best natural places on earth for protection, because it can only be entered by one narrow valley ("El Siq") which would be easy to guard. However, given the modern capabilities to fly over the city and bomb even mountain sanctuaries, it seems clear that God Himself will provide the necessary supernatural, angelic protection for Israel.

The Fifth Seal - Martyrdom

The Greek word "martyr" actually means "witness" or "one who gives a testimony." Early Christians were very bold witnesses for Christ in fulfillment of His command to be His witnesses in all the earth (Acts 1:8). In those days every Roman subject was expected to acknowledge Caesar as god. They were required to say "Caesar is Lord." Christians, of course could not say this. Instead, they acknowledged "Jesus is Lord." (1 Corinthians 12:3) For this reason many early Christians were put to death by a variety of cruel methods, such as crucifixion, burning at the stake, beheading, and being fed to lions. Historical accounts of these people refer to them as martyrs.

There have been a great many Christian martyrs down through the centuries. In fact, our own generation has seen the persecution and death of more Christians than any other age. This is especially true in fundamentalist Moslem countries, and in the totalitarian communistic regimes of Russia and China

During the Tribulation there will be many martyrs--perhaps the majority of those converted to faith in Yeshua around the world will be put to death as a threat to the New World Order established by the Antichrist. The fifth seal (Revelation 6:9-11) is about these martyrs, who ask the Lord, "How long...until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Revelation 6:10)

It is also clear that those who trust in Christ and refuse to receive the mark of the beast will be put to death for treason against Antichrist's one-world government (Revelation 13:10; 20:4). Surely the Lord will give them the strength to stand for Christ even if it means suffering in this extreme way. Believers are not promised deliverance from persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Petra - The Prepared Place

Historical Background of Petra

The ancient capital of Edom was the city of Bozrah--the Hebrew *bosra* means sheepfold. It lies 30 miles southeast of the Dead Sea in present-day Jordan. The present Jordanian city of Buseirah is not on any modern road but is a remote mountain village of difficult access. Ancient Bozrah at the same location, however, was on the main North West trade route known as the King's Highway (Numbers 20:17). The city was noted for its weaving industry and export of dyed garments.

Edom, as the territory allotted to Jacob's brother Esau, is documented in Genesis 36. A man named Bozrah was a descendant of Seir the Horite, who inhabited the land "before there were any kings in Israel." The historical record in Deuteronomy includes this parenthetical note:

(The Emites used to live there--a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Emites. Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land the LORD gave them as their possession.) (Deuteronomy:2:10-12)

Edom's long-standing enmity against Israel ultimately brought God's judgment on Edom. Obadiah the prophet devotes his short but potent message to the judgment of Edom, telling us of her pride and arrogance and the reasons for God's final judgment on these people. Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa, wrote of impending judgment on Edom:

This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not turn back. Because he pursued his brother with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, I will send fire upon Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah." (Amos 1:11-12)

Several writers have written fine descriptions of Petra and the history of that region of ancient Edom. The Nabateans displaced the descendants of Esau probably in the 6th Century BC. They controlled the entire region as far North as Damascus until the First Century. The Greeks and Romans built extensively in Jordan and the area around Bozrah and Petra was well populated as late as Roman times. Today the area is desolate and sparsely populated because of the very low rainfall and scarcity of natural resources there.

South of Bozrah, 20 some miles on the King's Highway, is Petra, the capital city of the Nabateans. Tourists to this vast mountain-enclosed ancient city in the Wadi Musa generally enter from the east on foot or on horseback through El Siq, an 6000 feet long narrow cleft (width: 12-30 feet) with 100-500 foot high cliff walls. Tombs and houses carved into the bed rock over a vast area at Petra would be suitable for temporarily housing many thousands of people. Mt. Hor is nearby, where Aaron died after Moses passed the high priestly garments of Aaron on to Eliezer in the sight of the congregation (Numbers 20:23-29). An Islamic shrine marks the probable tomb site.

Not to be conquered by Antichrist

The route of escape for the Jewish believing remnant from Antichrist's military pursuit as he seeks to annihilate them, has been made ready by the Lord:

He [the last king of the North] will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. (Daniel 11:41)

A hiding place

Evidently Jordan is given special protection during the last great invasion of Israel which will in fact devastate the

Land. Isaiah the Prophet instructs the believing remnant of Israel to find a safe hiding place during the time of Jacob's trouble when God's judgment will fall on the whole earth,

Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by.

See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer. (Isaiah 26:20-21)

During the second half of the tribulation period there will be no safe place to hide anywhere on the earth--except in the refuge God has provided, probably at Petra. We gain glimpses of how terrible life will become for non-believers in those days from many passages in the Book of the Revelation. For example at the opening of the Sixth Seal of judgment John notes:

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6:12-17)

The Concept of the Remnant

From the Old Testament it is clear that the majority of the Jewish people within the nation were not necessarily believers. Elijah lamented that he was the "only one" left who knew God after his successful defeat of the priests of Baal at Mt. Carmel. But God responded telling him that He had, at that time, "more than seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal."

From 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 we get the clear picture regarding Israel that "with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies fell in the wilderness"--referring to the generation that left Egypt under Moses.

Thus at any point in time "true Israel" means the believing community within the nation.

Sometimes it was substantial, at other times few in number.

Likewise within the professing church of Jesus Christ around the world, not all are true believers by any means,

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

God gets his work done by a "remnant" in every generation it would seem.

Christ's Presence

Ray Stedman has proposed the interesting possibility that Jesus Christ, following the Rapture of the church, will be present on the Earth during this time, appearing and disappearing at will as He did for a few weeks following the Resurrection.

In contrast to the false propaganda of the last days, in Matthew 24:27,28 Jesus unveils the true method for locating him in the day of his presence. To do so he uses a parable from nature and a proverb from life: "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man. Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

The word the Lord uses for "coming" here is the now familiar "*parousia*." It is quite a different word than he uses a few verses farther on when he speaks of "the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." It is

easy to confuse these two comings because of his reference to lightning in verse 27. Since lightning is a form of power and glory, many feel the Lord is using it as symbol of his coming in glory. But note carefully what he says.

Lightning flashes in the east, but the effect of it is seen all over the sky. Yet the flash itself does not involve the whole inverted dome of the heavens from east to west. When he uses the symbol of lightning, therefore, he is not describing a universally visible manifestation of his glory, but the universal effect of his presence behind the scenes. Like lightning flashes He will be seen by his own in different places, at all different times, but the effect of those appearances will be felt throughout the earth.

Furthermore, lightning is sovereign, unpredictable, uncontrollable. So will be the presence, the parousia, of the Son of man. He will appear and disappear at will. Whenever there is need for him he will be there, just as he was during the post-resurrection period. There will be no need to search for him for he cannot be found that way. There will be no need to look for him in the wilderness nor in the inner rooms, for he will come whenever and wherever he finds a heart ready to know him. In the passage parallel to this in Luke 17, Jesus says, "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day." A "day" used in that sense always refers to a period of time, not a sudden, climactic event.

We won't be dogmatic about this, but if Ray Stedman's interpretation is correct, it would certainly help explain the supernatural protection that the refugees from Israel will enjoy during this time.

An interesting corollary to this idea is that the raptured church might be involved in this activity of protecting the Saints during the Tribulation. This could be true because we know that we, the church, are destined to rule and reign with Him when He appears later as King of Kings. In any case, we are assured in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that once we have met The Lord in the air, we will always be with Him! The church is called the "Body of Christ" in the New Testament, so wherever the Lord of the church is at work, there also is His Body the church.

If the above scenario is correct, it is important to remember that the members of the church as well as their Lord will all have their new resurrection bodies. It should not surprise us that our ministry during this time period might well be like that of our Lord Jesus during the 40 days after His resurrection and prior to His ascension when He came and went at will, appearing and disappearing in the midst of followers to continue to teach them and guide them. The church may well have a similar role of encouragement in the lives of the 144,000 who will still be mortal and not immune from suffering and martyrdom in their heroic acts of evangelism.

Chapter 12

The Plot Thickens

Not All the Jews Flee to Edom

A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. (Zechariah 14:1-3)

These verses lead us up to the Battle of Armageddon which will be discussed in the next chapter. Jerusalem appears to have been occupied by "foreign armies" from the mid-point of the Tribulation when Antichrist sets up "The Abomination of Desolation"--until the great battle at the end of the Tribulation. According to the above text half of the city will go into exile and the other half will remain.

The Jews who will remain in Jerusalem, and elsewhere in Israel during the second half of the tribulation, will be ignoring the warning of Jesus given some 2000 years earlier. These Jews in fact will stay--and will maintain their secular, apostate, stance opposing the God of their forefathers, and continuing to stumble over their own cornerstone, Yeshua (Romans 9:32). God will continue to warn them through a new generation of prophets. Their message will be like that of Jeremiah at the time of the Babylonian captivity. At that time, when Nebuchadnezzar pillaged Israel, remnants led by Daniel and Ezekiel had escaped to Babylon where they enjoyed God's protection and blessing. God clearly spoke to the Jewish people urging them to go to Babylon. Jeremiah's warnings went unheeded in Jerusalem, yet God did not leave Himself without a witness in the capital. Most of those who remained in Jerusalem died in the terrible destruction of 586 BC. The glorious Temple of Solomon was pillaged, burned and destroyed on the 9th of Av. Jeremiah was taken by rebellious countrymen to Egypt where he was soon martyred, according to tradition.

Two Fearless Witnesses on the Temple Mount

At the mid-point of the Tribulation period Jesus will call his faithful remnant to flee Jerusalem and hide in the desert place, and he will place two powerful witnesses on public display in Jerusalem. For a full three and a half years they will speak to the nation and to the world of impending judgment. In spite of the enormously hostile environment of Jerusalem in that Day, these bold spokesman for the Lord will be kept safe until their mission is accomplished.

Revelation, Chapter 11, gives us details concerning two special servants God sets before His nation during the final turbulent months just prior to the return of Messiah in power and glory:

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon. (Revelation 11:1-14)

This parenthetical section in the above passage describes Two Witnesses who are given supernatural power to prophesy, to perform miracles and to speak the truth boldly without fear of being captured or killed for a period of 1260 days, which is the same length of time as the 42 months of verse 2 in this same chapter. The 42 months, in turn, is the same as 3 1/2 years, the exact duration of the second half of the Tribulation. This also corresponds to the period of Antichrist's reign in chapter 13, verse 5.

The identity of these two is not certain, but they could be Enoch and Elijah since these are the two people who were taken to heaven without dying (See Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11). Since it is "appointed for men to die once..." (Hebrews 9:27), God may be planning to send these two back to conclude their life's work in this striking manner, and to die. Elijah was, of course, a prophet and it is said of Enoch that he prophesied also (Jude 14).

It is also possible that they will be Moses and Elijah since these were the two who appeared with Jesus in His transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). If this is the case, they would represent the two Old Testament periods of The Law and The Prophets. Moses did die, but he was with God alone when he it happened, and was personally buried by God (Deuteronomy 34:1-8). He was considered the greatest of prophets (Deuteronomy 34:10).

These Two Witnesses are identified as "two olive trees." This is reminiscent of the imagery in Zechariah's prophecy of two olive trees which automatically supplied oil continuously to the Golden lampstand in the Temple (Zechariah 4:1-14). The meaning given in the passage is that the work of rebuilding the Temple in Zerubbabel's days was "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6) Likewise, though enemies are arrayed against God in the last days, His purposes will prevail by the power of His Holy Spirit.

The miraculous powers which these two demonstrate will be very much like the miracles performed by Moses and Elijah (Exodus chapters 4 through 12; 1 Kings 17:1,7; 18:1,19-45; 2 Kings 1:10-14). This is another indication that the Two Witnesses could be Moses and Elijah.

When their work is finished, God will allow them to be put to death. The place of their death will be Jerusalem, probably on the Temple Mount. The City greatly loved by God is known for killing the prophets (Matthew 23:37). On his way to be crucified, Jesus remarked that God's prophets were always killed in Jerusalem!

Spiritually speaking, Jerusalem can be compared to Sodom and Egypt, immoral places which were condemned by the Lord. Ungodly people rejoice at their death because they had stood against all their evil deeds.

After three and a half days, the Two Witnesses will be raised from the dead and caught up to heaven when they heard the words from heaven, "Come up here." The Rapture of the church happens at the beginning of The Tribulation, but this event toward the end of these seven years is similar, and may even be representative of what happens to the believing martyrs of this period of time.

Disasters of the Great Tribulation

There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilence in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. (Luke 21:11)

A great amount of attention is focused on the skies in our times. There are several reasons for this. Scientific advances in observation technologies have allowed us to learn much more about our space neighbors. We now know much more about the existence and orbits of small objects which could come near, or even strike the Earth.

Our own ventures into space are a second major reason for this interest. In our generation we have placed so many objects into orbit above us that it is almost impossible to track all of the functioning and non-functioning satellites.

Asteroids

About 5,000 asteroids are known to exist, and it is believed that there are as many as 30,000 of them in our Solar System. 1,600 of these are watched carefully. Most of them are controlled by Jupiter. About 40 of them are known to intersect the Earth's orbit.

The Asteroid belt, where most of them are found is between Mars and Jupiter.

In 1937 the asteroid Hermes came very close to earth. It passed within 500,000 miles, only twice the distance between the Earth the Moon. This is a "near miss." Our gravitational pull can affect something coming this close.

In 1989 an asteroid that was 5 miles in diameter came dangerously close. It will pass again some time after the turn of the century.

Russell Chandler, former religion editor for the Los Angeles Times, reports in his book called Doomsday, that

On March 23, 1989, a half-mile-wide asteroid flew through Earth's path at forty-six thousand miles an hour. Nobody saw it coming. A scientific team convened by Congress a year later noted that "the Earth had been at that point only six hours earlier." Had it struck the Earth, it would have caused a disaster unprecedented in human history.

Some asteroids we know about are:

Ceres - largest known - 488 miles diameter
Pallas - 379 miles diameter
Vesta - 336 miles diameter
Junu - 120 miles diameter
Icarus - 1 mile diameter: a "small flying mountain."

In the Book of Revelation one often reads about a "falling star." The Greek word for star is *aster*. This word is the basis for "Esther" and "asteroid."

Scientists have often suggested that an earlier collision with an asteroid may have caused mass extinction and the onset of an ice age. However, a literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis would suggest these events were caused by the great flood of Noah's days.

Meteors and Meteorites

These are "boulder-sized" asteroids. The largest one discovered was about 70 tons. They are often called "shooting stars," since they leave bright streaks in the atmosphere as they burn up. Those that do not completely burn up before hitting the earth are called meteorites.

One hit Arizona in prehistoric times causing a crater 4,100 feet across and 600 feet deep! About 500 of them strike the earth each year. About 120 impact sites are known.

Comets

We hear of comets occasionally, such as Haley's Comet, The Swift Tuttle Comet, and more recently, The Hale-Bopp Comet.

In 1994, Shoemaker-Levy 9, a comet with 21 fragments collided with Jupiter from July 16 through 22. The speed of this "comet train" was 37 miles per second (133,200 mph). This is 60 times the speed of an average bullet! (The energy carried by a moving object is proportional to the velocity squared!) At comet speed, one could go from New York to Los Angeles in 1 minute and 22 seconds. The first chunk of this comet hit Jupiter with a force of perhaps a million hydrogen bombs. It was photographed by powerful telescopes on earth which showed that it caused a mushroom cloud of gas nearly 1000 miles into space, and left a dark splotch, half the size of Earth.

The combined size of the 21 pieces was between 1/2 mile and 2 1/2 miles in diameter. The combined energy could be 20 million megatons (compare the largest bomb ever made: the Soviet's 58 megaton behemoth)! This total impact of Shoemaker-Levy 9 was greater than the combined force of all nuclear devices ever made.

One writer said that such a comet train hitting the Earth could incinerate whole countries and produce a dust cloud that would bring on nuclear winter. It would kill millions, or perhaps billions, of people.

In 1908 a comet in Siberia flattened the surrounding forests for 40 miles, and could be felt more than 100 miles away. Pressure waves from this event were recorded in London.

Ecological Issues

Many of the ecological problems of our age are related to the skies. Some of these are:

Depletion of the Ozone layer and the resultant increase in Ultra Violet Rays reaching the Earth.

Nuclear Radiation from bombs, power plants and satellites.

Space Junk falling every few days from old satellites and their rocket boosters.

Acid Rain which is a result of dangerous chemicals in the air.

UFOs

The current interest in UFO's may be setting us up for great deception. There is great interest in the Roswell, New Mexico stories, and accounts of the findings of the Air Force's Project Blue Book, which supposedly give some credence to the existence of these objects.

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-11)

Some prophecy scholars think that the belief in UFOs might cause Antichrist to use them as an explanation of the disappearance of Christians during the Rapture. Some New Age practitioners are already suggesting that extraterrestrials might someday "cleanse" the Earth of troublemakers. Interest in such UFOs goes in cycles. There is a current rise in interest, and several recent movies about UFO's.

In any event, the end of the age will be a time of unprecedented deception. Satan's power to imitate and counterfeit the miracles of God will increase and in those days separating the real from the counterfeit will become increasingly more difficult.

The Seven Trumpets

The First Trumpet - Scorching of the Earth

The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. (Revelation 8:7)

The events of the previous section, the Seven Seals, were events caused by human activity and natural, earthly disasters. This next series brings what might be called supernatural judgments. The first three appear to be the result of asteroids, meteors or comets. These are also natural, but in the sense that they are divinely directed judgments on the earth, they have a supernatural element. There seems to be a progression of disasters from space: first hail and fire mixed with blood, then what seemed like a large mountain, and later, a "star."

It should be noted that these trumpet judgments could be caused by a nuclear war just as well. Hal Lindsey thinks it is more likely that the events of this chapter are the result of nuclear activity than supernatural activity; that they are the result of man's evil actions once the restraining hand of God is removed. As mentioned before, some scholars expect the war of Ezekiel 38 and 39 at the beginning of the Tribulation, and some expect it to occur at the end. In any case, the language of these two chapters clearly describes God raining "fire" down from heaven on Israel's invaders from the North and also upon the "coastlands," or the "remote continents."

The first catastrophe in this series could also be caused by a comet or by very severe weather conditions. Comets are made of ice which would provide the water for hail. It would first vaporize, then perhaps, depending on other weather conditions descend to earth as hail. This sudden intrusion of a comet could cause extreme world-wide storms. The blood might be caused by animals being sucked up by waterspouts and tornadoes. And the fire could be extraordinary displays of lightning, which, in turn, could start forest fires in many places.. All of these events have happened before, but never to the extent of this plague, burning up one third of the earth's vegetation!

The Second Trumpet - Slaughter in the Sea

The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8:8-9)

This judgment could be caused by an asteroid plunging into the sea. Icarus, one of the smaller asteroids known to us is about one mile in diameter and is sometimes described as a small flying mountain. Other asteroids may be as large as Ceres, which is about 480 miles in diameter. Even a small asteroid crashing into one of our oceans would cause utter devastation. The fiery impact would burn and crush all life in a large portion of the ocean, and the resulting tidal waves would be beyond comprehension. These waves could capsize ships in every direction for hundreds of miles.

The Third Trumpet - Souring of the Water

The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water--the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter. (Revelation 8:10-11)

As we now know, a star is a large body of burning gases. Our own Sun is a comparatively small star, though it is 860,000 miles in diameter, compared to the Earth's diameter of 7,900 miles.

The largest known star was recently identified as "The Pistol Star." It is said to be ten million times brighter than our Sun, and is big enough to fill the orbit of Earth. It unleashes as much energy in six seconds as our Sun does in one year!

This means, of course, that a star can not "fall" to the Earth, though the Earth could presumably "fall" into the Sun. However, the Greek word for star is aster, from which we get our word asteroid and the name "Esther." Thus, it is not a star as we know it, but a large asteroid that is in view here. As in the previous plague, the asteroid strikes earth, but, in this case, on land, causing widespread destruction and poisoning of the waters in a large area.

A "Falling Star" can also describe one of the angels, as in Revelation 9:1. In this judgment it seems more reasonable to expect an asteroid than an angel.

The Fourth Trumpet - Smiting of the Planets

The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!" (Revelation 8:12-13)

This judgment affects the entrance of light from space. The amount of light from the sun, moon and stars is diminished by one third. This could be a description of what, in our generation, has been called "nuclear winter." One of the most serious side-effects of a nuclear war would be the wide-spread burning of cities and forests and the resulting soot and smoke reaching the stratosphere. This diminishing of the Sun's radiation could cause the average temperature of the Earth to cool between 18 and 36 degrees, resulting in crop failures and great ecological damage.

Alternatively, we cannot rule out that the actual light and heat output from the sun might be diminished by God during this judgment of mankind.

The eagle flying through the heavens with a message of woe is most likely a symbolic image of an angelic being. The three-fold repetition of "woe" is a Biblical way of intensifying the terrible nature of the impending doom soon to follow.

In Revelation 4:7 one of the faces of the Four Living Creatures was the face of an eagle. The message is a warning of the dreadful nature of the next three trumpet judgments.

The Fifth Trumpet - Striking by Locusts

The Diabolical Pit

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. (Revelation 9:1-2)

In this case the falling star is actually an angelic being. Satan fits this description best since He was created as the Anointed Cherub, a position of prominence among the angels (Ezekiel 28:14 Isaiah 14:4-17 and Ezekiel 28:12-19 are addressed to earthly rulers, but obviously refer to Satan's own history and work since he controlled the human rulers. Isaiah 14:12 says "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations!"

The Dragon of Revelation 12 is the Devil, another name for Satan (v.9). He is seen there sweeping away a third of the stars (angels) of heaven, and waging war against God, then being cast out of heaven (vv. 7-9, 12-13).

Satan is given the key, presumably from Jesus Christ, who, according to Revelation 1:18 holds the keys of death and Hades. This key to the Abyss might well be one of these keys.

The Demonic Plague

Their Actions

And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. (Revelation 9:3-6)

Once the Abyss, or Bottomless Pit is opened, its demonic inhabitants are set loose for the purpose of torturing people. Like locusts, they are numerous and destructive. Like scorpions, they inflict pain. But they are not allowed to kill. Here, as in the whole book of Revelation, God's sovereignty is seen. He sets the limits of what is permitted. (Job 2:6; 1 Corinthians 10:13)

Those who have the seal of God on their foreheads can not be harmed by these demonic mutations. Some take this to mean all believers, since we are sealed by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). However, it probably refers to the 144,000 servants of God from Revelation 7:3 who are marked or sealed on their foreheads before any further plagues were permitted.

The pain inflicted by this judgment is so severe that men who are afflicted would rather die than suffer the continuous torment (five months), but they are not allowed to take the easy course of death. This length of time may be allowed by God to give men the opportunity to repent, though it appears from the last verses of this chapter that none of them do (Revelation 9:19-20). Those who have hardened their heart against God would probably not even repent in hell itself.

Their Appearance

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. (Revelation 9:7-10)

Further information is given about these malignant creatures. Each description is symbolic of some aspect of their power and activity.

They are like horses prepared for battle: descriptive of strength. They seem to have crowns of gold, standing for power and authority, yet limited by God that they may not kill their victims. Human faces imply intelligence. Hair like a woman's hair would be totally unnatural for insect-like monsters and would add to the confusion about their nature. The lion's teeth picture ferocity, breastplates of iron show that they are invincible. Like normal locusts, they have wings. Wings symbolize mobility and speed. Because of their extraordinary powers, their sound in flight is loud and terrifying, like horses and chariots in battle.

The Destructive Potentate

They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon. The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come. Revelation 9:11-12

Perhaps the most terrifying aspect of this fifth trumpet judgment is that these monstrosities are actually the demons which have been imprisoned in the Abyss (Luke 8:31; Jude 6). They have a leader of their fallen ranks, named Abaddon, or "Destroyer." This is a Hebrew word which is used in connection with hell, and normally refers to it as the place of destruction (Job 26:6; Proverbs 15:11; 27:20). It occurs only here as the name of a person. Apollyon is the exact Greek equivalent of the same name. This name is found only here.

The Sixth Trumpet - Slaying of One-third of the Population

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.

A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Revelation 9:9-13)

The Sixth Trumpet is also the Second Woe. It is a judgment of terrible magnitude. It begins with the release of four evil angels (demons) from the area of the Euphrates River, the approximate location of the early evil empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Assyria. They are allowed to kill a third of the people on the Earth. They accomplish this is by mobilizing a force of 200 million soldiers. It is only in recent times that it would be conceivable to raise an army of that size. Today China has that many people who could serve as soldiers.

Each of these 200 million troops has equipment resembling modern weaponry, with fire, smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. They employ horses, symbolic of modern tanks, with "tails" able to inflict injury.

Even after all the agony and death inflicted by these judgments, the survivors are not willing to repent or to stop worshipping demons and idols. There is a process of hardening one's heart. It is illustrated in the case of Pharaoh during the days of Moses. He hardened His heart repeatedly. As a result, God actually hardened it more (Exodus 8:19, 32; 9:12,34; 10:1).

This hardening is explained in Romans 1:21-32. It starts with a conscious decision not to honor God, but to honor themselves instead. This results in idolatry. Idolatry in our age can take many forms. The word means "to worship what can be seen." Some practice idolatry in the ancient way of venerating a man-made image of something that represents their false god. In New Age religious thought there is worship of the creation itself, such as "Mother Earth," or use of sacred objects, such as crystals. Other people, who do not consider themselves religious at all, often venerate material possessions: in essence, worshipping materialism and wealth.

Idols are not devoid of power to influence men, the Apostle Paul tells us that demonic, destructive powers come into play when we give ourselves to any master except Yeshua.

Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. (1 Corinthians 10:19-20)

God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), but when man's rebellion has reached a certain point, He "gives them over" to their lusts and degrading passions.

Since the Trumpet judgments appear to take place during the Great Tribulation, the second half of the seven years of the Tribulation, these people will have received the Mark of The Beast, which is the unforgivable act of worship of Antichrist.(Revelation 14:9-11; 20:4). This also helps to explain why none of them are willing to repent.

The Seventh Trumpet - Sovereignty of God

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great--and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm. (Revelation 11:15-19)

The Seventh Trumpet, like the Seventh Seal, does not introduce an activity on earth, but looks to Heaven in anticipation of the next series of events. In this case, the next step is God taking His great power and beginning to reign on earth. This last trumpet introduces the events leading up to the Battle of Armageddon.

The great earthquake mentioned in this passage is probably the same earthquake that marks the Sixth Seal (Rev. 6:12-17), the last of the Seven Trumpets (Rev. 11:19), and the last of the Seven Bowls of wrath (Rev. 16:18-21)-- which all run in parallel. (See also Ezekiel 38:19-20 and Zechariah 14:4-5). Many Bible scholars hold that all these scriptures are homing in on one or possibly a connected series of great cataclysmic earthquakes that punctuate the end of the age, the open return of Messiah and the dawning of the Millennial age. Not only does the city of Jerusalem suffer great damage from this earthquake, but "the cities of the nations fall," "And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; and great hailstones, heavy as a hundred-weight, (75 pounds) dropped on men from heaven, till men cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague." according to Revelation 16:19, 20.

As the time approaches for Christ to return, it is also nearing the time for judging the dead and rewarding the faithful (Chapters 20 and 21).

The next few chapters explain important aspects of the total story, but they cannot be taken strictly in chronological order. They focus on particular topics, some of which we have already considered: Israel (Chapter 12), Antichrist and the Mark of the Beast (Chapter 13), the 144,000 sealed ones (chapter 14) (See 144000.), preparations for judgment (Chapters 14-15), and then the Seven Vials (Chapter 16) which are poured out in rapid succession, culminating in Judgment of Babylon (Chapters 17 and 18), the Battle of Armageddon, and the glorious return of Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Chapter 19).

Chapter 13

Armageddon

The awful culmination of the Great Tribulation will be the Battle of Armageddon. This battle gets its name from Revelation 16:14-16. Actually it might be better to speak of the "campaign" of Armageddon, since it is not one single battle but a series of events in which all the nations of the world are drawn in as participants. The word "Armageddon" is formed from the Hebrew words "Har" or mountain, and "Megiddo," a city on a hill--actually a tell--in the northern part of the Holy Land, inland from Mount Carmel (near the modern seaport of Haifa). It is at the "crossroads of the crossroads" where the ancient Via Maris ("Way of the Sea") crosses the central transverse highway of Israel. This commands a view of the Valley of Jezreel, the "breadbasket of Israel." It was a strategic command post for control of the entire area for many centuries. The transverse highway led to the other major caravan route of the day, "The King's Highway." Travelers from Egypt to Syria, Babylon, Persia, and Asia Minor would normally pass this way, and could be taxed by whoever controlled the city. For this reason, the city was often conquered by the various powers which occupied the Holy Land.

Two important issues need to be considered. As may be seen from the following section, Jerusalem is actually the focus of the battle, but Megiddo, is 55 miles away from Jerusalem. This may be understood when the huge numbers of soldiers involved in this battle are considered. This area, Megiddo, and the Valley of Jezreel, (also known as the Plain of Esdraelon) will be the staging area where the multi-national troops will assemble prior to their advance on Jerusalem. Haifa, at the West end of the Valley, is the logical seaport for major troop landings.

The other issue is the question of who is fighting whom in this battle. It is apparent that at the end of his career, Antichrist is fighting against various alliances, and his empire appears to be crumbling. On the other hand, according to Revelation 19, all the forces gathered for that battle will be arrayed together against Jesus Christ. Verse 19 states "Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army." The probable scenario is that Antichrist, realizing that his power is waning, manages to unite all the forces of earth together against their common enemy--The King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Like all non-believers do, they think they can prevail against Him!

This dreadful battle is the subject of many Old and New Testament passages. It is actually a series of inter-related disasters. In this section we will first look at some of the Old Testament predictions about this terrible day. These passages remind us that God's chosen people, Israel, and her capital, Jerusalem are the focus of the campaign. They also show God's compassion for Israel. We will then examine the steps which lead to the battle, and to the glorious return of The Lord Jesus Christ.

Old Testament Previews of The Battle of Armageddon

Zechariah

The post-exilic prophet Zechariah had much to say about the close of the age in which we live. God Himself will fight against those who will gather against Jerusalem.

This is the word of the LORD concerning Israel. The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him, declares: "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem." (Zechariah 12:1-2)

The term on that day used frequently by prophets, is a clue that the passage is referring to the Day of the Lord, i.e. the great tribulation period:

"On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

"On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness," declares the LORD. "I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, 'The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God.'

"On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place.

"The LORD will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah.

"On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them.

"On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem." (Zechariah 12:3-9)

Near the end of the coming tribulation period, Jerusalem is to come under military siege and be overrun by foreign armies one more time. Zechariah announces that this will happen just prior to Messiah's final return to the city,

A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.

Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. (Zechariah 14:1-5)

Daniel

The Book of Daniel is known as "The Apocalypse of The Old Testament." The visions of this book establish the framework of the entire history of evil world empires, from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (and even before), until the final despotic rule of Antichrist. In the ninth chapter there is a brief allusion to the Battle of Armageddon where he will be defeated. This one verse covers three and one half years: from the "middle" of the "seven," until the end of that time.

He [the man of sin] will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (Daniel 9:27)

The eleventh chapter of Daniel apparently foretells some of the activity of Antichrist's military campaigns, leading up to his bold establishment of himself as ruler, and the "abomination of desolation" at the mid-point of the Tribulation. The first twenty verses of this chapter describe the rise of Alexander's Greece (verse 3) at the end of the Medo-Persian era, then the emergence of the Roman Empire as a "King of the North." At verse 21 the scene shifts from the ancient Roman empire to the future appearance of a contemptible person who will seize the kingdom by intrigue (conspiracy).

At the height of his power he will decide to break his covenant with Israel. At that time he will abolish the daily sacrifice (in the newly rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem), and the False Prophet will set up the "abomination of desolation," which Revelation 13:14-15 reveals will be an image of the First Beast which is to be worshipped.

Most conservative commentators find the events of Daniel 11 were fulfilled to some degree by Antiochus Ephiphanes.

The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country.

"At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant.

"His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation." (Daniel 11:28-31)

A great gap or "great parenthesis" is found in Daniel Chapter 11. The first part of this chapter is a long history of ancient rulers, the Selucids and the Ptolemies, who struggled back and forth for many years between one another--with Israel in the middle. At verse 36 there is a sudden break in the text and Scripture leaps over centuries of intervening history down to "the time of the end." Then the final war will begin by a final Egyptian king invading Israel from the South and being met by the opposing forces of the last king of the North.

"The king [man of sin] will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price.

"At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land [Israel]. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas [the Mediterranean and Dead Seas] at the beautiful holy mountain [Jerusalem]. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him." (Daniel 11:36-45)

Joel

The prophet Joel also describes this final invasion,

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand--a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come.

Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste--nothing escapes them. (Joel 2:1-3)

Joel wrote of the approaching invasion of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar in his own day, and also about the final invasion of foreign armies that would come just prior to Messiah's appearance in power and glory. The clue to the end-time application is the phrase "the Day of the LORD" which occurs again at the end of the following section:

They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountain tops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defenses without breaking ranks. They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows.

Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it? (Joel 2:4-11)

God in mercy has previously saved the godly remnant in Israel at the mid-tribulation point and taken them safely to refuge in Petra for the last half of the tribulation period. Still, Yahweh calls to the remaining Jews in Israel to turn to Him, even at the late hour in which they are now living.

Joel's words apply well to both the approaching captivity in Babylon--which was on the near horizon in Joel's day-- but are even more relevant to the situation during the end time period. God pleads with His people to come back to Him, even at the midnight hour.

'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing--grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, 'Spare your people, O LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:12-17)

Joel also foresees the final conversion of Israel at the very last minute--just preceding the final return of Messiah. In mercy and grace God will at that time turn one third of the nation back to himself. In fact the prayers of this remnant are necessary for Messiah's return to His own land for the final time. This eleventh-hour conversion of great numbers of Jews to Messiah could well amount to more than one million new believers coming into the kingdom just as the Messiah is returning to the land for the final time:

Then the LORD will be jealous for his land and take pity on his people. The LORD will reply to them: "I am sending you grain, new wine and oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations. I will drive the northern army far from you, pushing it into a parched and barren land, with its front columns going into the eastern sea and those in the rear into the western sea. And its stench will go up; its smell will rise." Surely he has done great things.

Be not afraid, O land; be glad and rejoice. Surely the LORD has done great things. Be not afraid, O wild animals, for the open pastures are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches. Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

"I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten--the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm--my great army that I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls." (Joel 2:18-32)

Joel's apocalyptic warning is but one of many in the Old Testament which has a double fulfillment. Joel warned against the devastating invasions of Nebuchadnezzar that lay just ahead in his own day. But the Spirit of God also had in mind a greater and more complete fulfillment of this passage at the end of the age in which we now live.

The Seven Vials of God's Wrath

These vial judgments seem to come in rapid succession, leading up to the Battle of Armageddon. Little detail is given, but they are supernatural judgments that seem to affect the whole earth.

The First Vial - Damaging Sores

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."

The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. (Revelation 16:1-2)

The first vial will cause ugly and painful sores. If mankind has the ability to develop biological warfare, just imagine what the Creator could do in this area. The result is painful, but evidently not deadly. Actually, all of these plagues cause torment rather than death.

The Second Vial - Deadly Seas

The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died. (Revelation 16:3)

This is reminiscent of the plague of Exodus 7 in Moses' times, when the Nile River and all the water in Egypt was turned to blood. In this case, it will affect "the sea," meaning at least the Mediterranean, and perhaps all of the oceans of the earth.

The Third Vial - Deplorable Springs

The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve."

And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments." (Revelation 16:4-7)

This judgment is a continuation of the last one, spreading the horror of bloody water from the seas to all sources of water. As repugnant as this plague is, it is just because rebellious mankind has shed the blood of the saints and the prophets.

The Fourth Vial - Dangerous Sunlight

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. (Revelation 16:8-9)

Many natural causes could account for this scorching by the Sun. Violent eruptions of the Sun itself, a slight change of orbit, or even depletion of the ozone layer around the earth, could cause this.

It is very significant that, even with these stern reminders of the power and anger of God, rebellious people still refuse to repent.

The Fifth Vial - Dark Seizure

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done. (Revelation 16:10-11)

Coming on the heels of terrible burns from the Sun, there will be complete darkness and the cold that comes from this lack of light. Chills are common among those who have suffered burns, and this will make their situation worse yet. However, instead of repenting, mankind will curse God.

The Sixth Vial - Drying of the Strait

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. (Revelation 16:12)

These events will lead up to the great confrontation with Christ: The Battle of Armageddon. The drying of the Euphrates River by angelic agencies will make it easier for far eastern troops to enter the Middle East to prepare for the battle.

Demonic Spirits

Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. (Revelation 16:13-16)

The invitation to this battle is not by conventional political alliances, but by a demonic seduction.

The Seventh Vial - Destructive Scourge

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men.

And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible. (Revelation 16:17-21)

This judgment is identical to the Great Earthquake which will be described below.

