

Tapestry:

The Book of Revelation

**by David Justin Ross
and Brian J. Elmenhurst**

**All Books
and
Supplementary Material**

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Introductory Material

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Preface

Thirty years ago, the authors met weekly to discuss various theological and additional topics. During one of these conversations, the topic of the Rapture and its timing came up in connection with the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. This scripture appeared to contradict the prevailing belief of the timing regarding the Rapture. We decided to do an extensive study on the “End Times” and the events (as described by scripture) around it. We focused our study on the book of Revelation and what appears to be bizarre imagery. We quickly realized that we could not study Revelation independently from the rest of the Bible. Quite often, we would pull on a thread in Revelation that led to other parts of the Bible. Hence, we decided to call our commentary on Revelation *Tapestry*, where one side looks like a jumbled mess of knots and colors, but the other side displays a clear image of what the knots and colors are portraying.

After studying all the relevant aspects of scripture, reading over a hundred books between us, and seven years later, we felt we had a reasonable understanding of how things could play out, or at least as firm an understanding one may have of a prophecy before it is fulfilled. At that point, we did submit a manuscript to several publishers, and not surprisingly, we didn’t hear back from anyone. We taught classes on the topic in our church and for others who were interested in hearing what we had learned from our study.

The manuscript was not complete at that time. It was about 85% done, but life got in the way of completing it. Since new methods of publication are now available, however, we decided to complete the book and publish it via another method.

Summary and Overview

“There are many reasons why the modern Christian and even the modern theologian may hesitate to give to the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming that emphasis which was usually laid on it by our ancestors. Yet it seems to me impossible to retain in any recognisable form our belief in the Divinity of Christ and the truth of the Christian revelation while abandoning, or even persistently neglecting, the promised, and threatened, Return. "He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead" says the Apostles' Creed. "This same Jesus" said the angels in Acts, "shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." "Hereafter" said our Lord himself (by those words inviting crucifixion), "shall ye see the Son of Man . . . coming in the clouds of heaven." If this is not an integral part of the faith once given to the saints, I do not know what is.”

--CS Lewis¹

There is a strong need today for a commentary that makes the language of Revelation accessible to the Christian layman. *Tapestry: The Book of Revelation* is intended to provide this in a way that is also accessible to specialists in the field as well. Revelation is a tapestry woven of threads that reach throughout the Bible. The authors propose to take our readers beneath the surface of this tapestry to show how the threads connect, revealing how Revelation ties together the rest of the Bible. Our fundamental purpose is to translate the symbols and images of Revelation into terms understandable by all Christians. We carefully distinguish between what John sees and how John explains what he saw. The latter is John's language, but the former are God's visions. Our task is not to explain why John wrote what he did. John wrote what he was shown. Our task is to understand the meaning of what God showed John.

Interest in prophecy, particularly in prophecy concerning the end of the age, has risen sharply throughout the past century, driven in part by historical events. With the re-establishment of Israel in 1948 and the recapture of Jerusalem in 1967, there now remain no further prophecies that must be fulfilled before the commencement of the last seven years of this age. The fact that recent generations have seen prophecy fulfilled more clearly than any since the Apostles' has sparked a growing curiosity to know what is next on God's timetable.

The rise of technology has played its part as well. Modern science and engineering have in many ways caught up with Bible prophecy. The events in Revelation always could have been fulfilled miraculously; today, many of them are possible without the miraculous. Revelation tells us, for example, that people of every nation will see the

¹“The World's Last Night” in “The World's Last Night and Other Essays,” Lewis, C. S., Harcourt Brace, 1952.

bodies of the two witnesses lying dead in the streets of Jerusalem.² Throughout all time God could have made this possible through a miracle; today, it is possible through television and the Internet.

For all these reasons, the interest of both believers and non-believers in prophecy has grown. Numerous books, some of dubious scholarship, have appeared to serve this demand, but the most important book about the end times, the book of Revelation, remains out of the reach of most people. Many modern books on Revelation are too shallow or too sensational for the serious student and leave unaddressed the grandeur and depth of the book itself. Other books, written by and for scholars, lose the average reader in technical language and the finer points of theology. *Tapestry* seeks a middle ground.

Without a reliable guide, many abandon Revelation, believing the prophecy is too esoteric for the layman to grasp. As the time draws nearer, it is tragic that the book most concerned with Christ's return should be closed to many Christians. It is also unnecessary. Using a firm grounding in scripture, we provide a guide to John's language and God's symbols that is accessible to modern readers. We hope we also reveal some of the beauty and majesty of this capstone of the Bible, this book that sees the fulfillment of all that has been prophesied across more than three and a half millennia.

Our approach to Revelation has many facets. First, we will show that what God showed John, he often also showed to other prophets, and how by comparing their visions with his we can reach a stronger understanding of John's visions. By tying Revelation together with other prophecies of the end times we can also fill in gaps in our knowledge of things to come. Most important, we can better understand God's symbols by comparing John's visions with those of other prophets, and John's language with other prophets' and with deuterocanonical and extra-biblical sources.

What most makes Revelation difficult is that John stands nearly 2000 years in our past, describing events in our future, using a language of symbols that was centuries old when he wrote. Only through symbols could John comprehend enough of the far future to record what he saw and communicate it to those who lived after him. Our modern problems with God's method are of our own making. We have allowed ourselves to lose fluency in the language of the symbols. Thus, the task of a commentator today is largely that of a translator, attempting to translate the symbols that God used into words that our age understands.

Symbols, in particular rich, visual ones like those in Revelation, contain their information holographically. They are literally true and yet not visually true. What makes our media-trained minds revolt is that the symbols represent, in visual form, things that do not look like the symbols. If we are told a man is strong as an ox, we accept the metaphor. When a man is symbolized by an ox, we may see the details of the ox's hide or horns but lose the meaning of the symbol. When Christ appears before God's throne to take the scroll,

² Revelation 11:9.

John sees him as a mortally wounded seven-eyed lamb. When the Antichrist appears, it is as a multiheaded beast rising from the ocean. It is important to understand that the beast is no more and no less a beast than Christ is a lamb. We are not put off by statements that a particularly bad man is a beast or that Christ is the Lamb of God. We should not fear visual symbols that say the same thing.

How to read Tapestry

We strongly recommend reading the Principles of Exegesis in Appendix 8 to understand the methodology used to interpret Revelation and the events of the Last Days. While you are reading the commentary, it will also be helpful to have the Timeline (Appendix 10) at hand to put the events discussed in temporal context.

Revelation should be read as a set of prophecies yet to be fulfilled, similar to the way Isaiah or Ezekiel would have been read before their prophecies started coming true. One of the keys to understanding the book of Revelation is realizing that the prophecies are a series of overlapping views of the events of the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week. John will present a series of events and then go back in time, sometimes well before the events just presented and carry the prophecies forward, generally further in time than the previous section and often from a different viewpoint. In these sections, John often switches from the Heavenly to the Earthly viewpoint and back.

Next, it would be advisable to read Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse (Appendix 2) which is essentially a synopsis of Revelation and related events.

After reading the entire book of Revelation, read the chapter corresponding to the chapter in the commentary. The chapter in the commentary quotes the entire book during the discussions.

The authors of this work are Christians who believe in the inspiration of scripture. We therefore put far more weight on a parallel passage or explained symbol if it comes from the Bible, and so the Bible has been our primary tool in providing that "symbol dictionary". Nonetheless, there are sources beyond the Bible that can clarify particular passages, and they have been used when they offer significant aid. Important among these have been extrabiblical apocalypses. I Enoch, II Esdras, and the Gospel of Nicodemus have proven particularly useful.³

Tapestry grew from two courses: one in Christian Basics and one on the Book of Revelation that the authors taught at Celebration Presbyterian Church in Redmond, Washington. It is intended to be used by anyone wanting a more thorough understanding of Revelation. Small-group leaders who wish to lead Bible studies on Revelation or the end times will find it particularly helpful.

The quotes of scripture are generally from the NIV version of the Bible, primarily the 1984 revision of the 1978 edition. Some are from the 2011 revision. Where other

³ Though the latter is not an apocalypse, it speaks of the events during the rule of the Antichrist. It also makes fascinating reading.

versions are used, it is generally to provide a different translation of an ambiguous word or phrase.

Main Points in the Commentary

By following the Principles of Exegesis in Appendix 8, we have reached conclusions that may be controversial to some people. We believe that our readers should know them at the outset.

1. The events of the seven seals, trumpets, and plagues are mostly temporally sequential. They deviate from the strictly sequential in two ways. First, some of them look ahead to later events. The sixth seal, for example, announces the wrath of God, which is carried out in the seventh seal. Second, and more importantly, there are several periods of recapitulation, some of them quite lengthy. Thus, more than four chapters separate the seventh trumpet⁴ from the first plague.⁵ Within that span is a recapitulation that reaches back to Christ's first coming. In general, by the end of each recapitulation, events have advanced to or beyond where they were when the recapitulation started.
2. Another difficulty people have with Revelation is that the events of the Last Days are not presented in order and are not told from a single viewpoint. For the most part, a section in Revelation will present a series of events that are related and that are seen from a particular viewpoint (whether that of heaven or of earth). The following section may present the same events from the other perspective, or it may cover a new set of events. In the latter case it often looks back to part of the previous period before going on to later events. Sometimes these "recapitulations" can be very extensive and last for several chapters in Revelation. Throughout, we will attempt to clarify where in the sequence of events a particular text applies, what the viewpoint is, and what is of particular importance in this section. Throughout, consideration of the Timeline will greatly aid in keeping events in order.
3. The seven trumpets are included in the seventh seal, the seven plagues in the seventh trumpet.
4. The Antichrist, the first beast of Revelation 13, the beast from the Abyss of Revelation 17, the "man of lawlessness" of 2 Thessalonians, and the "prince who is to come" of Daniel 9 are all the same person, a literal ruler at the end of this age.
5. There is no explicit seven-year period in Revelation. Except for the first four seals, all the end time events in Revelation that precede the return of Christ take place in a three-and-a-half-year period.

⁴ Revelation 11:15.

⁵ Revelation 16:2.

6. We cannot be sure we are in the end times until the Antichrist is revealed. The first four seals are probably events of the first half of Daniel's Seventieth Week, but until the abomination of desolation is set up, we cannot know that we are within the Seventieth Week.⁶ Both Christ⁷ and Paul⁸ tell us to look for the revealing of the Antichrist to know we are within the end times.
7. From the revealing of the Antichrist at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week to the Return of Christ is 1335 days.⁹ All periods of 1,260 days, 42 months, or 3 1/2 years in Daniel and Revelation cover the period from the revealing of the Antichrist to the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The period of the seven plagues (the seventh trumpet) covers an additional 30 days, reaching to day 1,290.¹⁰ The remaining 45 days¹¹ allow the gathering of armies at Armageddon. At the end of that time, Christ returns and destroys the armies of the nations. The Millennium begins at that point. For the next seven months, Israel will bury the dead from Armageddon.¹² The temple will be purified for the first 965 days of the Millennium, bringing us up to 2,300 days.¹³ For the first seven years of the Millennium, Israel will burn the weapons of their enemies for fuel.¹⁴
8. The seven thunders¹⁵ fit into the 1,260 days, which is why they occur in the sixth trumpet instead of the seventh. They are the only group of seven judgments¹⁶ that do not fit into the seventh of the previous series. Neither we, nor anyone else, knows what the seven thunders said.
9. The "great tribulation" of which Christ spoke¹⁷ is part, but only a part, of this three-and-one-half year period, the second half of Daniel's "Seventieth Week". The authors have therefore been careful to avoid the misleading term "the Tribulation Period" as a descriptor of the seven years, preferring the more scriptural "Seventieth Week".