The "Campaign" of Armageddon

As we have said, it is obvious that the final conflict of the Tribulation is not one simple battle, but a complex series of military movements and engagements. Biblical scholars have proposed a variety of possible steps in this process. It is not wise to be dogmatic about the exact sequence. Like the prophecies of the first coming of Messiah, the various aspects were known, but there were many ways it could be envisioned. No one could have written the specific order and details of the Gospel before Christ came to fulfill the predictions about His earthly life and ministry.

Here are key elements of Christ's second coming, and a proposed sequence. Some of these features have already been discussed, and some of them will be explained more fully in the next chapter.

1 - Antichrist will invade Israel, then take his troops to the South (North Africa, including Egypt and Libya - Daniel 11:40-43). His economic dictatorship will be challenged, involving military activity during the second half of the Tribulation. Toward the end, the "King of the South" (probably Egypt, with Libya and others) will rebel. He will bring his troops through Israel, and quell the disturbances.

2 - Antichrist will be disturbed by news from the East and the North, so he will return to establish a staging area in the Valley of Armageddon ("between the seas and the beautiful holy mountain" - Mt. Zion - Daniel 11:44-45). He will return to Israel and set up his command post in the bread basket of Israel. The Valley of Armageddon is just 20 miles inland from the port city of Haifa, through which sea-borne armies of the world can enter.

3 - Kings and armies of all nations will be summoned to the battlefield. The Euphrates River will be dried up to enable the huge armies from the East to come (Revelation 9:14-16; 16:12-16). In a last futile effort to unify the armies of the Earth, and to divert attention from the fact that his strangle-hold on world powers is weakening, Antichrist will declare war against Jesus Christ Himself, the common enemy of all the debased people of the Tribulation. The object of his wrath will be the chosen people in Jerusalem.

4 - Destruction of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:1-3; 14:1-2). Jerusalem will be devastated by the overpowering might of Antichrist's forces.

Many fine Bible teachers, including the late Ray C. Stedman, see the fulfillment at this point of the war of Ezekiel 38 and 39.

In this view, the war, one of the campaigns of the Last War, will be against Israel, and will be provoked by Russia and her allies. See Daniel by Ray C. Stedman, (<http://pbc.org/dp/stedman/daniel>).

Other respected prophecy scholars believe that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, Antichrist will mount a futile attempt to attack the protected remnant who have fled, probably to the Petra/Bozra area (Micah 2:12; Jeremiah 49:13-14). Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, following the lead by Arnold Fruchtenbaum, believe this will be part of the campaign of Armageddon. Ray Stedman held to this view as well.

5 - Ominous signs will turn men's attention to the skies (Luke 21:25-27). Jesus will appear in the heavens, coming as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, utterly destroying the gathered enemies with the sword from His mouth (Revelation 19:11-16). As suggested before, He would likely have been present on the Earth since the time of His parousia ("coming") at the Rapture, appearing and disappearing as needed for the benefit of persecuted believers, like He did before His ascension. But at this momentous event He will make His presence known in such a way that "every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7).

The annihilation of Christ's enemies will include the harvest judgments (of wheat and of grapes) described in the next chapter.

6 - Jesus will appear, blood-stained from the battle, to the sheltered remnant at Bozra, near Petra, presumably to lead them from exile, back to the Holy City (Isaiah 63:1-6; Micah 2:12-13).

7 - When Christ's feet actually touch ground it will be at the Mount of Olives, and this event will trigger the great Earth-changing earthquake which is discussed below (Zechariah 14:4-5; Acts 1:9-12; Revelation 16:17-19).

8 - Babylon will be destroyed (Revelation chapters 17 and 18). Revelation 16:19 implies that the destruction of Babylon takes place at the time of the great earthquake. There is considerable debate about whether or not the Babylonian system of world commerce and spiritual prostitution will have anything to do with a literal, rebuilt city of Babylon in Iraq. However, since Saddam Hussein, the greatest builder of our time, has managed to restore the city somewhat, and plans to do more, only time will tell how this facet of the prophecy will unfold. Isaiah 13:1-20 indicates that the literal city of Babylon still has a devastating destruction coming, after which, it will never be inhabited again. Zechariah 5:5-11 also indicates that there will be future "wickedness" in a restored city of Babylon.

More likely both the destruction of the literal city of Babylon (and the nation of Iraq) as well as the destruction of "Mystery Babylon" are implied. This was Ray Stedman's view. The latter (Revelation 17 and 18) aspects of Babylon include the apostate church in league with the western confederacy of nations, and also the world-wide institutions of trade and commerce which are part of the present world order. False religion sprang from the ancient city of Babylon after the Flood, and now has polluted the entire world, spiritually speaking. But commerce, trade and economic systems in the world, including capitalism, have likewise become corrupted and must be replaced by righteous means of economics under Messiah's reign.

Harmony of Passages In Revelation About Armageddon

The Book of Revelation can not be taken in strict chronological order. The various sequences of events, such as the Messages to the Seven Churches, the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets, etc. are chronological, but each section stands alone to describe some aspect of the future. (See the charts in the Appendices to see how these segments fit together.)

The Battle of Armageddon certainly comes at the end of the seven years of the Tribulation, but references to it may be found in six places in the Book of Revelation. It serves as the end point of several of the separate sequences found in the book. A study of these six references helps us understand the total picture of the future.

You will notice that most of the Scripture references in this section are also quoted in another place. We repeat them here for the sake of clarity.

The Sixth Seal - Revelation 6:12-17

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

This first description comes very early in the Book of Revelation, but it is near the end of the Seven Seals. The Seventh Seal - Silence in Heaven - is not an event in itself, but is the introduction to the next segment of the book, the Seven Trumpets. "When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." (Revelation 8:1)

Signs in the heavens and a great, geography-changing earthquake are part of the description of the Sixth Seal, indicating that it actually does take place at the end of the seven years. Some commentators take this to be an earlier occurrence of these things, but if that were the case, the Battle of Armageddon with its accompanying signs would be anticlimactic.

From this it may be concluded that the Seven Seals cover the whole period of the Tribulation. This is perfectly fitting since it is given at the beginning of the events of this period, and serves as an overview of the entire seven years.

The Sixth Trumpet - Revelation 9:13-21; 11:13

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.

A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or

walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Revelation 9:13-21)

Everything about this battle is too grand to be a minor campaign of the Tribulation Period. It can not be the final carnage of the Battle of Armageddon, since all the destruction of that climactic event will be accomplished by Jesus Christ Himself! (See Revelation 19:11-21 below.)

It could, however, very well be a major aspect of the military events which frustrate Antichrist and cause him to refocus the attention of all the world's forces on their common enemy in Israel: The Lord Jesus Christ. (See notes on Daniel 11:36-45 above.)

It is also very significant that this battle is called the Second Woe. The Seventh Trumpet, which is The Third Woe, in chapter 11, is Christ taking control of the kingdoms of the world and the coming judgments. This, of course will take place immediately after the Battle of Armageddon.

The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great--and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm. (Revelation 11:14-19)

The Winepress of God's Wrath - Revelation 14:14-20

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe."

The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia. (Revelation 14:14-20)

This is the next place in the Book of Revelation which evidently refers to the Battle of Armageddon. It is called "the great wine press of the wrath of God" (v.19). The battlefield is some 200 miles long! There will be blood up to the horses' bridles (v.20). We have a picture given to us of utter destruction!

Sixth and Seventh Vials of God's Wrath - Revelation 16:12-21

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible. (Revelation 16:12-21)

Again, the similarities between this passage and the earlier ones in Revelation can only be explained by the fact that this pivotal event is given in relation to several separate sequences so that the reader will know how to put them all together. The Battle of Armageddon is the common anchor of all of these segments.

War Against The Lamb - Revelation 17:14

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

This verse is part of the description of the ten kings who will form Antichrist's governmental alliance.

The Coming of Christ as King of Kings - Revelation 19:11-21

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. (Revelation 19:11-21)

In the next chapter we will discuss the Glorious Return of Jesus Christ to the Earth. As this passage shows, His coming in glory will take place at the very end of the Battle of Armageddon. Antichrist and kings of earth will be assembled to make war against Him. Antichrist and the False Prophet will be thrown in to the Lake of Fire, and rest of the rebels will be killed with the sword from Christ's mouth, which is symbolic of His Word.

Signs in the Sun, Moon and Stars -- Luke

The remainder of the events described below either happen at the same time, or in rapid sequence.

"Immediately after the distress of those days "'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31)

"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke 21:25-27)

Jesus Himself gave this sign which actually accompanies His return. Notice that there is a gathering of the elect associated with this event also. This can not be the Rapture of the church. As shown before, the church, as such, is never mentioned during the Tribulation period. This event, immediately after His return to Earth, will be the gathering of the believers who are left on the Tribulation-torn planet.

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

"'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

"'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" (Matthew 13:24-30)

Believers will be "gathered into the barn" so they can populate the Millennial Kingdom which will begin immediately after this. Non-believers will also be gathered together for destruction at this time so that the Millennium may begin with only believers. More will be said about this judgment in the next chapter.

The Great Earthquake

When we listed the various portions of Revelation which refer to the Battle of Armageddon, it was obvious that one of the major aspects of this great judgment would be an earthquake of such magnitude that there has never been such a great one before! It will literally sink every island and shake down the mountains, and will transform the geography of the Earth completely. (Revelation 6:5; Revelation 9:19; Revelation 11:13, Revelation 16:18-21).

The Promised Land, in the providence of God, lies immediately adjacent to the African Rift Zone, the deepest known break in the earth's crust. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah at the Southeastern shores of the Dead Sea in the time of Abraham (c. 2100-1900 BC) is vividly described in Genesis 19. Archaeological research suggests that a great earthquake opened the rift zone releasing "brimstone" (sulfur) and volatile petroleum gases which caused a terrible firestorm.

In Zechariah 14:4-5 we are told:

On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

Consider this amazing Old Testament prophecy in the light of what the angel promised the Disciples on the day that Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives,

"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

This ultimate earthquake will evidently be preceded by others, leading up to "the big one." Jesus gave earthquakes as one of the signs of the "beginning of birth pains," the period before the beginning of the Tribulation, between His First and Second Advents. (Matthew 24:7-8).

The great earthquake of Ezekiel 38:19-20 could be a fore shock, coinciding with the war at the Second Seal of Revelation 6, or it could yet be another reference to the Battle of Armageddon, depending on where this battle occurs. There are good Bible scholars on both sides of this issue.

While some people seek to demonstrate that current earthquake activity is increasing dramatically, there is need for caution on this point, earthquakes are not yet increasing. For balance on this issue, see Appendix- Earthquakes, Signs and Wonders.

Chapter 14

Coming of The King of Kings

We come at last to the climax of the Tribulation Period, and the end of the Battle of Armageddon. Jesus Christ will literally, physically, and visibly, return to the Earth as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The last two segments of the previous chapter were devoted to the Signs in the Sun, Moon and Stars, and the Great Earthquake. These events happen virtually at the same time dramatically punctuating Christ's glorious appearing. Now, when we gaze at the Lord Himself, all the wondrous events in the heavens and on the Earth are suddenly not important!

The Glorious Return of Christ

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. (Revelation 19:11-13)

Jesus Himself spoke of this magnificent event. As stated earlier, Jesus did not mention the Rapture in His Olivet Discourse, but He spoke plainly of His return in glory.

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, [probably a reference to the Shekinah glory of the Old Testament] with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (Matthew 24:30-31--See also Luke 21:27)

Jesus also said that angels would come with Him in Matthew 16:27; and Matthew 25. In the context of those passages, especially Matthew 25, the angels will be employed to gather the nations for the judgment of Sheep and Goats which will be discussed later.

The Church Returns With her Lord

The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. (Revelation 19:14)

In the Bible, angels are sometimes dressed in white. But these riders are mentioned as a separate group from the angels. Like the Lord Jesus, they are sitting on white horses.

Earlier in Revelation there are strong clues about who these people might be:

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. (Revelation 3:4-5)

In this passage, the message to the Church at Sardis, those dressed in white are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are those whose names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life!

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (Revelation 3:18)

These are self-righteous members of the apostate church. They do not realize that spiritually they are "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." What they need is salvation, which is expressed as gold, as white clothes, and as salve for their eyes. This is the church to which Jesus needed to say:

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20)

The white linen is symbolic of righteousness. It is not self-righteousness, because Isaiah 64:6 says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."

The Apostle Paul spoke of a righteousness, not of our own, "but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (Philippians 3:9)

Righteousness is a gift of God for those who have put their faith in Christ. It is seen as part of the "Armor of God" in Ephesians 6: "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place" (v. 14).

The white clothing of this heavenly army is not the only evidence that believers of the church age will return with Christ. In Colossians 3:4, the Apostle Paul confidently asserted that, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

A similar thought was expressed by Paul to the believers at Thessalonica.

May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes (parousia) with all his holy ones. (1 Thessalonians 3:13)

The expression "holy ones" is the Greek word *hagios* or "saints," which is Paul's normal description of believers in Christ. (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1, etc.) Notice that it cannot refer to the martyred Saints of the Tribulation, because their resurrection is specifically stated to be at Christ's coming, at the beginning of the Millennium, or thousand year reign of Christ. (Revelation 20:5)

It should also be noted that there is a specific purpose in our coming with Christ at His Glorious Return. Revelation 20:6 explains it this way: "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years." The "holy ones" who return with Christ from Heaven, and the resurrected martyrs from the Tribulation period will assist Christ the King of Kings.

The Objects of His Wrath

Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. (Revelation 19:15)

This passage should be correlated with Revelation 14:14-20. In that passage two metaphors portray Christ's conquering activities. Both of these are compared to the harvesting of crops. The first metaphor is that of harvesting wheat ("a sharp sword"). The second is that of harvesting grapes ("He treads the winepress").

These harvests are final, concluding judgments since a very large fraction of the total population of the earth has already been destroyed by cascades of civil war, famine, plagues and cosmic disasters that hit earth like trip-hammer blows in the second half of the tribulation period.

It has been proposed by some Bible scholars that two different groups are in view in these two harvest events. It is not a matter about which we can be dogmatic, but there are interesting possibilities in this theory. From this point of view, the first harvest (of wheat) is that of the nations of the world, while the second harvest (of grapes) relates to Israel.

Harvest of Wheat

Returning to the descriptions of Revelation 14, we read first about the harvest of wheat.

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. (Revelation 14:14-16)

Destruction of Gentile Unbelievers

The first sickle and the references to the reaping of the harvest of the earth indicates the reaping of the wheat and the tares from the nations. Jesus foretold this in Matthew 13.

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' " "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' " "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" (Matthew 13:24-30)

This is a final separation of unbelievers from believers outside of Israel.

The tares or weeds are "harvested" first, and tied in bundles to be burned. When Christ comes in His glory, He will first annihilate His enemies who are gathered against Him at the Battle of Armageddon. Then He will gather and eliminate the rest of these non-believers to prevent them from entering into the Millennial Kingdom which He will immediately install. Physically, all unbelievers of that time will then be dead. But what of their spirits? They are gathered "to be burned." This implies a still-future event of "burning." This will be fulfilled at the time of The Great White Throne Judgment which is discussed later. (Revelation 20:11-15)

The wheat is then gathered into a barn. This is descriptive of collecting the scattered remnant of believers from their hiding places. Perhaps they will be brought to Jerusalem and other key locations to fulfill their role of occupying and replenishing the Millennial Kingdom.

Some modern commentators have tried to equate this gathering into a barn with the Rapture. But, in addition to the many problems associated with placing the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation, the imagery and timing of this gathering just do not fit the Rapture. The image of gathering believers into a barn is meaningful for living survivors of the Tribulation who are being prepared to inhabit the Millennium, but it is not an adequate picture of the glorious eternal place promised by Jesus to His believers in John 14:2-3.

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

The timing of this parable is another strong argument against this gathering being a reference to the Rapture. The unbelievers (the weeds or tares) are gathered first! Then the believers (wheat) are gathered.

This series of events is also foretold by the prophet Joel. First Joel discusses the judgment of the nations on the basis of their treatment of God's people the Jews.

'In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine that they might drink. (Joel 3:1-3)

This is the same judgment we know as the "Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats" from Matthew 25. This will be a final evaluation by Jesus of the survivors of the last great terrible war, and they fall into two classes:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)

Joel relates the assembly of the nations to the Battle of Armageddon. It is God who draws these armies into His land.

Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, 'I am strong!' Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, O LORD!

'Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. (Joel 3:9-12)

The Valley of Jehoshaphat is most probably the Kidron Valley between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. This, of course, is not the place where the battle is fought, but the place where this judgment takes place after the battle.

In Revelation this great event is called "the great supper of God" when it is announced ahead of time by an angel. It is so-called because of the hordes of vultures and other carrion eaters who come to devour the corpses littering the land.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great." (Revelation 19:17-18)

The Harvest of Grapes

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe."

The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.

They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia. (Revelation 14:17-20)

Destruction of the non-believers Remaining in Israel

Likewise, Israel is to be judged:

Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow--so great is their wickedness!

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 13:13-14)

The judgment of Jewish people alive at the time of this future battle was also foretold by Zechariah. Of that time, he said that one-third of Israel would believe, but two thirds would still be unbelievers. He used a different metaphor to describe the same judgment.

"Two Thirds" and "One Third" of All Israel

In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'" (Zechariah 13:8-9)

The conversion of one third of the Jews in Israel (if it happened today) would mean well over a million and a half converts to the true and living God. Zechariah says the new converts will be called on to undergo a terrible trial of their faith during the final days of the great military campaign of Armageddon involving as it will as many as 200 million soldiers from the armies of the nations. While the believing remnant in Edom "passes under the rod" of God's merciful, evaluating judgment, the eleventh-hour converts in Israel must "pass through the fire."

Though our own nation, the United States, contains a professing Christian population that appears to number many tens of millions of believers, it is more realistic to say that the "believing remnant" in America today is perhaps only 5 to 10% of those professing faith in Jesus Christ.

Thus the future large-scale conversion of Jews to belief in Yeshua at the close of the age will represent a very great and marvelous work of grace by the God of Israel. The end result of Yeshua's work in Israel at the end of the age will be a completely righteous nation of believers chosen to be the head of all the nations.

The Return of the Remnant from Edom

What happens to the believing remnant which had fled to Petra earlier? One vivid Old Testament picture is that of Messiah coming from Bozra (near Petra) with the remnant. Isaiah foretells this event. (Isaiah 63). The imagery is that of Yeshua as the greater Moses nurturing the flock of Israel at Petra and bringing them back into the land for the last time. (Micah 2:12-13)

God's Dialogues with the Messiah

The latter chapters of Isaiah contain a remarkable series of dialogues between God the Father and His servant the Messiah, or between the prophet and Messiah. In Chapter 42, Messiah is God's humble servant who will not only save Israel but aid the Gentiles and bring world-wide justice:

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope." (Isaiah 42:1-4)

In Isaiah 43-44, Messiah is seen as restoring Israel by forgiving them of all their sins and delivering Jacob from all his enemies. In Chapter 44, Cyrus the Mede is designated and called by name (!) many decades before he was born. God chose him to aid in the restoration of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. Messiah gives a personal description of his commission from the Father and contains an intimate discussion between God and His Messiah which reveals much about the content of the prayers of Jesus with His Father during his time on earth which would come 700 years later.

In Isaiah 50, Messiah is the true Israel who fulfills all that the nation had failed to attain because of persistent rebellion and disobedience. In Isaiah 52:13 through 53. Messiah is the suffering servant of the Lord whose death and resurrection are vividly foretold.

In Chapter 59, Messiah is Israel's goel, or kinsman-redeemer:

Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.

According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes; he will repay the islands their due.

From the west, men will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD drives along.

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD.

"As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the LORD. (Isaiah 59:15-21)

In Isaiah Chapter 63, the dialogue takes the following form. Isaiah as the observer appears to be standing on the Mt. of Olives in Jerusalem in the midst of the final battles there:

ISAIAH:

Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? (Isaiah 63:1)

MESSIAH, THE WARRIOR KING AND KINSMAN-REDEEMER:

**"It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."
Isaiah 63:1 (cont.)**

ISAIAH:

Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? (Isaiah 63:2)

MESSIAH:

"I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come." (Isaiah 63:3-4)

The blood spattering His garments is not the blood of His crucifixion, for that work on the cross was completely finished and ended 2000 years earlier. The blood is that of His enemies, slain in battle, and especially the blood of apostate Jews who have joined the armies of Antichrist to oppose Him.

Micah foretold the same thing.

"I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people.

One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head." (Micah 2:12-13)

The Final Conversion of Israel

Israel's national prayer for their Messiah to come and to forgive them is found in Hosea Chapters 5 and 6. Reputable scholars believe this prayer must be prayed by the nation as a precondition for their national salvation in the coming of Yeshua the Messiah to save them:

Then I [Yahweh] will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."

"Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him.

As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." (Hosea 5:15-6:3)

Earlier we traced the escape of a remnant of some thousands--perhaps tens of thousands--of believing Jews from Jerusalem to Petra which will take at the time of the desecration of the Third Temple at the mid-point of the tribulation period.

Yet as the age comes to a full close many passages of Scripture speak of the national conversion of Israel. We have seen that the imagery of the trampling out of the vineyard and the blood like grape juice flowing as high as a horse's bridle up and down the length of Israel will be Jewish blood as God judges the apostate majority of Jews in the land of Israel. In this terrible time for Israel, during the campaign of Armageddon, millions of men from invading Gentile armies in Israel will also meet their violent end. Many unbelieving Jews in Israel will undoubtedly die during this struggle as well. All the while the terrible judgments from God depicted in the Book of the Revelation will devastate the entire earth. Most of mankind will perish and the great infrastructures of the past thousand of years of civilization will be destroyed. The earth will be devastated and wasted.

Jeremiah's words at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians have a double fulfillment at the time of the end. Here is the beginning of chapter 4:

"If you will return, O Israel, return to me," declares the LORD. "If you put your detestable idols out of my sight and no longer go astray, and if in a truthful, just and righteous way you swear, 'As surely as the LORD lives,' then the nations will be blessed by him and in him they will glory." (Jeremiah 40:1-2)

Yet Paul argues in Romans 11 that in spite of all this, "all Israel will be saved."

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time

disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:25-36)

Paul is careful to make clear that he is not speaking of each and every Jew being converted, but true Israel is limited to those who ultimately believe in Yeshua within the nation. Just how many Jews will be saved at the very end of the age? Zechariah seems to give the clue.

Israel's National Mourning for Yeshua

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, and all the rest of the clans and their wives. (Zechariah 12:10-14)

The Final Outcome of Christ's Glorious Return

Returning to the key passage about the return of Christ in glory, we see that He will come back for the purpose of literally reigning on the Earth. As seen above, in the Harvest Judgments, He will first annihilate all the ungodly so that He may begin His reign with people who trust in Him.

His Authority To Reign

On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:16)

In His first coming to earth as Suffering Savior, His right to the Throne of David was thoroughly established, even though, to the disappointment of some like Judas, He did not come to reign, but to die. When He comes the second time in power and great glory, He will not be entitled merely to the Davidic kingship over Israel, but to the sovereign control of all of the kings and lords (other rulers) of the entire planet which He created, and for which He died. We will briefly discuss this golden period in the next section of the book.

The Death of His Enemies

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. (Revelation 19:17-19, 21)

This has already been discussed at length, but we should notice once again that all of the carnage of this dreadful battle will be done by Christ Himself, using the incomprehensible power of His word (the sword that came out of His mouth). His words, which were sufficient to instantly bring the worlds into being, will be more than adequate to make an instant end of this ugly war.

According to Hebrews 9:27, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (KJV) The death of these rebels is not the end of their story. They will still face the Great White Throne Judgment which will be discussed in the next section.

By contrast, two humans, though they are totally controlled by evil spirits, are judged immediately. They are Antichrist ("the first Beast") and his False Prophet, (the "second beast" --Rev. 13).

The Fate of The Unholy Trinity

But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. (Revelation 19:20)

The two Beasts of Revelation 13 - Antichrist and the False Prophet will be immediately dispatched to the Lake of Fire. This is the same place where the ungodly will be sent for eternal punishment at the White Throne judgment which takes place later (Revelation 20:11-15 - see the next chapter).

The Apostle Paul foretold Antichrist's doom in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 where it is said that the Lord Jesus will overthrow him "with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming"

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. (Revelation 20:1-3)

Satan's fate is different than that of his pawns, Antichrist and the False Prophet. He will be cast into the Abyss (the "Bottomless Pit") for a thousand years. He has one last episode of rebellion left to play out at the end of The Millennium. He will instigate one last war--it will be discussed in the next section also.

What an incredible scene is presented to the student of prophecy at the end of the Battle of Armageddon. It is a scene of mind-numbing destruction after man's battles against man, supernatural plagues on the Earth, the greatest earthquake of all time, and the sudden death of all of Christ's enemies! But it is also a scene of breathtaking glory: the glory of God the Son, standing in all His holiness and righteousness, demonstrating His everlasting love to the faithful who have survived these seven dreadful years. He is poised-- ready to rebuild a new perfect environment for those who have remained true to Him. He is surrounded by the holy angels, and all the saints of the Church Age who will help Him.

This is not the "End of the World," but the beginning of new and better things! There is much more to come, and for those who trust in Christ, it is all good!

Part IV
After The Tribulation

This last section is a brief summary of those prophetic events which come after The Tribulation. This is an epilogue to the main issue of the book: the distinctions between Israel, The church and The Saints of the Tribulation.

Chapter 15

The Millennium and Beyond

"The Millennium" means the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. It will begin when He returns from Heaven as "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords." It will be a glorious time when all of nature will be restored to an environment that is so wonderful that it reminds us of the conditions which prevailed in the Garden of Eden.

Overview of The Millennium

This is such a big subject that whole books have been written on this topic alone. Here we will simply outline some of the main teachings of God's Word about it.

Progress of the Kingdom

The Kingdom was PROMISED to the patriarchs

Abraham was given a promise by God that He would make of Abraham a great nation and give to His descendants the land of Canaan. He was also told that through his offspring all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 22:15-18).

The Abrahamic Covenant was reconfirmed to Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 26:3-4,23-24; 28:13-14).

David was told by God that his offspring would be given an eternal throne (2 Samuel 7:8-17, 24, 29; 1 Chronicles 17:7-15).

The Kingdom was ESTABLISHED by Jesus

John the Baptist announced that the Kingdom of God was near (Mark 1:15).

The Kingdom exists now and is in abeyance at the present. Jesus taught much about the Kingdom of Heaven. It was the theme of His preaching (Matthew 4:17). The Sermon on the Mount explained the principles of the Kingdom (Matthew chapters 5-7). His parables were given to explain various aspects of the Kingdom (Matthew 13). He related His teaching about future things (The Olivet Discourse) to the Kingdom (Matthew chapters 24-25). And He stated during His trial that His Kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:36-38; 19:19).

The Kingdom will be DEMONSTRATED during The Millennium

The Millennium will usher in the beginning of the physical reign of Christ (Revelation 19:11-20:6).

The Kingdom will be Fully DEVELOPED in the New Heaven/New Earth

The eternal Kingdom will be established when God creates a New Heaven and a New Earth (Revelation chapters 21-22).

Aspects of The Millennium

Geography

The second coming of Christ--when the Lord stands upon the Mount of Olives--will be accompanied by a great world wide earthquake so that "the cities of the nations fell and every island flees away." The topography of the land of Israel and the rest of the Earth will be drastically altered. The literal meaning of Isaiah 40:4 will come to pass (Zechariah 14:4).

Jerusalem will rise to become the capital of the Earth (Zechariah 14:9-11).

Ecology

Starting with the Millennium, there will be a removal of the Curse upon the earth which began with Adam's fall and continues down to the present unabated (Romans 8:18-23).

The Earth, and especially Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel) will become "like the Garden of Eden" (Ezekiel 36:35).

The Desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose (Isaiah 35:1), and the parched ground will become a pool (Isaiah 35:7).

The Trees...shall clap their hands, and instead of thorns there will be trees (Isaiah 55:12-13).

The earth will be fruitful, and there will be no famine (Ezekiel 34:27-29).

Animals will once again be friendly to one another and to humans. The wolf will lie down with the lamb, and the leopard with the baby goats. Little children will be able to play near serpents without fear (Isaiah 11:6-8). Wolves And lambs will feed together, and even the Lions will eat straw like the bullock (Isaiah 65:25).

Health

People who live during the Millennium will not die young. A person one hundred years old will be considered a child, since, presumably, a person could live throughout the 1000 years in the restored environment (Isaiah 65:20-23).

Sickness will not be a problem because "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in its wings" (Malachi 4:2).

Later yet, after the New Earth is established, the Tree of Life will be accessible to mankind. Its leaves are "for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2).

Politics

Jesus Christ will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and of the increase of His government there will be no end (Revelation 19:16; Isaiah 9:6-7),

Jerusalem will be the capital of the World, and all nations will come to Jerusalem. It will be considered the center of the nations (Isaiah 2:2-4; Ezekiel 5:5).

David will reign as king over Israel, and presumably, each nation will also have its godly king who will answer to Jesus Christ, the King of Kings (Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25).

The church will share with her Lord the rule over the Gentile nations (Revelation 4:4, 10-11; 20:4, 6).

No sin or rebellion will be allowed, because the Lord will withhold rain and send plagues on any who would rebel (Zechariah 14:16-19).

Jesus Christ will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 12:5; 19:15 - Greek: "shepherdize"). This means a strong central rule to bring prompt justice and quick control over unruly nations and individuals who revolt against God.

Sinners will be born on the earth during the Millennium. Satan will be chained and therefore not free to seduce, to tempt, and to deceive, but the flesh will still manifest itself showing how complete was the original fall of Adam and Eve. During this 1000 years men can not claim that the devil is responsible for their sinful failures.

There will be peace everywhere. People will "beat their swords into plowshares" and there will be war no more (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Worship and Belief

Messiah will build a new (fourth) temple, probably the great temple described in the final Chapters of Ezekiel. This Temple will be used for Memorial Sacrifices (Ezekiel 40:39-43).

Salvation during the Millennium will still be by grace through faith in Jesus Christ because there is "No other name given...whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10; Philippians 2:9-10; Revelation 22:4).

The Lord will put a new Spirit within believers whose home is on earth (Ezekiel 11:19).

Israel as a nation will be brought into the New Covenant which Jesus put into effect at the Last Supper. This covenant, promised to Israel by the prophets, has been graciously shared with the church during the interim period of Israel's Diaspora and unbelief.

Everything will be considered sanctified or "holy." Even the bells and pots will be holy to the Lord (Zechariah 14:20-21).

Unfortunately, some, even with this perfect environment, and the opportunity to see Christ in person reigning over the Earth, will still fail to believe in Him and will rebel at the end. They will follow Satan when he is released for a little while at the end of the Millennium. They will all be destroyed (Revelation 20:7-10).

The Apostle John's Brief Description of the Millennium

The 20th chapter of the Book of Revelation describes the Millennium. It immediately follows the Glorious Return of Christ in Revelation 19, which was discussed above. This short chapter may be considered in three parts: Preparation for the Period (verses 1-3); Progress during the period (verses 4-6); and Postscript to the period (verses 7-15).

Preparation for the period

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. (Revelation 20:1-3)

At the outset of the Millennium the devil will be cast into the Abyss. The Greek word *abussos* means "without depth." In this passage the word is used alone, but in Revelation 9:1 it is used as an adjective for another Greek word, *phrear*, which means "cistern," or "prison." Together, these words are often translated "bottomless pit."

In this pit Satan will be confined for the entire one thousand years of Christ's righteous reign on Earth. What happens when he is released is discussed below, when we look at the "Postscript to the period."

Progress during the period

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who

had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4-6)

The First Resurrection: Raised to eternal life

Those believers and followers of Yeshua who were converted during the tribulation period, and had been put to death--the martyrs of the tribulation period--will be raised from the dead (Revelation 20:4). They are those who would not receive the Mark of the Beast, and will have been put to death for their faith in Christ. They are raised again as part of the "first resurrection." Jesus Himself was the "first-fruits" of this first resurrection. At the Rapture believers of the church age are raised as part of this first resurrection. Now we see these believers also joining the ranks of this first type of resurrection.

In Daniel we read that Old Testament Saints are also resurrected to eternal life.

At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:1-2)

In John Chapter 5, Jesus also spoke of the coming day when the dead would rise in two separate resurrections, at his command:

I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. (John 5:25-29)

This resurrection of the saints of Israel who lived and died before Christ's First Advent will probably take place at the same time as the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs since they are a continuation of believing Israel during the last "week" of Daniel's "Seventy Weeks."

Judgment of Believers

Believers of the Church Age will have already appeared at the Bema Seat Judgment where whatever was sincerely done for Christ will be the basis of rewards, which, in turn, are given to Christ to prove our love to Him (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Revelation 4:10-11).

The exact nature of the judgment of other believers--the Old Testament believers and Saints of The Tribulation--is not described. It is possible that it will be similar to the Bema Seat.

The other type of resurrection is explained below where the ungodly are raised to stand at their judgment.

Postscript to the Period

The last part of Revelation 20 is about Rebellion (verses 7-9) and Retribution (verses 10-15).

Since these events take place after the Millennium is past, they will be considered later under the heading "The Last War."

Previews of The Millennium from the Old Testament

In contrast to the brief description of Revelation 20, the Old Testament has many lengthy passages which describe details of the Millennium, and of the time beyond, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. We will now turn our attention to some of these Old Testament sections.

Messiah will reign from Jerusalem and the nations will come to pay tribute:

Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 14:16-21)

The survivors from all the nations that had attacked Jerusalem are the same as the sheep of Matthew 25:31-46 and the Wheat of Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

So Israel will live in safety alone; Jacob's spring is secure in a land of grain and new wine, where the heavens drop dew.

Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will trample down their high places." (Deuteronomy 33:28-29)

An enigmatic prophecy about Enoch (who was translated into heaven prior to the flood of Noah) is recorded in the book of Jude. It has a double fulfillment: First, at the time of the Flood of Noah to judge the antediluvian world, destroying probably many billions of earth's inhabitants and delivering eight persons in the Ark. Then, at the end of the age we now live in Jesus will again appear "with his ten thousands of holy ones."

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (Jude 14-15)

A mystery-filled prophecy in Ezekiel clearly relates in part to the end time and God's judgment of His people Israel:

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will rule over you with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath.

I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered--with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath I will bring you into the desert of the nations and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you. As I judged your fathers in the desert of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will take note of you as you pass under my rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. (Ezekiel 20:33-37)

The promise to gather Israel from the nations was largely fulfilled during the past 100 years by the Zionist movement and the formation of the nation of Israel.

The term "wilderness of the peoples" may refer to Edom, (Southern Jordan, i.e., Petra) according to some Bible scholars.

The term "pass under the rod" appears in Leviticus 27 and symbolizes a separation of the consecrated and the unconsecrated animals of the flock.

The passage continues:

"I will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of the land where they are living, yet they will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

""As for you, O house of Israel, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Go and serve your idols, every one of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols. For on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD, there in the land the entire house of Israel will serve me, and there I will accept them. There I will require your offerings and your choice gifts, along with all your holy sacrifices. I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will show myself holy among you in the sight of the nations. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your fathers. There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done. You will know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, O house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."" (Ezekiel 20:38-44)

Zechariah adds:

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo." (Zechariah 12:10-11)

Isaiah 11 also contains a mystery concerning the end time:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him--the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth. Ephraim's jealousy will vanish, and Judah's enemies will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, nor Judah hostile toward Ephraim. They will swoop down on the slopes of Philistia to the west; together they will plunder the people to the east. They will lay hands on Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will be subject to them. The LORD will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River. He will break it up into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals. There will be a highway for the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt. (Isaiah 11:1-16)

A promise is given that "In that day" [at the end of the tribulation],

"the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant " The Lord will "assemble the [rest of the] scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth."

This, and other passages, indicate God's plan to eventually bring all Jews back to live in the land. At the present time fewer than a third of the Jews in the world are in Israel, eventually it will evidently be 100%.

That the Lord will destroy the "tongue of the Sea" could be a reference to the Suez Canal, and the prophecy that He will "wave his hand over the River" is probably a reference to the Euphrates River (Revelation 16:12).

Isaiah 19:23-25 speaks of the rebuilding of the old "King's Highway" from Egypt to Assyria and of Israel at this time, Egypt, and Assyria will (by God's grace) enjoy favored-nation status along with Israel. Isaiah says,

"Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria the workmanship of my hands, and Israel my heritage" (Isaiah 19:25).

Ezekiel says the following about God's mercy, grace and compassion coming on the nation of Israel at the close of the age in which we live:

I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.

""For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:21-27)

What is striking about this passage is that it tells us of God's concern for His own name, reputation and character. Therefore all people and nations who bear the name of Yahweh need to understand their responsibility to be faithful to their high calling. It is for the sake of His own name that he is restoring Israel, not at all because of their meritorious performance or even their repentance.

This is an announcement, similar to Jeremiah 30, of God's intention to bring the people of Israel into the New Covenant which Jesus put into effect with his 11 disciples at the Last Supper. The passage continues:

You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. (Ezekiel 36:28-31)

Here again is mentioned the national repentance spoken of in Zechariah 12:10-14.

Ezekiel then describes Messiah's reign over all the nations, from Jerusalem, and the millennial prosperity He will bring to all mankind, through Israel:

I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, O house of Israel!

""This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. They will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited."

Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.'

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Once again I will yield to the plea of the house of Israel and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep, as numerous as the flocks for offerings at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts. So will the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD." (Ezekiel 36:32-38)

Zechariah adds this insight about the Millennium:

On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime--a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah. But Jerusalem will be raised up and remain in its place, from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses. It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure. (Zechariah 16:6-11)

The Last, Last War

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelation 20:7-10)

After the Millennium, Satan is allowed out of the Abyss to rally together all who do not trust in Christ. These people would have rebelled against Christ during the time of His righteous reign, but they would not dare. It is most amazing that some people, who have had the privilege of living in a perfect environment, and who have experienced a world ruled in righteousness, will still not accept God's plan for their lives. It gives us insight to the fairness of their future judgment, because they simply do not want to be with their Creator and Savior. Nothing could ever convince them how wonderful He is. They would be unhappy in His presence for ever, even in Heaven.

Gog and Magog are representative of rebellious nations. This imagery is taken from Ezekiel 38 and 39, an earlier war which takes place before or during the Tribulation. Once again, rebellious nations and troops who are personally rebellious against Christ will seek to overthrow His control.

This time they will be led by Satan himself.

The scene of this battle is Jerusalem, the city God loves. The outcome of this war is that those who follow Satan are destroyed by fire from above, and Satan is thrown into a Lake of Fire (compare Revelation 20:14 and 15), where Antichrist (the Beast) and the False Prophet already had been thrown at the end of the Battle of Armageddon.

The Other Resurrection

Earlier we read about the "First Resurrection." The other type of resurrection is now seen in Revelation 20:10-15, where the ungodly are raised to stand at their judgment.

Judgment of Non-believers: The Great White Throne

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

This is the judgment of all who do not believe in Christ. They will be judged according to their works. But, according to Romans 3:20, no one can be saved by the law and good works. Those who depend on works will have their name blotted out of the Book of Life. Even in the days of Moses, God spoke of His book and of the fact that those who sin against Him will be blotted out of it. (Exodus 32:32-33). The imagery here is that people's names were at one time listed in this book, but they were blotted out because of the sin of rejecting Christ. Those who trust in Christ have had their sins forgiven, so their names still remain in the book.

In addition to the Book of Life other books are opened. This suggests that the deeds of every person are disclosed in full detail at the Great White Throne, and this in turn suggests that there may well be degrees of punishment in hell. This is hard to imagine, since hell at any level is a total, complete and final separation from God. Yet degrees of punishment would reflect the perfect justice of God which is always thorough and overlooks nothing.

Paul says that "the saints will judge the world" (1 Corinthians 6:2) so it is possible that God's people will take part in this great cosmic tribunal which is more commonly called "The Last Judgment."

Those whose names are not found in this Book of Life are consigned to the Lake of Fire. This is the most vivid of the Biblical pictures of Hell as a fiery eternity without Christ. John the Baptist spoke of an unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12), and Jesus told of a fiery furnace (Matthew 13:40-42), the fire of Hell (Matthew 18:9). It is an eternal fire (Matthew 18:11), which was prepared for the Devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). The New Testament word for Hell is Gehenna, which means the Valley of Hinnom. This is the name of the valley on the south side of the city of Jerusalem which served as the city dump. It was a fitting picture of a place where there are worms and the fire never dies. (Mark 9:45-48).

A New Heaven and Earth

By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. (2 Peter 3:7-13)

The Lord promised never to destroy the Earth by a flood again (Genesis 9:11), but it is destined for a fiery judgment which will cleanse it from all corruption and will result in a new, even better planet.

The heavens also are in need of cleansing and renewing since they also have been defiled by the activity of Satan and his host prior to their being cast down to earth during the tribulation.

Peter's prophecies are echoed in The Revelation where the creation of a New Heaven (Revelation 21:1) and a New Earth (Revelation 21:1,3-5) are foretold.

As far as we know, this is the final realm of the believer, the place where there will be no more death, sorrow, or pain (Revelation 21:4).

Old Testament previews of this New Heaven and New Earth are also instructive.

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

"Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.

Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:17-25)

The Heavenly Jerusalem

In the last two chapters of the Revelation, an incredible city, the Heavenly Jerusalem descends from Heaven to the New Earth. This magnificent place may be what Jesus referred to in John 14:1-3 where He told His disciples that He was going away to prepare a place for them, and that He would come again for them. He called this place "My Father's house," and said that in it are "many mansions."

This will apparently be the capital of the new Earth and the headquarters of Christ's operations. The things that are revealed about it correspond to the expectations of Christians in Heaven. Our Heaven will not be a cold ethereal place in outer space. This matchless city will be on a fantastic new Earth, which itself is a part of the new heavens. We will have glorified bodies like Christ's (1 Corinthians 15:40-44, 51-54) which was able to ascend into space (Acts 1:9). Perhaps we will be able to visit other heavenly locations without the aid of a space ship if it is God's will and purpose for us.

The imagery and symbolism of the New Jerusalem reflects both Israel and the church, so this heavenly city is evidently not exclusively the new home for the church only.

Here are some of the unique features of this city, as revealed in Revelation 21 and 22:

- It will be the home of the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb - Revelation 21:2,9.
- It will have twelve gates, named for the twelve tribes of Israel - Revelation 21:12-13.
- It will have twelve foundation stones, with the names of the Twelve Apostles - Revelation 21:14.
- It will be approximately fifteen hundred miles long, wide and high.- Revelation 21:16. Such a huge city would stretch from Los Angeles past Denver, and would be just as wide as it was long, and, most incredibly, it would be just as high! Actually, our present Earth is too small to accommodate such a huge city, but, at that time, there will be a new Earth.
- It will have golden walls and streets, pearl gates, and jewel foundations - Revelation 21:17-21.
- There will be no Temple in that city because God, the Almighty, and the Lamb will be there - Revelation 21:22 cf. 21:3ff.
- It will not need the sun or moon because The Glory of God, the Lamb is the light! - Revelation 21:23.
- The River of Water of Life will flow from the Throne of God and the Lamb - Revelation 22:1.
- The Tree of Life, from which Adam and Eve were barred after their sin (Genesis 3:22-24), will be a part of the city. - Revelation 22:2.

- There will be no curse there - Revelation 22:3-4; cf. 21:4.

If we take literally the dimensions given for the heavenly city, it will evidently be a sphere or cubical structure (or perhaps pyramidal) 1500 miles on a side. If the city has one billion inhabitants, each resident will have a cubic mile of space in which to build his new home.

Incidentally, Jews in Israel today who are working towards the rebuilding of Israel's Third Temple speak about zones of holiness in the temple and its courts. But they also believe the Temple is intended to be a "time portal" of sorts. Perhaps in some wonderful way the New Jerusalem above, and the rebuilt Millennial City of Jerusalem in Israel, or Israel's Fourth (Ezekiel's) Temple, will be connected. But the portal will not permit any defilement to reach the New Jerusalem as Revelation 22:14-15 tells us.

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.

It is a wonderful thing that the Bible ends on such a victorious note. What a glorious future the children of God have! In the end, believing Israel, The church, and the Saints from the Tribulation period will share together in a barely-imaginable place, in the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

We may all join in agreement with the final statement of the Revelation,

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen. (Revelation 22:20-21)

Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix B

Definition of Common Terms Found In Eschatology

"Last Days" The entire period between the first and second advents of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, 40 days after His resurrection, we have been living in the "last days."

Eschatology is the body of knowledge concerning the "last things," or the end of the age and the future.

Millennium. (Latin, *mille* = thousand; Greek: *chilloi* = thousand, hence chiliasm). The belief based on Revelation 20 that Christ will literally, physically reign on earth following the present age, for one thousand actual calendar years.

Amillennial. (prefix "a," "no"). The belief that there will no literal 1000 year reign of Christ. Thus Revelation 20 is taken symbolically, not literally, by adherents of this view. Amillennialists generally believe that Israel has been permanently set aside for all time and that God's current plan of salvation involves only the church.

Premillennial. The belief that Christ returns visibly and bodily at the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. He will rule the nations from Jerusalem. God will resume salvation work for Israel as a nation immediately after the departure or "rapture" of the true church.

Postmillennial. The belief that Christ will return at the end of the present age to take over the earth. Meantime, He is assumed to reign on earth through the church now. Postmillennialists do not necessarily believe in a literal millennial age. Satan was defeated at the cross and is now bound, hence the final triumph of the church in history is assured.

Rapture. (In the Latin Bible *rapere* meaning "to catch up," is the translation of the Greek *harpazo*, 1 Thessalonians. 4:17). The coming of Jesus to take His church out of the world, "like a thief in the night", i.e., suddenly, unexpectedly. Dates for this event can not be predicted from the Bible.

Tribulation Period. The end-time period of judgment of the earth with great out-pouring of wrath on mankind from God.

The 70th Week of Daniel. From Daniel we know this period to be just 7 years in length. The first-half is normally assumed to be relatively peaceful. The last half of this "week" (3-1/2 years) is "the great tribulation," or "the time of Jacob's trouble" when most of the terrible judgments in the Book of the Revelation occur. The first half of the Tribulation period is marked by apparent world peace, especially in the Middle East as Israel's false prophet and the political/military leader of the Western confederation of nations contrive a "successful" peace plan. (Isaiah calls coming this treaty Israel's "covenant with death.")

The onset of the Great Tribulation is marked by failure of this peace treaty and the desecration of the Third Temple in Jerusalem by the "man of sin." During the tribulation period Israel is once again the focus for events in the Bible.

Jerusalem will again be the center of reference for what God is doing in the world as was the case through the Old Testament period up until Israel's rejection of Yeshua as Messiah after His Palm Sunday entry as legitimate king in the line of David His father.

Pretribulation. The teaching that Jesus comes for His bride, the true church, at the beginning of the tribulation period.

Midtribulation. The belief that Jesus raptures the church half-way through the seven-year tribulation period.

Posttribulation. Belief that Jesus will come for His people at the end of the tribulation period, but prior to the Millennium.

Parousia. Greek word meaning "coming alongside and remaining with" someone. Describes the Second Coming of Jesus. Used in Matthew 24:3,27,37,39; 1 Thessalonians. 4:15, 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, James 5:7, 8; 2 Peter 1:16, 3:4; 1 Corinthians. 15:23.

Epiphaneia. Greek word meaning "A shining-forth," refers to the visible appearance of Jesus at the close of the age. Used in 1 Tim. 6:14, 2 Tim. 4:1,8; Matt. 24:27, 2 Thessalonians. 2:8; Titus 2:13. The words parousia and epiphaneia are combined in 2 Thessalonians. 2:8, translated "his appearing and his coming."

Apokalupsis. Greek word for "revelation," or "unveiling," or "uncovering." The visible appearing of Jesus to the world in full power and splendor. Also refers to the appearance of the Antichrist on the stage of history following the Rapture (2 Thessalonians. 2).

"Dominion Theology." Teaching that the church is responsible for taking over the world in the name and power of Christ. Associated with "reconstructionism," also known as "theonomy."

"Replacement Theology." Teaching in some circles today to the effect that the church has replaced Israel permanently in the plan of God. It is usually associated with an Amillennial view of eschatology.

"Dispensationalism." Teaching that history is divided into various time periods during which God moves in the world in certain distinctive ways. Hence, "dispensation of innocence," "dispensation of government," "dispensation of law," "dispensation of grace," and "kingdom economy," etc. The Greek word means "economy" or "administration." Several different schools of Dispensationalism exist.

"Day of the LORD." An extended period of time during which God openly intervenes in human affairs both in regard to judgment and blessing. In the present age justice is deferred or works out only slowly, judgment is largely withheld or restrained and God's people await the fulfillment of his promises and plans for them. Although Jesus the Lord rules over the universe He has not yet reigned on earth. This makes the famous prayer Jesus taught the disciples the most-often prayed and as yet unanswered prayer in the Bible, "...Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..."

"Day of Christ" The expression "the Day of Christ" occurs in the following passages: 1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5, 2 Cor. 1:14, Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16. KJV has "day of Christ" in 2 Thess. 2:2, incorrectly for the Day of the Lord. (Isa. 2:12, Rev. 19:11-21) The "day of Christ" relates wholly to the reward and blessing of of saints at His coming, as "the day of the Lord" is connected with judgment. (Scofield Bible notes)

Appendix C

Harmony of Prophecy Chart

(Ron's chart - expanded to include Isaiah 24-27; 64-66; Joel 2-3; Zechariah 12-14 and others--to be added)

Appendix D

Warnings and Cautions

As we approach the beginning of a new millennium there is bound to be a great deal of interest in prophecy. There are some dangerous temptations in the study of prophecy. Some teachers and writers go far beyond the boundaries of sound scriptural interpretation. There have already been many wild and irresponsible claims made by prophecy teachers, and there certainly will be many more errors taught during this time. The effect of this will be to mislead many and to discourage many others from study of this important aspect of the Scriptures.

Several cautions are in order for those who wish to know the truth but do not want to not be misled by false teachers. Here are some of these warnings and cautions:

1 - We cannot know the date of Christ's return. Jesus said,

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Matthew 24:36)

He also said:

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Matthew 24:42-44)

It should be noted that the previous two paragraphs relate to Christ's Glorious Return, not the Rapture. But if it is true for that later event, how much more would it be true for the Rapture, for which no specific signs are given.

In answer to their question about when He would establish His Kingdom, Jesus answered, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority." Acts 1:7

In another place, where Jesus' disciples wrongly thought that the Kingdom was going to appear at once, He gave them a parable about ten stewards, each of whom received money to invest. They were told to "Occupy until I come." (Luke 19:13 KJV) We do not know when He will return, but we should be busy about His business until that glorious day.

2 - We can not know who Antichrist will be. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8, he will not be revealed until the Holy Spirit, the Restrainer, has been taken away, presumably by the Rapture.

3- We must base our views on Scripture and proper methods of interpretation, and use supplemental information only for illustration.

4- We dare not be dogmatic about how future events will unfold. Like those who were looking for Christ's first coming, we should have carefully developed ideas of how His second coming, and all the related events of prophecy, might occur, but we should be open to other possibilities.

5- We must maintain respect and fellowship with other Bible-believing people who do not understand prophecy the way we do.

6- We must not ignore the importance of prophecy in the Bible. It is wrong to loose interest in this part of God's Word just because it is difficult or confusing, or even because others have made serious errors before.

These cautions, and many others, have been expressed in two good recent books: *Soothsayers Of The Second Advent*, by William M. Alnor, and *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*, by B.J. Oropeza.

Both of these men are associated with the Christian Research Institute in Irvine, California, founded by the late Dr. Walter R. Martin. Hank Hanegraaff, president of that organization, who is now known as "The Bible Answer Man," around the world, is an voice for caution. In the foreword to Oropeza's book he reminds us that 1 Peter 1:13 tells us to be sober-minded and alert.

He suggests that we be prepared for Christ's coming at any time, but realize it may not happen for another thousand years. (B.J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*, p. 9)

These two books list scores of examples of those who have set dates for Christ's return, have strongly suggested the name of Antichrist, or have made other serious errors which have discredited their scholarship.

Appendix E

Notes on Covenants in the Bible

by Lambert Dolphin

The Hebrew word *berith*, covenant, occurs over 280 times in the Old Testament. (The English word covenant means "a coming together.") Covenants can include treaties, alliances, agreements, compacts, pledges, mutual agreements, promises, and undertakings on behalf of another. The translators of the OT into the Greek Septuagint chose the Greek word *diatheke* in place of the Hebrew *berith*. In the NT *diatheke* occurs 33 times.

The term "testament" (as in "Last Will and Testament") is used in some translations of the NT 13 times to translate the word *diatheke*. This adds a new depth of meaning to the idea of covenants. The New Covenant rests upon the death of the one who made it, namely Jesus. Greek has another word, *syntheke*, which means a mutual agreement, however this word is not used in the NT presumably because covenants with God do not involve joint obligations between two equals.

Covenants often exist between two unequal parties, for example between God and man, or between a conqueror and his defeated enemy. Covenants in the Bible can be agreements between two individuals, between a king or leader and his people; or between God and individuals, or God and groups of individuals.

Covenants can be conditional or unconditional. Conditional covenants are forfeited if one party violates or defaults on his part of the agreement. Unconditional covenants are arrangements in which the default of one party does not negate the ultimate fulfillment and blessing of the covenant.

In our society we all make use of various types of covenants. Credit cards, automobile loans, and mortgage agreements are types of covenants. The lending party makes money or goods available to the borrower. The borrower agrees to pay back the loan, usually with interest. Covenants of this kind are clearly conditional. A marriage agreement is not only a covenant between man and wife, but the name and blessing of God are often invoked as well. The state enters into marriage covenants because it licenses marriage, and the families involved usually pledge to work together to strengthen the marriage bond between man and wife. Marriage is the oldest institution in the world, honored in the OT and the NT and approved by God for all mankind, believers and unbelievers alike, (though believers are not to enter into marriage with unbelievers). (See especially Malachi, Chapter 2). The marriage covenant gets to the heart of what God desires in his relationship with Israel (Hosea, Ezekiel 16), with the church as Bride of Christ (Ephesians), and with the individual believer (Song of Solomon).

Usually an individual passes along property and benefits to his surviving spouse, children or other heirs by means of a Last Will and Testament. The kind of covenant does not go into effect until the death of the Testator. Such covenants usually do not obligate the designated heirs, but this is not always the case.

All of the covenants between God and Man in the Bible are really based on our Creator's unmerited favor and loving-kindness towards His fallen and sinful creatures. Although man's expected response to God's grace may be stated differently in one covenant as compared to another, God always meets man on the basis of grace. Man's proper response is always to come from the heart-resulting in repentance, cleansing, a renewed spirit and worship as stated beautifully in Psalm 51.

Examples Of Covenants Between Men

1. Abraham's Covenant With Abimelech
See Genesis 21:25-33.

2. Joshua's Covenant With The People At Shechem
See Joshua 24:19-27.

3. David And Jonathan's Covenant Of Friendship
The relationship between David and Jonathan included a personal covenant between these two friends which is described in 1 Samuel 23:15-18.

4. The Covenant Between Jacob And Laban
Jacob and his uncle Laban agreed to work together under the terms of an agreement, or covenant described in Genesis 31-44-54.

5. Between Solomon And Shimei

Solomon issued a conditional covenant with Shimei, which the latter violated at the cost of his life. See 1 Kings 2:36-46.

6. Between Asa And Benhadad:
Asa, King of Judah and Benhadad of Syria entered into a compact against Baasha which is described in 1 Kings 15:17-22.

Examples Of Covenants Between God And Individuals:

1. With Aaron
Aaron, the first of the Levitical order of priests enjoyed a personal covenant with Yahweh affecting both him and his descendants described in Numbers 18:19-23.

2. With Isaac:
Isaac was personally promised by God that he was the chosen heir to the promises made to his father Abraham. This is made clear in Genesis 26:1-6.

3. God's Covenants With Yeshua
Central to all the covenants is what is called "the eternal covenant" that exists between God the Father and God the Son. The following Scriptures describe that covenant: (Isaiah 42:1-6, Isaiah 49:1-11)

4. King Josiah's Covenant With The Lord:
When King Josiah discovered the Torah, or Book of the Law he instituted national reforms in Judah and made a covenant with God and the people described in 2 Kings 23:1-25.

5. Antichrist's False Covenant (Of Death) With Israel:
A future and ill-advised covenant between Israel and the antichrist is described in Daniel 9:

"And he [the antichrist] shall make a strong covenant with many for one week [seven years]; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering [in the temple] to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." (Daniel 9:27).

Isaiah's judgment of this covenant issued earlier than Daniel's time--in advance--annuls this covenant, because it denies the place of Yeshua as rightful king and heir to the throne. See Isaiah 28:15-18.

Consequences For Despising The Sinai Covenant:

Leviticus 26:3-45 spells out to Israel the consequences they would suffer if the covenant of Moses was abandoned or forsaken.

The Blessings And Curses Under The Old Covenant

Under the terms of the Covenant of the Land Moses told the people just prior to the entry of the next generation into the land that a series of blessings would follow obedience and adherence to the covenant, and on the other hand curses and terribly consequences would follow disobedience to this covenant. These are delineated in Deuteronomy 28.

Jeremiah's Solemn Warning

Jeremiah reinforced the conditional nature of the Covenant of the Land just prior to the seige of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity. See Jeremiah 11:1-8.

Warnings To Respond To The New Covenant

The New Covenant, superior in every way to the Old Covenant, according to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. A strong admonition is included, however, about ignoring the grace of God and the wonderfully adequate and full promises of this covenant. See Hebrews 10:23-39 and Hebrews 12:12-29.

The New Covenant With Israel---A Covenant Of Peace

Although Israel as a nation has not yet been brought under the terms of the New Covenant their wonderful future when this does happen is foretold by the prophets. See Isaiah 54:1-17, Ezekiel 34:22-31.

King David, His Perpetual Throne, A Temple In Israel

God made a special covenant with King David, never repealed, never annulled which holds to this day. See 2 Samuel 7, Ezekiel 37:21-28, Jeremiah 31.

The New Covenant with Israel--Instituted by Jesus with Israel through the Disciples

The Table of the Lord, or holy communion is so familiar to most Christians today that many have overlooked the momentous importance of the original Last Supper when Yeshua placed this covenant into effect:

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:26-30)

Gentiles Invited Into The New Covenant Jesus Made With Israel

Romans 9:22-23 indicates that God intended from the beginning to bring many Gentiles into the family of Abraham through the terms of the New Covenant instituted by Yeshua. This is developed in Romans 11:13-35 and Hebrews 8:6-13.

The New Covenant as A Renewal of the Old Covenant

Note: The term "everlasting covenant" occurs 14 times in the OT. "Everlasting" is applied

- (1) to the covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:16),
- (2) to the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:7,13,19),
- (3) to the covenant God made with David (2 Sam. 23:5), and
- (4) to the New Covenant (Is. 55:3, 61:8, Jer. 32:40, 50:5, Ezek. 16:60, 37:26).

The book of Hosea is especially clear about God divorcing his unfaithful wife Israel under the terms of the Old Covenant, but taking her back to Himself again under the terms of the New Covenant.

"Therefore, behold, I [the LORD] will allure her [Israel], and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. "And in that day, says the LORD, you will call me, 'My husband,' and no longer will you call me, 'My Baal.' For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more. And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.

"And in that day, says the LORD, I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel; and I will sow him for myself in the land. And I will have pity on Not pitied, and I will say to Not my people, 'You are my people'; and he shall say 'Thou art my God.'" (Hosea 2:14-23)

"You bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, says the LORD.

"Yea, thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant.

"Then you will remember your ways, and be ashamed when I take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the [Palestinian] covenant with you. I will establish my [New] covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 16:58-63)

Old Covenant And New Covenant---Compared and Contrasted

The New Testament presents strong and vivid comparisons and contrasts between the Old and the Covenant. See especially Hebrews 9 and 2 Corinthians 3.

God's Faithfulness to His Covenants

To better understand God's faithfulness to all His covenants the following Psalms are especially instructive: 25, 50, 89, and 132.

Kenneth A. Kitchen says:

"The covenants contain various elements, some of which recur from place to place and period to period; these elements are labeled and color-coded. One essential element of any treaty is the stipulations the parties agree to follow (to respect property rights, for example)---so stipulations appear in every treaty. But other elements, such as the swearing of oaths, appear in some treaties but not in others.

"Although all the covenants have a formal beginning, middle and end, the overall form and structure vary considerably with respect to time and place. Some begin with a prologue, in which the history of a king or people is recounted; others begin by invoking witnesses, such as standing stones or a god; still others begin with a short preamble or title, in which the reasons for the pact are laid out.

"The middle part of covenants is made up of a combination of elements: stipulations, oaths, curses, the invocation of witnesses, and so on. In some treaties, moreover, such as those from eastern Mesopotamia...some combination of

elements (an oath followed by stipulations, for example) forms a unit that is repeated several times-the chart shows this repetition by extending the first element in the unit beyond the bar.

"The end of covenants, too, comprises various elements; some conclude with blessings, expressing the hope that the agreements will be kept; others end with curses, promising ill treatment for violations. Sometimes treaties contain provisions for depositing the written document in a sacred place (such as the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus) or a place for safe-keeping.

"The form and structure of covenants in the Near East changed dramatically over time---the highly complex treaties of Lagash and Umma from the third millennium BC, for example, are in striking contrast to the pared-down, simple treaties of the early second millennium BC. Such patterns help us date treaties that cannot be dated by other means. Kitchen observes that the treaties in Genesis match early second-millennium BC treaties, whereas the treaties in Exodus/Deuteronomy (the Sinai Covenant) and the Book of Joshua match late second-millennium BC treaties. The structures of these covenants provide another piece of evidence that the Bible's chronology is reliable." (Editors remarks, from Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Patriarchal Age*, Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR), Vol. 21, No. 2, March/April 1995)

The Main Covenants Of Yahweh Regarding Israel

As we have seen, "A covenant is a sovereign pronouncement of God by which He establishes a relationship of responsibility

- (1) between himself and an individual,
- (2) between Himself and mankind in general,
- (3) between Himself and a nation, or
- (4) between Himself and a specific human family.

A covenant in one category may overlap others...The covenants are normally unconditional in the sense that God obligates Himself in grace, by the unrestricted declaration, 'I will' to accomplish certain announced purposes, despite any failure on the part of the person or people with whom He covenants. The human response to the divinely announced purpose is always important, leading as it does to blessing for obedience and discipline for disobedience. But human failure is never permitted to abrogate the covenant or block its ultimate fulfillment." (C.I. Scofield)

Mainline Covenants

One special set of these covenants might well be called "mainline" covenants because they are connected one after another in a line, all the way from the first promise God made to Eve (that one of her sons would be the Messiah, the Savior of mankind), down through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (rather than Ishmael or Esau for example), through King David and ending in Jesus Christ. Both Joseph and Mary are descended from David though through different family lines as the NT genealogies in Matthew and Luke detail. This essay lists the "mainline covenants" mainly by quoting the relevant Bible references, without commentary which hopefully can be added later.

The Edenic Covenant

Man is charged with responsibility for propagating the race, subduing the earth, exercising dominion over the animals, caring for the garden in Eden, and refraining from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. See Genesis 1:28-30 and Genesis 2:16, 17.

The Adamic Covenant

See Genesis 3. The consequences of man's fall necessitated a changed relationship between man and God including the following elements: (1) A curse on the serpent: Gen 3:14, Rom. 16:20, 2 Cor. 11:3,14, Rev. 12:9. (2) The first promise of a redeemer (the proto-evangelium). Messiah would come in the line of Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David. (3) A changed state of woman including bondage and subservience to man's headship, and suffering and pain in motherhood. (4) Loss of the garden in Eden as a dwelling place and light occupation changed to heavy burden of work because of a cursed earth. (5) Inevitable sorrow and disappointment in life. (6) Shortened life span and tragedy of death.

The Noahic Covenant

This unconditional covenant with Noah (which affects all mankind) establishes principles for all government, and includes the following: (1) Sanctity of all human life established. Man responsible to protect life, even to capital punishment. (2) A Promise that another universal flood will not occur and the ground will not be cursed further. (3) Man's relationship to the animals and to nature is confirmed (Gen. 8:22, 9:2). (4) Man, presumably a vegetarian before the flood, is now allowed to eat meat. (5) Special characteristics are assigned to the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. See Genesis 8:21-9:17.

The Abrahamic Covenant

An unconditional covenant. (1) God gave Abraham the promise of a great nation---primarily meaning Israel, but also includes great peoples in the line of Ishmael and Abraham's others sons. In all Abraham, had eight sons, six through his second wife Keturah after Sarah died, (Gen. 25:3). Two peoples descended from Abraham are named specially. They are an earthly group (Israel) "as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore," and a heavenly group (the true church) "as numerous as the stars in the heavens." These two "family trees" form the subject of the mainstream of redemptive history in the Bible. (2) Abraham was chosen to be the father of numerous descendants, to be blessed personally, to be personally honored, to be a channel of blessing to others. (3) Those who bless Abraham are to be blessed and those who curse him will be cursed. Blessings on the nations are to come through Abraham. (4) Reaffirmation of the promise of a Messiah was made by God to Abraham. There are four major passages in Genesis specific to this covenant: Genesis 12:1-7; 13:14-17, 15:1-21; and 22:15-18.

The Covenant With Abraham Is Restated And Confirmed To Isaac By The Lord
See Genesis 26:1-5.

The Covenant With Abraham Is Restated And Confirmed To Jacob By The Lord
See Genesis 28:10-15.

The Mosaic Covenant

Conditional Covenant. Connected with the giving of the Law at Sinai, and the Levitical priesthood.

The Law condemns all men. See Exodus 19 and following.

The New Testament Comments On The Mosaic (Old) Covenant

See especially 2 Corinthians 3:7-9, Romans 3:19,20, and Hebrews 10:1-10.

The Covenant of the Land

This partly conditional covenant has several parts: (1) dispersion of the Jews was to be a consequence of disobedience. (2) Future repentance will be accomplished by God. (3) God will regather his scattered people and restore them to the land. (4) The people of Israel will be brought to the Lord as a nation. (5) The enemies and oppressors of Israel will be punished. (6) Future national prosperity and preeminence is guaranteed. See Deuteronomy 28-30. 28, 29 and Amos 9:9-15. Because of this covenant, the right of the Jews to live in the land is conditional upon their behavior.

The New Testament Promises

God Will Resume His Fulfillment Of Various Covenants With Israel
See Acts 15:14-18 and Romans 11:26, 27.

The Old Testament Concurrs on this: Isaiah 11:11,12, Jeremiah 23:3-8, Ezekiel 37:21-25, Hosea 2:14-16, Hosea 3, Joel 3:1-8 and Amos 9:11-15.

The Davidic Covenant

Features (1) a temple in Israel, (2) a kingdom in perpetuity, (3) a throne, i.e., royal authority in the line of David, and (4) chastisement on sons for their disobedience. The promise of Messiah in the line of David is confirmed. See 2 Samuel 7:8-16, Isaiah 1:24-28 and Psalm 89.

The New Covenant

An everlasting, unconditional covenant imparting a renewed mind and heart to the recipients. Restored favor and blessing for Israel. Complete and final forgiveness and removal of sins. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. A rebuilt temple in Israel (Ezek. 37:26,27a). Cessation of war and institution of world peace. The Greek word *diatheke* is used interchangeably 15 times in the New Testament for "covenant" and "testament." See Matthew 26:26-28, Jeremiah 31, Hebrews 8:8-13.

Some Provisions Of The New Covenant

The New Covenant promised to Israel went into effect at the Last Supper during Easter Week.

Jesus instituted this covenant with his eleven disciples who were representatives of true, believing Israel. Jesus then asked these disciples to become representatives of a new body of believers known as the church. They were called as Apostles to invite Jews and Gentiles alike around the world to enter into this New Covenant. After the completion of this calling out of the true church, Scripture promises that God will return and bring the nation of Israel (as a nation) into the New Covenant. This will take place at the end of the age when Jesus return to Jerusalem to sit as King on the throne of His father David.

Under the new covenant all those who belong to Christ and are part of the church benefit in the following ways: Called children of God---Romans 8:16. Called the household of God---Ephesians 2:19 Called children of Abraham--Galatians 3:7 Called children of promise---Romans 9:8 A "people of His own"---Titus 2:14 Heirs of God according to promise---Galatians 3:29 God's people called the temple of God---1 Cor 3:16 God's people called "the circumcision"---Philippians 3:3 God's people called "the Israel of God"---Galatians 6:16 Called "a chosen generation, royal priesthood, peculiar people, a holy nation"---1 Peter 2:9 Heirs of the kingdom---James 2:5 Called "sons of God"---John 1:12 Kings and priests of God---Revelation 1:6 Called "Mount Zion", "The City of the Living God"---Hebrews 12:22 The Bride of Christ---2 Cor. 11:2 The Body of Christ---1 Cor. 12.

The Relationship Between Jesus The Son Of God And The Covenants With regard to the Edenic Covenant

Jesus Christ is the "Last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45-47) who takes the place of the First Adam and recovers all that the First Adam lost, (Col. 2:10, Heb. 2:7-9). Concerning the Adamic Covenant, Jesus is the promised "Seed of the Woman" (Gen. 3:15, Jn. 12:31, Gal. 4.4, 1 Jn. 3:8) who fulfills all the demands on man for labor and toil (Mk. 6:3) as well as obedience, (Phil. 2:8, Heb. 5:8). As the son of Shem, Jesus fulfilled the promise to Noah and to Shem. Jesus Christ is the promised seed (singular) of Abraham to whom all the promises to Abraham apply. (Gen. 22:18, Gal. 3:16, Phil. 2:8). Jesus is the only man who fulfilled all the requirements of the Law of Moses, and He bore the curse of the law on our behalf, (Gal. 3:10-13), under the conditions of the Mosaic Covenant. Under the Palestinian Covenant He will yet perform the gracious promises, (Deut. 28:1-30:9). Jesus is the Seed and Heir and King under the terms of the Covenant with David, (Mt. 1:1, Luke 1:31-33). It was the sacrifice of Jesus that founded the New Covenant, (Mt. 26:28, 1 Cor. 11:25). (Adapted from the C.I. Scofield Bible notes).

Appendix F

The Complexities of Time

Introduction To Time

This essay touches briefly on various aspects and dimensions of time. To a scientist, time is a relatively simple

matter, but when one gets into the Bible time has qualitative and subjective aspects---there is much more to consider. The Bible contrasts time and eternity as well. God is outside of time. He is, "...the high and lofty one, who inhabits eternity." (Isaiah 57:15)

Time as we know it was created by God---it is part of the creation. (Note A) However the created universe consists of a physical, material world and a spiritual realm---the latter is called in the New Testament "the heavenly places." In the heavenlies time has quite different properties than we usually think about in regard to the physical, material world. Man was created to live in both worlds (the material and the spiritual) at the same "time" and a study of time and eternity (a much neglected subject) carries a number of surprises. The physical universe has been drastically affected by the fall of Lucifer and his angels, and by the fall of man. This means we now live in a damaged, deteriorating "old creation." Time itself has been altered by the fall.

Is The Age of the Universe Indeterminate?

Virtually all modern geology and astronomy textbooks today take it for granted that the solar system is at least four or five billion years old, and it is now assumed such great ages are gospel truth. Anthropologists take it for granted that man is at least several millions of years old.

But only in the past 200 years or so has Western science come to believe in a very old universe as opposed to a recent creation. The assumption of a very old universe has become such an ingrained paradigm that jokes are routinely made in classrooms and textbooks about Archbishop Ussher's alleged assignment of the date, day, and hour of creation in 4004 BC.

The Bible actually opens with the statement "In the beginning God..." without making any reference to date and time. In both Hebrew and Greek, the idea of "the beginning" means the "indefinite distant past." This is not to suggest that man's early history fades into obscure mists of mythology as we go backwards in time, but that God has not revealed all that we would like to know about the exact "time" of the creation of all things.

Like Genesis, the Gospel of John opens with the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is declared in Scripture that God always was, always will be, and is unchanging---"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Hebrews 12:8) The "beginning" referred to in John's gospel is actually an early point in time than the "beginning" of Genesis One. John says "the Word was with God" prior to the creation of the universe, and in fact all things were brought into being through the Word.

As far as archaeology and recorded history are concerned human civilizations appear to be only of the order of thousands, not millions, of years old. The Bible is an exceptionally accurate document, and there is no ancient document for which we have better manuscript authority (or evidence), or into which more man-years of intense scholarship have been invested in recovering the original text. The Old Testament genealogies have very few gaps in them (if any at all!) and are actually quite complete so that one can estimate the time of Adam, the first man, as occurring only a few thousand years before Christ.

The internal structure of the Bible makes it difficult to place the creation of Adam more than a few thousands of years in the past. Sadly, for many secular scientists this fact is considered sufficient reason for them to ignore the Bible altogether as a relevant source of reliable information on any subject. However, a Biblical world-view must in the long run be consistent with scientific data---properly interpreted. The God of the Bible is the God of truth and in the end truth from all possible sources must harmonize.

It may be, however, that the actual age of the universe is indeterminate. I believe this to be the case because God has apparently hidden from us the key evidence we need to unravel the past back to the time of creation. Twice the Bible makes important statements (consistent with each other) that suggest the fundamental nature of time, and many aspects of the actual course of history, presently escape our understanding to a large degree. Solomon says,

"I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." (Ecclesiastes 3:10-11)

Just as we cannot figure out God's ways and understand precisely how He works, (Romans 11:33), so also we may not notice events that are actually crucial to His plans and programs. And we may mislabel other events in history as important when actually they turn out to be unimportant in the long run. Most of Israel totally missed the many prophetic fulfillments that took place during the First Advent of their Messiah, Yeshua (Jesus), for instance. Only afterwards did His followers figure out what actually had been happening in God's plan as revealed in the Old Testament.

Our knowledge of what actually happened in the past is inadequate; the details of what was important and what was not are obscured in the mists of time. It is most difficult for historians to reconstruct what actually happened in the past. (History books are always being rewritten). Likewise, we cannot predict what events will unfold tomorrow with any real certainty, nor set a date for the return of Christ. Yet we are restlessly preoccupied with time and frustrated when we cannot unravel its secrets with all the precision a modern atomic clock can give us.