⁶ Nonetheless, if Israel ends up with peace with all its neighbors, or the temple is rebuilt, the authors plan to keep their running shoes handy.

⁷ Matthew 24:15.

⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

⁹ Daniel 12:12.

¹⁰ Daniel 12:11.

¹¹ Which, interestingly, is about how long it took to gather the forces for the first Gulf War.

¹² Ezekiel 39:12.

¹³ Daniel 8:14.

¹⁴ Ezekiel 39:9. The fact that Israel has been the center of oppression of the Antichrist, the attacks of Satan, and the preparation for a great war probably indicates they will need to burn whatever is handy during this period.

¹⁵ Revelation 10:3-4.

¹⁶ Assuming the seven thunders *are* a judgment.

¹⁷ Matthew 24:21.

10. During the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist and the False prophet will murder an innumerable multitude¹⁸ of believers. The largest number given in Revelation (and indeed, in the Bible) is the 200 million horsemen of the sixth trumpet.¹⁹ The number of martyrs during the Great Tribulation will therefore exceed this count, a number on the order of the population of the entire earth when John wrote.
11. Christians on earth during the Seventieth Week will be preserved through God's wrath, not removed from the earth first. The Rapture will take place in conjunction with the "first resurrection"²⁰ when Christ gathers his elect.²¹ We see no need to dispute whether the "Blessed Hope"²² of the church is the Rapture or the return of Christ; they take place at the same time. We believe the "first resurrection" is indeed the first, not preceded by one seven years earlier. Likewise, we believe the "last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15:52 is not followed by the seven trumpets of Revelation nor by the trumpet call of Matthew 24:31. Throughout scripture "first" means first and "last" means last.
12. Because the Rapture and the resurrection take place together at the end of the age, all believers will be in the same resurrected state at the beginning of the Millennium. At least three groups of non-Christians will enter the Millennium in physical bodies. These are Jews who turn to him after the Rapture,²³ the survivors of the nations who attack Israel at the final battle at Jerusalem (who, presumably had not taken the mark of the beast),²⁴ and likely others who had not taken the mark who survived the final plagues.
13. The "Babylon" of Revelation is the anti-type of "Israel". Both, at one level, are physical nations and both have additional symbolic meaning. As "Israel" is also God's kingdom made manifest, so "Babylon" is also a Satan-inspired political system. As "Israel" is all those faithful to God, both Jews and Christians, so "Babylon" is all those who oppose God and his people.
14. The setting for the "two in a field, one taken, the other left" prophecy of Luke 17 and Matthew 24 is the period immediately after the Antichrist is revealed and before he seizes Jerusalem. The "one taken" is caught by the Antichrist because he disobeyed Christ's command to flee.²⁵
15. At the transition from the sixth to the seventh trumpet (at the resurrection of the two witnesses) a strange thing occurs. An earthquake in Jerusalem kills 7,000

¹⁸ Revelation 7:9.

¹⁹ Revelation 9:16.

²⁰ Revelation 20:5.

²¹ Matthew 24:31.

²² Titus 2:13.

²³ Zechariah 12:10.

²⁴ Zechariah 14:16.

²⁵ Luke 21:21. Those who fail to flee "look back" like Lot's wife (Luke 17:32).

- people and the survivors give glory to God.²⁶ Both before and after the witnesses' resurrection, men curse God for the calamities. Only here do they give him praise. This giving glory is in response to the first angel (of three) in chapter 14²⁷ who demands that everyone give glory to God. Some respond.
16. The great majority of the events of Revelation and the end times can take place without miracles. A mark to control commerce,²⁸ the worldwide viewing of the bodies of the two witnesses,²⁹ the melting of dead men's flesh before their bodies can fall,³⁰ the creation of a speaking image,³¹ even the calling down of fire from "heaven",³² can now all have technological causes.
 17. Satan tried to give the kingdoms of the earth to Christ,³³ and Christ refused. The Antichrist will be made the same offer and will accept. At the time of Christ's temptation, the kingdoms of earth were still Satan's by right because of Adam and Eve's sin. With Christ's death, they became Christ's by right.³⁴ He will retake them by conquest.
 18. Revelation contains two periods of wrath. Satan's wrath³⁵ starts with his being cast to earth³⁶ and God's wrath is unleashed with the seventh seal and covers the seven trumpets and seven plagues.³⁷
 19. God wins!

²⁶ Revelation 11:13. On either side of this, people are cursing God as a result of his judgments.

²⁷ Revelation 14:6.

²⁸ Revelation 13:17.

²⁹ Revelation 11:9.

³⁰ Zechariah 14:12.

³¹ Revelation 13:15.

³² Revelation 13:13. Laser and particle-beam weapons, for example.

³³ Matthew 4:8-9.

³⁴ Revelation 5:9-10. Cf. 11:15.

³⁵ Revelation 12:12 where the word translated "fury" in the NIV is "thumos", a word used many times in Revelation for the wrath of God.

³⁶ We believe this occurs at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week and that Satan's wrath lasts at least through the Great Tribulation up to the killing of the Two Witnesses.

³⁷ This happens after the great tribulation, sometime late in the second half of the Seventieth Week.

The Structure of This Commentary

We have divided *Tapestry* into several sections in order to serve readers with different needs. The primary section, occupying the greatest portion of the book, is a verse-by-verse commentary laid out with chapter numbers paralleling those in Revelation. This commentary can be read straight through or used as a reference. It is divided into seven books for presentation on the website.

Unlike most commentaries on Revelation, *Tapestry* concentrates on the images shown to John, tying them to similar or identical visions given to other prophets. When the same scene is presented through different sets of eyes, it becomes clearer. To do this, we have included those scriptures (and occasional extrabiblical quotations) that deal with similar events. Also included are footnotes and endnotes where the authors present information that may be interesting to a specialist or that is too detailed to be presented inline in the general commentary.

The second division is a glossary explaining many of the terms used in the general text. The definitions are from one sentence to a few paragraphs in length. Areas requiring more in-depth treatment are covered in the third division.

The third division of *Tapestry* comprises detailed discussions on particular subjects relevant to Revelation, such as the Rapture and the Wrath of God. The topics covered throw light on the visions seen or the events foretold in Revelation but require too detailed a discussion to fit into the general commentary. Since *Tapestry* is a book about Revelation and not a complete study of the End Times, these topics are generally presented in ways relevant to the exegesis of Revelation.

Each division has footnotes. These footnotes, which appear at the bottom of the appropriate pages, contain references cited in the text and short comments that would otherwise interrupt the text. Longer comments are relegated to the endnotes.

Book 1 consists of chapters 12, 13, 14 of Revelation as well as material relevant to the events in those chapters but not necessarily detailed in Revelation. We start *Tapestry* with discussions of chapters 12, 13, and 14 because chapters 13 and 14 prophesy the most important and central events of the Seventieth Week and chapter 12 lays the groundwork for them. In particular, the revealing of the Antichrist, the event Christ tells us to watch for in the Olivet Discourse to tell we are in the end times, takes place in chapter 13.

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Book 1

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Introduction

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 in Book 1 deal with the Great Tribulation and a brief view of God's Judgments. Understanding these events, by weaving together the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, addresses the many questions of eschatology that have engaged scholars for centuries. Specifically, the revealing of the abomination of desolation, in the person and actions of the Antichrist, is the central event that Christ tells us to watch for in the Olivet Discourse.

Chapter 12 is written primarily from a heavenly perspective. It introduces the Woman crowned with stars who represents Israel and gives birth to Christ. In this chapter, Satan who is cast down proceeds to make war on the Woman. The Woman is protected, so Satan makes war on Christians instead. The events described here stretch from the midpoint of Daniel's Seventieth Week to its end.

In chapter 13, the Antichrist is revealed. His reign implements the persecution and killing of many millions of Christians in what is known as the Great Tribulation. The Antichrist also institutes a "voluntary" individual identifier known as the Mark of the Beast. That mark permanently claims the person who receives it, both physically and spiritually, for Satan by tying him irrevocably to the Antichrist. No one will be able to function economically in the world without the mark, so the pressure to take the mark will be severe. Not all who refuse to take the mark are Christians or Jews. There are others, and like Christians and Jews, they also will be persecuted and many put to death. The Great Tribulation and the Antichrist's rule start at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week and lasts 3 ½ years. This chapter, while covering the same timeframe as chapter 12, is seen primarily from an earthly perspective. It is, however, largely described in words and symbols more familiar in John's time than in our own.

In chapter 14 we read about the death of the 144,000 faithful and what happens to those who take the Mark of the Beast. The events of this chapter are written mostly from a Heavenly perspective and happen at specific points after the midpoint that will become clear as we proceed.

Chapter 12

Chapters 12 and 13 are perhaps the most central in Revelation to understanding the events of the second half of the Seventieth Week and the reasons behind God's Wrath. Chapter 12 introduces a lengthy (to 14:1) recapitulation, taking us back to before Christ's first coming and then bringing us forward to the place where we left off before the appearance of the mighty angel with the little scroll in chapter 10. Nearly all the events of these chapters are seen from the viewpoint of the earth. Chapter 12 starts with the appearance of a sign in heaven:

(Revelation 12) {1} 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. {2} She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

Three times John is shown a sign in heaven:¹ the woman; the Dragon, Satan who persecutes her; and the seven angels with the final plagues who will inflict final punishment on the earth for those who collaborated with the Dragon to persecute the offspring of the woman.

The woman is most likely Israel. Some have seen her as the Church, but her giving birth to the Messiah² (instead of the other way around) makes this impossible. Others (particularly Roman Catholics) have seen her as the Virgin Mary, though this also cannot be supported. It is true that Mary is Christ's mother, but the rest of the imagery associated with the woman does not fit. Believing Christians, called the "rest of her offspring", are not the children of Mary. Even if we were to take a Roman Catholic interpretation of this and see Catholics as spiritual children of Mary, the image still does not work, partially because it mixes literal and spiritual children, and partially because it would be very difficult to understand how the literal Mary would need to flee into the wilderness to a place of protection for her spiritual children. We will later see that some of these offspring may be believing Jews. If so, it is impossible to see the Jews as either spiritual or physical offspring of Mary.

The Roman Catholic desire to see Mary in this scripture is as poorly founded as some Protestant desires to see the Roman Church in the Whore of Babylon. The symbols given to John were symbols which made sense to him in his day, and both the image of Mary as queen of heaven and the Roman Church, garbed in cardinal red and seated on seven hills, are images of a later day.

¹ Revelation 12:1, 12:3, and 15:1.

² verse 5.