When Jesus left His disciples forty days after His resurrection, ascending into the cloud, (that is, through the space-time gateway of the Shekinah glory cloud into the heavenly places) from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, His disciples were anxious for word of His return. Jesus told them,

"...It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority." (Acts 1:7; compare with Matthew 24:36).

This scripture clearly implies that all attempts to set dates for the next World War and the second coming of Jesus are wasted effort. The ages past are also difficult for us to unravel and must remain full of mystery. The tapestry of the past has many folds, and we easily lose track of most of them in our feeble attempts to trace history backwards.

Modern secular science is built on the assumption that the laws of physics have never changed. Therefore we can make measurements say for 50 or 100 years and derive theories which can then be extrapolated backwards in time to the beginning of all things. This approach to science is known as "uniformitarianism" about which we are specifically warned in the New Testament in the Apostle Peter's remark about the world-wide flood in the days of Noah,

"First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.' They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

"But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire!" (2 Peter 3:3-12)

Whether we like it that way or not, arguments about the age of the universe may be irreconcilable. There is evidence both for a recent creation, and there is also evidence for an ancient universe. It is our stereotypical thinking about the nature of time that causes us the problem. We view time as an absolute, and as a single dimension measured by a fixed master clock. In reality time is multidimensional and we are trapped in one-dimensional linear time (because of the fall). We are unable to see the broader perspective of eternity. Our vision is too narrow and needs some stretching.

The Old Testament View of Time

The Hebrew concept of time found in the Old Testament is concerned more with the quality of time as it relates to hail, rain, summer, and harvest or to "evil days" or "prosperous times." Clock or calendar time certainly is tracked in

the Old Testament. Believing Jews as well as Christians believe the Old Testament is an accurate account of actual historical events and real people.

The Old Testament teaches by means of stories, by personal examples from the lives of individuals, and by case histories of God's dealings with men and angels. Scripture uses poetic images, dreams, visions and providential arrangements of circumstances to indicate God's invisible workings in human affairs from behind the scenes of history. The Hebrew year cycles around seed time and harvest and commemorative feasts and festivals. These call to mind the redemptive deeds of God and his blessings upon his chosen people Israel.

The feasts of Israel have great symbolic import both for the nation of Israel and for the church. Many details concerning these feasts are given in the Torah,

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, The appointed feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed feasts, are these. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings. "These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them.

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is the LORD's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. But you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD seven days; on the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, When you come into the land which I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, that you may find acceptance; on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the cereal offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, to be offered by fire to the LORD, a pleasing odor; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

"And you shall count from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven full weeks shall they be, counting fifty days to the morrow after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a cereal offering of new grain to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwellings two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah; they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD. And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their cereal offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD. And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs; they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And you shall make proclamation on the same day; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work: it is a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. "And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work; and you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD." And the LORD said to Moses, "On the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present an offering by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on this same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whoever is not afflicted on this same day shall be cut off from his people. And whoever does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no work: it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your sabbath."

And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the feast of booths to the LORD. On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. Seven days you shall present offerings by fire to the LORD; on the eighth day you shall hold a

holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a solemn assembly; you shall do no laborious work. "These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD offerings by fire, burnt offerings and cereal offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day; besides the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts, and besides all your votive offerings, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

"On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD seven days; on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD seven days in the year; it is a statute for ever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days; all that are native in Israel shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD. (Leviticus 23)

The Old Testament gives us a record of patriarchs and races, nations and kings. It is a selective record narrowing down to focus on the bloodline leading to the Messiah. Israel is at stage center, all directions are measured from Jerusalem, and the relationship between the Israelites and their God determines their prosperity or adversity in the land (*eretz yisrael*). The historical record of the Old Testament reveals national deterioration and repeated failures by men, but persistent, gracious intervention by God who sovereignly works out His grand strategy down through the ages. Israel typifies God's dealings with the nations. From Israel the Messiah has already come once, and through Israel will come the ultimate salvation of the nations when Messiah returns.

The Old Testament does not often speak at all about the affairs of other nations unless they impinge on events concerning Israel. Little is said about earthquakes, natural disasters, wars, the rise and fall of empires and nations, storms, or cosmic events---unless such happenings relate directly to Israel. In addition, the purpose of the Biblical record is mostly moral and ethical. Because He is a personal God who makes covenants, Yahweh is evidently much more interested in helping men to know Him and to understand themselves than He is in teaching us details of science or all the fine points of history.

Concerning the Old Testament, Paul plainly says in First Corinthians, 10:11, that "These things happened to them (to the Old Testament fathers) as types, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come." In his letter to Romans, (15:4), Paul also wrote, "Whatever things were written in former times were written for our instruction, that through patience and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."

Interruptions in Time Recorded in the Bible

The Hebrew language has no verb tenses in the usual sense familiar to us who speak English. In the Jewish way of thinking, the quality of an event or happening becomes more important than the minutes or hours (the measure) the event occupies in our familiar four dimensions of length, width, height and time.

For example, in the Old Testament there is Joshua's "long day," (which occurred about 1420 BC). On that day, the sun conveniently stood still for about a whole day, so Joshua could finish an important battle against the Amorites. (The battle is described in Joshua Chapter 10.) The LORD also conveniently arranged an exceptionally heavy hailstorm at the same time, suggesting that something radical happened to the earth's normal weather patterns at the same time. What actually took place in nature would be, to us, of enormous scientific importance to learn more about. However, the Bible makes the stopping of the earth's rotation on its axis and the fall of enormous, deadly hailstones incidental to the main purpose of the narrative which was recorded to show how God can use supernatural means to deliver His people. Conceiving in the mind the possibility that God actually stopped the earth's rotation and coordinated simultaneously all the forces and effects that would have been accompanied such a happening staggers the imagination---we simply don't know what actually happened except that the record says the length of one particular day was stretched by divine intervention.

Some day perhaps we will discover some supporting evidence for an unusual historic event such as a large meteor striking the earth, or a great volcanic explosion, or a close-passage of the planet Mars, which would correlate conclusively with Joshua's Long Day. The idea that God should interrupt the normal flow of time for a moral reason

may strike us as "unreasonable," and, of course, explaining how He does it, (the laws of physics being what they are), is not an easy task. Critics have felt the earth would fly apart instantly if its rotation were ever stopped or even slowed. But this assumes that God lacks sufficient power to coordinate and control all related forces such as tides and stresses in the crust.

About 714 BC King Hezekiah faced the crisis of early death and asked God for help, (2 Kings 20). He granted the king fifteen more years of life. As a sign, God caused the sun dial in the palace to move backwards "ten steps." Perhaps the reversed motion of the sun dial was caused by some sort of wobble in the earth's rotation? Who knows? God doesn't bother to tell us, apparently it isn't important for us to know how it happened.

The Hebrew idea of continuous present tense is found in the covenant name of God (one of many names for God in the OT). This is the God who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush in Sinai saying, "I am Who I am. Tell Pharaoh, 'I AM' has sent you." This could be translated equally well as "I Will be Who I Will Be." The name YHWH (Yahweh, or Jehovah) is simply derived from the verb "to be." God is the great "I AM" in the sense that each of us is a little "i am." In reading the Gospel of John it is helpful to note that Jesus used the term "I am" a number of times in the sense of the meaning of Yahweh. For instance He said, "...before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58) Jesus was much more aware of the eternal dimension than we are. He dwelt in eternity in some sense the whole time he was present on earth as the Man Christ Jesus. Thus, some of the accomplishments by Jesus at points in time while He was on earth sent ripples into eternity which changed both the past and the future! As God is eternal and outside of time, so our human spirits are also eternal. However, our bodies are fallen, subject to death, and not yet redeemed. It is the fact that our spirits live in bodies that places us in contact with the physical world and limits our experience of time.

To illustrate how the verb tenses in English can be either past or prophetic-future in the Hebrew in some cases, consider the prayer of Habakkuk in Habakkuk Chapter 3,

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. O LORD, I have heard the report of thee, and thy work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years renew it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. Selah

His brightness was like the light, rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. Before him went pestilence, and plague followed close behind. He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered, the everlasting hills sank low. His ways were as of old. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was thy wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was thy anger against the rivers, or thy indignation against the sea, when thou didst ride upon thy horses, upon thy chariot of victory? Thou didst strip the sheath from thy bow, and put the arrows to the string. Selah Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice, it lifted its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation at the light of thine arrows as they sped, at the flash of thy glittering spear. Thou didst bestride the earth in fury, thou didst trample the nations in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thy anointed. Thou didst crush the head of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah

Thou didst pierce with thy shafts the head of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. Thou didst trample the sea with thy horses, the surging of mighty waters. I hear, and my body trembles, my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones, my steps totter beneath me. I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like hinds' feet, he makes me tread upon my high places.

This passage can be read either as a record of God's great and mighty deeds in the past, which the prophet recalls--- or the passage can be read as predictive of God's mighty acts in the future. Either past or future meanings are correct. God has delivered his people Israel by great acts in history on their behalf. And, God will deliver Israel in the future by even greater deeds and mighty works. In any case, there is reason for God's people to hope for their salvation in those times when things get worse before they get better. Habakkuk lived in one of those times when there is little on the immediate horizon to give one hope.

Subjective Time

Various dimensions of time (which we usually don't stop and think about) are known to us in our daily experience. First, there is subjective time, which is the appearance of time to our sense of consciousness. Subjective time cannot be measured by a stop watch, but this type of time varies over wide limits. Sometimes we perceive a sequence of events around us as happening in a flash. Sometimes time seems to drag on "forever"---while the clock on the wall may tick off only minutes. Many of us remember how time appeared to move very slowly during childhood. A single summer day seemed to last forever, and the interval between Christmases and school vacations was an "eternity." Later in life, some of us look back and see that decades have passed almost as if they were but months. Carl Jung noted that in the second half of life it seemed as if all the events in the past are equidistant from the present. An event that took place 40 years ago may flash back into our consciousness as if it had happened yesterday. In sudden accidents some have reported that their whole lives flashed before their eyes in great detail, in a what was really only a few seconds or less on the clock. When we dream at night what seems to be many hours of time is shown by REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep patterns to be only minutes of elapsed time. When we are bored not only does time drag on with seemingly endless monotony, the "quality" of our conscious experience is low. On the other hand when life is exciting and fulfilling, the forward movement of time is more obvious and the "quality" of the moment is greatly magnified. I have come to believe that subjective time has been greatly affected (negatively) by the fall of man. Therefore for God's people heaven will not only be life that last forever, it will also be life of immensely restored quality and enjoyment.

God's final judgment of all of us will no doubt reveal that what we considered important and precious was often rubbish in the eyes of God. Conversely, small forgotten moments we thought nothing of may be elevated and rewarded when God's records showed we uttered a helpful word of comfort to someone in need, or gave aid from a right motive.

Biological time has to do with wildlife migratory patterns, animal hibernation, biorhythms, jet lag, circadian (24-hour) patterns and menstrual cycles---numerous phenomena in nature that are loosely coupled to dynamical time (that is, to months and seasons). Although such biological time clocks are mysterious and still not well understood, they are probably closer to the way God keeps time, if we remember that the Jewish calendar is based on the lunar month, the cycle of harvest, and the motion of the earth, moon, planets, and stars. Seen in this light, the scientist's way of keeping time---with precision quartz clocks and atomic resonators is actually somewhat arbitrary and less "absolute" than God's heavenly clocks and calendars.

Linear Time and Cyclical Time

The Hebrew view of time also includes the concept that time moves from event to event in a line---not a straight line, to be sure, but towards a goal. The goal is always the future, yet the goal intended by God is always to be fulfilled in history. Bible prophecies frequently have both an immediate and a long-term fulfillment, for example. In the Bible, sins are seen to have consequences that follow inevitably, moral choices lead to measurable results for good or for ill, and history proceeds towards the definite outworking purposes of God.

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:14, 15)

A consummation of the ages lies ahead, for which all else has been but a shadowy preparation. In both ancient Greek culture, (among the Pythagoreans, Stoics and Neoplatonists), and in Hindu culture (especially during the Vedic period, 1500-600 BC), one runs onto the concept of circular, or cyclical time. This is sometimes symbolized by the uroboros, the snake chasing his own tail. In this view of time, the beginning leads back around to the end, and the cycle starts all over again. The Babylonians, ancient Chinese, Aztecs, Mayans, and the Norse had cyclical calendars.

In pantheistic religious systems of thought the universe is often depicted as going through great long epochs of rebirth, growth, decay, and destruction. The Hindu cycles, for example, range from 360 human years, to 300 trillion years (which is the lifetime of the gods before their rebirth). Reincarnation---which has no basis in the Bible at all (see Hebrews 9:27)---springs from such an Eastern pantheistic point of view. Augustine was among the first to insist

on linear time as opposed to cyclical, since he observed that many important events in the Bible clearly happened one time only. Since clocks were not well-developed until the 14th Century, it was perhaps easier for the ancients to imagine events in history as recurring since the four seasons and patterns of the stars in the heavens were cyclical.

The Bible depicts the human race as having a definite clear beginning, a history which has been accurately recorded by God, and an approaching day of judgment when all men will be evaluated justly by their Creator. The fact that "books are to be opened" on judgment day means God keeps track of detail (by means of his "recording angels")--- even if we do not ourselves keep good record books. God even pays attention to the numbering of the hairs on our heads. He will see to it that truth and justice ultimately prevail no matter how grim things seem to us at the moment (1 Corinthians. 4:5). A good example of the work of a recording angel is to be found in Ezekiel 9:2ff.

Dynamical Time and Atomic Time

The "clock" for measuring time given us in the Bible can be called "dynamical time" because this clock is based on the motion of the earth on its axis (defining the day), the period of the moon as it revolves around the earth establishing the lunar month (used in the Jewish calendar), and the time it takes for the earth to make one trip around the sun, which defines the year. Planetary alignments, constellations, comets, meteors, special stars, and other events in the heavens are ordained by God for marking out unusual events. This time-keeping mechanism which relies, essentially, on Newton's law of gravity is described in Genesis One as something God put into place on the Fourth Day of creation:

"And God said, 'Let there be lights [Hebrew ma'or] in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day." (Genesis 1:14-19)

Most common clocks keep dynamical time. But also in common use today are "atomic clocks." In fact our present precision time standards are set to atomic time rather than a dynamical time standard. Atomic time would be locked in step with dynamical time if the velocity of light were an absolute, fixed constant. As discussed elsewhere, (see On The Constancy of the Speed of Light), a careful statistical analysis of all the measured values of the velocity of light, c , shows that c has decreased during the past 300 years, and thus atomic clocks have slowed down with respect to dynamical clocks. When the velocity of light first began to be measured it appears that the annual decrease in velocity was very rapid. In fact it has been suggested that the initial value of c when the universe was new may have been as much as one to ten million times higher than its present value.

It is not possible for c to be a variable without forcing a select group of other constants to also vary. Otherwise the universe would be unstable and serious inconsistencies would occur in many equations of physics. The evidence available at the present time suggests that c , Planck's constant h , the rest mass of the electron in the atomic frame of reference, and radio-active decay rates are not fixed. The gravitational constant G is fixed, as is macroscopic mass and most other physical properties affecting life on earth, however. It seems probable that the reason c has decreased is because of an increasing permeability of free space (one of the "metric" properties of space). This would result, for example, from a shrinkage of the original universe after it was "stretched out" by God to its maximum diameter on the Second Day of creation.

The observed decrease in the velocity of light originally studied in detail by Australian scientists Barry Setterfield and Trevor Norman follows a steeply decaying curve leveling off to nearly zero change in recent years.

Since it is quite possible that the velocity of light has decreased by a factor of perhaps 10 million or more, the long geological ages now in vogue, which follow the atomic clock, would actually be compressed by this amount according the dynamical time scale of ordinary history.

Time's Arrow in Physics

Many physical phenomena can be described very satisfactorily by mathematical equations. Usually these

(differential) equations involve mass or similar measurable properties of the physical world, and the dimensions of length, width, height and time. From a strictly mathematical point of view it does not matter if time is positive or negative---most equations of physics are time reversible.

However it is not so in real life, because of something which is called "Time's Arrow." The real world we live in is governed by an important principle known as the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The Second Law can be stated in several forms, but basically it refers to the tendency of things to rot, rust, decay and fall apart with the passage of time. As we use energy, the total amount of available energy available to do additional work decreases inexorably. Orderly systems proceed to break-down in the direction of chaos, and the "information content" of things decreases with the passage of time. Both outside energy and outside organizing intelligence are required to bring order out of chaos.

In the case of living organisms, it is the genetic code which instructs cells to build themselves into orderly organisms, but this is accomplished at the expense of an overall decrease in the total available energy of the universe.

In physics this principle is often stated as "Entropy always increases." Entropy is a measure of the unavailable energy in a system or the state of disorder. Technically speaking this law of entropy applies to what is known as "closed systems." However if a sufficiently large circle is drawn around most any system one can think of the law applies without exception. The earth and its atmosphere do not comprise a thermodynamically closed system because of energy input from the sun, for example. However by drawing a circle around the solar system, one has a closed system.

Incidentally it can be shown that energy from the sun alone is not sufficient to decrease the overall entropy of earth or to drive biological organisms in the direction of increasing complexity. (See for instance, Charles B. Thaxton, Walter L. Bradley and Roger L. Olsen, *The Mystery of Life's Origin* (Philosophical Library; New York, 1984). This point is widely misunderstood among secular scientists today. It is wrongly taught that energy inputs alone are sufficient for living systems to self-organize out of simple molecules, given enough time. The above authors, and other scientists as well, have shown by careful calculation that programming information from a source outside a system is required, in addition to energy, for the molecules of life and living cells to be assembled.

In conclusion, physical processes known to science require that time move from the past through the present and into the future irreversibly. "Linear," "one-dimensional" time is the time frame of the physics of the macroscopic world. This view of time is consistent with the progression of the ages in the Bible.

Time in the New Testament

The New Testament appeals to reason, to the conscience, and to the rational mind to communicate the same truths that are found in the Old Testament in story form. Someone has suggested that the Old Testament appeals to the right side of the brain and the New, to the left side. Bible teacher and former corporate executive and scientist Chuck Missler often says,

"The New Testament is in the Old Concealed, and The Old Testament is in the New Revealed."

The basic message of God's love and actions in history is really the same, but it is presented in two differing formats in the two halves of Scripture. The New Testament message is addressed not only to the Jews but to the pagans, the Goyim, the entire non-Jewish world. When the New Testament was written down in the First Century, AD, Greek and Roman culture and government dominated much of the ancient world. The original language now changed between the two Testaments without warning from Hebrew to Koine Greek.

The Greek language of the New Testament refers to time as measured in *chronos* and *kairos*---times and seasons. The meanings of the Greek New Testament words for times and seasons add more to an understanding of the complex nature of time in our universe. *Chronos* (Strong's Concordance Number 5550) means quantity of time, space of time, duration, succession of moments, length of time, or a bounded period of time. To understand this word, it is helpful to read the passages of the New Testament where *chronos* is used. These include Matthew 2:7,

Luke 4:5; 8:27; 20:9, Acts 20:18, Romans 16:25, and Mark 2:19. *Kairos* refers to the quality of time or season, the epoch characterized by certain events, the decisive quality of happening, an opportune time, or a fortuitous moment.

The renowned Bible scholar Archbishop Trench wrote,

"The 'seasons' are the critical epoch-making periods foreordained of God, when all that has been slowly, and often without observation, ripening through long ages is mature and comes to birth in grand decisive events, which constitute at once the close of one period and the commencement of another. Such, for example, was the passing away of the old Jewish dispensation; such, again, the recognition of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire; such the conversion of those outside; such the great revival which went along with the first institution of the Mendicant Orders; such, by still better right, the Reformation; such, above all others, the second coming of the Lord in glory."

Kairos (Strong's Concordance Number 2540) is used in such passages as Romans 5:6, Galatians 6:10, Matthew 13:34, 26:18, Revelation 12:12, I Peter 1:11, and Luke 4:13. In the New Testament we have expressions like "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19), "times of ignorance" (Acts 17:30), and "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

Greek also uses the word *aion* for age, usually referring to an indefinite period of time marked by certain moral or spiritual characteristics. The plural *aionios*, denotes the eternal or everlasting in the New Testament. For example "life eternal" (*aionios zoe*) in John 17:3 refers to an ever-increasing knowledge of God. This word and its derivatives and compounds is very common in the New Testament and can be searched by looking up Strong's Concordance Numbers 165 and 166.

Times of Stress

To illustrate the importance the Bible places on the content and quality of an interval of time within history, the expression "times of stress" occurs in one of the most interesting passages in the New Testament, Paul's second letter to Timothy 3:1-5. Our understanding of the message is enriched by looking up the individual Greek words in this passage in a lexicon. The passage in question reads as follows:

"But understand this; that in the last times there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people."

An analysis of the details of this passage will be found in a separate essay.

The "Last Days"

The entire New Testament uses the term "last days" to refer to the entire 2000 year interval between the first and second advents of Christ. Christ was born "late" in history as God measures time---see Galatians 4:4. He will return after recurring cycles of stress have plagued mankind. These cycles will come with repeated frequency and intensity as the age draws to a close---cycles compared in Scripture to the birth pangs of a woman about to give birth to a child. They will also be less and less local and more and more global. For example, only in our century have we had "World" Wars. The present world economy is another example. A recession in one nation these days affects the world economy creating a crisis not easily corrected by any individual sovereign nation.

It is not possible for us to anticipate where and when the next "time of stress" will befall us, nor can we tell what form it will take. Thus, we cannot plan ahead very well, so we must take one day at a time as Jesus advised us in the Sermon on the Mount, "...Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34) (KJV) During these times of stress, the real character of human beings surfaces, raw, ugly sores open in society, and the situation becomes dangerous and violent. Astrologers explain that such times are at least partially caused by "unfortunate" aspects and alignments of the planets.

For a detailed discussion of the use of the term "last days" in the New Testament see *Are These the Last Days?*, by

The term "the Day of the Lord" appears frequently in the Bible. The Day of the Lord is an extended period of time, not just a 24-hour day, and is to be contrasted with the times in which we now live which we might call "the Day of man," or "man's day." See The Day of the Lord.

For my chart of Bible prophecy and the end of the age see Chart of the End of the Age, <http://ldolphin.org/>.

The Mysterious Flow of Time

Although time is measured in history in terms of clocks and calendars, it is also articulated into seasons. These periods of time bend, stretch, and unfold as God periodically moves the course of history in a different direction. Often, at the last minute, God postpones the final consummation of events, withdraws impending judgments, or even blesses us unexpectedly just when it seems to us that we are at a point of no return in our personal lives or when we think the sky is about to fall on our heads bringing an end to the world as we know it.

God is outside of time. He is an eternally self-existing, self-defining, living Being. Since he created time as we know it, we can think of past, present, and future are eternally present before His eyes.

God's actions in eternity can affect past, present, and future (as experienced by mankind), simultaneously. A certain action of God completed in the past can have on-going and lasting results. Other activities of God, such as His expressions and grace and mercy towards us all, continue day after day. Certain events, such as the "appointed" hour we die or the Day of Judgment, are fixed in the future, predetermined by God. Since God is more concerned with the quality of time than the quantity or measure of time, we can all expect to experience time differently in eternity depending on the quality of our lives during our present training on earth.

Since God is outside of time, past, present and future are always present before Him. Consider the case of a sudden airplane disaster where all the passengers and crew have but moments to cry out to God in a hundred or more sudden, separate, desperate prayers. God has all of eternity to hear even the shortest of these prayers, to review all the lives and facts and His own timetables for history---He knows every heart, every motive, all the facts and He has all the time in the world to take a myriad of data into consideration before answering or denying each one of those prayers! He can take His time, all the time He needs, and yet not fail to answer every one of these simultaneous prayers, each with justice, compassion, and certitude. He does not need to make split-second decisions as we do, He is never caught off guard, and when He does act He can accomplish the impossible in a flash. An example of this sudden and complete action by God will be in the coming resurrection of the dead as described in First Corinthians,

"Lo! 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 imperishable, and we shall be changed."

Some have attempted to estimate the time duration of a "twinkling of the eye." It is surely no more than milliseconds in our time frame.

There are many references in the Bible to "appointments" on God's calendar indicating that there is a divine plan for the ages in effect at all times. The age prior to the one in which we now live carries the title "times of ignorance." Speaking in Athens the Apostle Paul declared to the crowd,

"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one [man, Adam] every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man.

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, [Jesus] and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:24-31)

Time Disrupted by the Fall

The universe was created for man---in science this is called the "anthropic principle." It is also evident from the opening chapters of the Bible. An empty universe inhabited only by God and the angels makes little sense to most of us. God does not "need" a universe, nor does he need man to add to His Being. He is fully sufficient and complete in all His attributes so our creation adds nothing to His essential nature. The universe was made as a home for man, and man was made for fellowship with God (see Isaiah 45:18). Man was placed in charge of the creation as Hebrews Chapter 2 recalls. God pronounced nature "good" and valuable to Him before He placed man on earth. Intuitively it is unattractive to imagine that the universe sat empty for aeons before man arrived on the scene---as evolutionary thought teaches was the case. According to Genesis, God proceeded to create the universe step by step in an orderly way, and when He had the ecosystem prepared, He made man (last of all) and placed him squarely in the center of things to understand and to rule over what had been created. [Man has since lost his dominion over the creation---but that is another story. God has a restoration plan underway].

The notion of an originally upright, unflawed universe also suggests that the moon and planets may have once been more beautiful, more pristine, and more "inhabitable" than they are now. I myself happen to believe that some sort of cosmic disaster has already occurred throughout the solar system and that there is ample evidence now of destructive forces at work in the physical universe that were not put there by God. The Biblical view also contradicts the notion that man is improving and society is advancing morally and socially. Rather, it is the grace of God which makes life bearable and prevents mankind from self-destruction.

The original creation was "good" (unmarred, flawless) at the end of creation week. Then the angels fell and later man fell. The fall of man resulted in a "curse" on the physical world, a curse which has not yet been lifted. [Actually there are at least five significant curses named in Genesis that effect the world we live in today]. The fall of man and the fall of Satan seems to have made fundamental changes in certain laws of physics and biology as well. The nature of subjective time, i.e., the "quality" of time as we experience it has changed since creation. Also, man in his present condition is constrained to a rather limited "one-dimensional" time frame whereas before the fall, our first parents enjoyed a multidimensional quality of time much richer than we can even begin to imagine.

Before the fall, our first parents in their innocence and purity were in a very real sense enjoying a quality of life moment by moment that is unknown to us at the present time.

Incidentally the role of the angels in the government of the physical universe as well as in the affairs of men is confirmed by a verse in Hebrews,

"...For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking." (2:5)

The implication of this verse is the age we now live in is governed by the angels---the age which is to come will not be governed by angels, but by the redeemed of mankind who are in Christ the Lord.

A Glimpse into Eternity

The Biblical view of time found in the New Testament is that time in the heavenly places, that is in the spiritual world, is multidimensional. For example, in the Book of the Revelation we see scenes taking place on earth in human history and scenes in the heavenly places going on at the same time. Time in heaven apparently moves in the forward direction as it does on earth. For example Revelation 8:1 describes a period of silence in heaven lasting "about half an hour." But time in heaven has a quality and a pace different from time on earth.

A good example of an event occurring in "eternity" is found in the Gospels: one day Jesus stepped up to the top of Mount Mizar, a minor peak on the slopes of Mount Hermon, above Baniyas (ancient Caesarea Philippi) in northern Israel and was transfigured before His frightened disciples, Peter, James, and John. Appearing with Him (about 30 AD) were Moses (from about 1400 BC) and Elijah, (who was translated into heaven without seeing death about 850 BC). All were alive and well, as if contemporaries, oblivious to the years that had separated them by our way of reckoning time.

This incident (recorded in Luke 9:28-36; Matthew 17:1-8; and Mark 9:2-8) shows that all the usual rules and constraints of time (as we commonly think of them) were momentarily lifted. Thus, it was not only possible for men from ancient times to appear alive in the presence of the disciples of Jesus, but also for Jesus to assume His glorified body all at the same "time." Luke's account is as follows:

"And he said to all, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.'

"Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah'---not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen." (Luke 9:23-36)

Another example of the multiple dimensions of time and eternity will be helpful to the reader. Consider the various time frames that are involved in the writing, printing, and reading of a book, for example, a mystery novel. Perhaps the author took a year to write the manuscript, but drew from many years of personal experience and from his own reading of history. Suppose six months elapse before the book is on the market and reaches the reader. The reader then begins the book, and after a period time of intermittent reading, finishes it. (The reader can even skip ahead to the end, if he wishes, to see how it all turns out). Internal to the book is the time frame of the story, which may include flashbacks in the lives of some of the characters. After reading the book, it goes on the library shelf, but the reader retains a summary version, condensed in his memory. He is free to recall the book, or read it again. In this example one can count half a dozen, or more, different time frames all co-existing!

Time As Experienced in a Resurrection Body

After His resurrection, Jesus further demonstrated the capacities of His resurrection body by appearing and disappearing at will among His disciples, in the days between the resurrection and the ascension. From such records in the Gospels, we can conclude that resurrection bodies are equipped for multidimensional space and time travel. Jesus ate food and could be touched and felt, in His resurrection body. He did not return in a ghost-like, shadowy form. In his two letters to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul clarifies the nature of the resurrection. Physical death is the point a believer steps out of the time frame of human history. When a person leaves time and enters eternity. Once in eternity one bypasses intermediate (future) times to arrive at the resurrection at the exact same instant all other believers do, in fact "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

First note carefully the wording the Apostle uses in describing the resurrection body as already in existence in eternity:

"For we know that if the earthly tent [Greek *skenos* = "tent"] we live in is destroyed, we have [now] a building [Greek: *oikos* = building] from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:1-5)

The resurrection of Christians who have died during the past two thousand years immediately precedes the catching up of living believers at a yet-future event called the "rapture of the church" [see separate essays on the "appearing"]

and the "coming" of the Lord]. This appearing [parousia] of the Lord Jesus for His church is an event in eternity which intrudes into our time frame at some particular date on God's appointment calendar,

"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, [died] that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

"But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape. But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)

In this passage three distinct events occur: (1) a great shout from the Lord Jesus which summons the dead back to life, (2) the Archangel's {Michael's} call to Israel, and the sound of a trumpet to summon those believers alive at that moment of history. That same trumpet and the immediate transformation of living Christians at the rapture is described in 1 Corinthians 15:

"Lo! 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 imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (15:51-58)

In the experience of the Christian, one's personal death corresponds exactly with the Second Coming of Christ, though this event will also happen on earth at the definite date and time in recorded human history. This is what Paul meant when he said to be absent from the body was to be at home with the Lord, not as a spirit, but in a resurrection body along with everyone else who knows God. This can be seen at the Martyrdom of Stephen in the book of Acts.

"Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.' But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'" And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:56-8:2)

As Stephen died he saw heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Throughout the New Testament Jesus is ordinarily pictured as seated at the right hand of God. Evidently He stands to receive His bride, the church, at the rapture. Thus all Christians get to heaven at the same moment. In one sense, then, heaven is now empty. There is no value in praying to the Virgin Mary or St. Jude since they aren't there yet! But as will be seen shortly, there is another sense in which all believers are already in heaven.

Who is Presently in Heaven?

Not only has Jesus Christ been raised from the dead, He is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God in a new

resurrection body. All authority and power in the universe has been placed into His hands, (Matthew 28:18). Therefore heaven is certainly not empty. The angels are there and the splendor and glory of God is unchanged and undiminished.

"As I [Daniel] looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened...I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:9-14)

When an individual enters into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord, he or she is immediately spiritually regenerated and becomes identified with Jesus Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. This is the meaning of baptism--being "placed into" Christ, into the Body of Christ. Paul says in Romans,

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him." (Romans 6:3-9)

Paul elaborates on this in Ephesians,

"And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God--not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:1-11)

Although our spirits and souls are made new if we know Jesus Christ personally, our bodies are not yet redeemed. It is our present mortal physical bodies (connecting us by the five senses) which link us to the "old creation." In spirit we already have been "raised" from the dead, we are dwelling in the heavenly places--we are already seated with Christ at the right hand of God. If we had our resurrection bodies "put on" instead of our old earth-tents, we would immediately perceive that we all had arrived in heaven together. Hebrews Chapter 12 describes our present dwelling in heaven:

"For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.' Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I tremble with fear.'

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. His voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.' This phrase, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of what is shaken, as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may

remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:18-29)

So in one sense as all the above passages tell us, all believers are presently dwelling in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. But in another sense the only man who is now in heaven is Jesus. Mary is not there yet, nor Jude the half-brother of Jesus, nor the Apostle Paul, nor my grandmother. The resurrection has not yet taken place. And there is no "waiting room" where our loved-ones are now in a holding pattern standing-by for heaven either.

When the resurrection does occur we shall all arrive there at exactly the same time. This is explained in more detail in a sermon on *Time and Eternity* by Ray C. Stedman.

Rewards Beyond this Life

Eternal life---which is the free gift of God to all those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord---is a kind of time dimension characterized not only by endless duration, but by very high quality. God's time has richness, variety, freedom from boredom and endless diversity. Living in fellowship with Him who is Life is not only liberating but exciting beyond the power of language to describe. Eternity does not mean timelessness, except perhaps for those in hell.

"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

Notes and References

Note A. "God is neither time-bound nor space-bound, for He existed before the Universe existed, before the creation of space or matter or time. Einstein put the nature of the relationship between these three realities this way:

If you don't take my words too seriously, I would say this: if we assumed that all matter disappeared from the world, then before relativity, one believed that space and time would continue to exist in an empty world. But, according to the Theory of Relativity, if matter and its motion disappeared, there would no longer be any space or time.

"Long before Einstein, Augustine * had perceived the real equation of time with matter. He saw that space and matter are co-existent, and he held that God created time when He created the Universe.

* Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. XI, chap. 6: "Beyond doubt, the World was not made in Time, but with Time." As a matter of fact, the Jews themselves anticipated Augustine, though with somewhat less precision and sophistication. [See Louis Ginsberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Phil., Jewish Publ. Assoc. of Amer., 1955, Vol. V, p. 6, note 14, quoting from *Bereshith Rabbah* 3:7 and *Koheleth* 3:11]. It is also noted here that the Jewish philosopher, Philo, accepted the view held by his contemporaries. He adopted the concept that time came into being when the universe was created [see Philo, *On Creation*, Vol. 1, Loeb classical Library, Harvard, 1971, p. 21].

- Time began with the creation of matter. Of God Himself, Augustine said this: "Thy years stand together at the same time...Thy years are one Day, and Thy day is not like our sequence of days but is today." *
- Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. XI, chap. 13, Sect. 16.

1. To establish an accurate calendar of events, the Chronology-History Research Institute (PO Box 3043; Spencer, Iowa, 51301) is undertaking computer dating of the Bible. This group has issued several important books and publications and has a helpful newsletter, *It's About Time*. *Biblical Chronologies* by Alan Montgomery and by Barry Setterfield are available online.

2. A valuable compilation of more than forty calendars, ancient and modern, is found in Frank Parise, ed., *The Book of Calendars* (Facts on File; New York, 1982). The number of days in the year in all ancient calendars was 360. This was changed in 701 BC for reasons that are still disputed by Bible scholars. See Chuck Missler's briefing package

Signs in the Heavens available from Koinonia House, PO Box D, Couer d'Alene, Idaho 83816-0347. Chuck has an excellent briefing package available on the Jewish Feast Days as well.

3. Among contemporary creationists, Donald E. Patten has written a number of provocative books and articles on catastrophic happenings in ancient times. See his *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch* (Pacific Meridien Press; Seattle, 1966); *The Long Day of Joshua and Six Other Catastrophes* (ibid., 1973); and *Six Volumes of which he is the editor, A Symposium on Creation* (ibid., 1977). Patten is controversial and many of his ideas have been disputed or challenged. Gerardus D. Bouw, PhD., *Geocentricity*, (Association for Biblical Astronomy, 4527 Wetzel Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44109, 1992) discusses Joshua's long day and other unusual events recorded in the Bible.

4. The late Arthur Custance wrote a series of scholarly "Doorway Papers" some years ago that were later published by Zondervan Press (1976). Some of his books relevant to this essay include *Journey out of Time, Time and Eternity*, and *Two Men Called Adam*, and *The Seed of the Woman*. His library is now being added online. Published originally by Doorway Publications, %Evelyn M. White, 38 Elora Drive, Unit 41, Hamilton, Ontario, L9C 7L6, Canada.

A wonderful classic book on God, time and eternity is Nathan R. Wood, *The Trinity in the Universe*, 1978, Reprint, Kregel Press, Grand Rapids, MI. Biblical concepts of Time and Eternity are eloquently discussed by C.S. Lewis in his *Mere Christianity* (Macmillan Publishing; New York, 1960); and by Ray C. Stedman in *Authentic Christianity* (Multnomah Press; Portland, 1975). The latter book is available from Discovery Publications, 3505 Middlefield Road; Palo Alto, CA 94306. Ray Stedman attributes much of his understanding to the scholarly work of Dr. Arthur Custance.

5. Richard Morris's, *Time's Arrow* (Simon and Schuster; New York, 1980), is a very good book on this subject. Morris includes a good bibliography.