Though the sun, moon, and stars are repeatedly used to categorize the full natural panoply of heaven,³ they are equally used as signs of the end times.⁴ It is far more likely that the association here goes back to Joseph's dream.⁵ In that dream, the sun stood for Abraham, the moon for his wife Sarah, and the eleven stars for his eleven brothers.⁶ The victory wreath of twelve stars around her head are therefore the twelve patriarchs. Her clothing like the sun shows her righteousness, for Christ has told us "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."⁷ The position of the moon beneath her feet, and indeed the use of the sun, moon, and stars as part of her display, may indicate their position as inferior to hers, which hearkens back to Joseph's dream and shows the superiority of God's people to inanimate creation.

(Revelation 12) {3} Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. {4a} His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.

The Dragon is Satan. His appearance, red with ten horns and seven crowned heads, will be discussed in chapter 13 in connection with the beast from the sea. When he first appears, though his appearance is satanic, his habitation is yet heaven. Throughout scripture, Satan still has access to the throne room of God,⁸ and he makes use of that position to accuse believers of their sins before God. Satan started out as one of the Cherubim directly at the throne of God.⁹ Since stars are sometimes angels in Revelation,¹⁰ it is possible that Satan manages to drag one third of the angels down with him. Traditionally, it has been said that that fraction of the angelic host followed Satan in his rebellion. The one third echoes the several one-third judgments of chapters 8 and 9, particularly the fourth trumpet,¹¹ though exactly what that means is hard to say.

(Revelation 12) {4b} 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. {5} She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations

³ e.g. Deuteronomy 4:19, Psalm 148:3, Song of Solomon 6:10, Jeremiah 8:2, 1Corinthians 15:41.

⁴ e.g. Isaiah 13:10, Ezekiel 32:7, Joel 2:10, Matthew 24:29, Revelation 8:12.

⁵ Genesis 37:9.

⁶ Genesis 37:10.

⁷ Matthew 13:43.

⁸ Job 1:6, Zechariah 3:1, Revelation 12:10.

⁹ Ezekiel 28:16.

¹⁰ Revelation 1:20, probably 9:1.

¹¹ Revelation 8:12.

with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

The male child is Jesus. This is most clearly shown by the statement he will rule the nations with an iron scepter, symbolizing the strength and power of his rule. Four times¹² scripture tells us the Messiah will rule the nations of the earth with a firm hand, symbolized by a rod or scepter of iron¹³. The Messiah as ruler is emphasized in the famous passage about him in Isaiah:

(Isaiah 9) {6} For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. {7} Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

The child is snatched up in Christ's Resurrection. The same word is used of believers at the Rapture.¹⁴ Satan, of course, tried to devour Christ first through Herod killing the babies of Bethlehem,¹⁵ then through tempting him in the desert,¹⁶ and finally through Judas.¹⁷ Christ's resurrection defeated Satan at that time. Christ's return will defeat him first for the thousand years of the Millennium and then, after his final rebellion, for all time and eternity. Satan's killing Christ and Christ's victory over him both in the Resurrection and in his return fulfill the first prophecy about Christ in scripture, that given in the Garden of Eden:

(Genesis 3) {15} "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."

In this way, the woman in the heavens also looks back to Eve, for Christ is her offspring as well, both literally and as it fulfills this prophesy in Genesis. It is worth considering this verse a bit more closely. There are at least four individuals or groups in view here: the serpent (whom we know from verse 9 of this chapter is Satan), Eve, Satan's

¹² Psalm 2:9, Revelation 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15.

¹³ Iron is a symbol of discipline and power. This is no ornamental scepter.

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The Greek word "harpazo" means to seize or grab hold of and conveys the idea of taking something forcefully.

¹⁵ Matthew 2:16.

¹⁶ Matthew 4:1ff.

¹⁷ John 13:2.

offspring, and Eve's offspring. It is likely that Eve's offspring are both the specific (Christ) and the general (humanity). The church has always taken Christ as fulfilling the prophecy here that an offspring of Eve will crush the head of Satan but be wounded doing so.

Following that parallel, then, the "offspring" of Satan are probably also both general (those who are against God and his followers, or even against life itself, that is to say, participants in the world system in each generation) and specific (the Antichrist). Notice that the verse states that her offspring will crush *your* head (*not* your offspring's head). That is because the real contest across time is that between God (in the form of Christ) and Satan.

(Revelation 12) {6} 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 candidates for who the woman is (as mentioned above) are the literal Eve, the literal Mary, or Israel. It is very difficult to picture either Eve or Mary fleeing into the desert, but we know that Jerusalem will fall to the Antichrist at this time and that Christ warned the inhabitants of Judea (Luke 21:20) to flee to the mountains at this time. It therefore makes the most sense to see the woman as Israel and her children being Christ, believing Jews, and Christians.

The woman will be protected for three and a half years. There are five mentions in Revelation of a period of this length and as all five mentions refer to the same period of time, the woman fleeing into the wilderness coincides with the trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles.¹⁸ If the woman is Israel and if her being in exile coincides with Jerusalem being trampled, it is most reasonable to believe she is in exile *because* Jerusalem is occupied by the Gentiles. Keep in mind that when John was shown these visions, Jerusalem was under Roman domination and had been under one form or another of Gentile domination since 586 or 587 B.C. The prophecy was given about 25 years after the city and the temple were burned by the Romans. Thus, for this prophecy to be fulfilled, the Jews had to regain control of Jerusalem at some date future to John.

For this interpretation to be correct, there must be a gap of thousands of years between verses 5 and 6. This gap is precisely the same as the one between Daniel 9:26 and 27. It is also consistent with a gap in the applicability of Isaiah 9:6a. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders." The two halves of this verse apply to Christ's first and second coming, respectively, the same gap as in Daniel and Revelation.

The gap spans the Church Age of which the Old Testament is ignorant. If there is no gap, then it is impossible to find a satisfactory series of events to which this prophecy

¹⁸ Revelation 11:2.

applies. In any event, there must be a gap, for more than sixty years had already passed from the Resurrection to when John was shown these visions of events yet to come.

The woman flees the wrath of Satan into the desert where she will be protected from the power of Satan for the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Some have thought the place made ready for faithful Jews will be the city of Petra in the Jordanian desert, though there is little scriptural support for any specific location.

(Revelation 12) {7} And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. {8} But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. {9} 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.

The mention here of the war in heaven supports the idea that the third of the "stars" that the dragon sweeps down are the angels that follow him. There are, however, substantial problems with these verses. If the narration here is anything like linear, the time clearly appears to be after the Resurrection of Christ, and indeed at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week. How is that to be reconciled with Christ seeing Satan hurled down¹⁹ and Ezekiel²⁰ reporting he had already been thrown down?

Most likely, Satan's expulsion has two parts. First, he is removed from his position as one of the guardian Cherubim but remains as the accuser of the righteous, and finally he is cast out entirely to lead his final revolt against God as part of the end times. These verses show the difficulty in equating heavenly time with earthly.

In verse 9, the dragon and also the serpent of old (presumably the one in the Garden) is called Satan. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the serpent in the Garden called Satan. Readers of the Bible have to wait from the first book to the last for that to be clarified.

Revelation 12 {10} 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. {11} 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. {12} Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the

¹⁹ Luke 10:18.

²⁰ Ezekiel 28:16-17.

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."

This gives support to this final expulsion from heaven taking place at the time of the end. These verses set it at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week.

Revelation 12 {13} When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. {14} 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. {15} Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. {16} But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

It is very difficult to say what is meant by the two wings of a great eagle (though some have thought it might be some kind of airlift to help the inhabitants of Jerusalem escape the Antichrist). It is equally difficult to give a literal interpretation to the water spewed from Satan's mouth or the earth's swallowing the river. We do, however, have this flood referred to in Daniel in discussing the same period. In Daniel 9:26 Daniel says that "the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood." The water from Satan's mouth (at the same time as the capture of the city) and the mysterious flood of Daniel are likely the same thing, whatever that may be. There is a passage in Isaiah that may clarify what the flood means:²¹

(Isaiah 8) {6} Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, {7} therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the River -- the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks {8} and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!

²¹ Isaiah 8:6-8.

It seems likely, because of this comparison with Assyria, that it is the armies of the Antichrist that pursue the people of Jerusalem in vain.

It is worth pointing out that once before the Jews fled from those who would destroy them: the Egyptians in the time of Moses. And they were protected in the wilderness. Notice the parallels. The Jews flee from their oppressors and the land they control (Egypt under Pharaoh and Jerusalem under the Antichrist), they are pursued (Pharaoh and the dragon), and a natural-seeming event separates the Jews from their enemies (the Red Sea returning to its place and the earth swallowing the flood from the dragon's mouth). These parallels give us a view of how the woman's flight and the dragon's frustrated pursuit may play out: the Jews flee from a Jerusalem surrounded by armies and are pursued by the soldiers of the Antichrist. Some sort of "natural" phenomenon (such as an earthquake that opens crevasses) occurs to delay and divert the pursuers until the fleeing Jews can be carried to safety.

This parallel gives a good way of looking at how the events of the Last Days will play out from an earthly perspective. There are throughout history parallels, types, and other similar situations that show the effects on God's people and the earth of events of heavenly or eternal importance.

The time the woman will be taken care of is given as 1,260 days in verse 6 and a time, times, and half a time in verse 14. Throughout, the time period is 42 months of 30 days each. This has led some to refer to 30-day months as "prophetic months". Nowhere does scripture refer to such a thing, but the equivalence of 1,260 days with the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week would seem to support making Daniel's "week" equal to 2,520 days or 12x7 (84) 30-day months.²²

(Revelation 12) {17} Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Satan attempted to destroy Christ (the first mentioned of her offspring) and, having failed at that and now thrown down to the earth, he attempted to destroy those fleeing Jerusalem as it falls to the Antichrist. That fails as well so he goes after "the rest" of the woman's offspring. Who are these? It is likely, though by no means certain, that there are two groups in view here (as we will see with the 144,000 and the Great Multitude),²³ the first is believing Jews and the second Christians. If that interpretation is correct, those who "obey God's commandments" are the believing Jews and those who "hold to the testimony of Jesus" are Christians.

²² See the appendix on Daniel's Seventieth Week.

²³ See chapter 7 of Revelation.

Nowadays it is very common, especially to those who hold a Dispensationalist view, to see Jews and Christians as completely separate groups. And while there may be good reasons for seeing them as separate, scripture is not so clear-cut. First, even if we take a late date for the writing of Revelation, the Church was still substantially Jewish when it was written. If the earlier dates are considered, it was *primarily* Jewish. Second, the Seventieth Week of Daniel (like the other sixty-nine) are decreed for the Jewish people and for Jerusalem. The Jews are more in view in Revelation (and in the events of the Last Days) than is commonly held by Christians today.

If there are two groups here, Satan first goes after the Jews and then after the Christians. As with God's blessings, so with Satan's wrath: to the Jew first.

This action of Satan's starts the Great Tribulation which will result in the martyrdom of hundreds of millions of Jews and Christians and provoke the Wrath of God which will purify and reclaim the earth.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period 3 ½ Years	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6th seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7th seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7th trumpet
The beginning of the millennium	<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague
The end of the millennium The beginning of eternity	<p>1,000 Years</p> <p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p> <p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
Eternity	New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem	

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 is the center and the turning point of the entire book of Revelation. It reveals, both from a spiritual and an earthly perspective, the two beasts who together are the great enemies of Christ and his followers during the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week and charts much of their careers. Chapter 12 spoke of Satan turning from his pursuit of the woman clothed in stars to go after those who follow Christ. This chapter shows how that persecution begins and how it is carried out.

(Revelation 13) {1} And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

This chapter starts out with a problem: who is standing on the shore of the sea? There are well-attested alternate readings to this verse in Greek. The Textus Receptus reads "and I stood", some texts read as here, "and he stood" (referring back to the dragon in chapter 12), while yet others read "And here" without saying who is on the sand. Thus, in the NIV it is Satan standing on the shore; with the alternative readings it is John, the angel, or perhaps no one.

The sea monster, a symbol for one of the beast kingdoms, Egypt,²⁴ is here called Rahab.²⁵ It will be (or has been) crushed by God.²⁶ The sea monster has many heads (Psalm 74:13-14) and will be destroyed by God in the Last Days (Isaiah 27:1). The sea serpent is Leviathan (except where Leviathan seems to be a whale), so Rahab and Leviathan are both types of this Last-Days beast.

Three times it is made clear that earth and sea are in mortal peril. First, an angel with a loud voice stops the four angels who are to harm the earth and sea until God's servants can be sealed.²⁷ Then, the mighty angel who gave John the little scroll which began this sequence of visions took his stand on the land and on the sea.²⁸ Finally, when Satan is

²⁴ Isaiah 51:9-10.

²⁵ This is not the same word as the name of the harlot who helped the Israelites, though it is transliterated the same in English.

²⁶ Psalm 89:8-10. In Isaiah 30:7 Egypt is called Rahab.

²⁷ Revelation 7:2-3. What is about to happen now ends the hiatus announced there. First Satan will damage the earth and sea and then God will purge it with his plagues.

²⁸ Revelation 10:2. Note this angel can stand on both the sea and the land. The only way Satan can perform this feat is to stand on the seashore.

cast down, another loud voice in heaven says, “Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you!”²⁹

Many times in scripture creation is divided into two parts (heaven and earth, where “earth” means all that is not heaven)³⁰ or three parts³¹ (heaven, earth, and sea, where “earth” means dry land).

Two beasts now come forth, one from the sea and one from the earth³². Most likely, they come forth because Satan summons them. Their actions certainly establish that they are his minions. Note that they come from two of the three parts of creation and that Satan has just been cast down from the third.

Though never called any of these things, the beast from the sea is almost universally taken to be the “Antichrist”³³ spoken of in two of John’s letters,³⁴ the “ruler who will come” from Daniel 9,³⁵ and the “man of lawlessness” of 2 Thessalonians.³⁶ The symbols associated with him are among the most difficult to interpret in Revelation, since, as we shall see, they simultaneously stand for the man, his empire, and the empires throughout history which persecuted God’s people.

There are five monsters mentioned individually in Revelation:³⁷ the dragon and four “beasts”. The dragon, as we have seen,³⁸ is Satan³⁹, particularly in his role as the persecutor of Jews⁴⁰ and Christians⁴¹. The other beasts all resemble Satan in various ways, showing they are his creatures. They are the killer of the two witnesses,⁴² the pair from sea and earth,⁴³ and the mount of the Whore of Babylon⁴⁴. The beast from the

²⁹ Revelation 12:12. This woe comes both from the action of Satan (through the two beasts, one from the sea and one from earth), and from the actions of God (when his plagues fall on earth and sea). Note that this verse in chapter 12 supports reading verse 1 of this chapter as “and he (Satan) stood on the shore of the sea”).

³⁰ e.g. Genesis 14:19, Deuteronomy 3:24, 4:26, Joshua 2:11, 1 Samuel 2:10, 2 Chronicles 2:12, Ezra 5:11, Psalm 73:25, Matthew 11:25, Colossians 1:16.

³¹ e.g. Genesis 1:26, Exodus 20:11, Job 11:8-9, Psalm 96:11, 146:6, Acts 4:24, 14:15, Revelation 21:1.

³² Revelation 13:11

³³ See Glossary.

³⁴ 1 John 2:18, 2 John 1:7.

³⁵ Daniel 9:26.

³⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

³⁷ And a whole lot more creatures which look pretty monstrous but which are members of hordes of similar monsters.

³⁸ 12:3.

³⁹ Revelation 20:2.

⁴⁰ Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17.

⁴¹ Revelation 12:17.

⁴² Revelation 11:7.

⁴³ 13:1, 11.

⁴⁴ 17:3.

sea and the one who kills the two witnesses are the same. We will follow tradition and refer to him as the Antichrist. The Whore's mount in chapter 17 represents the Antichrist's empire rather than the man himself while the final beast is the False Prophet.

It should also be noted how similar are the descriptions of the Dragon and the Antichrist. They are similar enough that one might be tempted to equate them, but there are reasons to reject doing so, primary among them is that the dragon appears to summon the beast from the sea. The correct interpretation is probably to see the Antichrist as a counterfeit incarnation of Satan, a perverse imitation of Jesus as God Incarnate. When the Antichrist first appeared (as the first horseman at the first seal), he was only a man. Now, called forth by Satan⁴⁵ and given authority over the nations of the world (which authority is Satan's to give⁴⁶ and which he first offered to Christ⁴⁷), he is fully possessed by the Dragon, operating according to his will, especially when it comes to persecuting God's people. The first beast in chapter 13 and the mount of the Whore of Babylon in chapter 17 both so strongly resemble the Dragon because they do Satan's bidding.⁴⁸

(Revelation 13) {2} The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

Though the beast resembles Satan, he also resembles some of the beasts in Daniel chapter 7:

(Daniel)7 {2} Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. {3} Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. {4} "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 human being, and the mind of a human was given to it. {5} "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!' {6}

⁴⁵ Revelation 13:1.

⁴⁶ See Luke 4:6. Christ did not dispute Satan when he claimed the kingdoms of the earth were his to give to whom he pleases. The offer was real, though the consequences of taking it severe. The real Christ turned down the offer. Now, in chapter 13, we see one who accepts the offer, the fake Christ, the Antichrist.

⁴⁷ Matthew 4:1-11.

⁴⁸ For a more detailed description of the various beasts of Revelation, see the chapter "The Beasts of Revelation".

“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. {7} “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.”⁴⁹

The first three beasts, resembling respectively, a lion, a bear, and a leopard, represent (most likely) Babylon, the Medes and the Persians, and the Greeks⁵⁰, and the fourth is the final kingdom of the Antichrist. The beast from the sea, therefore “resembles” the Greek empire of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, has feet like Persia, and a mouth like Babylon.

Whatever else these similarities mean, they put this beast from the sea squarely among the beast kingdoms of the past and very similar in symbolic description to the final beast in Daniel, the beast of the last days.

(Revelation 13) {3} One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.

We are currently at the mid-point of the Seventieth Week.⁵¹ How are we to reconcile the fact that the Antichrist has been prominent on the world stage for three and a half years by now (at least since the signing of the seven-year treaty⁵²) and we are only now

⁴⁹ A thorough study of the connection between Daniel’s visions of the Seventieth Week and the events of Revelation would be very profitable but is beyond the scope of this book.

⁵⁰ Clearly this is the Greeks because Alexander’s empire was, at his death, divided into four kingdoms.

⁵¹ We know it is the midpoint of the Seventieth Week by a slightly circuitous argument: the fourth beast of Daniel and the first beast of Revelation 13 are the same. The fourth beast of Daniel is given power over Israel for three and a half years, as is the Antichrist. Those three and a half year periods are the same period. Therefore, the emergence of both beasts is at the start of that period. Since that period is the second half of the Seventieth week, the emergence of the two beasts takes place then. It is not that we see the men (the Antichrist and the False prophet) for the first time then. It is that they are revealed for what they are at that time.

⁵² Both Daniel (chapter 9) and Isaiah (chapter 28) speak of covenants or treaties that are apparently made with or include the leaders of Israel and that are broken. The one in Daniel clearly refers to the period we are discussing – it is made at the start of the Seventieth Week and in this chapter we are about to see it broken.

The one in Isaiah is far less certain, though if it does (at least in part) refer to the covenant with the Antichrist, it may explain why the Antichrist seems to operate in Jerusalem (where, for example, the two prophets are killed and the sacrifices are stopped), but we never see him taking it over. Regardless of the applicability of Isaiah’s “covenant of death”, it seems likely that the Antichrist has power over Jerusalem as a result of the covenant made at the start of the Seventieth Week. Alternatively, we may

seeing him emerge? There surely will be plenty of people at this time who suspect that this rapidly rising world leader is the prophesied Antichrist, though until now no one could be certain. At this point, three things happen in rapid succession that make it clear who this man is: he receives what appears to be a fatal wound, he recovers from it miraculously, and he takes his place in the temple of God, claiming to be God. The combination of those events will leave no doubt in the minds of anyone paying attention as to who he is.

Who gets this wound, what is it, and is it really fatal? Verse 3 states the wound is to one of the heads of the beast. If we are to take the Antichrist as one of those heads, it makes sense he is the one wounded. That would make the Beast from the sea both the Antichrist and anti-God rulers of similar kingdoms across the ages. This double use is employed in the mount of the Whore of Babylon so may be the most reasonable interpretation. This would mean that the “revealing” of the Antichrist – who, after all has been around at least 3½ years at this point – is symbolically shown here by having him identified as one of the heads of Antichrist *kingdoms* through the ages.

A careful reading of verse 3 makes it clear that it is the head of the *beast*, *not* the head of the *man* that the beast head represents, that receives what seems to be a fatal wound. It therefore could be any kind of wound of the Antichrist that appears to be fatal, not necessarily to his head. Verse 14 of this chapter indicates it comes from a sword. Nothing stops this from being literal, but scripture can use “sword” generally to mean violence. See, for example, Matthew 10:34-36 where Christ says he comes to bring a sword and then lists oppositions and fights that are unlikely to all involve the use of a sword.

Is the wound really fatal? Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 calls the miracles of the Antichrist “counterfeit” and the text in Revelation only says that he “seemed” to have had a fatal wound. Later, however, verse 12 refers to the wound as “fatal”. Whether or not the wound really is fatal and the healing real, the people of the earth will believe them to be.

We, as a society, no longer readily accept the miraculous, partially because science has adequately explained in non-miraculous fashion many things the ancients believed were the work of the gods. As a result, the healing of the death wound of the Antichrist will either be obviously miraculous (rather than merely not understood) or extraordinarily well faked. Whichever it is, the apparent “resurrection” of the Antichrist starts a new cycle of most people believing in the everyday presence of the supernatural.

see him taking over Jerusalem in verse 7 where it says he is given (by Satan) authority to make war on the saints and to conquer them. It is worth noting that we also do not see the Antichrist leave Jerusalem at the end of the 70th week – all we see are his armies arrayed against Jerusalem when Christ returns.

Neither the reason for nor the source of this wound is given, though some kind of assassination attempt seems probable. The wound and recovery seem to occur *before* the Antichrist takes his place in the temple, proclaims himself God, and demands worship.⁵³ Verse 3 says the “miraculous” healing causes people to follow him; verse 4 and following shows this turn to worship, probably indicating that the wound and recovery precede the self-proclamation of godhood and may form its basis, at least in the minds of many people.

Here we see the revealing of the Antichrist from both a heavenly and an earthly perspective. We see him in association with Satan and with the beast kingdoms of the past (the heavenly perspective, reflected in his many-headed form) and in the following verses we see the same thing from the perspective of earth.