6. Kenneth Jon Rose, *The Body in Time* (John Wiley and Sons, 1988) is a well-written book on biological clocks especially as related to the human organism.

7. The following quote will introduce a recent book on science and religion:

I AM'

There is an old Texas aphorism: 'Time is how God keeps things from happening all at once.' Perhaps for God things do happen all at once, and 'time' as we know it is only an approximate description.

As long ago as the fourth and fifth centuries the Christian philosopher Augustine of Hippo gave a great deal of thought and prayer to the subject of time. Like Aristotle and Islamic natural philosophers, Augustine concluded that time begins with the running of the universe. He made a sharp cut between the things that exist in time and space and what is outside time and Augustine began with the question 'What was God doing before He created Heaven and Earth?' and decided that the question has no meaning because words such as 'before' and 'after' and 'then' can't apply where time as we know it doesn't according to Augustine, time as we know it is part and parcel of this creation, not something that applies to God.

The timeless present tense in which Augustine proposed that God exists is difficult to imagine or describe. Augustine wrote: 'Who shall lay hold upon the mind of man, that it may stand and see that time with its past and future must be determined by eternity, which stands and does not pass, which has in itself no past or future.' Augustine doesn't say, you will notice, that eternity lasts for ever, though that's how most of us think of eternity. Eternity lasts no time at all. Eternity 'stands and does not pass' and 'in eternity nothing passes but all is present.'

In this model of reality, you can't talk about a 'time' before time was created, any more than you can talk about it Hawking's no-boundary universe. There was never a 'time' time didn't exist. 'There can be no time apart from creation.. Let them cease to talk such nonsense,' wrote Augustine.' What he proposed instead of 'such nonsense' was that God, existing in an eternal present, creates chronological time for the benefit our human minds and existence.

What would it be like if events were not ordered in chronological time? If God knows everything in the universe that ever happened and ever will happen in the same way (except infinitely more detail) that I know what's happening right now the room with me, in what way would that affect God's power to affect this universe? What meaning could cause

and effect have in such a setting? What would happen to 'predictability'? Where events are not filed chronologically, is there some other filing system? Those are questions we have no hope of answer but we can speculate a little.

Our chronological framework forbids knowledge of the future. That's a prescription one wouldn't have in a timeless situation. It wouldn't be at all surprising to find God knowing the future---it would all be NOW to God. That makes problems for us, because it is difficult to think of ourselves as having free will if someone knows the future and knows what we are going to decide. However, I know what I did yesterday. I decided to push on this chapter rather than to write some long-overdue letters. It would never occur to me that this knowledge, which I have on Wednesday, in any way obliged me to make that yesterday, on Tuesday. True, I can't change my mind about it now. Is it my knowledge about what I decided yesterday that makes it impossible for me to change that now? Why necessarily conclude it is that?

We cannot assume it is knowledge of the past that robs us of the ability to change it. Why should we assume that knowledge of the future robs us of our ability to change the future? Why, in any instance, should knowledge of an outcome determine that outcome? In our framework of chronological time, knowing the future would seem to determine the future, and certainly the psychological situation of knowing and having free will at the same time would not be one we could cope with---a good argument for why that possibility isn't allowed in our creation. But why should this necessarily hold for God in a regime where time as we know it doesn't exist at all? It isn't difficult to imagine a situation in which I have free will and God might know every last detail of what I'm going to do for the rest of my life. seventeenth-century Afghan writer expressed it, 'All the pages not yet written He has read'---and yet I can write on them anything I choose.

The biblical description of God's activity in the world makes a great deal more sense if Augustine's model of time is the correct one: God's ability, as described in the Old Testament, to plan a period of thousands of years, taking into account all the spanners that his Chosen People are going to throw into the works; the blame that falls on Judas, though Judas' betrayal of Christ fulfills prophecy; puzzling incidents in which Christ apparently overlooks the fact that his disciples are constrained by chronological point of view and has to re-explain in a way that make sense to them; Christ's statement 'Before Abraham was born, I am,' and all the incidents of prophecy, great and small. None of it seems so bizarre if God is seeing it and intervening in the whole of 'history' at the same instant, not constraining our free will but taking advantage of our choices and mitigating the consequences. The oddness from our point of view merely the oddness with which this perfectly feasible activity was up in our chronological time, where it doesn't mesh and we no vocabulary to describe it.

We, of course, have no idea whether this is the way time works---or the way God works. We do know that we can't yet understand time. It remains one of the great mysteries. We suspect that chronological arrow of time as we know it is a broken symmetry, because the underlying laws of physics don't in general an arrow of time themselves. With few exceptions, they are reversible. If a law allows a sequence of events to occur, it also allows a time-reversed version of the same sequence---the film run backward. Nevertheless, in most of nature, events occur in a time-directed manner and the film is never run backward. Once again, as in the case of galaxy clusters, it's to determine whether what we observe is really a broken symmetry or something more fundamental.

The best judgment sent indicates that chronological time is only a part of a more fundamental reality.

Kitty Ferguson, *The Fire in the Equations: Science, Religion, and the Search for God*, pp. 225-227. (Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1994)

See also the separate essay Time and Eternity

Ray C. Stedman on Time, Eternity, and the Resurrection

The Best Is Yet To Be

Well, what is it, that is coming? Like a good chef, Paul has been whetting our appetites and stimulating our anticipation by veiled references to some breathtaking experience yet to come. But now he grows specific. In chapter five he describes the weight of glory in more explicit terms:

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." (2 Corinthians 5:14)

"A building from God"... "a house not made with hands"... "our heavenly dwelling," what do these expressions refer to? They are obviously set in direct contrast to "the earthly tent we live in" which is clearly the present body of flesh and bones. But before we take a closer look at these phrases, note how definite and certain Paul is. See how he begins: "We know..." There is nothing uncertain about it at all.

Many today, as in the past, are trying to guess what lies beyond death. Some have supposed that the spirit of man departs, only to return in some reincarnation of life as another human being. The evidence used to support this is usually the testimony of certain persons (often given through a medium or in a hypnotic state) who apparently recall whole episodes from their previous existence. But it must be remembered that the Bible consistently warns of the existence of "lying spirits" or demons who have no compunctions about representing themselves to be the spirits of departed persons and who take delight in deceiving humans. Others have suggested that knowledge of such things is put beyond us, that the only proper approach to life is to view everything as tentative, nothing can be depended on for sure. But Jesus and the apostles never speak that way. Christ said that he came to tell us the truth, that we might know. The Apostle John underlines this point again and again, saying, "These things are written that you might know." So Paul says here, we know certain things about life beyond death.

Things We Really Know

Well, what do we know? First, says Paul, we know that we now live in an earthly tent. Twice he calls the present body a tent. Tents are usually temporary dwellings. Once I visited a family who lived in a tent in their yard while waiting for their new house to be finished. It wasn't very comfortable, but they were willing to put up with it until they could move into their real house. This is the case, Paul says, with Christians. They are living temporarily in tents.

Further, he says that in this tent we both groan and sigh. Do you ever listen to yourself when you get up in the morning? Do you ever groan? It is quite evident that the apostle is right, isn't it? There is the groan of daily experience. Perhaps the tent is beginning to sag. The cords are loosening and the pegs are growing wobbly. There may also be the sigh of expectancy. "We sigh with anxiety," says the apostle, "not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed." No one wishes to be disembodied (unclothed), but nevertheless, we do long sometimes for something more than this body offers. We feel its limitations. Have you ever said when invited to do something, "I wish I could; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"? That is the sigh of anxiety, longing to be further clothed.

The Heavenly House

In contrast to this temporary tent in which we now live, the apostle describes the permanent dwelling waiting for us when we die. It is "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This is the indescribable "weight of glory" which is now being prepared for us by the trials and hardships we experience. If the present tent is our earthly body, then surely this permanent dwelling is the resurrection body, described in 1 Corinthians:

"So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body." (15:42-44)

If the apostle can describe our physical body as a tent, then it is surely fitting to describe the resurrection body as a house. A tent is temporary; a house is permanent. When we die, we will move from the temporary to the permanent; from the tent to the house, eternal in the heavens. This resurrection body is further described:

"For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

When we compare this passage with the one we are considering in 2 Corinthians 5, we note that the word for "clothed" ("that we would be further clothed") is exactly the same Greek word as the one translated "put on" in 1 Corinthians 15 ("this perishable must put on the imperishable"). This present perishable body of ours must be clothed with imperishable life, and this present mortal nature must be clothed with immortality. It is at that time, says Paul, that "death is swallowed up in victory." Compare that with the statement of 2 Corinthians 5, "that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." The two passages are clearly parallel and the "house not made with hands" is the resurrection body of 1 Corinthians 15.

Is There A Temporary Tent?

But this poses a serious problem with some. They say, "Well, if 'the building of God' is the resurrection body, then what does a believer live in while he is waiting for the resurrection body? Resurrection won't occur till the second coming of Jesus. What about the saints who have died through the centuries? Their bodies have been placed in the grave and won't arise until the resurrection; what do they live in during the interim?"

To this problem three widely varying answers have been posed. One is that departed saints have no bodies until the resurrection. They are with the Lord but as disembodied spirits, incomplete until regaining their bodies at the resurrection. But this view ignores Paul's words, "{We} long to put on our heavenly dwelling so that by putting it on we may not be found naked." And again, "We sigh with anxiety, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed." Furthermore, the language of both 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5 seems to imply an immediate donning of the resurrection body. There is no hint of any waiting period.

A second answer to the problem is that of soul sleep. This theory says that when a believer dies his soul remains asleep within the dead body. When the body is raised at the resurrection, the soul awakens. But because it has been asleep since death, it has no knowledge of the intervening time and no awareness of having been asleep. This concept solves the problem of the missing bodies but directly contravenes such Scriptures as the Lord's words to the thief on the cross, "Today shall you be with me, in Paradise," and Paul's declaration, "we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5 :8).

Still a third group proposes to solve the problem by suggesting that the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," is not the resurrection body at all but an intermediate body which God gives the believer to live in until the resurrection. Presumably, at that time, the intermediate body is dissolved and only the resurrection body exists. But it is difficult to square that with the description, "eternal in the heavens." Such a view also destroys the parallelism of 2 Corinthians 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. Since there is no hint anywhere in Scripture of the existence of an intermediate body, the view seems hardly tenable.

The Problem Disappears

The problem these strange answers propose to solve is really no problem at all. It arises only when we insist on projecting the concepts of time into eternity. We constantly think of heaven as a continuation on a larger and perfect scale of life on earth. Locked into our world of space and time, we find it very cult to imagine life proceeding on any other terms. But we must remember that time is time and eternity is eternity and never the twain shall meet. We experience something of the same difficulty in dealing with the mathematical concept of infinity. Many people imagine infinity to be a very large number, but it is not. The difference is that if you subtract 1 from a very large number, you have one less, but if you subtract 1 from infinity you still have infinity.

Dr. Arthur Custance, a Canadian scientist who is also a remarkable Bible scholar and author of a series of biblical-scientific studies called Doorway Papers, has written something very helpful on this:

"The really important thing to notice is that Time stands in the same relation to Eternity, in one sense, as a large number does to infinity. There is one sense in which infinity includes a very large number, yet it is quite fundamentally different and independent of it. And by analogy, Eternity includes Time and yet is fundamentally something other. The reduction of Time until it gets smaller and smaller is still not Eternity. Nor do we reach Eternity by an extension of Time to great length. There is no direct pathway between Time and Eternity. They are different categories of experience." (Doorway Paper No. 37)

The thing we must remember in dealing with this matter of life beyond death is that when time ends, eternity begins. They are not the same, and we must not make them the same. Time means that we are locked into a pattern of chronological sequence which we are helpless to break. For example, all human beings sharing the same room will experience an earthquake together. While there are varying feelings and reactions, everyone will feel the earthquake at the same time. But in eternity events do not follow a sequential pattern. There is no past or future, only the present NOW. Within that NOW all events happen. An individual will experience sequence, but only in relationship to himself, and events will occur to him on the basis of his spiritual readiness. No two individuals need, therefore, experience the same event just because they happen to be together.

When Time Ends

All this may sound quite confusing, and it is true it contains great elements of speculation. But let us return to the Scriptures and the problem of what happens to the believer when he dies. Holding firmly to the essential point that time and eternity are quite different, then when a believer steps out of time, he steps into eternity. What was perhaps a far-off distant event in time is suddenly present in eternity if one is spiritually prepared for it. Since the one great event for which the Spirit of God is now preparing believers here on earth is the coming of Jesus Christ for his own, that is the event which greets every believer when he dies. It may be decades or even centuries before it breaks into time, but this

particular person is no longer in time. He is in eternity. He sees "the Lord coming with ten thousands of his saints," just as Enoch did when he was permitted a look into eternity, and at a time when he was the seventh from Adam and the population of the earth was very small (Jude 14).

Where The Ages Meet

But what is even more amazing is that in the experience of that believer he does not leave anyone behind. All his loved ones who know Christ are there too, including his Christian descendants who were not even born yet when he died! Since there is no past or future in heaven, this must be the case. Even those who, in time, stand beside his grave and weep and then go home to an empty house, are, in his experience, with him in glory. Dr. Custance carries this even further.

"The experience of earth saints is shared by all other saints, by those who have preceded and those who are to follow. For them all, all history, all intervening time between death and the Lord's return is suddenly annihilated so that each one finds to his amazement that Adam, too, is just dying and joining him on his way to meet the Lord: and Abraham and David, Isaiah and the Beloved John, Paul and Augustine, Hudson Taylor and you and I all in one wonderful experience meeting the Lord in a single instant together, without precedence and without the slightest consciousness of delay, none being late and none too early." (Doorway Paper No. 37, p. 28)

This truly astonishing quality of eternity is the reason Jesus could promise his disciples with absolute certainty, "And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3). That promise not only applied to that generation of Christians, but would apply to all, directly and personally, through all the intervening centuries. This also explains the strange promise at the close of Hebrews 11. Speaking of Abraham, Moses, David, Jacob, Joseph, and others the writer says, "All these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect"

To be "made perfect" is to be resurrected, so this passage specifically states that the saints of old will not be resurrected without us. Either they are disembodied spirits waiting for the resurrection (which we have already seen is not likely) or there is some way by which we can leave time one by one and yet participate together in one glorious experience of resurrection. The proper understanding of eternity supplies the answer.

Eternity Invades Time

There are other references in Scripture that present this same phenomenon of the apparent eclipse of time. For instance, in Revelation 13:8, Jesus is referred to as "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." Now the cross occurred at a precise moment of history. We know when the Lamb of God was slain. But the Bible says it occurred before the foundation of the world. How can an historical event which occurred at a certain spot on earth, in the biblical reckoning be said to have occurred before the earth was even made? The passage does not say that the Lamb was foreordained to be slain before the foundation of the world, but it says he was actually slain then. Surely it means that the cross was an eternal event, taking place both in time and eternity. In time, it is long past; in eternity, it forever occurs. So also would the resurrection, and in the same way, the second coming of Christ. When any Christian dies, he passes from the realm of time and space into timelessness, into the NOW of God when the full effect of these timeless events is experienced by him to whatever degree his spiritual state requires. But the Lord's return is an event yet to take place in historical time when the church is complete and the end of the age has come. Perhaps this is the meaning of the Lord's words: "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5:25).

A problem passage for some, in this respect, has been Revelation 6:9-11 where John sees the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God under the altar in heaven. They are crying out to God, "How long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth." In response they are told to be patient a little longer until the full count of martyrs is complete. This seems to indicate a sense of time in heaven and a need to wait for something in the future. How do we explain this in the light of what we have just seen regarding time and eternity?

The explanation, of course, is that John, who sees all this, is still a man living in time and space on earth. It is necessary, therefore, that what he sees in heaven be communicated to him in the symbols and language of earth. This is a common phenomenon in the Book of Revelation. In the first chapter John sees Jesus in heaven. Does he really have long white hair and feet like burnished bronze and does a sharp sword come out of his mouth? No, clearly these are symbols which convey to John the power, wisdom, and glory of the Lord Jesus in his glorified, risen estate. The truth conveyed by the vision of the souls under the altar is evidently their identification with and concern for their brethren who are still on earth. They express themselves in terms of time and space in order that John (and we) may understand. Can We Come Back?

Perhaps this also indicates a further condition of the eternal experience: those who have stepped out of time into eternity can, if they so choose, step back into time again, though remaining invisible. That is, of course, exactly what Jesus did repeatedly during his forty-day post-resurrection ministry. To those in eternity, time may be like a book on our library bookshelf. If we choose, we can pick up and browse through it at random. We can enter the time sequence found in the book at any place we desire, follow it through for as long as we like, and then lay it down to reenter (in consciousness) the time sequence in which we normally live. In similar fashion those in eternity may select some period of history which they would like to live through and step back into that time, living out its events, though invisibly. This, of course, is pure speculation and may not prove to be true at all, but it does at least fit the suggestion of Scripture that in a resurrected state we will be free from many of the limitations of our present body of flesh.

One thing is clear. Paul looked forward with keen anticipation to the day when he would put off his earthly tent and move into his heavenly dwelling. It would be, he says, a "spiritual" body, not meaning, as many have supposed, a body made up of spirit something rather ethereal and immaterial but rather a body fully subject to the spirit, designed expressly for the spirit. Now we must say, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Then we can say, "My spirit is willing and the flesh is equal to its demands. Let's go!" Perhaps a quote from C.S. Lewis will help understand this point.

"The command 'Be ye perfect' is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said (in the Bible) that we were "gods" and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him---for we can prevent Him, if we choose---He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which rests back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said." (Mere Christianity, p. 171)

Yes, something more is coming something so different from anything we have known up to now that it defies description. Yet it is something so splendid and glorious that, even whispered, it sends chills of expectation down the spine of the universe. Phillips' version of Romans 8:18-19 is beautifully expressive of this: "In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has in store for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own."

(From Authentic Christianity, Chapter 9, by Ray C. Stedman, (Multnomah Press 1975).

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Author: Isaac Watts Composer: Attributed. to William Croft
Tune: St. Anne (Croft) Scripture: Ps 90:1-5

- 1 O God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast, And our eternal home!
- 2 Under the shadow of Thy throne, Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone, And our defense is sure.
- 3 Before the hills in order stood, Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God, To endless years the same.
- 4 A thousand ages in Thy sight Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night Before the rising sun.
- 5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream, Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream Dies at the op'ning day.
- 6 O God our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while life shall last, And our eternal home.

Appendix G

The Day of The Lord

by Lambert Dolphin

The Day of the LORD is a special term in the Bible used to refer to a period of time when God directly intervenes in human affairs--in judgment or in blessing. The Day of the Lord we are presently waiting for in our time frame will begin with the rapture (or "translation") of the church and will continue through the tribulation period (seven years), and on through the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth until the time of the "new heavens and new earth." (Rev. 21)

In contrast to the coming Day of the Lord, we can think of the present age as "The Day of Man," because God has allowed human evil to run its full course in our time. God's interference with man's attempts to conduct his own affairs as he pleases, is today minimal. Although there is restraint from God on man's attempts to run things, God is now allowing what is called "the mystery of lawlessness" to run its course. The culmination of "Man's Day" will be the appearance on the stage of history of a great world leader, a "lawless one," who will in actuality attempt to counterfeit God's Messiah and King, Jesus.

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12)

At the present time Jesus Christ the Lord is indeed ruling over the earth (and indeed over the entire universe), however He is not yet reigning on the earth. It is God's will "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11) According to God's decree all men will one day submit to the authority of Jesus willingly or by force--one way or the other. The above quotation is repeated also in Romans 14:11 and is derived from Isaiah Chapter 45 in the Old Testament which says in part,

"...I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God...I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the LORD, who do all these things..."Woe to him who strives with his Maker, an earthen vessel with the potter! Does the clay say to him who fashions it, 'What are you making'? or 'Your work has no handles'? Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in travail?'" Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the work of my hands? I made the earth, and created man upon it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host..."

"For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other. I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in chaos.' I the LORD speak the truth, I declare what is right.

"Assemble yourselves and come, draw near together, you survivors of the nations! They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save. Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.'"

Before departing from his disciples for the last time from the Mount of Olives Jesus instructed his disciples giving them what has been called "The Great Commission."

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

The disciples and Christians of the First Century all expected Jesus to return very soon. Indeed this has been the hope of the true church in every generation.

Come Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free,
From our fears and sins release us; Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.
Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child and yet a King.
Born to reign is us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine eternal Spirit Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne."
(Charles Wesley, 1707 - 1788)

The actual second coming of Christ to earth is described several places in the New Testament (as well as in the Old). Towards the very end of the First Century the aged apostle John saw the Second Advent in a great vision,

"I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

"And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords." (Rev. 19:11-16)

For the unrepentant who reject Christ's rule over them now during the present Day of grace, the fast-approaching Day of the Lord will be a time of terrible retribution, judgment and eternal destruction. For God's people it will mean final purifying, fulfillment, and reward. The Apostle Paul describes the parousia ("presence," or "appearing") and the epiphaneia ("shining-forth" or second coming) of the Lord as a single event in his First letter to the Thessalonians. In our earthly time frame these two events (the rapture of the church and the second coming in power and glory) are separated by the seven years of the tribulation period

"We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brothers, as is fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring.

"This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering-since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:3-12)

The Old Testament is replete with vivid poetic descriptions of impending judgments on Israel, and/or the Gentile nations, which also will be more completely carried out by the Lord at the end of the age we now live in:

"Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every man's heart will melt, and they will be dismayed. Pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in travail. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame. Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the earth a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant, and lay low the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make men more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger." (Isaiah 13:6-13)

God's judgments--both of men and Satan, "the god of this world (or, age)"---are especially directed at the root problem of sin---which is pride.

"Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust from before the terror of the LORD, and from the glory of his majesty. The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the pride of men shall be humbled; and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high; against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan; against all the high mountains, and against all the lofty hills; against every high tower, and against every fortified wall; against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the pride of men shall be brought low; and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. And the idols shall utterly pass away.

"And men shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the glory of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. In that day men will cast forth their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats, to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the glory of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. Turn away from man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?" (Isaiah 2:10:22)

Today, the New Testament offers wonderful, complete forgiveness of all sin made possible by the death of God's own son, Jesus, on our behalf. The full power of his resurrection enables those who follow Jesus to live whole and godly lives. Furthermore, Christ promises that his bride, the true church, will escape from the wrath to come. (See 1 Thessalonians 1:10, quoted below).

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews warns that God will soon shake not only all the cities of the earth, the foundations of all human society, but also the heavens themselves, including the "principalities and powers in the heavenly places," the unseen angelic orders who presently control human affairs to a great extent. Only those things in heaven and on earth which God himself has built will survive!

"See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. His voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.' This phrase, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of what is shaken, as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:25-29)

Zephaniah the prophet gives us an especially vivid view of the Day of the Lord. A partial fulfillment of this prophecy occurred about 30 years later in the Babylonian captivity, however it is clear that the full implications of this prophecy are yet future:

"The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. 'I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth,' says the LORD. 'I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. I will overthrow the wicked; I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth,' says the LORD.

"'I will stretch out my hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests; those who bow down on the roofs to the

host of the heavens; those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom; those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him.'

"Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is at hand; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. And on the day of the LORD'S sacrifice---I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire. On that day I will punish every one who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud.' 'On that day,' says the LORD, 'a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills. Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off. At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are thickening upon their lees, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.'

"The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring distress on men, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealous wrath, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full, yea, sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth." (Zephaniah 1)

Zephaniah also writes of blessings upon Israel and all the nations in the days of Messiah's visible, earthly, thousand-year reign:

"Therefore wait for me,' says the LORD, 'for the day when I arise as a witness. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all the heat of my anger; for in the fire of my jealous wrath all the earth shall be consumed. 'Yea, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering. 'On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, those who are left in Israel; they shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall pasture and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.'

"Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has cast out your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear evil no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: 'Do not fear, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. 'I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you together; yea, I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,' says the LORD." (Zephaniah 3:8-20)

Joel tells of disturbances in the heavens and great disruptions in nature associated with the Day of the Lord. These events are also described in the New Testament.

"And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls." (Joel 2:30-32)

And in the New Testament,

"When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its

winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?'" (Rev. 6:12-17)

God's ultimate purpose in judging evil is not the destruction of mankind but a new creation:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their children with them. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD." (Isaiah 65:17-25)

The Apostle Paul tells us that the Day of the Lord will approach and come upon the world silently and unannounced:

"But as to the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape.

But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:31-11)

References

For the term the Day of the Lord see Isa. 13:6, Isa. 13:9, Isa. 58:13, Jer. 46:10, Ezek. 13:5, Ezek. 30:3, Joel 1:15, Joel 2:1, Joel 2:11, Joel 2:31, Joel 3:14, Amos 5:18, Amos 5:20, Obad. 15, Zeph. 1:7, Zeph. 1:14, Zech. 14:1, Mal. 4:5, Acts 2:20, 1Cor. 5:5, 2Cor. 1:14, 1Ths. 5:2, 2Ths. 2:2, 2Pet. 3:10.

For the term that Day (which refers either to an impending or a final judgment when God intervenes) see Deut. 31:17, Deut. 31:18, 1Sam. 8:18, Isa. 2:11, Isa. 2:17, Isa. 2:20, Isa. 3:7, Isa. 3:18, Isa. 4:1, Isa. 4:2, Isa. 7:18, Isa. 7:20, Isa. 7:21, Isa. 7:23, Isa. 10:20, Isa. 10:27, Isa. 11:10, Isa. 11:11, Isa. 12:1, Isa. 12:4, Isa. 17:4, Isa. 17:7, Isa. 17:9, Isa. 19:16, Isa. 19:18, Isa. 19:19, Isa. 19:21, Isa. 19:23, Isa. 19:24, Isa. 20:6, Isa. 22:8, Isa. 22:12, Isa. 22:20, Isa. 22:25, Isa. 23:15, Isa. 26:1, Isa. 27:1, Isa. 27:2, Isa. 27:12, Isa. 27:13, Isa. 28:5, Isa. 29:18, Isa. 30:23, Isa. 31:7, Isa. 52:6, Jer. 4:9, Jer. 30:8, Jer. 48:41, Jer. 49:22, Jer. 49:26, Hosea 2:16, Hosea 2:21, Joel 3:18, Amos 2:16, Amos 8:3, Amos 8:13, Amos 9:11, Micah 2:4, Micah 4:6, Micah 5:10, Micah 7:11, Micah 7:12, Zech. 2:11, Zech. 3:10, Mark 2:20, Luke 6:23, John 14:20, John 16:23, John 16:26.

Paul uses the term "the day of Christ" in 1 Cor. 1:8, Phlp. 1:10 and 2:16.

Especially recommended for a better understanding of this complex subject are Ray Stedman's commentary on the two letters to the Thessalonians, his Expository study on the Olivet Discourse, and his commentary on the book of the Revelation.

Appendix H

The History of Edom

Brief History and Final Destiny of Edom

by Lambert Dolphin

Immediate Family History

The immediate family history of Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca, begins in Genesis Chapter 25 and continues through the end of Genesis.

The Descendants of Jacob's Brother Esau (Edom):

Genesis 36, which records the family tree of Esau, lists many names still associated with the land of Edom in Southern Jordan, and also mentions individuals whose unfavorable interactions with the people of Israel are recorded for us elsewhere as the Old Testament unfolds.

These are the descendants of Esau (that is, Edom). Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the son of Zibeon the Hivite, and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. And Adah bore to Esau, Eliphaz; Basemath bore Reuel; and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his cattle, all his beasts, and all his property which he had acquired in the land of Canaan; and he went into a land away from his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together; the land of their sojournings could not support them because of their cattle. So Esau dwelt in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.

These are the descendants of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the son of Zibeon, Esau's wife: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the first-born of Esau: the chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Adah. These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: the chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah; these are the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: the chiefs Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; these are the chiefs born of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife.

These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs. These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. The sons of Lotan were Hori and Heman; and Lotan's sister was Timna. These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah; he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he pastured the asses of Zibeon his father. These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah. These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. These are the chiefs of the Horites: the chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, according to their clans in the land of Seir.

These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city being Dinhabah. Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead. Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his stead. Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his stead, the name of his city being Avith. Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates reigned in his stead. Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his stead, the name of his city being Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab. These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their families and their dwelling places, by their names: the chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth,

Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession." (Genesis 36).

A further historical note is found in I Chronicles:

These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites: Bela the son of Beor, the name of whose city was Dinhabah. When Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead. When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his stead. When Husham died, Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his stead; and the name of his city was Avith. When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. When Samlah died, Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates reigned in his stead. When Shaul died, Baal-hanan, the son of Achbor, reigned in his stead. When Baal-hanan died, Hadad reigned in his stead; and the name of his city was Pai, and his wife's name Mehetabel the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. And Hadad died. The chiefs of Edom were: chiefs Timna, Aliah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom. (1 Chronicles 1:43-54)

Edom Denies Israel Passage Through Their Land During the Exodus

Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, "Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the adversity that has befallen us: how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers; and when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel and brought us forth out of Egypt; and here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. Now let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, neither will we drink water from a well; we will go along the King's Highway, we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, until we have passed through your territory." But Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through, lest I come out with the sword against you." And the people of Israel said to him, "We will go up by the highway; and if we drink of your water, I and my cattle, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing more." But he said, "You shall not pass through." And Edom came out against them with many men, and with a strong force. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

And they journeyed from Kadesh, and the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, "Aaron shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there." Moses did as the LORD commanded; and they went up Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days. (Numbers 20:14-29)

God's Coming Slaughter of Nations; Edom to be a Perpetual Wasteland

"Draw near, O nations, to hear, and hearken, O peoples! Let the earth listen, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host, he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter. Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.

"For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have doomed. The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood, it is gorged with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom. Wild oxen shall fall with them, and young steers with the mighty bulls. Their land shall be soaked with blood, and their soil made rich with fat. For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into brimstone; her land shall become burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up for ever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the hawk and the porcupine shall possess it, the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. He shall stretch the line of confusion over it, and the plummet of chaos over its nobles. They shall name it No Kingdom There, and all its princes shall be nothing. Thorns shall grow over its strongholds, nettles and thistles in its fortresses. It shall be the haunt of jackals, an abode for ostriches. And wild beasts shall meet with hyenas, the satyr shall cry to his fellow; yea, there shall the

night hag alight, and find for herself a resting place. There shall the owl nest and lay and hatch and gather her young in her shadow; yea, there shall the kites be gathered, each one with her mate. Seek and read from the book of the LORD: Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the LORD has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them. He has cast the lot for them, his hand has portioned it out to them with the line; they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation they shall dwell in it." (Isaiah 34:1-17)

Jeremiah Prophecies: Edom to Become a Wasteland

Concerning Edom. Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Is wisdom no more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished? Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Dedan! For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time when I punish him. If grape-gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings? If thieves came by night, would they not destroy only enough for themselves? But I have stripped Esau bare, I have uncovered his hiding places, and he is not able to conceal himself. His children are destroyed, and his brothers, and his neighbors; and he is no more. Leave your fatherless children, I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me." For thus says the LORD: "If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink. For I have sworn by myself, says the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a horror, a taunt, a waste, and a curse; and all her cities shall be perpetual wastes." I have heard tidings from the LORD, and a messenger has been sent among the nations: "Gather yourselves together and come against her, and rise up for battle!" For behold, I will make you small among the nations, despised among men. The horror you inspire has deceived you, and the pride of your heart, you who live in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill.

Though you make your nest as high as the eagle's, I will bring you down from there, says the LORD. "Edom shall become a horror; every one who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters. As when Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbor cities were overthrown, says the LORD, no man shall dwell there, no man shall sojourn in her. Behold, like a lion coming up from the jungle of the Jordan against a strong sheepfold, I will suddenly make them run away from her; and I will appoint over her whomever I choose. For who is like me? Who will summon me? What shepherd can stand before me? Therefore hear the plan which the LORD has made against Edom and the purposes which he has formed against the inhabitants of Teman: Even the little ones of the flock shall be dragged away; surely their fold shall be appalled at their fate. At the sound of their fall the earth shall tremble; the sound of their cry shall be heard at the Red Sea. Behold, one shall mount up and fly swiftly like an eagle, and spread his wings against Bozrah, and the heart of the warriors of Edom shall be in that day like the heart of a woman in her pangs." (Jeremiah 49:7-22)

Some Reasons for Divine Judgment on Edom According to Ezekiel

"Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Edom acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance upon them, therefore thus says the Lord GOD, I will stretch out my hand against Edom, and cut off from it man and beast; and I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel; and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath; and they shall know my vengeance, says the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 24:12-14)

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it, and say to it, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you, and I will make you a desolation and a waste. I will lay your cities waste, and you shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the LORD. Because you cherished perpetual enmity, and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment; therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you are guilty of blood, therefore blood shall pursue you. I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation; and I will cut off from it all who come and go. And I will fill your mountains with the slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain with the sword shall fall. I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities shall not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD. "Because you said, 'These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them,'---although the LORD was there---therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy which you showed because of your hatred against them; and I will make myself known among you, when I judge you. And you shall know that I, the LORD, have heard all the revilings which you uttered against the mountains of Israel, saying, 'They are laid desolate, they are given us to devour.' And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it. Thus says the Lord GOD: For the rejoicing of the whole earth I

will make you desolate. As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD." (Ezekiel 35:1-15)

Obadiah's Prophecy Against Edom

The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom: We have heard tidings from the LORD, and a messenger has been sent among the nations: "Rise up! let us rise against her for battle!" Behold, I will make you small among the nations, you shall be utterly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is high, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, thence I will bring you down, says the LORD. If thieves came to you, if plunderers by night---how you have been destroyed!---would they not steal only enough for themselves? If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings? How Esau has been pillaged, his treasures sought out! All your allies have deceived you, they have driven you to the border; your confederates have prevailed against you; your trusted friends have set a trap under you---there is no understanding of it. Will I not on that day, says the LORD, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of Mount Esau? And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman, so that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.

For the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off for ever. On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth, and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. But you should not have gloated over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; you should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; you should not have boasted in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of his calamity; you should not have gloated over his disaster in the day of his calamity; you should not have looted his goods in the day of his calamity. You should not have stood at the parting of the ways to cut off his fugitives; you should not have delivered up his survivors in the day of distress. For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you, your deeds shall return on your own head. For as you have drunk upon my holy mountain, all the nations round about shall drink; they shall drink, and stagger, and shall be as though they had not been.

But in Mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions. The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor to the house of Esau; for the LORD has spoken. Those of the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau, and those of the Shephelah the land of the Philistines; they shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. The exiles in Halah who are of the people of Israel shall possess Phoenicia as far as Zarephath; and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the Negeb. Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's."

Malachi on God's Perpetual Enmity Against Edom

The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How hast thou loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" says the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob but I have hated Esau; I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, till they are called the wicked country, the people with whom the LORD is angry for ever." (Malachi 1:1-4)

Esau: A Type of the Flesh

One of the most valuable lessons to be learned from the family history of the descendants of the brothers Jacob and Esau concerns the New Testament application. The New Testament views the conflict between the flesh and the spirit as typified by the conflict between Jacob and Esau:

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.

But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another. (Galatians 5:13-26)

Jacob in many ways typifies the average believer. He was deceitful, manipulative, clever and bent on advancing his own causes for many years. After wrestling all night with The Angel of the Lord at the Brook Jabbok near Peniel, his name was finally changed to Israel (Genesis 32). Though he may have been somewhat slow to fully believe and trust God, Jacob's heart was inclined from his birth towards the things of the Lord.

Esau's heart and motives, on the other hand, were perpetually set on the goals and rewards of the world. He cared not at all about the things that were important to God.

"See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled; that no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears." (Hebrews 12:15-17)

As noted above, the entire book of Obadiah tells us why God hated Esau but loved Jacob, and why it is that perpetual enmity exists within the Christian, between the spirit and the flesh:

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is high, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, thence I will bring you down, says the LORD.

When the people of Israel left Egypt under the leadership of Moses the first opposition they encountered was from a people known as the Amalekites. Genesis 36 tells us that Amalek was the grandson of Esau!

Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD is my banner, saying, "A hand upon the banner of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exodus 17:8-16)

Later King Saul was told by the prophet Samuel to completely eradicate the Amalekites, (1 Samuel 15ff). Saul's incomplete obedience not only cost him his throne and his life, but reveals clearly how easy it is for us as believers to compromise with our own flesh---which God has said is utterly worthless. (See Ray Stedman's "First Samuel: The Death of the Flesh.").

In the book of Esther, the arch-fiend and enemy of the Jews is the infamous Haman, an Agagite. Sure enough, Agag's name is to be found listed as the king of the people of Amalek! (See Ray Stedman's commentary, "The Struggle for Power.")

Herod Antipas, before whom Jesus remained silent, (Luke 23:9) was an Idumean, that is one of the last of the Edomites. God has nothing further to say to the flesh, nor to the descendants of Edom. Their fate was sealed long ago.

King David's successful military dealings with Edom are recorded in 2 Samuel 8. Solomon's compromises with his "many foreign wives" caused the Lord to raise up against him an adversary, Hadad, from the royal line of Edom, (2 Kings 11). Thus there is a long history of antagonism between the descendants of Jacob and of Esau throughout Old Testament history.