In any event, after being “killed”, the Antichrist is “healed” by the power of Satan and thereafter is completely his creature. We see this symbolically in his appearance and close association with Satan. Second, in a direct attack on believing Jews, we see it more literally when he takes his place in the temple. At this point all speculation (at least among those paying attention) will end and the Antichrist will stand revealed. Until the “fatal” wound and the Abomination of Desolation we could not be certain the Seventieth Week had begun. This is the sign Christ told us to be on the lookout for.⁵⁴

(Revelation 13) {4} Men worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?" {5} The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. {6} He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. {7} 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.

Notice that they worship both the beast and the dragon. The beast because he was resurrected and Satan because he was the apparent agent of that resurrection. The Antichrist himself is worshipping Satan because as Satan said to Christ “all this (the kingdoms of the earth) I will give you ... if you will bow down and worship me.”⁵⁵ Christ resisted the temptation; the Antichrist does not.

⁵³ Verse 4 and following.

⁵⁴ Matthew 24:15.

⁵⁵ Matthew 4:9.

In verse 5 the beast is given a mouth to utter “proud words”. The word translated as “proud words” is μεγάλα – megála which literally means “great things”. They will certainly be “proud”, but it is also likely they will indicate power and authority and inspire the peoples of earth. Since people in general are repulsed by naked pride, but greatness attracts them, it is likely that the Antichrist is given the ability, by Satan, to say and do “great things”. This authority, his blaspheming God and slandering the holy ones, and his ability to conquer the saints and exercise authority over all the earth, is for a period of forty-two months. As discussed elsewhere, this is co-terminus with the other periods of equal length in Revelation and is the second half of the Seventieth Week of Daniel. It is unlikely that the Antichrist knows that his period of power is so limited, but Satan knows he has but a short time.⁵⁶

Comparing these verses with Daniel 7 shows that the fourth beast of Daniel and the beast from the sea are the same. Daniel 7:25 says the fourth beast will “speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people”, while this beast “opened his mouth to blaspheme God” and “was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them”. Elsewhere we are told that the Antichrist persecutes God’s people for three and a half years and the holy people will be delivered into his (the final beast in Daniel 7) hands for “a time, times, and half a time”.⁵⁷

It is worth noting that in verse 6 the Antichrist blasphemes against God’s dwelling place (the real temple in heaven) and that from Daniel and Matthew we know he desecrates the temple in Jerusalem, the shadow of the real temple.⁵⁸

Men worship the dragon (Satan) because he has given authority to the beast. In verse 7 we are told that authority is over every tribe, people, language, and nation. They belong to Satan and authority over them is his to give. It is likely, given the juxtaposition of these verses, that people will realize that the Antichrist now has power over the whole world and that there is something spiritual about the source of that power. Anyone paying attention will hear his blasphemies and know that his spiritual authority isn’t from God.

(Revelation 13) {8} All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. {9} He who has an ear, let him hear. {10} If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for

⁵⁶ Revelation 12:12.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Revelation 11.

⁵⁸ Hebrews 8:5a

patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

Those whose names have not been written in the book of life will worship him, but not those belonging to Christ.

Verse 10 is somewhat problematic because the NIV mangles the Greek in attempting to make an uncertain passage clearer. As translated here, verse 10 appears to suggest a kind of fatalism to those who follow Christ: if you are going to be killed, you will be. If you are going to be taken captive, you will be. Your job is to patiently endure whatever happens and keep the faith.

What the Greek really says, however, is “If anyone gathers (others) for captivity, into captivity he goes. “If anyone will kill with the sword, must he with the sword be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.”⁵⁹ So translated, this echoes Christ’s word in the garden: he who lives by the sword,⁶⁰ dies by the sword. It is not teaching fatalism, it is telling the saints not to fight back. In doing so, they demonstrate both their endurance – no doubt of the persecutions – but also their faith in Christ. The difference is subtle but important. It does not say we must endure because we can do nothing about it. It says we are to endure to show our faith. Either way it is translated, it is clear we are not to fight back, at least not militarily. We are not even supposed to think it through too thoroughly. As Christ says in Matthew 10:19: “But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time, you will be given what to say”.

Jeremiah has a strong parallel:

(Jeremiah 1) {1} Then the Lord said to me: ‘Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go. {2} And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’, tell them: this is what the Lord says: ‘Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; Those for captivity, to captivity.’ {3} ‘I will send four kinds of destroyers against them,’ declares the Lord. ‘the sword to kill and the dogs to drag away and the birds and the wild animals to devour and destroy.’

⁵⁹ The Textus Receptus has:

εἰτι Vaicμalwsiansunageieisaicμalwsianupageieiti Venμacairaapokteneideiautonenuca
cairaapoktanqhnaiwdeestinhupomonhkaih pisti Vtwnagiwn. As is often the case, the King
James gets it right: He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must
be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

⁶⁰ Matthew 26:52.

This echoes both the four horsemen of the apocalypse in chapter 6 (the Antichrist, the sword, famine, and plague), as well as the end of the armies of the Antichrist in chapter 19 where they are killed with the sword from Christ's mouth and their bodies devoured by the birds.

Paul also saw the rise of the Antichrist:

(2 Thessalonians 2) {1} Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, {2} 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. {3} Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. {4} He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. {5} Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? {6} And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. {7} For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. {8} 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. {9} 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, {10} 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. {11} For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie {12} and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

The tight linkage between Satan and the Antichrist (seen both literally and symbolically in chapter 13 of Revelation) is stressed by Paul as well. Verses 9-11 support the idea that the "miracles" surrounding the Antichrist are phony, though the word translated here as "counterfeit" really means "lying". Whether the signs and wonders are faked or not, they are for lying purposes by the father of lies.

(Revelation 13) {11} Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. {12} 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. {13} And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. {14} 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.

This second beast is generally called “the False Prophet”, though Revelation doesn’t call him this until chapter 19. This beast has horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. In other words, he has the appearance of someone benign (possibly even Christ-like) but he speaks like Satan, meaning his words are lies, meant to work evil.

The false prophet performs powerful signs, including calling fire down from heaven. Unlike with the case of the wound of the Antichrist, nothing here indicates that these actions are fake. It says he is given the power to do the signs, presumably by Satan, which would indicate the signs are real, though whether real or not, they are there to deceive people and lead them from God. These signs, like the “resurrection” of the Antichrist, cause people to follow him and, through him, the Antichrist and Satan. He then orders the people of earth to set up an image of the Antichrist. Given all the evil that will come of that image, it is worth pointing out that we, ourselves, will set up the image.

We will come back to the image and what it does in a moment, but first it is worth discussing the relationships among the dragon, the first beast, and the second beast. The traditional approach is to see here a counterfeit Trinity, with the dragon (Satan) in the place of the Father, the Antichrist in the place of Christ, and the False Prophet in the place of the Holy Spirit. Several things appear to support this interpretation. First, Satan, by demanding worship of the Antichrist and of mankind, attempts to put himself in the place of God. Ironically, he does this on earth just after being thrown down from heaven where he had tried to do that for real.

Second, the Antichrist is obviously a false “Christ”, the worst and last of those, prophesied by Christ himself.⁶¹ Finally, since prophets (at least legitimate ones) speak by

⁶¹ See, for example, Matthew 24:5.

the power of the Holy Spirit, it makes sense to therefore set the False Prophet as the false equivalent of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, Christ himself says that the Holy Spirit will testify about Christ. He also says that he must die before the Holy Spirit will come,⁶² and the False Prophet arises after the Antichrist “recovers” from his head wound.

So far, the parallels are solid, but there is another possibility: that the False Prophet has more the role of St. Peter after the resurrection than of the Holy Spirit. Christ told Peter to feed his sheep, which has been taken to mean he was to shepherd the church. Christ had previously told Peter “you are Peter. On this rock I will build my church”.⁶³ Without getting into what this means as far as Catholics and Protestants are concerned, Peter was the first head of the church. The False Prophet sets up the worship of the Antichrist. Peter has the authority from Christ to build his church; the False Prophet exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf (verse 12). Whatever one thinks of calling Peter the “Vicar of Christ”, this certainly is the vicar of the Antichrist. Peter is told to lead people to Christ; the False Prophet forces people to worship the Antichrist.

Whether the False Prophet is a parody of the Holy Spirit or of St. Peter, his powers – coming to him via the Antichrist but originating in Satan – will deceive those who are not God’s. They (and not the False Prophet himself) will construct the image of the beast and worship it. Man becomes the instrument of his own destruction and damnation. Even in the Last Days false idols are made by men and then worshiped by them.

What is this “image of the beast” and where is it set up? Revelation, written after the temple on earth was destroyed,⁶⁴ never mentions the earthly temple. In particular, Revelation does not say that the Antichrist takes his place in it. Nevertheless, we know from Daniel⁶⁵ that the Antichrist will set up “an abomination that causes desolation” in the temple. The best interpretation is that this abomination that causes desolation is

⁶² John 15:26.

⁶³ Matthew 16:18.

⁶⁴ There is some dispute over when Revelation was written, during the reign of Nero (54-68 AD) or around 95 AD during the reign – and persecutions – of Domitian being most likely. Both emperors are known to history as persecutors of Christians and many scholars think John wrote to, among other things, give hope in a period of persecution. The latter date is generally preferred by historians.

There are, however, problems tying events in Revelation to either date. At its simplest, 666 can be calculated from Nero’s name (Nero Caesar, translated into Hebrew and then gematria used to calculate its number). If that is the case, then 666 might be a coded way to refer to Nero as the persecutor. But if the book was written in the reign of Nero then the absence of the earthly temple becomes somewhat problematic since the earthly temple was in existence until destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

The later date lowers the likelihood that 666 refers to Nero though as late as the fifth century there were those who believed Nero lived on and would someday return (see, for example, Augustine’s City of God, XX:19:3).

⁶⁵ Daniel 9:27.

the image of the beast. If that image isn't the prophesied "abomination", it is hard to imagine what it would be.

It is possible that Ezekiel tells us exactly where the image is set up:

{Ezekiel 8:4-6} And there before me was the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the plain. {5} Then he said to me, "Son of man, look toward the north." So I looked, and in the entrance north of the gate of the altar I saw this idol of jealousy. {6} And he said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing--the utterly detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable."

Another possibility is mentioned in 1 Maccabees. Antiochus Epiphanes, successor to Alexander the Great and king of the Seleucid empire from 175 BC until 164 BC, is a type (see Glossary) of the Antichrist and carried out many (but not all) of the prophecies associated with the Antichrist. Greece, in the form of this empire, is one of the beast kingdoms of history. "Epiphanes" means "God made manifest". Maccabees says:

(1 Maccabees 1) {54} Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side.

1 Maccabees 1 uses the same language as Daniel and presumably took the setting up of the image of Zeus within the temple as the prophesied "abomination that causes desolation", or at least a type of it. All this together indicates what Revelation does not say: the image of the Antichrist will be set up somewhere in the Last Days temple.

(Revelation 13) {15} 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.

The False Prophet, in giving an inanimate object "breath", that is the appearance of life and the ability to speak, demonstrates what to John would have seemed miraculous. While it is possible that the animation of the image will actually *be* miraculous, it is at least equally likely that this is another case where what would have seemed miraculous to previous generations – inanimate objects showing human traits – is ordinary engineering in ours. Which of these is the case – electronic or miraculous – cannot be said with certainty. But the miraculous is certainly possible, given that people are already worshipping Satan (verse 4). As with the "fatal" wound, whether real or counterfeit, people will believe the speaking of the image to be miraculous.

Now we come to the Great Tribulation where innumerable Christians will be killed because they refuse to worship the beast.

(Revelation 13) {16} 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, {17} 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. {18} 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.

There is immediately a problem here: who is it that forces everyone to take a mark? The NIV translates ποιεῖ to mean “he forced”, but it just as well can be translated “it forced”. It therefore isn’t clear whether the False Prophet or the image does the forcing.

There are several things directly in view from verse 4 to here. The Antichrist is “miraculously” healed and receives authority, Satan and the Antichrist are worshipped, the Antichrist takes his place in the temple, an image of the beast is set up, people are forced to take the mark, and those who take it are damned. Most economically, these can all be seen as parts of the same thing – the establishment of Satan worship (whether direct or indirect through the worship of the Antichrist and of the image), the marking of those who so worship (as a parody of the seal of God), and the eternally fatal results of worshipping the beast and of taking the mark.

The mark of the beast appears 7 times in Revelation.⁶⁶ What it means has been debated from the beginning along with how the number of his (the beast’s) name is to be interpreted. We will discuss that in a moment, but let’s first look at the consequences of taking and of not taking the mark. The mark is on a person’s right hand or on his forehead.⁶⁷ While this is clearly meant to be taken literally, the main point is that the mark is impossible to hide. It is prominent. And it is required to either buy or sell.

Here is one of those places (there are many others) where prophecy in the Bible looks forward to a day very different from the times when the prophecy was written but manages to communicate both to the time when the prophecy was given and to future ages including, presumably, the time for which the prophecy was meant. The mark is needed to buy and sell. But this is a prophecy from a time when money was quite scarce and the primary means of exchange around the world was still barter. Under a barter system (or even under a physical monetary system) it is difficult to see how two people

⁶⁶ 13:16, 13:17, 14:9, 14:11, 16:2, 19:20, and 20:4.

⁶⁷ While most likely that the prominence of the position is the purpose of the right hand or forehead, it should be noted that while everyone has a forehead, not everyone has a right hand.

wanting to complete a transaction would be prevented from doing so simply because one of them didn't have a particular tattoo.

But when looked at from our day, were the mark tied in some way to a person's electronic financial accounts, not having such a mark could make financial transactions impossible. Further, a tattoo can be easily faked; an implanted chip, say, that connects to the financial system, is a much harder proposition but even that is not immune to counterfeiting.

It is very likely that the goods being sold, as well as the people doing the buying and selling, will be tracked. Businesses, exchanges, stores will find their abilities to conduct commerce without being a part of the Antichrist's system nearly impossible. Even if someone with the mark wishes to provide aid to those without it, this tracking and presumed accountability will make that next to impossible. In short, the only way to survive without the mark will be through an underground economy, raids on food stores, and similar resistance tactics. Nonetheless, there will be those who do not take the mark. Believing Christians and Jews certainly, but there will likely be others. Revelation makes distinction between those with the mark and those without the seal of Christ.⁶⁸

The NIV translation of verse 17 is again weak. The Greek says, "... having the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name", without, of course, there being any punctuation. It is therefore possible that there are three different categories of people given a mark, though what distinctions, if any, are intended are not at all clear. Whatever is meant, the person will be marked with the essence of the beast. Given the consequences of taking the mark, this seems true regardless of how one pictures the mark itself.

The meaning of the number of the name and how one is to calculate the number is another matter. Entire forests have been felled to print books purporting to tell us who the Antichrist is from the way the letters of his name are turned into numbers. It may surprise the reader to know, but the authors have no more idea than anyone else what this calculation means.

Another problem with 666 is that it may not be the original reading. It certainly isn't the reading in the oldest manuscript extant today. Papyrus 115 from Oxyrhynchus in middle

⁶⁸ Compare Revelation 16:1-2 where those with the mark of the beast break out in boils with Revelation 9:4 where the scorpions afflict those without the seal of God. Since both of these take place during the Great Tribulation, it is likely the distinction is intentional. Further, Zechariah 14:16 (clearly speaking of the time when Christ returns) says that "Then all the survivors from the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles". It seems inconceivable that there would be those in the Antichrist's army that do not have the mark, but apparently there will be. But it is even more unlikely that there will be believing Christians or Jews fighting against Christ there.

Egypt, dated to between 225 and 275 AD very clearly has the number as 616 as do other early manuscripts. Papyrus 115 is extremely fragmentary, and some have hypothesized that the word “or” that appears before the number was meant to indicate (there is a hole in the manuscript here) “666 or 616”. Jerome was aware of the two readings and corrected the most common Latin bible of his day from 616 to 666 when creating the Vulgate.

Some (particularly Preterists who set both the events and writing of Revelation to the reign of Nero) see the emperor Nero in the numbers. There exists an Aramaic scroll from Wadi Murabba’at dated to early in Nero’s reign that refers to Nero by name and title: Nero Caesar. The Greek version of the name and title transliterates into Hebrew as Nron Qsr which, using gematria, calculates to 666. Curiously, the Latin version of the same name and title transliterate into Hebrew as Nro Qsr, which tallies to 616. The problem with either is that his name wasn’t “Nero Caesar”. It was “Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus” which doesn’t calculate out nearly so well.⁶⁹

Perhaps after the Antichrist is revealed the method of calculating 666 from his name will make sense, but until then attempts are probably futile. But other things regarding the mark remain to be investigated. The word used for mark is χάραγμα. The term was primarily used for imprinting coins or sealing documents but was also used for an imperial seal. While coins stamped with the emperor’s image were common and while some transactions might not have been possible without using properly stamped coinage, seeing in the mark of the beast as merely the image of the emperor on a coin is spurious for the obvious reason that neither forehead nor hand are in view in coinage.

Far more persuasive is the use of the word χάραγμα for an imperial seal. Those who take the mark are “sealed” by Satan as a parody of the way Christians are sealed by God. The 144,000 are sealed by angels with the seal of the living God in Revelation 7:2-4, a sealing for glory. Here we see the sealing by the minister of the Antichrist (and, through him, of Satan) of beast worshippers for their destruction. The most important thing about the mark, therefore, is not that it is necessary for commerce; it is that taking it leads to damnation.

There is a sin that leads to death, according to John.⁷⁰ In the case of Ananias and Sapphira⁷¹ the death was physical, the result of testing the Spirit. Whether their death was also eternal is not stated in scripture.

⁶⁹ For those who believe the events of Revelation were fulfilled in the first century, a question: If the readers of Revelation were supposed to determine that Nero or someone else was meant, shouldn’t we be able to perform the calculation? It seems far more likely that it applies to someone unknown to John or his first century readers.

⁷⁰ 1 John 5:16.

⁷¹ Acts 5:1-10.

In Matthew 12:32 Christ says that “anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” These two cases – lying to the Spirit and blasphemy against the Spirit are the only mentions of unforgivable sins except for the one before us, that is, taking the mark of the beast. Revelation 14:9-11 says that anyone who takes the mark will be damned.

Putting all this together, the mark is a seal of a soul for Satan. It cannot be taken accidentally or without knowing the consequences (see chapter 14). The taking of it likely constitutes blasphemy against the Spirit since it is, like that blasphemy, an unforgivable sin. While the mark will be physical and tied to the ability to conduct commerce, it will also be an outward manifestation of an inward condition.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>The 144,000 sealed Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months, the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6 seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7 seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p><u>Flee to the mountains</u></p> <p><u>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</u></p> <p><u>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</u></p> <p><u>The 3rd angel - Judgment</u></p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7 th trumpet
The beginning of the millennium	<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	The gathering for Armageddon The 7 th Plague
The end of the millennium	<p>1,000 Years</p> <p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
The beginning of eternity	<p>Eternity</p> <p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 continues the narrative from the end of Chapter 13. We are still during the period of the Great Tribulation. The exact timeline of events within this chapter are difficult to establish. The order of events is not that difficult since the events of this chapter are presented as a continuous sequence. Exactly when they take place within the last half of the Seventieth Week, however, is more difficult.

(Revelation 14) {1} Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. {2} And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. {3} And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. {4} These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. {5} No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

These are almost certainly the same 144,000 which were sealed in chapter 7. Their seal is Christ's name and his father's name on their foreheads. The plain reading is that they are virgins or celibate, though it is possible this means they did not prostitute themselves to the False Prophet's religion.

The 144,000 are with Christ, standing on Mount Zion. At issue is whether this is the earthly or the heavenly Mount Zion. There are three alternative interpretations: 1) they are on earth and it is before Christ's return, 2) they are on earth and it is after Christ's return, or 3) they are on the heavenly Mount Zion.

The first is impossible. If they are on the earthly Mount Zion and they are with Christ, it cannot be before his return. The second, though possible, is unlikely. First, if this is on earth, this is the first appearance of Christ on earth, and we know both from Zechariah⁷² and from Acts,⁷³ that Christ will first appear on earth on the Mount of Olives.ⁱ This could

⁷² Zechariah 14:4.

⁷³ Acts 1:10-12.

be after that, of course, but since this would then be the first appearance of Christ on earth in Revelation, such an interpretation does great violence to the timeline.

By far the most likely interpretation, given the songs which follow and the statement the 144,000 are “purchased from among men”,⁷⁴ is that they are in heaven. Hebrews⁷⁵ tells us the real Mount Zion is in heaven, and the association of earthly and heavenly things is very strong in Revelation, particularly with respect to the temple. The earthly Mount Zion, where the temple was located on earth, is but a shadow of the real Mount Zion which is in heaven. The heavenly Mount Zion is the site of God’s throne room. That passage in Hebrews possibly provides additional support that this is the heavenly Mount Zion: Hebrews tells us that those who have come to the heavenly Mount Zion have come to the “church of the firstborn” and Revelation calls the 144,000 the firstfruits to God.⁷⁶

Consistent with this interpretation is the next thing the 144,000 do - sing a new song before the throne. Since there is no indication of movement or change between their first appearing in this chapter and when they sing, their appearing must therefore also be in heaven.

They are firstfruits, which is consistent with the palm branches⁷⁷ carried by the great multitude previously seen just after the 144,000 were originally introduced. Jeremiah calls Israel the firstfruits of God:

(Jeremiah 2) {1} The word of the LORD came to me: {2} "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. {3} Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them," declares the LORD.

Interestingly, in Jeremiah Israel is following the Father. In Revelation the 144,000 are following Christ. This, at least peripherally, supports Christ being God and the 144,000 being Jews.

If, as seems likely, they are dead, it means the 144,000 have been martyred by the Antichrist. Note that all of them are with Christ, none has been lost. All who are sealed in Christ stay that way.

⁷⁴ verse 4.

⁷⁵ Hebrews 12:22.

⁷⁶ Revelation 14:4.

⁷⁷ See Leviticus 23:40.