King Amaziah's famous (but ill-fated) raid into Edom is recorded in 2 Chronicles 25,

Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not with a blameless heart. And as soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand he killed his servants who had slain the king his father. But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the law, in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin.

Then Amaziah assembled the men of Judah, and set them by fathers' houses under commanders of thousands and of hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He mustered those twenty years old and upward, and found that they were three hundred thousand picked men, fit for war, able to handle spear and shield. He hired also a hundred thousand mighty men of valor from Israel for a hundred talents of silver. But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel, with all these Ephraimites. But if you suppose that in this way you will be strong for war, God will cast you down before the enemy; for God has power to help or to cast down." And Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?" The man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this." Then Amaziah discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim, to go home again. And they became very angry with Judah, and returned home in fierce anger.

But Amaziah took courage, and led out his people, and went to the Valley of Salt and smote ten thousand men of Seir. [Edom] The men of Judah captured another ten thousand alive, and took them to the top of a rock and threw them down from the top of the rock; and they were all dashed to pieces.

But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-horon, and killed three thousand people in them, and took much spoil.

After Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the men of Seir, and set them up as his gods, and worshiped them, making offerings to them. Therefore the LORD was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, "Why have you resorted to the gods of a people, which did not deliver their own people from your hand?" But as he was speaking the king said to him, "Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be put to death?" So the prophet stopped, but said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel." Then Amaziah king of Judah took counsel and sent to Joash the son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." And Joash the king of Israel sent word to Amaziah king of Judah, "A thistle on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife'; and a wild beast of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thistle. You say, 'See, I have smitten Edom,' and your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness. But now stay at home; why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?"

But Amaziah would not listen; for it was of God, in order that he might give them into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought the gods of Edom. So Joash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. And Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his home. And Joash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem for four hundred cubits, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. And he seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God, and Obed-edom with them; he seized also the treasuries of the king's house, and hostages, and he returned to Samaria. Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived fifteen years after the death of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, from first to last, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel? From the time when he turned away from the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there. And they brought him upon horses; and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David.

All of this history serves to illustrate for us that no good ever comes from our best efforts, our self effort in the Christian life, which is the root source of what the Bible calls "the flesh." Only the works of God, the works of the Holy Spirit done through us when we are obedient and submissive to God---have any lasting worth. All else will, in the end, be destroyed.

Appendix I

Jesus, The Kinsman Redeemer - Jesus the Avenger of Blood And The Cities of Refuge

by Lambert Dolphin

Will The Real Jesus Please Appear?

Every generation needs to rediscover who the historical Jesus really is. We must not only know Jesus Christ personally as Lord and Master, we must know the whole Bible and take it seriously. We are subject to it's authority as well as to the authority of the Apostles and the Lord. But culturally speaking every generation of Christians must strip off the old varnish, the overlays of tradition, and the faulty views held by the church in previous generations. Of course we must not take very seriously, nor value very highly [if at all] the views of the liberal self-appointed "Jesus Scholars" who would revise the Gospels for us based on their own latest findings of modern scholarship. These "experts" are for the most part not Christians at all, but false teachers the Apostles us warned about. (Jude, 2 Peter 2). Some years ago a well-known Bible teacher remarked, "We need to remember that Jesus Christ was not crucified on an altar below a stained glass window, between two candles, but naked on a cruel-Roman cross in the hot sun on a main thoroughfare outside of Jerusalem. "

Let us look at some of the contrasting glimpses of the Person of Jesus as they are to be found in the Bible.

The Pale Galilean: Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild?

Clearly, the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ was very different from what might have been expected all taking into account all of the Old and New Testament pictures of His coming, *

... Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me. " (John 12:44-50)

Many examples in the Gospels are similar to the account of Jesus meeting a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus. Jesus' dealings with the woman at the well in Samaria who had had five husbands (John 4) immediately comes to mind, or his compassion for a woman caught in the act of adultery, (John 8). Gentleness, compassion, mercy and caring for outcasts and the black sheep of the culture were typical of his actions. Jesus' meeting with Zacchaeus took place near the end of his public ministry.

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today. " So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. " And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of

anything, I restore it fourfold. " And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost. " (Luke 19:1-10)
Jesus raised the dead, healed the sick, comforted the poor and released countless men, women and children from guilt, shame, sickness and the influence of demons,

... Jesus declared, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. " (Matthew 11:15-30)

Jesus did not hesitate for a moment in responding to the cries of ten lepers,

And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. " When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests. " And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well. " (Luke 17:12-19)

But Jesus was neither gentle, meek, mild, nor soft-spoken in his public rebukes delivered in scathing white-hot anger to the religious leaders in Jerusalem,

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If any one swears by the temple, it is nothing; but if any one swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath. ' You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? And you say, 'If any one swears by the altar, it is nothing; but if any one swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath. ' You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it; and he who swears by the temple, swears by it and by him who dwells in it; and he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets. ' Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation. (Matthew 23:13-35)

There are also many hints and references in the Gospels that strongly suggest that the Second Coming of Jesus will be very different from the First,

[Jesus] went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back. ' "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king. ' "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. "The first one came

and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' 'The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 'His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' 'Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' 'His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' 'Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' 'He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them---bring them here and kill them in front of me.' (Luke 19:11-27)

Jesus Speaks in the Synagogue at Nazareth

Following his baptism and temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 3:13-4:11), Jesus began his public ministry at Capernaum. At the Northern end of the Sea of Galilee. He was warmly received by crowds there, but in a visit to his home town of Nazareth his remarks in the synagogue outraged the citizenry.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country.'" And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But passing through the midst of them he went away. (Luke 4:16-30)

In reading from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus selected a passage from Chapter 61 which actually reads,

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,

---and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion---to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. Aliens shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; but you shall be called the priests of the LORD, men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. Instead of your shame you shall have a double portion, instead of dishonor you shall rejoice in your lot; therefore in your land you shall possess a double portion; yours shall be everlasting joy. For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. (61:1-9)

Clearly Jesus was delineating and describing the character of His first advent and the fundamental change that would take place in his mode of action and priorities when He came the second time.

God of Vengeance, God of Furious Wrath

A similar picture of God's vengeance and violent intervention in human affairs when Jesus comes again is found in Isaiah 34,

Draw near, O nations, to hear, and hearken, O peoples! Let the earth listen, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host, he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter. Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have doomed. The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood, it is gorged with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom. Wild oxen shall fall with them, and young steers with the mighty bulls. Their land shall be soaked with blood, and their soil made rich with fat. For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into brimstone; her land shall become burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up for ever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the hawk and the porcupine shall possess it, the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. He shall stretch the line of confusion over it, and the plummet of chaos over its nobles. They shall name it No Kingdom There, and all its princes shall be nothing. Thorns shall grow over its strongholds, nettles and thistles in its fortresses. It shall be the haunt of jackals, an abode for ostriches. And wild beasts shall meet with hyenas, the satyr shall cry to his fellow; yea, there shall the night hag alight, and find for herself a resting place. There shall the owl nest and lay and hatch and gather her young in her shadow; yea, there shall the kites be gathered, each one with her mate. Seek and read from the book of the LORD: Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the LORD has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them. He has cast the lot for them, his hand has portioned it out to them with the line; they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

A parallel passage in the New Testament shows clearly that Jesus will come again both to save (his people) and to judge and destroy his enemies,

We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering---since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfil every good resolve and work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:3-12)

The unloosed fury and wrath of a holy God shows clearly in the writings of the prophet Zephaniah,

The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," says the LORD. "I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. I will overthrow the wicked; I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," says the LORD. "I will stretch out my hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests; those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens; those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom; those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him. " Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is at hand; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. And on the day of the LORD'S sacrifice-"I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire. On that day I will punish every one who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud. " "On that day," says the LORD, "a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills. Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off. At that time I will search

Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are thickening upon their lees, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them. "

The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring distress on men, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealous wrath, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full, yea, sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth. (Zephaniah 1)

Introducing the subject of soon-coming judgment on ancient Nineveh the Prophet Nahum wrote of terrible destruction on all sides,

...but safety and refuge for all of God's own people---in Nineveh, in Israel or elsewhere. The LORD is a jealous God and avenging, the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger and of great might, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither, the bloom of Lebanon fades. The mountains quake before him, the hills melt; the earth is laid waste before him, the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him. The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a full end of his adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness. What do you plot against the LORD? He will make a full end; he will not take vengeance twice on his foes. Like entangled thorns they are consumed, like dry stubble. Did one not come out from you, who plotted evil against the LORD, and counseled villainy? Thus says the LORD, "Though they be strong and many, they will be cut off and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds asunder. " The LORD has given commandment about you: "No more shall your name be perpetuated; from the house of your gods I will cut off the graven image and the molten image. I will make your grave, for you are vile. " Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace! Keep your feasts, O Judah, fulfill your vows, for never again shall the wicked come against you, he is utterly cut off. (Nahum 1:2-15)

The Cities of Refuge

Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, deserved immediate punishment for his crime, if not immediate death. He feared not only God's justice, but more than God he feared vengeance from another member of his family. To our surprise we learn in Genesis 4 that God protected Cain for the rest of his life from such familial retribution! In spite of this amazing protection, and in spite of God's offer of help and salvation, Cain apparently never took advantage of this temporary reprieve---nor did any of his descendants as far as we know. The godly respondents to the grace of God before the Flood seem to have all been in the line of Seth which led eventually to Noah. That God is reluctant and slow to judge is a one of the main themes of the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

A beautiful picture of God's longsuffering with mankind in ancient Israel is found in the provision by the Lord of six special Cities of Refuge where those who had killed someone, or were accused of killing another person, might flee for temporary safety. The fugitive could remain there until the death of the current high priest. Only those guilty of what we would call "murder in the second degree" were granted safe haven. Deliberate murder had to be punished by the death of the murderer. In this case the murderer was to be put to death by the "avenger of blood"---the nearest male relative of the deceased. (For details see Reference Notes) In his fine study of the Cities of Refuge and related topics, Chuck Missler calls attention to the fact that the death of Jesus was in fact second degree murder. He bases this conclusion on one of the last words of Jesus on the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do. " (Luke 23:34) Thus Jesus is the Christian's City of Refuge---and Jesus is our Great High Priest, whose death releases us from the blood-guilt of sin.

The Go-el, or Kinsman Redeemer

The Book of Ruth (see Ruth: The Romance of Redemption) is a beautiful love story found in the Old Testament in which a foreign, (Gentile) woman of Moab finds a home, an inheritance, a husband---and a place in the ancestral lineage leading to Jesus the Messiah. It also tells us in practical language the role of the Kinsman Redeemer in ancient Israel. The role of this relative was to redeem lost land and property and to protect the person and inheritance of the party in need of help. (For details see also the Reference Notes) The Hebrew go-el gives us another magnificent type of Christ as our Redeemer, for He saves us totally, whether we are Jew or Gentile.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:8-14)

Peter the Apostle reminds us,

You know that you were ransomed (redeemed) from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (I Peter 1:18-21)

O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appear.
O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan's tyranny.
From depths of hell Thy people save. And give them victory o'er the grave.
O come Thou Day-spring, come and cheer Our spirits by Thine advent here;
And drive away the shades of night, And pierce the clouds and bring us light!
O come Thou Key of David come, And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high. And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel! Shall come to thee, O Israel!
(Ancient Plain Song, Hymn from 12th Century)

Safety, Refuge, and Salvation Prior to the Flood

The ark of Noah, (The Hebrew word for ark is related to the Egyptian word db't, = "coffin"), was under construction, on dry land presumably far from water, for probably 120 years. Although Noah (who Peter calls "a preacher of righteousness") sought to persuade the people of his generation to come into the ark and so be saved, none responded, "... when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water." (1 Peter 3:20) The ark is a beautiful picture of salvation by grace through faith. There was no other way to be saved from destruction in that day except by coming into the God's ark of refuge. The world was warned for 120 years of impending judgment. The ark had one door in the side. Later in history Jesus said,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. " (John 10:7-11).

Noah's name means "comfort" or "rest," and looks ahead to the words of Jesus, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. " The ark was likewise a coffin. Those who come into Christ by faith are identified with Him in his death, burial and resurrection. God called from within the ark inviting Noah and his family to enter in and find refuge. Does God offer help to mankind in every generation? Definitely yes! On what

basis? Always on the basis of the individual's faith (personal trust and reliance) in the living God. Does He take pleasure in destroying the creatures He has created. Definitely not, The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) Ray C. Stedman writes thus concerning God's intervening judgment in human affairs,

"All through the Bible we see God's love is manifest to men and women everywhere in urging them to escape this judgment. God in love pleads with people, 'Do not go on to this end!' But ultimately he must judge those who refuse his offer of grace. He says, in effect, 'I love you and I can provide all you need. Therefore love me, and you will find the fulfillment your heart is looking for.' But many men and women say, 'No, I do not want that. I will take your gifts, I will take all the good things you provide, but I do not want you! Let me run my own life. Let me serve my own ends. Let me have my own kingdom.' To such, God ultimately says, 'All right, have it your way!' "God has three choices: first, he can let rebellion go on forever and never judge it. In that case the terrible things that are happening on earth, all these distressing injustices, the cruelty, the anger, the hate, the malice, the sorrow, the hurt, the pain, the death that now prevails, must go on forever. God does not want that, and neither does man. Second, God can force men to obey him and control them as robots. But he will never do that because that means they cannot truly love him. Love cannot be forced. Therefore, third, the only choice God really has is that he must withdraw ultimately from those who refuse his love. He must let them have their own way forever. That results in the terrible torment of godlessness. If God is necessary to us, then to take him out of our lives is to plunge us into the most terrible sense of loneliness and abandonment that mankind can know. We have all experienced it to some small degree when we get what we want and then discover we do not want what we got! For that sense of bored emptiness to go on forever, is unspeakable torment." (Ray C. Stedman, The Time of Harvest, Discovery Paper No. 4206)

Jesus, the Avenger of Blood

If Jesus is typified by the Ark of Noah as a harbor in the year-long deluge which destroyed an entire civilization before the Flood, if Jesus is a City of Refuge for the manslayers and other sinners, if there is ultimate safety for all His children---who are "in Christ"---then what about those who are not "in Christ"---those who refuse His grace and mercy and insist on living out their natural lives on their own terms and according to their own authority? The New Testament calls such persons "lost." The Old Testament considers them the outsiders to the family and plan of God. Being "lost" means ultimate separation from God. (See On Everlasting Destruction) But in addition it means there must be fair, and balanced, and even-handed final justice, and degrees of punishment for all those who have chosen external existence apart from God. (See The Judgment Seat of Christ)

The Avenger of Blood in ancient Israel, the nearest male relative, was responsible for protecting the property, liberty, and posterity of his next of kin, in addition to protecting their lives through the "avenging of blood." This Old Testament Type of the Avenger of Blood is also fulfilled, as might be expected, by Jesus Christ the Lord....

God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 2:6-10)

As might be expected for a "next of kin," the coming Judge, the Jew named Jesus, will be especially zealous for the maltreatment of His own people, the Jews, down through history,

I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations, and have divided up my land, and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and have sold a girl for wine, and have drunk it. "What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will requite your deed upon your own head swiftly and speedily. For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, removing them far from their own border. But now I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will requite your deed upon your own head. I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a nation far off; for the LORD has spoken. " Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare war, stir up the mighty men. Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, "I am a warrior. " Hasten and come, all you nations round about, gather yourselves there. Bring down thy warriors, O LORD. Let the nations

bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the nations round about. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the wine press is full. The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And the LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel. (Joel 3:3-16)

If Jesus is the Avenger of Blood on behalf of millions of Jews who have suffered at the hands of Gentile oppressors and anti-semites, He is also the Judge of all the world.

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:22-29)

A final question remains in considering Jesus as the Avenger of Blood for all mankind. Who avenges the innocent blood shed by the Savior of the World Himself? Who is Jesus' next-of-kin responsible for Jesus' own vindication and for just retribution against the guilty on His behalf? Surely it must be the heavenly Father of Jesus, the God of heaven and earth who gave His only-begotten, dearly-beloved son to make it possible for any one, or all, of us to be saved? In the book of the Revelation both Jesus and God the Father are characterized as turning loose their great wrath against an unbelieving world,

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" (Revelation 6:12-17)

We have already seen in the typology of the Cities of Refuge and the Kinsman-Redeemer that all sinners, Jew or Gentile, who seek the forgiveness of God, based on the substitutionary death of Jesus, our Great High Priest---all these persons are released forever from all guilt for all their sins. So the final issue is, who among the unforgiven sinners of the world must face the final Avenger of Blood who will personally deal with the enormous problem of the bloodguilt of the shed blood of the innocent Lamb of God? Responsibility for the death of Christ is clearly distributed throughout the world. All of us are guilty---all of us are responsible.

But when Jesus stood in trial before Pilate....the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas. " Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified. " And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified. " So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves. " And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:20-25)

Accountability for sin in the eyes of God is measured in proportion to light received and the amount of revelation given. Deliberate sin is more serious than inadvertent transgression. Furthermore Israel was instructed by Moses about the defilement of the land which shed blood would bring, especially innocent blood. You shall not thus pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of him who shed it. You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell in the midst of the people of Israel. " (Numbers 35:33-34) God's judgment on the whole world is inevitable and soon to fall on everyone. The Bible describes the final conflagration as including

the most terrible of all world wars as being centered in the land of Israel. For the Jews it will be "The Time of Jacob's Trouble" spoken of by their prophets. Believing Jews will find salvation, safety and refuge (see The Coming Exile of Israel in Edom). The majority of Jews, the Bible predicts, will be destroyed in a terrible blood bath described in Revelation Chapter 14

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. "

So he that was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. Ray C. Stedman gives a vivid exposition and commentary on these terrible time,

We have to ask, who is this one seated on the cloud "like a son of man," wearing a victor's crown and holding a sickle in his hand? There can hardly be any doubt, can there? It is the Lord Jesus. He himself had told his disciples in Matthew 13, in the parable of the wheat and the weeds, when the disciples in the parable asked the Lord, "Shall we pull up these weeds?" He said to them, "No, let both grow together until the harvest, and then I will tell the harvester, 'First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, and then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn. '" Then he interpreted that parable to the disciples, saying, "The harvest is the end of the age (the seven-year period to which we have come in this book), and the harvesters are the angels. " This agrees exactly with what we have here. The angels announce that the time of harvest has come, and the words of Jesus then in Matthew 13 will be literally fulfilled. Let me read them to you: "The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. " These are very clear words from the lips of Jesus himself.

Now there is still another scene of harvest. Verse 17: Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe. " The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia [which is about 180 miles]. Is this the same story of harvest twice-told? No. You will notice the first harvest is a harvest of wheat. It is cut with a sickle, and it is a separation of the true wheat from the false-looking wheat, the "darnel" is literally the word, the tares of the field. It looks like wheat, but it is not. The angels will separate the two. But this is clearly a grape harvest, a vintage harvest, and the vine in Scripture is always a symbol of Israel. **

The prophet Isaiah uses this symbol of Israel being brought as a vine out of Egypt and planted in a beautifully cared-for land by God himself. Psalm 80 refers to the same thing-Israel is described as a vine. At the Last Supper the Lord himself said, "I am the true vine and you are the branches," speaking of his Jewish disciples. This is the symbol of Israel, and it is referring to the judgment of apostate Israel. Strangely enough, most of the nation of the Jews today do not believe their own Scriptures. Many of them are atheists. Many of them have denied the Word of God and the Old Testament, or that it applies to them as a special people at all. This therefore is the judgment of apostate Israel. It is called in Jeremiah 30, "the time of Jacob's trouble. " Many scriptures describe it. It will be a time of warfare once again against Israel, the time of the invasion of the nation by great armies from the north. Palestine is overrun. This is when the woman (who is true Israel) that we saw in chapter 12 flees and hides in the desert. But apostate Israel is destroyed, and Jerusalem is sacked and partially destroyed. You can read that in Zechariah 12 through 14. The prophet Joel describes it in vivid language. Let me give you these words from his third chapter: Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat [which means "God judges"], for there will I sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow-so great is their wickedness. " Obviously this is the same scene as we have here. Notice, by the way, in verse 20, the change from a symbol to the literal meaning. Grapes are thrown into the winepress (that is a symbol), but blood pours out-that is the literal meaning of wine; that is when wine symbolizes. When we take the Lord's Supper, wine symbolizes the blood of Christ for us. Blood covers the land for 180 miles, the length of Israel, in a terrible scene of judgment... I must leave this now for the moment, but I want to remind you that beyond these scenes of judgment, beyond these terrible descriptions of what is to come upon the earth, beyond the blood, beyond the slaughter, beyond the darkness, beyond the heartache and the sorrow and the misery, when the land is covered with blood from end to end, there is coming a new day, a wonderful day, a time that the prophets have described. Beyond the time of Jacob's trouble is the time when Israel shall blossom like a rose, and like a vine spread its branches throughout the whole of the earth, and their Messiah will reign amidst his people over the whole world. It is really the utopia that men have dreamed of for centuries. That is what God is working toward, and that is what will eventually come to pass. I hope you

are facing your own personal relationship to these things. God is always asking, "If you know that I am the One who is necessary to your very existence, then worship me. Give yourself to me. " This is the choice we all must make. (from The Time of Harvest)

O sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things!
His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.
The LORD has made known his victory,
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.
Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!
Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody!
With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!
Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who dwell in it!
Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98)

Jesus as He is now

"...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:17-23)

A. W. Tozer, late prophet-pastor at Moody Bible Church in Chicago, wrote these insightful words about 50 years ago,

"The teaching of the New Testament is that now, at this very moment, there is a Man in heaven appearing in the presence of God for us. He is as certainly a man as was Adam or Moses or Paul; he is a man glorified, but his glorification did not de-humanize him. Today he is a real man, of the race of mankind, bearing our lineaments and dimensions, a visible and audible man, whom any other man would recognize instantly as one of us.

"But more than this, he is the heir of all things, Lord of all lords, head of the church, firstborn of the new creation. He is the way to God, the life of the believer, the hope of Israel, and the high priest of every true worshiper. He holds the keys of death and hell, and stands as advocate and surety for everyone who believes on him in truth. Salvation comes not by accepting the finished work, or deciding for Christ; it comes by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, the whole, living, victorious Lord who, as God and man, fought our fight and won it, accepted our debt as his own and paid it, took our sins and died under them, and rose again to set us free. This is the true Christ; nothing less will do. "

The clearest description of Jesus---raised from the dead---ascended on high and now in heaven as Lord of the Universe and Great High Priest over all---is found in Revelation Chapter One.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty... Then I [John the Apostle] turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was

like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (1:8-18)

When the Lord Jesus returns to earth---and all evidence suggests this long-awaited event will be soon---it will be in a very much more dramatic way than when he came the first time as a baby born to a young Jewish virgin in Bethlehem a few miles South of Jerusalem. Jesus described his second coming in the Olivet Discourse, a final discussion with his disciples of what the future held, just before his crucifixion,

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. " (Matthew 24:29-30)

Zechariah also described this same event some 500 years earlier.

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward. And the valley of my mountains shall be stopped up, for the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it; and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD your God will come, and all the holy ones with him. (Zechariah 14:2-5)

Finally, the Apostle John in exile on the Island of Patmos off the coast of what is now Turkey was privileged to have been given a great vision of the return of Christ near the end of the First Century.

Then I [John] saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:11-16)

Jesus as the Believer's Refuge

More clearly than ever the New Testament reveals there is still today a place of refuge, one unique way, and but one and only one plan of salvation, Enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and experience as a result, regeneration, spiritual rebirth, (John 3). By faith, as a result of trusting in Jesus, the believer then experiences the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, and of Christ, and of God the Father. By means of spiritual baptism the individual is then taken out of the world-system (and his or her identification with the fallen-world) and is placed into the Body of Christ. The true church, the Body of Christ is a living organism. (Romans 6) Jesus has been raised from the dead and has ascended into heaven. Joined to Christ, the believer has positionally been taken to heaven also, (Ephesians 2). "Neither is there salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. " (Acts 4:12) Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. " (John 14:6) "Truly, truly, I say to you, if any one keeps my word, he will never see death.... " Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. " (John 8:51, 58)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible, hid from our eyes.
How blessed, how glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, Victorious, Thy great name we praise.
Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render, O help us to see
Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!

Footnotes

For contemporary Jewish (Israeli) perceptions of what their soon-coming Messiah will be like see *Modern Jewish Beliefs Concerning the Coming Messiah* by Rabbi Chaim Richman. Most Orthodox Jews believe, of course, that Jesus is not their true Messiah and that he [Messiah] has yet to come for the first time.

** The rousing American Civil War Hymn, *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, by Julia Ward Howe has inspiring lyrics, but somewhat confused theology:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword. His truth is marching on. I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps, They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps; I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps, His day is marching on. He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat, He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat; O be swift, my soul, to answer Him, be jubilant, my feet! Our God is marching on. In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, With a glory is His bosom that transfigures you and me; As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free! While God is marching on. Chorus: Glory! glory! Hallelujah! Glory! glory! Hallelujah! Glory! glory! Hallelujah! Glory! glory! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on!

Background Reference Notes: AVENGER. The RSV translation of the Hebrew participial forms of *ga'al* and *naqam*, and the Greek substantive *ekdikas*. *Go'el* is rendered by "avenger" only in the expression *go'el haddam*, "the avenger of blood." In Nu. 35:12 "blood" is omitted in the MT but found in the LXX and other versions. The *go'el* was the protector or defender of his family's interests. As the nearest male relative he was responsible for protecting the property (Lev. 25:25-34), liberty (vv. 35-54), and posterity (Ruth 4:5, 10; Dt. 25:5-10) of his next of kin, in addition to protecting their lives through the avenging of blood (Nu. 35:9-28; Dt. 19:4-10; Josh. 20:1-9 2 S. 4:7. 11). The legislation giving the *go'el* both the right and responsibility to avenge his kinsman's blood distinguished two types of criminal bloodshed, "murder" and "manslaughter," both expressed by the same Hebrew word *rasah*, found in the sixth commandment (cf. Ex. 20:13). Whereas in the case of "murder" the *go'el* killed the offender (Nu. 35:19, 21; Dt. 19:12), in the case of "manslaughter" he could do so only if the offender left the assigned city of refuge prior to the death of the high priest (Nu. 35:12, 24f., 27; Dt. 19:6; Josh. 20:3, 5, 9). The human avenger of blood is used as a figure of Yahweh's role as *go'el* for His people in passages such as Isa. 49:26. The custom of avenging blood has not been limited to the ancient Hebrews. In ancient times it was practiced by, among other nations, the Greeks; and in present times has been attested among the Arabians, Persians, and other Oriental peoples. In contrast to *ga'al*, *naqam* is the Hebrew equivalent of the Eng. "avenge" in the sense of "exact satisfaction for a wrong by punishing the wrongdoer." It occurs twice in the Psalms (Ps. 8:2 [MT 3] and 44:16 [MT 17]) in connection with Israel's enemies as a *hithpa'el* (intensive reflexive) participle meaning "they that avenge themselves." Perhaps the poet is implying a contrast to Israel, who has Yahweh as his avenger. In Ps. 99:8 the *qal* participial form is used to denote Yahweh's vengeance against the misdeeds of His servants. The Gk. *E'kdikos* describing the Lord (1 Thess. 4:6) means "one who satisfies justice," i. e., by punishing the evildoer (cf. Rom. 13:4). (ISBE, 1979, Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI). By Bruce K. Waltke

Scofield Reference Bible Notes: 1. (Isaiah 59 20) Redemption, kinsman type, Summary: The Rock or kinsman-redeemer, is a beautiful type of Christ. (1) The kinsman redemption was of persons and an inheritance (Lev. 25:25,48; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:7,11, 14). (2) The redeemer must be a kinsman (Lev. 25:48-49; Ruth 3:12-13, see v. 9, note; Gal. 4:4; Heb 2:14-15). (3) The redeemer must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:4-6; Jer. 50:34; Jn. 10:11,18). (4) Redemption is effected by the *goel* paying the just demand in full (Lev. 25:27; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)... 2. (Isaiah 59:20) The time when the "Redeemer shall come to Zion" is fixed, relatively, by Rom. 11-23-29, as following the completion of the church. This is also the order of the great dispensational passage, Acts 15:14-17. In both, the return of the Lord to Zion follows the outcalling of the church. 2. (Isaiah 59:20:49) The kinsman-redeemer. The word *goel* is used to indicate the redeemer--the one pays. The case of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 2:1; 3:10-18; 4:1-10) perfectly illustrates this beautiful type of Christ. Cities of Refuge: (Numbers 35:6) Here in vv. 6, 9-28 the general command is given to set aside six cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan River (v. 14). In Dt. 4:41-43, Moses sets aside three cities east of the Jordan (Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan, v. 43) prior to the conquest of Canaan. Joshua 20 records the law of the cities of refuge and tells of the assignment by Joshua of three cities west of the river (Kedesh, Shechem, and Kiriath-arba, v. 7). Here, too, reassignment of the three cities on the other side of the Jordan is recorded (v. 8). The law of the cities of refuge is recounted in detail in Dt. 19:1-13, and they are alluded to in Ex.

21:13. The cities of refuge are illustrative of Christ sheltering the sinner from judgment (Rom. 8:1, 33-34; Heb. 6:17-20; cp. Ps. 46:1; 142:5). REFUGE, CITIES OF [Heb. 'are hammiqlat]. Certain of the LEVITICAL CITIES (Nu. 35:6-34, Josh. 21:13, 21, 27, 32, 38; 1 Ch. 6:57, 67 [MT 42, 52]) that were set apart to serve as places of asylum for the accidental manslayer; mentioned principally in Nu. 35:9-34; and Josh. 20:1-9 (cf. Ex. 21:12-14; Dt. 4:41-43; 19:1-10). According to Josh. 20:7f., the six cities designated for this purpose in Joshua's lifetime were Kedesh, Shechem, Kiriath-arba (Hebron), Bezer, Ramoth-gilead, and Golan. After each tribe had been assigned its territorial allotment (Josh. 13-19), Joshua, at the command of God, designated the cities of refuge. They were fairly evenly distributed throughout Israel. West of the Jordan were Kedesh (Tell Qades), about 24 km. (15 mi.) N of the Sea of Galilee in the land of Naphtali; Shechem (Tell Balatah), 32 km. (20 mi.) W of the Jordan in the range called the hills of Ephraim (tribe of Ephraim); and Hebron (el-Khalil), about 30 km. (19 mi.) S of Jerusalem (tribe of Judah). East of the Jordan were Bezer (Umm el-'Amad') 13 km. (8 mi) NE of Medeba (tribe of Reuben); Ramoth-gilead (Tell Ramath), 40 km. (25 mi.) ESE of the Sea of Galilee (tribe of Gad); and Golan (Sahem el-Jolan?) in the highlands 32 km. (20 mi.) E of the Sea of Galilee (tribe of Manasseh). Many peoples of the ancient Near East maintained certain places as asylums for fugitives accused of crimes; once the fugitive was within the sanctuary he could not be apprehended or punished, whether guilty or innocent. Israel also had places of asylum, but in the strict laws of the Pentateuch (cf. esp. Ex. 21:23-25) murder had to be punished by the death of the murderer (vv. 12, 14; Nu. 35:16-21). One who intentionally killed another person was to be put to death by the "avenger of blood" the nearest male relative of the deceased. Such retribution could not be negated by the payment of "blood money" to the relatives of the deceased in compensation for the murder (v. 31). A distinction was made, however, between the person who killed someone accidentally and the one who did so willfully. The cities of refuge were established for unintentional manslaughter. To prevent the "avenger of blood" from taking vengeance upon the accused before the nature of the homicide could be established, the Israelites were commanded to give every assistance to the fugitive in his flight to one of the designated Cities (v. 25). Roads to these cities were to be properly maintained and sign-posted, and the location of each city was such that none was more than one day's journey from any point in the land of Israel (Dt. 19:3 cf. v. 6). Apparently the altar of Yahweh was a place of asylum even before the establishment of the cities of refuge (Ex. 21:13f.). Cities were needed, however, as permanent places of refuge. In later times it appears that the fugitive was permitted to grasp the horns of the altar, and if the homicide was accidental he was granted safe passage to the nearest city of refuge (cf. I K. 1:50; 2:28-30). According to Nu. 35:24 the manslayer was then judged by the "congregation"; i. e., he was returned, under a protective escort provided by the city, to the place from which he came, and tribal elders unrelated to either the deceased or the accused were to set up an investigative tribunal to establish the nature of the homicide. The intentional murderer was to be delivered into the hands of the "avenger of blood," even from the altar itself (Ex. 21:14; cf. I K. 2:28-34), but if the death was accidental, the accused was to be returned to one of the cities of refuge (Nu. 35:25). The manslayer had to reside in that city until the natural death of the high priest (v. 28; it is unclear whether this refers to the leading priest of Israel or merely of the city), which was possibly viewed as expiation for the accidental death (cf. T. B. Makkoth IIb). If the manslayer went beyond the city's boundary before the high priest's death, the avenger of blood could kill him without being guilty of murder (vv. 26f). This system was designed to avoid the possibility of an endless "blood feud" between families after someone was killed. It was only during the united kingdom period that all six cities were under Israelite control. Only Shechem and Hebron had continuous Hebrew control until their destruction in 722 and 587 B. C. respectively. (ISBE, 1979, Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI). By S. G. DECLAISSE-WALFORD.

Appendix J

Are Earthquakes Increasing? Signs of the Times or Signs of the End by Lambert Dolphin

Appendix K

Pretribulation or Prewrath?

by Ron Graff

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Introduction

Recent publications by Robert Van Kampen and Marvin Rosenthal have presented a new variation in the study of the timing of the Rapture. They have coined the expression "prewrath Rapture" for their position. (*The Rapture Question Answered*, p. 49, p. 198). The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the key aspects of their theory and compare it to the teachings of the pretribulation Rapture.

Since most of their teaching on the Rapture question is distilled in Van Kampen's book, *The Rapture Question Answered*, most of our references will be to this book. Some references will be made to *The Sign (Expanded Version)*, Van Kampen's earlier and larger work. Reference notes will refer to Rapture, and Sign, accordingly.

I would like to state at the beginning, that I do not consider those who hold the prewrath position as enemies. The ones I have read love the Lord, are evangelistic, and seem to be very sincere. I am very impressed with Van Kampen's ambition, writing skills, reverence for God's Word, and generosity (his organization sends free copies of *The Sign* to pastors!). We are all seekers for the truth, and it is my hope that my observations will help all of us become better students of prophecy. (Acts 17:11)

Areas of Agreement

Following Van Kampen's own list of areas of agreement, I acknowledge the following issues of mutual understanding. These matters do not need to be addressed in our discussion.

- Premillennialism
- Literal hermeneutic
- Seven year Tribulation
- Second half of Tribulation dominated by Antichrist
- Mark of the Beast
- Unprecedented persecution of the elect and Israel
- Timing of the battle of Armageddon
- The Church will not see the wrath of God
(Rapture, pp. 33-42)

Problems With The Pre-Wrath View

Van Kampen claims that he was torn between the pretribulation and posttribulation views of the rapture. He agreed with his pretribulation friends that the church will not see the wrath of God (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10). But he agreed with his posttribulation friends that the elect will someday become targets of Antichrist's persecution (Matt. 24:21-22; 29-31; 2 Thess. 2:1-8; Rev. 13:3-10; 14:9-12). (Rapture, pp. 42-43)

He felt that there must be a common denominator somewhere in Scripture to balance these teachings. When he considered the signs given in Matthew 24:29-31, he believed he had discovered this common element.

"Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."
Matthew 24:29-31(NIV)

Based on this discovery, Van Kampen says that the core truth of their view is this:

"The persecution by Antichrist during the great tribulation will be the wrath of Satan (Rev. 12:12), not the wrath of God. When the sign of the sun, moon, and stars is given in the heavens, the wrath of Satan against the elect will be terminated, the faithful to God will be raptured, and then the wrath of God will begin against the wicked who remain, ending with the battle of Armageddon." (Rapture, pp. 47-48)

After carefully studying both of Van Kampen's books (The Sign, and The Rapture Question Answered), I believe that this statement of the "core truth" of the prewrath view really does represent the key differences between their position and the pretribulation position. It identifies several questionable elements of their theology. These debatable assumptions are:

- 1A - Antichrist will persecute the Church.
- 2A - Satan's wrath ends at the Rapture and then God's wrath begins.
- 3A - The Rapture takes place when Christ returns in great glory.
- 1A - Antichrist will persecute the Church.
- 1B - Failure to distinguish between Israel and the Church

The prewrath position does acknowledge the separate existence of Israel and special treatment by God during the Tribulation when she is driven into the wilderness (Rev. 12), but it assumes that they are not saved until the very end, when they think the 144,000 are sealed. This will be discussed more fully later. The big problem with prewrath theology is the assumption that the "elect" which are also "saints" of the Tribulation period are basically the same as the church. There are two main difficulties with this view. First, the church is missing. This is also discussed later. Of equal importance, this seven year Tribulation period is definitely the last "week" of Daniel 9:27, and, as such, is a final segment of Israel's history before the Millennial Kingdom. According to The book of Revelation, the events of the period revolve around Israel, The Temple, Jerusalem, the Two Witnesses, and the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel.