It is probable that the 144,000 are the *first* to fall to the Antichrist. After falling to earth, Satan starts out attacking Israel and only after that fails does he go after Christians.⁷⁸ Calling them “firstfruits” would support this and would put the timeline at just after the Antichrist takes over Jerusalem shortly after the midpoint in the seven-year period. Whether or not they are the “firstfruits” of those killed by the Antichrist, they can be seen as the firstfruits of redeemed Israel. The rest of Israel will not be fully redeemed until Christ’s return.⁷⁹

So how might this look to those living on the earth? As is often the case, things look very different when seen from an earthly versus a heavenly perspective. Here, we see the 144,000 in glory, standing with their lord. But on earth they are dead, victims of the Antichrist’s first persecutions, likely taking place as or shortly after he gains control of Jerusalem. What looks like a victory for evil on earth is an introduction into glory in heaven.

One further thing should be said about the 144,000. Some have said they are missionaries preaching to the people of the last days. This interpretation is of course possible, but it is highly unlikely. As discussed above, the most logical explanation of who the 144,000 are in this chapter is dead believers in Christ. Since it is likely that this scene in heaven takes place shortly after the midpoint of the tribulation, they are no longer on earth during the period where missionaries would be most needed.

(Revelation 14) {6} 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. {7} 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."

Three angels now appear, flying in mid-air and issuing God’s final warnings to mankind. This echoes the three Woes⁸⁰ announced by a flying eagle. This chapter fits in chronologically with 13, covering the time from the conquest of Jerusalem by the Antichrist to the start of the plagues. But where each of the three angels fits into the timeline is the difficulty mentioned above. What follows is, to the best of the authors’ abilities, what appears to be the most consistent, though it is by no means the only possible interpretation.

⁷⁸ Revelation 12:13-17.

⁷⁹ Zechariah 12:10.

⁸⁰ Revelation 8:13.

The proclamation of the Gospel to all nations is a necessary precursor to Christ's return.⁸¹ This angel's proclamation of the Gospel ensures that Christ's prophecy is fulfilled and would make little sense if repentance and turning toward God were not still possible. This consideration helps set the time of the proclamation as just before or immediately after the institution of the mark of the beast, which is itself just past the mid-point of the Seventieth Week. We are at the start of the Great Tribulation where all who fail to take the mark will be persecuted by the Beast and False Prophet, and many will be killed. The phrase "the hour of his judgment has come" is therefore annunciatory.⁸² What is current is the start of the final persecution that will usher in God's judgment. This interpretation (that all three angels speak at the start of the Great Tribulation and that their proclamations are annunciatory) provides a consistent (if still uncertain) interpretation of the timing.

John calls the first messenger "another" angel to distinguish him both from the "mighty angel" whose little scroll introduced this series of visions and from all the other angels in previous chapters. The appearance of the 144,000 and the messages of the three angels refer to the four religions of the last days: Judaism, Christianity, the Satan worship of the Antichrist and the False prophet,⁸³ and the secular-religious prostitution associated with the Whore of Babylon.⁸⁴

The first angel calls on all to worship God, the creator of the universe. In distinguishing God from the gods of the nations, the Israelites were always careful to state they worshiped the creator God. At this occurrence, creation is represented by a four-fold division of heavens, earth, sea, and fresh water. Note that, except for the heavens coming first instead of last, these are exactly the victims of the first four trumpets in chapter 8 and the first four plagues in chapter 16 and is doubtless meant to show that all of creation is involved in the trumpets and plagues and that, ultimately, they all belong to God.

**(Revelation 14) {8} A second angel followed and said,
"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the
nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."**

This proclamation of the collapse of the religious and political system surrounding the Whore of Babylon is what makes the timeline of this chapter difficult. If it is a statement of current or recently past events, then it must take place at the end of the Great Tribulation, just before Christ's return. If, on the other hand, it is annunciatory, then

⁸¹ Matthew 24:14.

⁸² It is worth noting that the proclamation of the three woes (though not the woes themselves) were also annunciatory.

⁸³ Revelation 13:15.

⁸⁴ See chapters 17 and 18.

placing it near the start of the Great Tribulation makes it the same kind of statement as the first angel's proclamation of the hour of God's judgment. Making this annunciatory seems, to the authors, the more reasonable interpretation. We choose to put it near the start of the Great Tribulation for another reason as well. The identical proclamation of chapter 18⁸⁵ is clearly announcing something about to happen (but not yet happening) because after that announcement another voice from heaven⁸⁶ calls on believers to come out of Babylon to escape her judgment which must therefore still be future.

This current verse is the first mention of Babylon in Revelation. When we get to chapter 17, we will discuss the Whore in greater detail, but for now it is sufficient to point out that the prevalence of prostitution as a symbol of false religion throughout the Bible makes it highly probable a false religion is in view whenever the Whore is mentioned.

Isaiah saw much the same thing:

Isaiah 21 {9} Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: 'Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!'

Note that the system that is Babylon will fall, but there is here no mention of those people who are within it. This is in direct contrast to the third angel's message, where the eternal damnation of those who take the mark is promised. The reason for this will be seen in chapter 18: some of God's people are within that system, and they will be called out to salvation.⁸⁷

(Revelation 14) {9} 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, {10} 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. {11} 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."

This pronouncement by the third angel is almost certainly annunciatory, supporting the idea that the second is as well. As mentioned above, the third religion in Revelation is Beast/Satan worship. It is probably instructive that the parallel verse in Isaiah says that

⁸⁵ Revelation 18:2.

⁸⁶ Revelation 18:4.

⁸⁷ Revelation 18:4.

in the fall of Babylon, all the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground and this angel immediately thereafter speaks of the image of the false “god” whose worship is commanded by the False Prophet.

Here it is made clear that those who worship⁸⁸ the beast will both receive the full brunt of God’s fury on earth and will be punished eternally in the Lake of Fire. Note that the smoke of the destruction of the Whore goes up forever after her destruction,⁸⁹ and the smoke of the torment of those who worship the beast does as well. This is the fate of everything that stands ultimately in opposition to God. It is worth noting that scripture says the “smoke” of the destruction of the Whore and the “torment” of those who worship the beast. The Whore, not being a person, is destroyed while the beast worshippers continue to exist.

It also is important to note that those who take the mark “will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath”. The Wrath of God takes place from the start of the persecutions until Christ’s return, intensifying with the passage of time and culminating in the bowl (plague) judgments of chapter 16. The fury of God is the bowl judgments which are included within the Wrath.

Whether or not the second and third angels’ proclamations are annunciatory (and therefore at or just before the establishment of the mark of the beast) or are statements of events as they happen, they are in the correct time order. Babylon falls first and then, at the Last Judgment, those with the mark are cast into the Lake of Fire.

John sees three angels making these proclamations, but it is not clear what the inhabitants of earth see. There are three proclamations made in quick succession: the preaching of the Gospel in all the earth, the proclamation of the fall of Babylon, and the warning not to take the mark. It is, of course, possible that the inhabitants of the earth will see the angels, but more likely is that the first and third proclamations at least will be made by God’s people on earth and possibly by the two witnesses⁹⁰ (who will also be calling down the trumpet judgments). This is the last moment for salvation for many people. While those who do not take the mark (and survive not doing so) are able to accept Christ while they live, those who take the mark and worship the image of the beast are lost.

Several times in scripture we are told to watch for the revealing of the Antichrist. That revealing will be when he recovers from a would-be death wound and takes his stand in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Before that (particularly when the seven-year treaty is made), many will strongly suspect that the world leader rising so rapidly is

⁸⁸ Or give homage to.

⁸⁹ Revelation 19:3.

⁹⁰ See chapter 11,

the Antichrist, but not until he is directly revealed will those watching know for sure. That certainly will prompt those who follow Christ to proclaim the gospel afresh and to warn their neighbors of the coming mark and the consequences of taking it.⁹¹

While the first and third proclamations are likely carried out on earth by Christians, the second proclamation is very different. The prostitute of Babylon has two linked meanings in the last days – the false religion of final Antichrist kingdom and, represented for the eighth time by that kingdom, the whole anti-God satanic system of beast kingdoms through the ages and their associated anti-God “religions”. The period of the trumpets and, most especially, the period of the plagues brings about the ultimate⁹² destruction of the beast system as well as its manifestation in the Seventieth Week.

What will be seen on earth of the fall of Babylon? Most likely, as with other judgments of God, the destruction of Babylon will proceed in stages. Once he has ultimate power (at the middle of the Seventieth Week), the Antichrist will have no further need for support from the pagan world system – he is the only god he needs, and all political power is now his. It seems likely he will turn on the system that brought him to power, possibly to use its resources at the last battle. The trumpets and then the final plagues complete the destruction that, perhaps, he initiates.

In the third announcement come two verses, 10 and 11, that are among the most difficult verses in the Bible. They are not difficult so much because they point to eternal damnation, which is hard enough, but because they specifically state that those who take the mark are tortured,⁹³ and, even harder, in the presence of Christ and his angels. Our age is not fond of retribution - that sins unrepented carry eternal penalties.

Isaiah does have a prophecy concerning the fate of Edom which speaks of a destruction that occurs in a finite time but from which the smoke rises forever:

(Isaiah 34) {8} For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause. {9} Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! {10} It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever. From

⁹¹ Some have said that believing in a post-tribulation Rapture means that we are not watching for Christ's return but for the appearance of the Antichrist. That, of course, is exactly correct. By no less an authority than Christ himself we are told to watch for the Antichrist to be sure the time has come: Matthew 24:15.

⁹² Ultimate except for the brief rebellion at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-10).

⁹³ “basanizo” carries with it not only the idea of torment but of torture. It also carries the implication of testing, since the root word means a touchstone. It might be possible, therefore, to take the smoke as eternal but not the torment, or to take the torment as having some purpose other than retribution, but it seems safer to take the scripture at its literal meaning.

generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.

This prophecy is discussed in greater detail in chapter 19. It is more likely that the parallel is between Edom and the Whore, rather than between Edom and those who take the mark, since like the Whore, Edom is not a person.

Using the root meaning of testing for “basanizo” is pretty thin stuff to try to show that anything other than eternal punishment is meant here. Like it or not, these verses warn of a literal eternal punishment for those who take the mark.

Perhaps placing this angelic proclamation around the time of the establishment of beast worship and assuming that, as is the case with the angel proclaiming the fall of Babylon, what is seen in heaven is acted out on earth,⁹⁴ means that it will be made very clear beforehand what the consequences of taking the mark are. In any event, because of this angel’s work (or of Christians playing out the angel’s proclamation on earth), there will be a universal knowledge of the consequences of taking the mark.

(Revelation 14) {12} This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. {13} Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

Why does saying that those who take the mark will be eternally punished call for patient endurance on the part of the saints? It isn’t the warning that needs enduring – it is the consequences of not taking the mark, which for very many will be martyrdom. This echoes Peter’s words:⁹⁵

But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, it is commendable before God.

Those who die in the persecutions of the Antichrist will then be forever out of the reach of evil, and of the horrors of the Wrath of God which are coming onto the earth.

Chapter 13 had almost the same statement applied at the same time – the time of the Antichrist’s rule:

(Revelation 13:10b) This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people.

⁹⁴ Revelation 18:1.

⁹⁵ 1 Peter 2:20b.

This earlier verse makes it clearer that the “patient endurance” is of the persecutions and depredations of the Antichrist. This, and the words “from now on” help set the current proclamation at the start, not the end of the Great Tribulation.