The fact is, when Jesus gave His explanation of future events, known as the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 and 25), the church had just been announced (Matthew 16:13-18), but it's composition and destiny, including the Rapture, was still a mystery. This information would later be revealed to the Apostle Paul. If Christ had discussed the course of the Church Age and the Rapture, it would have been very confusing to the disciples at that time. The church came into existence on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and little by little, the organization took shape. All of the early believers were Jewish, and the new church was seen as a continuation of their Old Testament Beliefs.

The "mystery" of the church was revealed to the Apostle Paul, and described by Him in numerous passages of Scripture. In Romans 11:25 he used the word to describe the temporary "hardening" of Israel: "I do not want you to

be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in."

The word "mystery" (Greek *mysterion*) meant a "secret," or something formerly hidden, but now revealed. Paul used it in various places to describe aspects of the church and its mission. (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:9-10). The Rapture itself is called a mystery in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. In Ephesians 3 the Apostle explained in greater detail that the mystery of the church was part of God's purpose all along to make Gentiles heirs together with Israel.

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:2-11)

Van Kampen complains that when the pretribulation teachers relegate the events of the Olivet Discourse to Israel, they fail to teach the entire Gospel message. (Rapture, p. 103) We agree that students of the Word should accept that all Scripture is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16), and that all of it should be taught. However, not all sections apply to all people. Everything in the Gospels is important and instructive to the church, but some portions are about the history of Israel, beyond the age of the church. To fail to make that distinction is to do a great disservice to the Bible student.

2B - Failure to distinguish between the Church and the "saints" of the Tribulation

The prewrath Rapture theory equates church with the "elect" of Matthew 24:31, who are gathered by angels when Christ returns in power and glory (Rapture, pp. 80-81). There are serious problems with this view. The glorious visible return of Christ as King of Kings is quite different from the promised Rapture of the church. This will be discussed later.

The church is not named once in the entire account of the Tribulation period in the Book of Revelation Chapters 4-19. This is all the more noticeable since the word is used repeatedly in the first three chapters, where Christ is seen walking among the churches, and then sending messages to seven specific churches. The best explanation for this is that the true church, the bride of Christ, is taken from the earth at the Rapture. At chapter 4, the Apostle John is told to "Come up here." For the remainder of the vision, he is in the presence of the Lord, looking down on the dreadful events of the Tribulation. This is symbolic of the Rapture of the church.

During the Tribulation, however, there are "saints." They are also called the "elect." They are undoubtedly true believers in Jesus Christ, because there has been "no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12 (NIV) Just as it has always been, they may be Jews or Gentiles who have decided to receive Christ as Savior. As the story unfolds in the book of Revelation, these believers will undergo great persecution, and many of them will be martyred for the cause of Christ. Those who die are the subject of the Fifth Seal (Revelation 6:9-11). Those who survive to the end will be gathered together by angels (Matthew 24:31) and will undoubtedly be the mortals who populate the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20).

3B - An unfair test (Rapture or Armageddon?)

Van Kampen suggests a test he has given to prophecy classes he has taught over the years. First read the following Biblical passage:

Matthew 24:27-40

27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.
29 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."
30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.
31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.
32 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.
33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.
34 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.
35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;
39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.
Van Kampen has them read verses 27, 30-31 and 37-40, then asks, "Now, decide which event Christ had in mind when He gave this specific instruction to His disciples. Does this passage refer to the battle of Armageddon as recorded in Revelation 19:11-21, or does it refer to the rapture of the saints as recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17?" (Rapture, pp. 106-107) He then states that everyone in his classes has always thought it was about the Rapture.

The question itself is flawed. There is no reference in these verses to any battle, much less the specific battle of Armageddon. If the question were to be worded fairly it should ask, "Does this passage refer to the glorious return of Christ as recorded in Revelation 19:11-21, or does it refer to the rapture of the saints as recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17." In that case, knowledgeable students would be most likely to choose the Glorious Return.

Van Kampen wouldn't word the question in this way because he evidently does not believe that there are two separate events. In fact, he ridicules the pretribulation view as teaching that the church should be looking for the second coming, but Israel should be waiting for the third coming. (Rapture, p. 95) Of course, this is not what is taught by pretribulation teachers. It is easily provable that there are two distinct events coming - The Rapture and The Glorious Return. (See "Failure to distinguish between the Rapture and The Glorious Return of Christ" below) Pretribulation scholars refer to both events as "The Second Coming," just as the many events of Jesus' earthly sojourn were all part of His "First Coming."

2A - Satan's wrath ends at the Rapture and then God's wrath begins.

Using Revelation 12:12, and 13:4-7, Van Kampen says that Satan's wrath is the persecution of God's elect. (Rapture, p. 58).

These verse state:

Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." (Revelation 12:12)

Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?" The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the

saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. (Revelation 13:4-7)

When one studies this passage, it is clear that Satan's wrath is a reaction to God's wrath. God punishes Satan by casting him down to earth. This makes him angry. He is, in fact given power to persecute believers ("the saints") during the last half of the Tribulation (42 months). The proper way of seeing the Tribulation is that it is the time of both God's wrath and Satan's wrath as he struggles against the sovereignty of God.

Even in this present time we can see the same thing, to a lesser degree. Peter says that the Devil is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and causing persecution of believers. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

1B - Artificial shift from Satan's wrath to God's wrath

Using the illustrations of the days of Noah and the days of Lot in Luke 17:22-30, Van Kampen concludes that the Rapture will occur on the very day that God's wrath begins, thus ending the wrath of Satan. (Rapture, pp. 56-59).

The passage does not refer to the Rapture, but to the Glorious Return of Christ. The worst expression of God's wrath will be delivered at that time because the battle of Armageddon is fought. But that is not to say that the earlier part of the Tribulation is not also the result of God's wrath.

2B - Assumption that God's wrath does not begin until Christ returns.

The prewrath assumption that God's wrath does not start until just before the battle of Armageddon does not fit the facts revealed in the book of Revelation.

Even in the very first chapter of Revelation we see Christ, not as the Gentle Savior of the Gospels, but as the Judge, with eyes of blazing fire, glowing bronze feet, a voice that sounds like rushing waters, a sword coming out of his mouth, and a face glowing like the sun in all its brilliance. (Revelation 1:13-18)

In Revelation 3:10 the Church at Philadelphia was given the promise that they would be kept "from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." The implication is clear that God's wrath would be poured out on the whole evil world as He had done at the time of the flood.

In Chapters 4 and 5, future events are seen as emanating from God's sovereign throne. Jesus Christ, as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Lamb who was slain, is the only one worthy to open the seals of the scroll. Starting with chapter 6, Jesus opens the seals, one at a time, and each time, events transpire which represent God's wrath and judgment, usually on the whole earth.

In chapter 7 God holds back the strong angels who have power to harm the earth until the 144,000 can be sealed.

In chapter 12, as mentioned before, Satan's wrath is displayed, but it is the result of God's wrath leveled against him.

At the midpoint of the Tribulation, when people must decide whether or not to receive the "mark of the beast," it is said that God's judgment has come.

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of

the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." (Revelation 14:6-11)

3A - The Rapture takes place when Christ returns in great glory.

1B - Failure to distinguish between the Rapture and The Glorious Return of Christ

The key passage for the prewrath view is the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 and 25). There is only one return of Christ in view there, and that is at the end of the sequence of events describing the Great Tribulation. Matthew 24:30 states that, "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory." Van Kampen says this is the Rapture. However, there are many differences between the Rapture and the Glorious Return of Christ. Here are some of these differences:

THE RAPTURE: THE GLORIOUS RETURN

Christ comes for His own Christ returns with His own 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Revelation 19:14
Believers taken to Father's House Believers come to Earth John 14:3 Matthew 24:30
Seen only by believers Every eye will see Him 1 Corinthians 15:52 Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16; Matthew 24:30
No reference to Satan Satan bound Revelation 20:1-3
Earth not judged Earth judged Revelation 20:4-5
A Mystery Foretold in Old Testament - 1 Corinthians 15:51 Dan. 12:1-3; Zech. 12:10; 14:4

2B - Who is left to populate the Millennial Kingdom?

If the Rapture were to take place just before the battle of Armageddon, and all the believers were taken just before the final events of the Tribulation, what people would become believers at the very last moments so that there would be godly people to populate the Millennial Kingdom? Van Kampen's thought is that this is where the 144,000 come in. (Rapture, pp. 53-54).

We agree that there will be many Jewish people who believe at the end when they see the Lord whom they have pierced and mourn for Him. (Zechariah 12:10).

However, according to Revelation 7:3- , the 144,000 are sealed before any destruction occurs:

"Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

3B - The Judgment of the Sheep and Goats

According to Matthew 25:31-46, there will be a judgment of "sheep" and "goats" based on how people treated Israel. In the pretribulation view, surviving believers of the Tribulation period will qualify as the "sheep." In the prewrath view, all believers would have been taken at the Rapture and only a remnant from Israel itself would become believers at the very end. It is difficult to imagine that these new converts could be the "sheep" who acted kindly toward Israel.

Van Kampen offers a very unorthodox explanation of this dilemma. Since it is obvious that these Gentile survivors have not yet accepted Christ (or they would have gone up at the Rapture shortly before this time), he says that they will have trusted Christ when they saw Him face to face "when the Son of Man comes in His glory." (Matthew 23:31) (Sign, pp. 403-405)

I didn't notice any mention of this theory in his later book, probably because of difficulties in supporting this view.

4B - The Parable of the Wheat and Tares

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares also refers to the separation of believers from non-believers at the end of this age

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?"

"An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?"

"No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

This parable make good sense from a pretribulation point of view because it is similar to the Judgment of Sheep and Goats. In both cases, there are many believers and many non-believers. This takes place at "the end of the age" and the agents are angels. It is difficult for the prewrath position because that view does not allow for a large number of believers at the end of the age.

Again, I did not notice the use of this parable in Van Kampen's later book, *The Rapture Question Answered*, but is used repeatedly in *The Sign*. This passage is listed at least 15 times in the Scripture Index of that book. In *The Sign*, the author usually listed this passage as a proof for the Rapture, saying, for instance,

As we continue, we will see that when believers are received by Christ in the clouds at the Rapture of the church, it will be the angels of God who "gather the wheat into My barn" (Matt. 13:30) and who "gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (Matt. 24:31), and that "we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [by God's angels] together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17) (*Sign*, p. 296)

Notice the mixing of expressions from this parable with the classic passage about the Rapture. This passage simply can not refer to the Rapture, because it is stated that it takes place "at the end of the age," and even more importantly, the weeds, or tares, are collected FIRST, bundled for burning (presumably at a later time - *The White Throne Judgment*), and THEN the wheat is gathered into the barns.

Conclusion

I have noticed that a surprising number of young pastors have adopted the prewrath position. One possible reason for this is the normal desire of each generation to "go beyond" the previous one. It is actually a good thing for young scholars to test what they have been taught, and especially to compare it to the Scripture.

Another possible reason for the wide-spread interest in the prewrath theory comes from the fact that most pastors are really not up to speed in eschatology. They realize that nearly one third of the Bible is prophecy, but they have not invested the time to know it well. Van Kampen himself says that he spent nine thousand hours of Bible study and research during eight years to develop his eschatology. ("Join the club, Robert! Every serious prophecy teacher has invested many years in concentrated study). What he did though that gives a huge boost to his teaching, is to give

free copies of his large and colorful book to pastors. Hopefully, most of them will continue to read other works to balance their knowledge.

What difference does it make whether we accept the pretribulation or the prewrath viewpoint? To Van Kampen, the stakes are great. He says, "your view of end times may determine whether you, your children, or your grandchildren survive the onslaught of Antichrist or die at his hands." (Rapture, p. 131) Just like the posttribulation view, the bottom line for the prewrath folks is survival.

By contrast, the bottom line for the pretribulation view is evangelism and holy living. But let's admit that godly prewrath believers can be just as evangelistic as their pretribulation brothers and sisters. And shouldn't we all be wise enough to prepare for the future? In any case, Jesus expects us to love one another.

Appendix L The Return of Jesus Christ In Power Glory and Splendor (the *epipheneia*)

by Lambert Dolphin

Jesus of Nazareth was seen by his disciples and by groups as large as 500 persons (1 Cor, 15:6) during the 40 days between his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to the "right hand of the Majesty on High." Then instructing his disciples to wait for the promised arrival of the Holy Spirit, he departed this earth from the summit of the Mount of Olives, just East of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem,

"He presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God, And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.' And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight, And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men [angels] stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. (Acts 1:4-12)

The Holy Spirit then descended, from the Father and the Lord Jesus, ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, a Sunday morning, while the believing community was gathered for prayer and fellowship, Thus began the era of the church which has been God's means of calling out the world "a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) The church is especially called the "body of Christ" with Jesus the Head of the body, Wherever Christians gather Jesus is with them by means of the Holy Spirit--but Jesus has been visibly absent from the earth was nearly 2000 years,

The return of Jesus to earth is in two stages, First, He arrives unannounced to call out the true church, His Bride, This event (described in 1 Thessalonians 4 and usually called "the rapture") is distinguished from His visible return in power and glory seven years later, Two different Greek words are used, Parousia, meaning "presence" describes the coming of Jesus for his saints, and epiphaneia, meaning "appearing" describes his public unveiling (apokalupsis) in splendor, power and glory, After the rapture, Christians will pass through the reviewing "judgment seat of Christ," but the church will remain on the earth (in new, resurrection bodies) through the tribulation period, with Jesus, ministering to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists of the tribulation period from behind-the-scenes, (See Ray C, Stedman, God's Final Word: Understanding Revelation, Discovery House, 1991),

A number of passages in the Bible describe the glorious second coming of the Messiah Jesus to save our beleaguered planet from total destruction, and to set up his kingdom on earth, Zechariah tells us that the place of Jesus' return to earth will not be Zion, Illinois, but the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, Israel:

"Behold, a day of the LORD is coming, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in the midst of you, For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city, Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle, "On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward, And the valley of my mountains shall be stopped up, for the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it; and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, Then the LORD your God will come, and all the holy ones with him, "On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost, And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the LORD), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light, On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter, And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one." (Zechariah 14:1-9)

When Jesus returns to the Mount of Olives he will arrive from the direction of Edom (Southern Jordan)---with the blood of his enemies spattering his garments, He will bring with him the remnant of believing Jews who fled earlier to Jordan at the midpoint of the tribulation period, And with him also will be his Bride, the church, and great myriads of his holy angels: "Who is this that comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he that is glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? 'It is I, announcing vindication, mighty to save.' Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like his that treads in the wine press? 'I have trodden the wine press alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment, For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption has come, I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me victory, and my wrath upheld me, I trod down the peoples in my anger, I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.'" (Isaiah 63:1-6)

During the Olivet Discourse, Jesus describes his future public return in these words,

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31) A parallel passage in Luke's gospel reads as follows: "great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people [Israel]; they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken, And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke 21:23b-27)

And in Mark:

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken, And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory, And then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven." (Mark 13:24-27)

The Apostle Paul describes this event in his second letter to the Thessalonians:

"We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing, Therefore we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring, This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering--since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed [unveiled, that is apokalupsis] from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was

believed, To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Now concerning the coming [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come, Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion [apostasia] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God, Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed [apokalupsis] in his time, For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way, And then the lawless one [the antichrist] will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming [literally, "by the epiphaneia of his parousia"]." (2 Thess, 1:3-2:8)

The Apostle John also presents a full picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus with his saints,

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war, His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself, He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God, And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses, From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty, On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords, "Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army, And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image, These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur, And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh." (Revelation 19:11-21)

Concluding his commentary on the Book of the Revelation, cited above, Ray Stedman says,

Following the reassurance of the truth of His promises, the underscoring of His warning that those who give themselves over to sin will have no part of heaven, Jesus declares His credentials: He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning, and the End, He is God, the Creator, And He is the Root and Offspring of David, He is also fully man, the descendant of King David, the Messiah of the Jews, heir to the throne of His father David, ruler of Israel, And He is the bright Morning Star---the one who promises to come for His own before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, Again and again in this one concluding chapter Jesus says, "Behold, I am coming soon!" Many people read that and say, "How can that be? These words were written centuries ago, Christians in the first century believed He was coming soon, and He never came, Why should Christians in the twentieth century believe He is coming soon?" Some will even say, "The apostles were wrong, The book of Revelation is wrong, After 2,000 years of waiting, it should be obvious that Jesus is not coming back."

But if there is one thing the book of Revelation makes clear it is the fact that John's vision links time and eternity in ways that transcend human understanding, We look at time as a straight line, marked off in years like inches on a ruler, We see John's era of the first century AD as being at one point on the ruler, our own era some 2,000 years later, and the events of Revelation as occurring at some time further along that ruler, Properly understood, however, the events of Revelation were no further off in John's future than they are in yours and mine, The final destiny of a human being, whether lost or righteous, begins the instant that individual dies, Eternity is never more than a heartbeat away, never farther in the future than one's own death, It won't be long before both you and I step out of time and into eternity, And when we arrive in eternity, the saints who preceded us in death by a hundred or a thousand or two thousand years won't say to us, "What took you so long?" They'll be just like us, new arrivals in eternity, staring goggle-eyed in amazement at the unguessed-at wonders God has prepared for us, Jesus is coming soon, He was coming soon in the day of John the apostle, Even if the events of Revelation do not take place for another thousand years or ten thousand (though I hardly think that likely!), this statement would still be true: Jesus is coming soon.

"Come, Lord Jesus!"

John's vision closes with an invitation and a final warning,

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." The invitation is clear: "Come!"

This invitation is issued by the Spirit of God Himself, and it is echoed by the redeemed of God (the bride), and by every individual Christian who hears, It is an invitation to every reader of the book of Revelation to come, take the free gift of the water of life, come to Christ and live eternally.

The warning is equally clear: Don't change a word in this prophecy! The book of Revelation is God's truth, Don't add to it, Don't subtract from it, Certainly a book so rich in symbolism must be interpreted-but it must be interpreted carefully, Don't take away its meaning by emphasizing the symbolic at the expense of the literal, Do not destroy its intent by literalizing everything in it and ignoring the meaning of the symbols, Most important of all: Believe it, Ignore, reject, or distort God's truth and you risk missing out on God's plan; you risk having to endure the terrors described in the book; you risk losing out on your portion of the tree of life and the beautiful Holy City, Believe it-because Jesus is coming soon! He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen, Come, Lord Jesus, Doesn't your heart reverberate with that same poignant prayer! Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! The world is waiting, aching, crying for your return! The church is watching and expecting you! Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.

Appendix M

The Marriage Supper Of The Lamb

by Lambert Dolphin

The church of Jesus Christ is described by at least seven symbols or figures in the New Testament. Jesus is the Great Shepherd and we are the sheep (Jn 10:1-18). He is the True Vine and we Christians are the branches (Jn 15:1). We are "living stones" being built into a house which is a habitation for God---Christ Jesus is the cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-7). The Lord is described as a merchant who finds and buys a single pearl of great price (Mt. 13:45). He is Great High Priest over the household of faith, and we are his servant-priests (Heb. 4:14-16). The church is the Body of Christ, every one a member of every other, and all under the direction of Christ the Head of the Body (1 Cor. 12:12-14). Finally the church is the Bride of Christ and Jesus the waiting Bridegroom (Rev. 21:9).

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

"I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2)

Dallas Seminary theologian Chancellor and retired President, John W. Walvoord writes as follows:

"The use of the figure of a bride to represent the church in her relationship to Christ has in mind the oriental pattern in which marriage is contemplated as having three major steps: (1) the legal marriage often consummated by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom in which the dowry is paid and the young couple are formally married in a legal sense; (2) subsequent to the legal marriage, the bridegroom according to the custom would go with his companions to the house of the bride to claim his bride for himself and to take her back to his own home; (3) the bridal procession would be followed by the marriage feast which would often last for many days as illustrated in the wedding at Cana (John 2). In the oriental marriage, there was no ceremony such as is common in western civilization, but the legal marriage was consummated by the parents in the absence of the bride and bridegroom.

"Taking this figure as a spiritual picture of the relationship of Christ to His church, it is evident that for individual Christians, the marriage as far as its legal character is concerned is consummated at the moment an individual puts his trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour. In the case of the Christian, the dowry has already been paid in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and the bride has been purchased and claimed in a legal way by the Bridegroom. The church is, therefore,

already married to Christ as far as the technical relationship is concerned. The day will come, however, when the Bridegroom will come for His bride and this is fulfilled in the rapture of the church. At that time the Bridegroom will claim His bride and take her to His Father's house. This is the background of the statements in John 14:2,3 where Christ said: 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.' This passage contemplates that Christ in the present age is preparing a place for His bride. When this is complete and the bride is ready, He will come to take the bride to her heavenly home which will be accomplished by the rapture and translation of the church.

"The church which is made perfect by the grace of God will be delivered from the earthly scene and presented to the heavenly bridegroom on the occasion of the rapture of the church. The marriage union thus contemplated will result in the church being forever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and it will fulfill Christ's declared purpose "that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). The Word of God pictures the relationship of Christ to His church as the most beautiful of love relationships in human experience and contemplates unbroken fellowship throughout all eternity as the church enjoys the immediate presence of their loving Lord.

"Further confirmation is given that this is an event fulfilled in heaven rather than on earth in the millennium is the declaration in Revelation 19:7-9, at the time of the return of Christ to the earth to set up His earthly kingdom. The church is pictured as already the wife of the Lamb and as already arrayed in fine linen. The marriage of the Lamb is declared to have already come and now the invitation is extended to those outside the church, the body of Christ, to participate in the marriage supper (Revelation 19:9) which seems to be a spiritual representation of the millennium or at least its inauguration. As the marriage feast is the final stage, it should be clear that the Lamb has already come for His bride and claimed her previously in the rapture of the church. The marriage (Gr. *gamos*) is actually the entire ceremony subsequent to the coming of the bridegroom for the bride. In this marriage ceremony is the marriage supper (Gr. *deitnon*) which is the meal or supper proper." (John W. Walvoord, *The Nations, Israel, and The Church in Prophecy*, Zondervan, 1967)

Although the Old Testament does not reveal God's purpose in calling out a church comprised of Jew and Gentile, (Ephesians 3), a great feast prepared by God Himself for his people was described by the Prophet Isaiah nearly 700 years BC:

"On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the LORD GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isaiah 25:6-9)

While the church as the Bride of Christ is nowhere spoken of in the OT, Israel was called the "wife of Yahweh." The prophets eloquently describe God's nurture, courtship and betrothal of Israel (e.g. Ezekiel 16). They also dealt with the nation's spiritual adultery--and finally divorce from the Lord--(e.g. the book of Hosea). In spite of this "divorce" under the Old Covenant God promises to restore his beloved wife at the close of the age in which we now live. This restoration of Israel under the New Covenant is clearly explained in Hosea, in Jeremiah 31, and Romans 9, 10, and 11 to cite only a few references.

Ray Stedman in his commentary on Revelation notes that the Bride of Christ as described in the New Testament includes more than just the saints of the church age since Pentecost who comprise the church:

"It is a great honor to be invited to a wedding feast. It is a feast to which the entire human race is invited--but only a fraction of the human race will attend. The invitation is the gospel, and the gospel has gone out to all men and women everywhere, in every age of history. Some accept the invitation. Some reject it....The Spirit of God has been calling men and women throughout the centuries, from Old Testament times through our own New Testament era and on into the future, even in the tribulation period. The invitation goes out to everyone: 'Come to the marriage feast of the Lamb!' What a privilege that will be, to see the Bridegroom face to face, to be a member of His beloved bride, to share in the intimacy of fellowship with the Lord Jesus!" (Ray C. Stedman, *God's Final Word*).

When it came time for Isaac, Abraham's son, to be married (he was 40 years old), Abraham sent his eldest servant back to his native land to select a bride for his son. Chapter 24 of Genesis is a remarkable picture of the way God the Father would later send the Holy Spirit into the world to call out a bride for His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus that most commentators on Genesis take note of this. For example C. I. Scofield says:

"The entire chapter is highly typical. (1) Abraham, type of a certain king who would make a marriage for his son (Mt. 22:2, John 6:44); (2) the unnamed servant, type of the Holy Spirit, who does not "speak of himself" but takes the things of the Bridegroom to win the bride (John 16:13,14); (3) the servant, type of the Spirit as enriching the bride with the Bridegroom's gifts (Gal. 5:22, 1 Cor. 12:7-11); (4) the servant, type of the Spirit as bringing the bride to the meeting with the Bridegroom (Acts 13:4, 16:6,7, Rom. 8:11, 1 Thess. 4:14-16); (5) Rebekah, type of the church, the ecclesia, the "called out" virgin bride of Christ (Gen. 24:16, 2 Cor. 11:2, Eph. 5:25-32); (6) Isaac, type of the Bridegroom, "whom not having seen" the bride loves through the testimony of the unnamed servant (1 Peter 1:8); (7) Isaac, type of the Bridegroom who goes out to meet and receive his bride (Gen. 24:63, 1 Thess. 4:14-16)." (Scofield Reference Bible notes)

Jesus suggested a great marriage feast would be part of his final return to earth to be with his own. He used a number of direct and indirect references to this festive meal. The marriage supper was anticipated when Jesus celebrated the "Last Supper" with his disciples:

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Matthew 26:26-30)

The universality of God's invitation for all men everywhere to come to the marriage supper is clearly implied by a famous parable related by Jesus in Matthew 22. The required wedding garment represents true righteousness imparted by faith which replaces that normal self-righteous we all have as a result of the fall:

"And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1-14)

The wedding feast, celebration, and intimate union with the Lord of the universe---who is Himself Love---will be so joyful, fulfilling and marvelous that all efforts should be focused on getting ready to attend:

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour."

"Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. And some one said to him, 'Lord, will those who are saved be few?' And he said to them, 'Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!' There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and

Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.'" (Luke 13:22-30)

"Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, 'When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher"; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.' He said also to the man who had invited him, 'When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.'"

"When one of those who sat at table with him heard this, he said to him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' But he said to him, 'A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for all is now ready." But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused." And another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, "Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame." And the servant said, "Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room." And the master said to the servant, "Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

"Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, 'If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. 'Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltness be restored? It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill; men throw it away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'" (Luke 14:7-35)

In the parable of the Ten Virgins Jesus distinguished between professing and true believers. True believers have the endless resources of the indwelling Holy Spirit within them while those who have not yet enter a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord are merely enjoying temporary fringe benefits of associating with those who know Jesus personally:

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'" (Matthew 25:1-13)

The actual marriage supper of the Lamb itself is specifically announced in connection with the second coming (the *epiphaneia*) of the Lord Jesus:

"Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"-for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the

saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (Revelation 19:6-9)

The Great Supper of God

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is not to be confused with the Great Supper of God which is an invitation for vultures and other carrion feeders to gorge themselves on the dead bodies of the wicked men of earth slain in battle during the campaign of Armageddon: Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven,

"Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. (Revelation 19:17-21)

This same "sacrificial feast"---for the benefit of the birds of prey---is described in Ezekiel. The time is after the great Northern invasion of Syria and Russian satellite powers which many Bible scholars believe is part of the campaign of Armageddon during the last half of the tribulation period just prior to the triumphant return of Jesus Christ to establish his kingdom on earth. The Ezekiel passage describes the destruction of the invading armies as due to the direct intervention of the hand of God.

"As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field, 'Assemble and come, gather from all sides to the sacrificial feast which I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast upon the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth--of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast which I am preparing for you. And you shall be filled at my table with horses and riders, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors,' says the Lord GOD." "And I will set my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment which I have executed, and my hand which I have laid on them. The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them. "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name. They shall forget their shame, and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God because I sent them into exile among the nations, and then gathered them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations any more; and I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 39:17-29)

Appendix N

The Judgment Seat of Christ

by Lambert Dolphin

Whether a Christian dies before his time from an accident or tragedy, or whether he or she lives out a normal life span of 70 or 80 years, each and every one of must, at death, pass a special reviewing stand of God known in

Scripture as the "Judgment Seat of Christ." Even those who remain alive on earth until the rapture will experience this judgment as they pass from the earthly realm to the heavenly. The Greek word, (Bema), basically means a law tribunal where defendant and accuser stand in front of a magistrate in a court. Many Bible commentators use the analogy that the Bema is the evaluation of athletes in competition passing the judges' reviewing stand in order to win the rewards appropriate to how well they have run the race.

This "athletes' reward ceremony" aspect of the Judgment Seat of Christ is based upon such Scriptures as 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

John's Gospel, and Romans 8, promise that Christians have passed out from under all condemnation and will not fail to pass the test of the Judgment Seat of the Christ. Without negating the notion that this judgment does involve the rewarding of all those running the race, the notion of a legal tribunal is also implied by key passages in Corinthians:

"According to the commission of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or stubble---each man's work will become manifest (openly visible), for the Day (of the Lord) will disclose it, because it will be revealed (unveiled) with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men..." (2 Corinthians 5:10-11)

Every Christian is given the opportunity of building a Christian life, like a house, upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Hay, wood, and stubble are insubstantial building materials which are neither structurally sound nor fireproof. These materials represent all our self efforts---whether on behalf of our own interests or in the service of God. Gold, silver and precious stones---which do survive fire---are those permanent enduring things which God is building in us and in others. The Lord has promised to shake our entire universe one day so that only what He has built will remain:

"'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.' This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken, as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:25b-28)

While the prospects of endless delights, joy, and freedom of sin forever when we all get to heaven are held before us in the Bible and vividly pictured for us by inspiring Christian writers such as C.S. Lewis in *The Great Divorce*, none of us shall reach the other side without passing through a process of seeing ourselves as we really always were and have finally become. This will be a time when God makes known "the thoughts and intentions of the heart." All those activities in our lives undertaken in the energy of self-effort will be burned up and lost to us forever. It is perhaps because he knew more than we do about the awesomeness of facing God and leaving our present world of darkness and illusion for the glorious light of holy reality, that the Apostle Peter urged his readers to look forward to, and count upon the "extra" grace that is coming to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 1:13).

Our Lord himself spoke of the end of life, and the end of the age as carrying with it great agony like that of a woman in travail, but He said, "...your sorrow will be turned into joy...you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." (John 16:20-22)

The Apostle Paul writes regarding the Apostolic calling to ministry and advises us to practice self-evaluation. Note that the judgment seat of Christ is one of rewards, approval and commendation,

"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart." Then every man will receive his commendation from God. (1 Cor. 4:1-5)

"None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' So each of us shall give account of himself to God. Then let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother." (Romans 14:7-13)

It is better for us to grow more and more aware of our sins through diligent pursuit of holy living, through prayer and fellowship, through study of the Word of God and regular self-judgment that averts the judgment of God. Otherwise we may drift away with the crowd into compromises that leave us in the end no different from the pagans around us. If that occurs we are in jeopardy of losing our rewards which God desires to give us. "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality." (Colossians 3:23-25)

This present life is not where our goals, hopes and dreams and fulfillment are to be found---God's purpose is for us to regain our lost humanity and become whole persons who will live forever in a new creation. It is not for this life only that God is preparing us, but for something far more glorious and splendid. This is all made possible not by our best efforts but by the grace and mercy He has already lavished upon us and is ready to supply anew if we will but ask. C. S. Lewis writes in this connection,

"It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. "All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations.

It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations---these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, marry, snub, and exploit- immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." (from *The Weight of Glory*)

Appendix O

The Great White Throne Judgment

by Lambert Dolphin

God is the Judge of All

Information about life after death and eternal judgment is sparse in the Old Testament. However, Daniel clearly describes a final resurrection of the dead divided into two classes:

"At that time [the end-time] shall arise Michael, the great prince [archangel] who has charge of your people [Israel]. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:1-3)

Judgments in the Bible are of various types and kinds. Often they are temporal---we all suffer lost opportunities in life due to inappropriate choices which have displeased God. Discerning the will of God (for believers) is described in Romans 12:1, 2 as being three-tiered. We are to prove in experience what is the will of God, "...what is good, acceptable and perfect." Excessively carnal behavior after one becomes a Christian can result in what is called a "sin unto death". This is essentially a foreshortening of one's lifespan on this earth due to sin. Other temporal judgments of God in history can include the destruction of a city or a nation due to sin. For instance, God ordained the total destruction of the Canaanite peoples who inhabited the promised land in the time of Abraham, though God granted them a stay of execution amounting to some 400 years (Deut. 10:16-18).

The entire Old Testament records temporal judgments on Israel and the surrounding nations as well as judgments upon individuals or cities. Temporal judgments differ from eternal judgments in that the death of an individual because of such a judgment may be unrelated to whether or not a person is eternally saved or lost. First Corinthians 10 describes the death of an entire generation of Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai after the Exodus from Egypt. Even Moses was denied entrance into the land because of disobedience. Yet great numbers of these covenant people knew the Lord in their hearts and so will enter the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lot's life in Sodom was hardly exemplary, yet he is described as a believer in the New Testament. Much more can be said on the general subject of judgment, but to end this introduction on a positive note, it can be said that repentance and a whole-hearted turning to God delays judgment pushing it further into the future.

Seven Special Judgments of God

Seven judgments described in Scripture have special significance. These are,

- (1) The judgment of the cross which includes the judgment of the believer's sins,
- (2) The self-judgment of the believer whereby we avoid God's judgment for sins, (1 Cor. 11:31);
- (3) The judgment seat of Christ immediately after the believer's death where the quality of a Christian's life is evaluated and rewarded, (2 Cor. 5:10);
- (4) The "sheep and goat" judgment at the start of the Millennium determining which Gentiles may enter the kingdom;
- (5) The judgment of Israel at the beginning of the Millennium. This is described in Ezekiel 20:33-44;
- (6) The judgment of fallen angels, (Jude 6, 1 Cor. 6:3) and,
- (7) The great white throne judgment (or "last judgment") of unbelievers at the end of the Millennium.

Judgments in Eternity are outside of Time

Although the last judgment follows 1000 years after the second coming of Christ to earth, as far as earth-time is concerned, when any individual dies he or she immediately leaves time and enters eternity---there is no intermediate state. In the experience of that individual, whether he is a believer or a non-believer, the next event experienced is one of two judgments. Unfortunately in our culture we are so accustomed to thinking of time as linear and everywhere the same in the universe. But, it is clear from the Bible that mortal man is trapped in a linear time frame, whereas heaven runs by different set of clocks. At physical the individual time-travels in an instant to one of two judgments---either reward or eternal punishment.

This immediate judgment after death (as far as eternity is concerned), for both believers and unbelievers, is described for us in connection with the Second coming of Christ in glory (his epiphaneia) recorded in 2 Thess. 2: "...we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering---since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed." (v 4-10)

All judgment of mankind is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. One man, Christ Jesus, is now ruling our entire universe as the Lord of time and space, and nature, and history, and human affairs. Every person's life and destiny is in his hands. Jesus himself said this: "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:21-29)

The setting of the judgment of the great white throne is associated with an event in the Bible called the "second" resurrection. "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are ended... "...Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.

Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:5, 6; 11-15)

Two different documents are presented at this awesome courtroom scene. Books recording the life-deeds of every individual are presented. These books are evidently the records kept by recording angels (see for example, Ezekiel and The Destruction of Jerusalem).

The second book is "the Lamb's Book of Life" where the names of all believers are written "before the foundation of the world," (Rev. 13:8, see also, Phil. 4:3, Rev. 3:5, Rev. 13:8, Rev. 17:8, Rev. 20:12, Rev. 21:27). Although eternal separation from God might seem to be in itself the most awful and terrible ultimate punishment in itself, the text strongly suggests that there are degrees of punishment in the lake of fire, for "all were judged by what they had done."

Ray C. Stedman, offers the following comments on the judgment of the great white throne:

Here is a startling and terrifying scene. Imagine standing on a starship, watching the earth and the planets recede from view, the stars moving against the background of eternal night. That is the vision suggested by John's words, "Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them." This suggests that all of humanity will be removed from earth, perhaps from the universe as we know it, to eternity itself, where there is no space and no time. That is where judgment will take place. The judge is Jesus, not God the Father. "The Father judges no one," said Jesus, "but has entrusted all judgment to the Son." It is Jesus who sits upon the Great White Throne of majesty and gathers all the dead before Him.

There will also be some living people from the Millennium, for it must be determined if their names are recorded in the book of life. Judgment will be "according to what one had done." Deeds reveal the condition of the heart. Deeds reveal belief. All the deeds of mankind are preserved in God's great library. Books are a symbol of the eternal record of our lives. If John were receiving this vision today, the symbol would probably be videotape or computer disks rather than books. The books are metaphors for the record of every life---and the final judgment of every life shall be made on the basis of that record. Only those whose names are in the book of life can do righteous deeds. Only the deeds of the righteous will survive the fire of judgment. All other deeds will be consumed to ashes. Only those acts that have been done by the power of the Spirit of God and done for the glory of God will remain. Even the noblest and most impressive accomplishments, even acts which have helped many people or changed the course of history---if they were done by the power of the self and for the glory of the self---will vanish without a trace.

If your name is not in the book of life, your evil deeds will be revealed. All the hidden corners of your life will be subjected to scrutiny. Nothing will go unnoticed. Today you may have a reputation for your devotion, your caring, your humility, your abilities---but in that day Jesus will judge the hidden motives behind your deeds. He will know if your real reason for service in the church and the community was to glorify God---or if it was all tainted by selfishness, pride, and the lust for prominence, power, influence, and recognition...

When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to minister to other cities and towns in Israel, they returned rejoicing that they had cast out demons with just a word of command. They were amazed at the power of God that was flowing through them, at the wonderful deeds that were being accomplished, at the fact that even the demons submitted to them in the name of Jesus. "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you," Jesus replied, "but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." That is the central question in life: Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? Beside this one issue, everything else pales in comparison. Your name is written in that book when you commit your life to Jesus. No one needs to face the lake of fire. No one goes into the Abyss against his or her own will. It is a choice we all make in this life. If we refuse the Savior, God can only give us the fate we demand.

The issue of eternal punishment raises a problem in the minds of most thoughtful Christians: What about those who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ? Isn't it unfair that someone should be condemned to an eternity apart from God simply because he never had the opportunity to hear about Jesus? This is a difficult question, but it is addressed in Scripture. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "Anyone who comes to [God] must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek Him." God knows the intent and condition of every human being, and He will deal with every individual according to the great declaration of Scripture, "Far be it from [God] to...kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike...Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" We know that God only holds us accountable for the light of understanding we have received. Those of us who have received more revelation are responsible for how we respond to that revelation. Scripture does not explicitly tell us the fate of those who have not heard of Jesus, of the cross and the empty tomb, of the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. But the Bible does tell us that God will deal justly with them.

The question that confronts you and me, since we have received so much of the revelation of God's truth, is this: Have our names been written in the Lamb's book of life? Jesus knows our hearts. Nothing is hidden from His view. If we come to Him, we belong to Him and He to us. We need fear nothing from the final judgment and the second death."

One final note. Believers are raised from the dead and given resurrection bodies. When unbelievers are raised at the Last Judgment they also stand before God with resurrection bodies. We are not told anything about these bodies, but they will evidently be imperishable. The Bible suggests that unbelievers suffer eternal torment separated from God--not as disembodied spirits, but as persons who have body, soul and spirit and are forever conscious of where they are and why.

Appendix P

Outline of The Olivet Discourse

by Ron Graff

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

Matthew 24 and 25

Introduction 24:1-3

1A. Jesus' Explanation of the Future 24:4-31

1B. Beginning of Birth Pains 24:4-8

2B. The Tribulation 24:9-14

3B. The Great Tribulation 24:15-28

4B. After the Tribulation 24:29-31

2A. Jesus' Examples about the Future
24:32-25:46

1B. Parable of the Fig Tree 24:32-35

2B. Days of Noah 24:36-51

3B. Illustrative Parables 25:1-46

1C. Parable of the Virgins 25:1-13

2C. Parable of the Talents 25:14-30

3C. Parable of the Sheep and Goats 25:31-46

Appendix Q

Outline of The Book of Revelation

By Ron Graff

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION & SALUTATION 1:1-8

1B. Introduction 1:1-3

2B. Salutation 1:4-8

1A. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST 1:9-18

(The things which you have seen)

1B. Preparation for the vision 1:9-10

2B. Presentation of the vision 1:11-18

1C. The revelation of John 1:11-16

1D. The Golden Stands 1:11-12

2D. The Glorified Savior 1:13-16

2C. The reaction of John 1:17-18

2A. THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THIS
AGE

1:19-3:22

(The things which are)

1B. Insight about the church 1:19-20

2B. Instruction to the church 2:1-3:22

1C. To Ephesus 2:1-7

2C. To Smyrna 2:8-11

3C. To Pergamum 2:12-17

4C. To Thyatira 2:18-29

5C. To Sardis 3:1-6

6C. To Philadelphia 3:7-13

7C. To Laodicea 3:14-22

3A. THE PROGRAM OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE
FUTURE

4:1-22:21

(The things which will take place...)

1B. The scene in Heaven 4:1-5:14

1C. View of the Heavenly Majesty 4:1-11

1D. The Throne 4:1-3

2D. The Elders 4:4

3D. The Surroundings 4:5-6b

4D. The Four Creatures (living beings)
4:6c-8

5D. The Worship 4:9-11

2C. Vision of the Holy Mystery 5:1-14

1D. The Scroll 5:1

2D. The Search 5:2-4

3D. The Savior 5:5-7

4D. The Song 5:8-10

5D. The Saying 5:11-14

2B. The Scene on Earth 6:1-20:15

1C. The Tribulation 6:1-19:21

1D. Opening of the Seven Seals 6:1-8:1

1E. First Seal - Antichrist 6:1-2

2E. Second Seal - Arms 6:3-4

3E. Third Seal - Agony (Famine) 6:5-6

4E. Fourth Seal - Annihilation (Death) 6:7-8

5E. Fifth Seal - Anticipation (Martyrs)
6:9-11

6E. Sixth Seal - Agitation 6:12-17

() Tribulation Saints 7:1-17

1F. The Sealed Ones 7:1-8

2F. The Saved Ones 7:9-17

1G. Enormity of the Multitude 7:9
 2G. Exultation by the Multitude 7:10-12
 3G. Explanation about the Multitude
 7:13-17
 7E. Seventh Seal - Adjustment 8:1
 2D. Sounding of the Seven Trumpets
 8:2-11:19
 1E. Expectation 8:2-6
 2E. Execution 8:7-11:19
 1F. First Trumpet - Scorching of the Earth
 8:7
 2F. Second Trumpet - Slaughter in the Sea
 8:8-9
 3F. Third Trumpet - Souring of the Water
 8:10-11
 4F. Fourth Trumpet - Smiting of the
 Planets 8:12-13
 5F. The Fifth Trumpet -
 Striking by Locusts 9:1-12
 1G. The Diabolical Pit 9:1-2
 2G. The Demonic Plague 9:3-10
 1H. Their Actions 9:3-6
 2H. Their Appearance 9:7-10
 3G. The Destructive Potentate 9:11-12
 6F. The Sixth Trumpet - Slaying of One-
 third of the Population 9:13-21
 1G. The Command from Heaven
 9:13-16
 2G. The Consuming Holocaust 9:17-19
 3G. The Conscious Hardness 9:20-21
 () Parenthetical Explanations 10:1-11:14
 1G. About God's Program 10:1-7
 2G. About John's Prophecy 10:8-11
 3G. About Gentile Power 11:1-2
 4G. About Two Prophets 11:3-14
 7F. The Seventh Trumpet - Sovereignty of
 God 11:15-19
 3D. Important Considerations of the Period
 12:1-19:21
 1E. The Role of Israel in The
 Tribulation 12:1-18
 1F. Birth of the Deliverer 12:1-6
 1G. Purpose for Israel 12:1-2
 2G. Plan of the Devil 12:3-4
 3G. Protection of the Child 12:5-6
 2F. Battle with the Devil 12:7-17
 1G. War in Heaven 12:7-12
 2G. War on Earth 12:13-17
 2E.. The Reign of the Unholy Trinity During
 The Tribulation 13:1-18
 1F. The Dragon (Satan) 13:2,4
 2F. The Despot (Antichrist) 13:1-10
 1G. His Appearance 13:1-4
 2G. His Actions 13:5-10
 3F. The Deceiver (False Prophet)
 13:11-18

1G. His Person 13:11
 1H. Like a Lamb
 2H. Like a Dragon
 2G. His Power 13:12-13
 3G. His Purpose 13:14-18
 3E. The Redemption of the 144000
 During The Tribulation 14:1-5
 4E. The Reports from Heaven During The
 Tribulation 14:6-13
 1F. The First Message 14:6-7
 2F. The Second Message 14:8
 3F. The Third Message - 14:9-12
 4F. The Fourth Message 14:13
 5E. Reaping of Judgment During The
 Tribulation 14:14-19:21
 1F. Judgment of the Beast and
 False Prophet 14:14-20
 1G. The Conqueror 14:14
 2G. The Conquest 14:15-20
 2F. Judgment of the Earth 15:1-16:21
 1G. The Victorious Vision 15:1-8
 1H. Songs of Praise 15:1-4
 2H. Scene of Preparation 15:5-8
 2G. The Venomous Vials 16:1-21
 1H. The First Vial - Damaging Sores
 16:1-2
 2H. Second Vial - Deadly Seas 16:3
 3H. Third Vial - Deplorable Springs
 16:4-7
 4H. Fourth Vial - Dangerous Sunlight
 16:8-9
 5H. Fifth Vial - Dark Seizure 16:10-11
 6H. Sixth Vial - Drying of the Strait
 16:12 () Demonic Spirits 16:13-16
 7H. Seventh Vial - Destructive Scourge
 16:17-21
 3F. Judgment of Babylon 17:1-19:6
 1G. Preface about the Woman 17:1-2
 2G. Perversity of the Woman 17:3-6
 3G. Position of the Woman 17:7-18
 4G. Punishment of the Woman 18:1-19:6
 1H. Ruin 18:1-8
 2H. Reaction 18:9-19:6
 1I. On Earth 18:9-19
 2I. In Heaven 18:20-19:6
 4F. Judgment at Armageddon 19:7-21
 1G. Heavenly Jubilation 19:7-10
 (The Marriage Supper of The Lamb)
 2G. Horrible Judgment 19:11-21
 1H. The Coming of Christ's Army
 19:11-16
 2H. The Crumbling of Antichrist's Army
 19:17-21
 2C. The Millennium 20:1-15
 1D. Preparation for the Period 20:1-3
 2D. Progress During the Period 20:4-6

3D. Postscript to the Period 20:7-15
1E. Rebellion 20:7-9
2E. Retribution 20:10-15

1F. The Devil 20:10
2F. The Deceived 20:11-15
3B. The Scene on the New Earth 21:1-22:21

Appendix R

Notes on Daniel 11 and 12

Appendix S

Ancient Prophecies and Ancient Prayers for the End of the Age

by Lambert Dolphin

Chuck Missler has often noted that the world is now entering into a climactic time of history about which the Bible has more to say than any other period of history, including the time of the first Advent of Jesus.

The Old Testament speaks with clarity and new relevance of the end time events again and again. As we approach the time of the end we can expect the Spirit of God to illuminate many previously obscure passages in the Old Testament. We can also expect to see new light on passages we previously understood only in part. For example, the deliverance of the godly remnant by Yeshua, "the angel of the presence" from Petra at the close of the tribulation period is alluded to by Moses in his last words to his people before he died. All we need do is change the past tense verbs to future in our English translations of the Hebrew text:

This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. He said, "The LORD came ["will come"] from Sinai, and dawned {"will dawn"} from Seir upon us; he shone ["will shine"] forth from Mount Paran, [in Edom] he will come with his ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand. Yea, he loves his people; all those consecrated to him are in his hand; so they follow in thy steps, receiving direction from thee, (as) when Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob. Thus the LORD will become king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people will be gathered, all the tribes of Israel together. (Deuteronomy 33:1-5)

Earlier we saw that the imagery of the remnant being taken to Petra "on eagles' wings" was reminiscent of God's deliverance of his people under Moses. God will supernaturally protect his remnant in the wilderness of Petra and supernaturally rescue them from the pursuit of Antichrist's armies (Rev. 12:15,16). Yeshua will then lead the remnant to Jerusalem where he will make his public appearance, his epiphaneia.. Earth's rightful ruler will be publicly unveiled in Jerusalem. Jesus foretold of this event:

"...for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. Alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people [Israel]; they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the [angelic] powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:22-28)

Moses at his death gave prophetic blessings upon the tribes of Israel, one by one. The final fulfillment of these promises will take place after Messiah returns to Jerusalem by way of Seir and Bozrah:

"Let Reuben live, and not die, nor let his men be few."

And this he said of Judah: "Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him in to his people. With thy hands contend for him, and be a help against his adversaries."

And of Levi he said, "Give to Levi thy Thummim, and thy Urim to thy godly one, whom thou didst test at Massah, with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and mother, 'I regard them not'; he disowned his brothers, and ignored his children. For they observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.

They shall teach Jacob thy ordinances, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt offering upon thy altar. Bless, O LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those that hate him, that they rise not again."

Of Benjamin he said, "The beloved of the LORD, he dwells in safety by him; he encompasses him all the day long, and makes his dwelling between his shoulders."

And of Joseph he said, "Blessed by the LORD be his land, with the choicest gifts of heaven above, and of the deep that couches beneath, with the choicest fruits of the sun, and the rich yield of the months, with the finest produce of the ancient mountains, and the abundance of the everlasting hills, with the best gifts of the earth and its fulness, and the favor of him that dwelt in the bush. Let these come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the head of him that is prince among his brothers. His firstling bull has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall push the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth; such are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and such are the thousands of Manasseh."

And of Zebulun he said, "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out; and Issachar, in your tents. They shall call peoples to their mountain; there they offer right sacrifices; for they suck the affluence of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand."

And of Gad he said, "Blessed be he who enlarges Gad! Gad couches like a lion, he tears the arm, and the crown of the head. He chose the best of the land for himself, for there a commander's portion was reserved; and he came to the heads of the people, with Israel he executed the commands and just decrees of the LORD."

And of Dan he said, "Dan is a lion's whelp, that leaps forth from Bashan."

And of Naphtali he said, "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full of the blessing of the LORD, possess the lake and the south."

And of Asher he said, "Blessed above sons be Asher; let him be the favorite of his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil. Your bars shall be iron and bronze; and as your days, so shall your strength be. "There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, and in his majesty through the skies. The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you, and said, Destroy.

So Israel will dwell in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone, in a land of grain and wine; yea, his heavens drop down dew. Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you; and you shall tread upon their high places." (Deuteronomy 33)

An enigmatic prophecy about Enoch (who was translated into heaven prior to the flood of Noah) is recorded in the book of Jude has a double-fulfillment: First, at the time of the Flood of Noah to judge the antediluvian world, destroying probably many billions of earth's inhabitants and delivering eight persons in the Ark. Then, at the end of the age we now live in Jesus will again appear "with his ten thousands of holy ones."

It was of these (false teachers) also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord will come with his holy myriads, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (Jude 14-15)

A mystery-filled prophecy in Ezekiel clearly relates in part to the end time and God's judgment of His people Israel:

"As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be king over you (Israel). I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where

you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out [largely fulfilled in the last century]; and (then, after that) I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, [Note: The term "wilderness of the peoples" may refer to Edom, according to some Bible scholars], and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, says the Lord GOD. I will make you pass under the rod, and I will let you go in by number. [the term the wilderness of the peoples, v35, in the Bible often refers to Edom]. {Note: The term "pass under the rod" appears in Leviticus 27 and symbolizes a separation of the consecrated and the unconsecrated animals of the flock.}

I will purge out the rebels [apostates] from among you, and those who transgress against me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn (Edom?), but they shall not enter (back into?) the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. "As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: Go serve every one of you his idols, now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols. "For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land; there I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings. As a pleasing odor I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country which I swore to give to your fathers. And there you shall remember your ways and all the doings with which you have polluted yourselves [see Zechariah 12:10-14]; and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, says the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 20:33-44)

Isaiah 11 also contains mystery concerning the end time:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious.

In that day [at the end of the tribulation] the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the [rest of the] dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. But they shall swoop down upon the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put forth their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them. And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt (the Suez Canal); and will wave his hand over the River [the Euphrates?, Rev. 16:12] with his scorching wind, and smite it into seven channels that men may cross dryshod. And there will be a [new king's] highway from Assyria for the remnant which is left of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt. (Isaiah 11)

But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel caused to be profaned among the nations to which they came. "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations will know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

Ezekiel says the following about God's mercy, grace and compassion coming on the nation of Israel at the close of the age we live in:

For I will take you [Jews] from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. [Then] I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. [This is an announcement, similar to Jeremiah 30, of God's intention to bring the people of Israel into the New Covenant which Jesus put into effect with his 11 disciples at the Last Supper.]

You [Jews] shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses; and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds. [Here is the national repentance of Zechariah 12:10-14 again.]

Ezekiel then describes Messiah's reign over all the nations, from Jerusalem, and the millennial prosperity He will bring to all mankind, through Israel:

It is not for your sake that I will act, says the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel. "Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now inhabited and fortified.' Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it. "Thus says the Lord GOD: This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them: to increase their men like a flock. Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the LORD." (Ezekiel 36:21-38)

Regarding the believing remnant is gathered under the care of the Great Shepherd of the Sheep at Bozrah,

"I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men. He who opens the breach will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the LORD at their head." (Micah 2:12-13)

The Lord's return (at the parousia) to care for his remnant at Petra and his leading them safely back to Jerusalem by way of Bozrah is then compared by Isaiah with God's care for the Jews through the wilderness in the Days of Moses:

I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel which he has granted them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, Surely they are my people, sons who will not deal falsely; and he became their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence (compare 1 Cor. 10:3) saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

But they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses his servant. Where is he who brought up out of the sea the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. Like cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So thou didst lead thy people, to make for thyself a glorious name. Now follows a prayer of the remnant for deliverance:

Look down from heaven and see, from thy holy and glorious habitation. Where are thy zeal and thy might? The yearning of thy heart and thy compassion are withheld from me. For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; thou, O LORD, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name. O LORD, why dost thou make us err from thy ways and harden our heart, so that we fear thee not? Return for the sake of thy servants, the tribes of thy heritage. Thy holy people possessed thy sanctuary (the Third Temple) a little while; our adversaries have trodden it down. We have become like those over whom thou hast never ruled, like those who are not called by thy name. (Isaiah 63)

Prayers for Israel From Long Ago

The Hebrew Prophetic Future Verb Tense

Verb tenses are not as clearly specified in the Hebrew language as they are in English. In a number of prophetic passages of the Old Testament the verbs are commonly translated as past tense in our English Bibles. However, the prophetic future tense can equally well be used. (Note: When the Hebrew letter *waw* is added before a word it means "and." When added as a suffix it means "his." *Waw* before a verb indicates a change of the tense of the verb from past to future and vice versa (a verb in the past tense with a *waw* in front of it is to be understood as future tense).

Notice in the passage quoted below how the words of the prophet Habakkuk take on new meaning for the end of the age if one switches the verb tenses from past tense to future.

Habakkuk lived just before Nebuchadnezzar's siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple so he was downhearted and grieved because God was bringing great Israel against the chosen people through a foreign people of even great wickedness. It was a dark hour for history similar to the hour that Israel faces in our own time, so Habakkuk's words and prayers applied both to his immediate situation. Yet his pray would seem to apply equally well to the end of the present age:

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. O LORD, I have heard the report of thee, and thy work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years renew it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

God will come from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran (i.e., from Petra). His glory will cover the heavens, and the earth will be full of his praise. Selah. His brightness is like the light, rays flash from his hand; and there he will veil his power. Before him goes pestilence, and plague follows close behind. He will stand and measure the earth; he will look and shake the nations; then the eternal mountains will be scattered, the everlasting hills sink low. His ways will be as of old.

I see the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian tremble. Is your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Is your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you ride upon thy horses, upon your chariot of victory? You will strip the sheath from thy bow, and put the arrows to the string. Selah. You will cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains will see you, and writhe; the raging waters sweep on; the deep gives forth its voice, it lifts its hands on high. The sun and moon stand still in their habitation at the light of your arrows as they speed, at the flash of your glittering spear. You will stride the earth in fury, you will trample the nations in anger. You will go forth for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You will crush the head of the wicked (one), laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah. You will pierce with your shafts the head of his warriors, who come like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. You will trample the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.

I hear, and my body trembles, my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones, my steps totter beneath me. I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like hinds' feet, he makes me tread upon my high places. (Habakkuk 3:1-19)

Isaiah Chapters 24 through 27 are often called "The Little Apocalypse" because of the prophet's description of this end-time period, "the time of Jacob's trouble" for Israel (Jer. 30).

"Behold, the LORD will lay waste the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the slave, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled; for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left. The wine mourns, the vine languishes, all the merry-hearted sigh. The mirth of the timbrels is stilled, the noise of the jubilant has

ceased, the mirth of the lyre is stilled. No more do they drink wine with singing; strong drink is bitter to those who drink it. The city of chaos is broken down, every house is shut up so that none can enter. There is an outcry in the streets for lack of wine; all joy has reached its eventide; the gladness of the earth is banished. Desolation is left in the city (Jerusalem), the gates are battered into ruins. For thus it shall be in the midst of the earth among the nations, as when an olive tree is beaten, as at the gleaning when the vintage is done..."

The Final Conversion of Israel

Israel's national prayer for their Messiah to come and to forgive them is found in Hosea Chapter 5 beginning at verse 15. Most reputable scholars believe this prayer must be prayed by the nation as a precondition for their national salvation in the coming of Yeshua the Messiah to save them:

I [the LORD] will return again to my place, until they [Israel] acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress they seek me, saying, Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know, let us press on to know the LORD; his going forth is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth." (Hosea 5:15-6:3).

Earlier we traced the escape of a remnant of some thousands--perhaps tens of thousands--of believing Jews from Jerusalem to Petra which will take at the time of the desecration of the Third Temple at the mid-point of the tribulation period.

As the age comes to a full close many passages of Scripture speak of the national conversion of Israel. We have seen that the imagery of the trampling out of the vineyard and the blood like grape juice flowing as high as a horse's bridle up and down the length of Israel will be Jewish blood as God judges the apostate majority of Jews in the land of Israel. In this terrible time for Israel, millions of men from invading Gentile armies fighting World War III in Israel will also meet their violent end. All the while the terrible judgments from God depicted in the Book of the Revelation will devastate the entire earth. Most of mankind will perish and the great infrastructures of the past thousand of years of civilization will be destroyed.

Yet Paul argues in Romans 11 that in spite of all this, "all Israel will be saved."

Lest you [Gentiles] be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, [to the church] and then all Israel will be saved; as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As regards the gospel they are [now] enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11:25-36)

Paul is careful to make clear that he is not speaking of each and every Jew being converted, but true Israel is limited to those who ultimately believe in Yeshua within the nation. Just how many Jews will be saved at the very end of the age?

Though our own nation, the United States, contains a professing Christian population that appears to number many tens of millions of believers, it is more realistic to say that the "believing remnant" in America today is perhaps only 5 to 10% of those professing faith in Jesus Christ. Thus the future large-scale conversion of Jews to belief in Yeshua at the close of the age will represent a very great work of grace by the God of Israel. A final conversion of one-third of the populace of Israel will surely be very large in percentage compared to the size of the fractional wheat harvest from among the Gentiles. The end result of Yeshua's work in Israel at the end of the age will be a completely righteous nation of believers chosen to be the head of all the nations.

Isaiah wrote these words about 700 BC:

On this mountain (Mt. Zion) the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the

covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil [of pride and spiritual blindness] that is spread over all nations. (2 Cor. 4:3,4) He will swallow up death for ever (1 Cor. 15:54), and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth (Rev. 21:4); for the LORD has spoken.

It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain [Jerusalem], and Moab [Jordan] shall be trodden down in his place, as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit. And he will spread out his hands in the midst of it as a swimmer spreads his hands out to swim; but the LORD will lay low his pride together with the skill of his hands. And the high fortifications of his walls he will bring down, lay low, and cast to the ground, even to the dust.

In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps faith may enter in. Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee. Trust in the LORD for ever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. For he has brought low the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust. The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy." The way of the righteous is level; thou dost make smooth the path of the righteous. In the path of thy judgments, O LORD, we wait for thee; thy memorial name is the desire of our soul. My soul yearns for thee in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks thee.

For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the LORD.

O LORD, thy hand is lifted up, but they see it not. Let them see thy zeal for thy people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for thy adversaries consume them. O LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us, thou hast wrought for us all our works. O LORD our God, other lords besides thee have ruled over us, but thy name alone we acknowledge. They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end thou hast visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them. But thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation; thou art glorified; thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land (of Israel). O LORD, in distress they sought thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like a woman with child, who writhes and cries out in her pangs, when she is near her time, so were we because of thee, O LORD; we were with child, we writhed, we have as it were brought forth wind. We have wrought no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For thy dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades thou wilt let it fall.

In the midst of Isaiah's description of the terrible judgments during the time of Jacob's trouble, the prophet gives a call for the remnant to hide themselves for a season:

In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea; [these creatures symbolize our human pride, inspired by Satan in the hearts of men].

In that day: "A pleasant vineyard [Israel], sing of it! I, the LORD, am its keeper; every moment I water it. Lest any one harm it, I guard it night and day; I have no wrath. Would that I had thorns and briers to battle! I would set out against them, I would burn them up together. Or let them lay hold of my protection, let them make peace with me, let them make peace with me." In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit. Has he smitten them as he smote those who smote them? Or have they been slain as their slayers were slain? Measure by measure, by exile thou didst contend with them; he removed them with his fierce blast in the day of the east wind. Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be expiated, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: when he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones crushed to pieces, no Asherim or incense altars will remain standing.

For the fortified city (Jerusalem?) is [now] solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness; there the calf grazes, there he lies down, and strips its branches. When its boughs are dry, they are broken; women come and make a fire of them. For this is a people without discernment (those who remained in Jerusalem after the flight of the remnant?); therefore he who made them will not have compassion on them, he that formed them will show them no favor.

In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the LORD will thresh out the grain, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel. And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come (back) and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem. (Isaiah 24-27).

The post-exilic prophet Zechariah had much to say about the close of the age we live in as well as details about both the identity and character of both the true Messiah and the Antichrist.

An Oracle The word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus says the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him: "Lo, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of reeling to all the peoples round about; it will be against Judah also in the siege against Jerusalem. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it shall grievously hurt themselves."

The term "on that day" is a clue that the passage is referring to the Day of the Lord, i.e. the great tribulation period:

And all the nations of the earth will come together against it [Jerusalem]. On that day, says the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But upon the house of Judah I will open my eyes, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.' "On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves; and they shall devour to the right and to the left all the peoples round about, while Jerusalem shall still be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem. "And the LORD will give victory to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be exalted over that of Judah. On that day the LORD will put a shield about the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, at their head. And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Israel's National Mourning for Yeshua

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land shall mourn, each family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.

"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. "And on that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit. And if any one again appears as a prophet, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD'; and his father and mother who bore him shall pierce him through when he prophesies. On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; he will not put on a hairy mantle in order to deceive, but he will say, 'I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil; for the land has been my possession since my youth.' And if one asks him, 'What are these wounds on your back?' he will say, 'The wounds I received in the house of my friends.'"

Yeshua, the Church, and the Remnant from Edom return to Jerusalem

Behold, a day of the LORD is coming, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.

On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward. And the valley of my mountains shall be stopped up, for the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it; and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD your God will come, and all the holy ones (saints, i.e., the church, his holy angels, and the believing remnant from Edom] with him.

On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the LORD), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from

Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one. The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft upon its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. And it shall be inhabited, for there shall be no more curse; Jerusalem shall dwell in security. And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will smite all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh shall rot while they are still on their feet, their eyes shall rot in their sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their mouths. And on that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them, so that each will lay hold on the hand of his fellow, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other; even Judah will fight against Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the nations round about shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the asses, and whatever beasts may be in those camps.

Messiah will Reign from Jerusalem and the Nations will come to Pay Tribute

Then every one that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem [the sheep of Matthew 25:31-46] shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain upon them. And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then upon them shall come the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the feast of booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the feast of booths. And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the LORD." And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar; and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the flesh of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day. (Zechariah 12-14)

The Wine Press of Wrath upon the Jews

Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe. So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped."

The first sickle and the references to the reaping of the harvest of the earth indicates the reaping of the wheat and the tares from the nations, Matthew 13. This is a final separation of the believers in the nations other than Israel divided and differentiated from the unbelievers they are co-mingled with.

And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth (Israel), for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city (Jerusalem), and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia. (Revelation 14:14-20)

This series of events is also foretold by the prophet Joel. First Joel discusses the judgment of the nations on the basis of their treatment of the God's people the Jews. This is the same judgment we know as the "Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats" from Matthew 25:31-46.

"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations, and have divided up my land, and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and have sold a girl for wine, and have drunk it.

"What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will requite your deed upon your own head swiftly and speedily. For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, removing them far from their own border. But now I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will requite your deed upon your own head. I will sell

your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a nation far off; for the LORD has spoken."

Joel now announces the assembly of the nations to the Battle of Armageddon. It is God who draws these armies into His land.

Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare war, stir up the mighty men. Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, "I am a warrior." Hasten and come, all you nations round about, gather yourselves there.

Next, Joel invokes the Lord to come down with his armies of heaven to fight against the nations:

Bring down thy warriors, O LORD.

Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the nations round about. [Again, this is the sheep and goat judgment of Matthew 25:31-46. The Valley of Jehoshaphat is most probably the Kidron Valley between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives]

Likewise, Israel is to be judged:

Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the wine press is full. The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.

Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

The Lord makes His open appearance upon the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem in the midst of the battle:

And the LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel. "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwell in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy and strangers shall never again pass through it.

The return of the Lord leads at last into the conditions of peace on earth under Messiah's long-expected reign:

"And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the valley of Shittim. "Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem to all generations. I will avenge their blood, and I will not clear the guilty, for the LORD dwells in Zion." (Joel 3)

Although quoted earlier in this chapter, a clear description of this same event---the coming of Messiah to the Mount of Olives in power and glory---is described by the aged Apostle John:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses.

From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to (a) smite the nations, and he will rule [lit: shepherdize] them with a rod of iron; he will (b) tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two

were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.
(Revelation 19:11-21)

Notice that the armies of the world originally gather to battle at Megiddo---to fight one another. In the midst of that battle, ominous portents from outerspace---visions and signs of the approach of Yeshua---cause the armies of the world to turn and fight against God and His armies!

Isaiah's Prayer for the Soon-Coming of Messiah:

O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence---as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil---to make thy name known to thy adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains quaked at thy presence. From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides thee, who works for those who wait for him. Thou meetest him that joyfully works righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways. Behold, thou wast angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one that calls upon thy name, that bestirs himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast delivered us into the hand of our iniquities.

Yet, O LORD, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; we are all the work of thy hand. Be not exceedingly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity for ever. Behold, consider, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities have become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins. Wilt thou restrain thyself at these things, O LORD? Wilt thou keep silent, and afflict us sorely?

Messiah's reply to the prophet:

I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, "Here am I, here am I," to a nation that did not call on my name. I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and burning incense upon bricks; who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am set apart from you." These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day. Behold, it is written before me: "I will not keep silent, but I will repay, yea, I will repay into their bosom their iniquities and their fathers' iniquities together, says the LORD; because they burned incense upon the mountains and reviled me upon the hills, I will measure into their bosom payment for their former doings." Thus says the LORD: "As the wine is found in the cluster, and they say, 'Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it,' so I will do for my servants' sake, and not destroy them all. I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah inheritors of my mountains; my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for my people who have sought me. But you who forsake the LORD, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny; I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer, when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my eyes, and chose what I did not delight in."

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, my servants (the remnant) shall eat, but you (apostates) shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame; behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for anguish of spirit. You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse, and the Lord GOD will slay you; but his servants he will call by a different name. So that he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth, and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hid from my eyes.

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They

shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their children with them. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD."

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the LORD. But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. "He who slaughters an ox is like him who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like him who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a cereal offering, like him who offers swine's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like him who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; I also will choose affliction for them, and bring their fears upon them; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes, and chose that in which I did not delight." Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: "Your brethren who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame. "Hark, an uproar from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies! "Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she was delivered of a son. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her sons. Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth? says the LORD; shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb? says your God.

"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; that you may suck and be satisfied with her consoling breasts; that you may drink deeply with delight from the abundance of her glory." For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall suck, you shall be carried upon her hip, and dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the LORD is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies. "For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the storm wind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the LORD execute judgment, and by his sword, upon all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many. "Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating swine's flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, says the LORD. "For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD. "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, says the LORD; so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD. "And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." (Isaiah 64-66)

Appendix T

The Internal Structure of The Book of Genesis

Moses is the author of the first five books of the Bible, (the Pentateuch, or Torah), according to the Jewish understanding. Historical Christian understanding agrees--supported not only by Jewish tradition but also by the New Testament and the words of Jesus Himself. (See Ex 17:14, 24:4-8, 34:27; Num 33:1,2; Deut 31:9,22,24; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18, Neh 13:1, etc.; and Mt 19:8; Mk 1:44; 10:4, 5; Lk 5:14; 16:31; 20:37; Acts 3:22;

13:39; 15:5ff; 26:22; Rom 10:5, 19; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15; Rev 15:3). (Deuteronomy Chapter 24 was evidently added by a later writer since it speaks of the death of Moses).

Moses evidently compiled the Pentateuch from sources we are not told about in the Bible. These could have included: (a) 100% direct inspiration or revelation from the Holy Spirit, (b) oral traditions passed down from Adam through the godly line of Seth to Abraham, etc., (c) written records preserved by various of the patriarchs supplemented by God-given additional inspired textual material. Option (c) is most likely as discussed below.

The time of Moses' writing of the Torah (during the Exodus from Egypt) would have been around 1400 BC at which time perhaps 2500-4000 years had elapsed since Adam left the garden. Computer studies of the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch conducted in Israel in recent years show that all of these five books of the Bible had a single author, (namely Moses) regardless of the source material Moses used.

There are eleven clear internal divisions in the text of Genesis. The key phrase marking these divisions are the words, "These are the generations of..." (The word "generations" in the Hebrew is *toledoth*). Note that the New Testament opens with the words, "The book of the generations of Jesus Christ..."

The weight of evidence suggests the respective names attached to each of these divisions represent closing signatures or subscripts added by the patriarchal writers of each section. The eleven divisions are as follows:

1. "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth" (Genesis 2:4). The author of Chapter 1:1 through 2:4a was the Holy Spirit Himself since there was no human observer to record the events of creation week.
2. "This is the book of the generations of Adam" (Genesis 5:1). Adam could have actually left a written record which comprises Genesis 2:4b through 5:1.
3. "These are the generations of Noah" (Genesis 6:9). Noah evidently wrote down this section of Genesis and passed it on to his sons in written form.
4. "Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth" (Genesis 10:1). Noah's three sons seem to be credited with the section of Genesis which concludes with 10:1.
5. "These are the generations of Shem" (Genesis 11:10). Shem's contribution is reflected in the abbreviated account of Japheth's lineage (they were scattered abroad and probably lost touch with Shem), and the full detail preserved concerning the descendants of Shem. Also, the Holy Spirit seems to have been careful to preserve the line of promise from Eve to Messiah.
6. "Now these are the generations of Terah" (Genesis 11:27). Terah perhaps kept the brief record from 11:10-27.
7. "Now these are the generations of Ishmael" (Genesis 25:12). The line of Ishmael is noted in the brief section that ends with the signature of 25:12.
8. "And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son" (Genesis 25:19).
9. "Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom" (Genesis 36:1).
10. "And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir" (Gen. 36:9).
11. "These are the generations of Jacob" (Genesis 37:2).

God says in Genesis 26:6 that Abraham "kept Torah," i.e., he evidently had written "commandments, statutes and laws" from God which had been handed down to him. There are a number of good reasons for believing that Hebrew is the original one language of mankind up to the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel.

The *toledoth* model does not negate the claims of Scripture given about itself since:

"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16,17)

And also,

"First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Pet 1:20, 21)

For a thorough and helpful discussion of the toledoth model for the contributors to the source books Moses used to write Genesis, see Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Creation-Life Publishers, San Diego, CA. 1976. See also the Introductory Notes to the Harper Study Bible published by Zondervan. James Montgomery Boice also discusses this authorship model in his outstanding commentary, *Genesis*. The substantive model for the internal structure of Genesis as described above is found in P. J. Wiseman, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, New York 1985)

Appendix U

Do You Know Christ Personally?

So what is the meaning of all of this? Why did God go to so much trouble to tell us what is going to happen in the future? Two thousand years ago the people who asked these very questions were the ones who were looking for the coming of Messiah. They recognized Jesus for who He was and they believed in Him. They accepted the Gospel, or "Good News" about Christ.

Today when you recognize these "Signs of the Times" it may cause you to ask the most important question of all, What must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:32). And the answer is Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. (Acts 16:33). But what exactly does this mean?

First, you must admit that you have sinned: fallen short of God's expectations of you, and that the payment of sin is death. You could never pay for your own sin, but Jesus Christ paid for it by dying in your place.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... (Romans 3:23)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Then, you must ask Christ to be your Savior and your Lord. Here are several verses of Scripture that say the same thing in slightly different ways:

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

You may ask Christ into your life by prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God. Tell Him something like this: "Dear Lord, I know that I'm a sinner, and I need Jesus Christ to save me from my sin. Right now, I open the door of my life and ask Jesus to come in. Be my Savior and my Lord."

Did you pray? It isn't the exact words that count, but in your own way, if you confessed your sin and asked Christ to become your Savior, He kept His promise and entered your life. This is what the Bible means about being "born again." (John 3:3,5) You have been born into the family of God. Now, be sure to tell someone what you have done!

There is one other thing. The Bible teaches that all believers should be baptized. (Matthew 28:18-20 and the example of all converts in the Book of Acts) Find a good Bible-teaching church in your area and ask to be baptized right away in order to be identified with Christ and to be obedient to Him.

If you have made that decision and would like to have help to get started in your Christian life, contact either of the authors via their web sites, and we will be happy to send you some simple follow-up materials.

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