The chapter that started with the appearance with Christ of the 144,000 Jews (also killed by the Antichrist) now refers to the other set of Christ’s followers, Christian gentile believers. Three times the two groups are referred to distinctly but linked together in Revelation: the two sets of descendants of the woman clothed in stars (chapter 12),⁹⁶ and the 144,000 and the Great Multitude (both here and in Revelation 7). These two groups may also be in view in the “other sheep that are not of this sheep fold (John 10:16).

Some have taken verse 13 to read “Blessed from now on (that is, the moment of their deaths) are those who die in the Lord.” While it is certainly true that those who die in the Lord at any time and in any age are blessed, this reading is spurious. It is far more likely that both the escape from further horrors and the special blessings and rewards which accompany martyrdom are in view. Those who die from now on will primarily die martyrs from the persecutions of the beast. They are especially blessed.

We now come to the beginnings of the Wrath of God. Mentioning it immediately after the deaths of the martyrs under the Antichrist are alluded to is appropriate since the proximate reason for the Wrath of God is retribution for the martyrdoms of all the saints (as was promised to the martyred souls under the altar).⁹⁷ The persecutions of the Great Tribulation fill up of their number.

(Revelation 14) {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.

There are two possibilities for who this individual is: Christ or an angel. We will analyze this in more detail after we review the verses that follow.

(Revelation 14) {15} 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." {16} So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. {17} Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he

⁹⁶ where, however, it may be that the division here is between Christ himself and his followers, rather than between Jewish and gentile believers.

⁹⁷ Revelation 6:9-11.

too had a sharp sickle. {18} 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." {19} The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.

Showing us when all this takes place is a parallel scripture from Joel where there are also sickles swung and grapes gathered in a setting clearly tying them to the Wrath of God and the end of the age:

(Joel 3) {12} 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. {13} 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! {14} Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. {15} The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. {16} 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. {17} 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.

There are four individuals in the verses from Revelation, in roughly parallel pairs. The first pair comprise the one like a son of man with a sickle and the angel from the temple giving orders, while the second pair is the angel who comes from the temple carrying a sickle and the angel from the altar giving orders.

Three of the four are clearly angels. The use of the term "like a son of man" makes the identity of the first one less certain. The messianic use of the term Son of Man,⁹⁸ which Christ used many times to describe himself⁹⁸ has its origin in Daniel, where Daniel saw Christ at his Second Coming:

(Daniel 7) {13} In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and

⁹⁸ e.g. Matthew 8:30, 16:13, Mark 9:12, Luke 12:8.

was led into his presence. (14) He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

The use of this term is suggestive that the first harvester is Christ because of these messianic associations. But many times in scripture the term is also used to refer either to a man or to one who looks like a man.⁹⁹ We therefore cannot say from immediate context whether Christ is meant. In a moment, however, we will cite a verse that makes it definitive that it is an angel.

Exactly what is happening here and how it is manifested on earth are somewhat difficult to determine. The groupings of the individuals into two sets makes it seem there are two separate harvestings. There are several scriptures worth comparing with this one. The first comes from Matthew chapter 13. That chapter has several parables dealing with planting and harvesting and the end of the age. In the parable of the weeds and wheat, the owner of the farm tells his workers not to pull up the weeds as they are sprouting, lest the wheat also be destroyed.

(Matthew 13) {37} "Let them 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." He (Christ) answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. {38} 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, {39} and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. {40} As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. {41} 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. {42} They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth..."

Note that in verse 41 Christ says the harvesters are angels. This seems a solid reason to believe the one like a son of man in Revelation is not Christ but an angel.

At first glance there appear to be two harvestings here in Matthew as well, first of the tares and then of the wheat. But on closer reading that interpretation falls apart. This

⁹⁹ Job 25:6, Psalms 8:4, Psalms 144:3, Psalms 146:3, Isaiah 51:12, for example.

scripture, like all parables, is extremely compact and a lot is covered in a few words. Note that the harvest (singular) is “the end of the age”. All the events of the last half of the Seventieth Week and after are covered by the word “harvest”. A few verses on in Matthew comes the parable of the net:

(Matthew 13) {47} “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. {48} When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. {49} This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous {50} and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth...”

Here the good fish are collected and separated and then the bad are thrown by the angels into the fire. Since they are mentioned in both orders, it seems best to interpret this as a single catch and the previous Matthew parable as a single harvest with no specified order to what happens to the righteous and the wicked. Further, since the wicked end up in the fire, all this seems to point more to the Last Judgment than to events during the Great Tribulation.

Another possible interpretation of Revelation 14:15-19 is that the first harvest, carried out by Christ, is the Rapture while the second is the harvest of the evil to wrath. If the Rapture occurs in Revelation, this the first place it could occur.¹⁰⁰ Christ, in the Olivet Discourse, says:

(Matthew 24) {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.

The gathering of the elect in Matthew seems almost certainly to refer to the Rapture, but it is unlikely that the Rapture is in view in these scriptures in Revelation. Both references to a harvest refer to harvests of the earth, and neither are for eternal punishment or reward – that comes later at the Last Judgment and its associated events. It is clear what happens on earth in the case of the second harvest. It is the start of the bowl (plague) judgments. But what is the first harvest? It seems likely that it is, in

¹⁰⁰ Those who see a pre-Wrath or a mid-Tribulation Rapture of the Church find support in these verses.

some way, a “harvest” of the righteous (and therefore a contrast with the harvesting to wrath). There are two possibilities that immediately come to mind from other places in Revelation. The first is that it is the removal (through martyrdom) of the Great Multitude. When they first appeared in Revelation chapter 7, the Great Multitude were in association with the 144,000, though at that point the 144,000 were alive and being sealed with the seal of Christ, while the Great Multitude was already dead. That death has already been referred to in this current chapter (Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on).

The clue to solving this apparent conflict of timing of events between the these two may lie in another verse in Revelation, Revelation 18:4:

Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues”.

If the second harvest in chapter 14 is the plague judgments that are about to hit the earth, then this would appear to be the calling out of the those who are God’s from the Babylon system. It is true that the first harvest refers to “the earth”, but so does the second. The plagues are aimed at Babylon (see Revelation 18:4) but hit the entire earth.

There are two things that take place between the institution of the mark and the destruction of Babylon: the death of the Great Multitude during the persecutions of the Antichrist and the calling of believers out of Babylon. It seems most likely that the first harvest, carried out by the one like a Son of Man, refers to one of these. Either are appropriate for the placement in the timeline. There are several problems, however, with equating the first harvest with either of them. If it doesn’t refer to the actual deaths of believers during the persecutions (mentioned as about to begin by the voice from heaven in verse 13), then the taking place of those deaths, the proximate cause of the Wrath of God and particularly of his fury, isn’t seen in this chapter. On the one hand, if it does refer to them, it must be admitted that that looks a great deal more like a harvest than a calling out of Babylon does. On the other hand, it means that the angel, operating on orders from the throne of God, is responsible for their deaths and not the Antichrist.

The other alternative, that it is the call out of Babylon¹⁰¹, fits the timeline well, but does not look much like a harvest if all that happens is that they flee as those are warned to flee in Matthew 24.¹⁰² There is a possible, though still problematic solution: the calling out of Babylon and the deaths of the Great Multitude are the same thing. We have

¹⁰¹ It is possible, though unlikely, that Revelation 18:4 is not a warning to believers of the last days, but to believers of all ages.

¹⁰² Matthew 24:16ff.

already been told by the voice from heaven that those who die in the Lord during these persecutions are blessed and that they will rest from their labors.

Isaiah 57 starts with two relevant verses:

(Isaiah 57) {1} The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart; the devout are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. {2} Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

This parallels the text in Revelation 18:4: There, believers are called out “so that you will not receive any of her plagues”. Putting these verses from Isaiah with Revelation 18:4 and the current verses, it may be that those who die in the great persecution are, from a heavenly perspective, “taken away” to be spared from evil, even though from an earthly perspective they are killed. If the righteous and the devout are killed to save them from evil, might not the call out of Babylon be same? Certainly the killing of the Great Multitude looks more like a harvest and continues the parallelism of first the 144,000 Jews and then a great multitude of believers of all nations that started in chapter 7.

Further, perhaps, hinting at this equivalence is that though Babylon is the direct target of the Wrath of God, verse 18, the second harvest and the grapes of wrath, refers to the entire earth. If the plagues of Babylon hit the entire earth, where can the believers go to escape them if not out of the earth entirely?

All of the above interpretations are certainly problematic, but the scripture in Isaiah makes it clear that the death of believers can be an act of God for their own good (whatever the actual mechanism of it taking place), as does Psalm 116:15: precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants.

With the action of the angels in verses 17-19, we are on more solid ground. The angel in verse 18 comes from the altar to announce the harvest of the evil. In Revelation chapter 6 the fifth seal¹⁰³ the souls of the martyrs were under the altar and were told to wait a little while until the number of the martyrs should be filled up and then their deaths would be avenged. With the first harvest we see the number of the blessed martyrs completed. With the second, we see the retribution ordered. The next verses announce the promised retribution. The events of this harvest of the evil will occupy the next few chapters of Revelation. Revelation designates this period “the fury of God”,¹⁰⁴ or “the fury of the wrath of God”.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Revelation 6:9-11.

¹⁰⁴ e.g. Revelation 14:10. At this point in the narrative “thumos”, here translated “fury”, replaces “orgay” (anger) as the primary descriptor of the period.

¹⁰⁵ Revelation 16:19, 19:15.

Since the Wrath of God is retribution for the blood of the martyrs,¹⁰⁶ and since we know it won't start until their full number has been completed,¹⁰⁷ it seems likely that the seven years of the Seventieth Week are now ended. Daniel¹⁰⁸ indicates that the establishment of the abomination of desolation takes place in the middle of the Seventieth Week. The Antichrist must be in charge for this to take place, giving us the latest possible start for his reign. Both Daniel¹⁰⁹ and John¹¹⁰ say that the persecution of God's people by the Antichrist will last for 3 1/2 yearsⁱⁱⁱ and John indicates¹¹¹ that that persecution is coterminous with his reign. Since the persecutions have ended, it therefore seems likely that, effectively, so has his reign. We are now caught up with where we were when the seventh trumpet sounded and "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."¹¹²

We are therefore at the end of the 1260 days of the Antichrist's reign and about to start the period of the final plagues. Daniel said the final distress would last 1,290 days,¹¹³ so it is possible that within the extra month are the plagues. The rapidity with which they are administered supports the idea that they happen over a short period of time. Since they are, unlike previously in Revelation, complete rather than partial judgments, were they to continue for long, it is likely no flesh would survive.¹¹⁴

(Revelation 14) {20} 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.

These verses echo several similar scriptures throughout the Old Testament. Isaiah, speaking of the conquests of the king of Assyria (one of the beast kingdoms – see chapter 17) says in a passage we have cited before:¹¹⁵

(Isaiah 8) {6} Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, {7} therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the River -- the

¹⁰⁶ Revelation 6:10.

¹⁰⁷ Revelation 6:11.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel 9:27.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel 7:25.

¹¹⁰ Revelation 13:5.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² Revelation 11:15.

¹¹³ Daniel 12:11.

¹¹⁴ Matthew 24:22.

¹¹⁵ Isaiah 8:6-8.

king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks {8} and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!

Horses' bridles are about neck high, and the distance from Damascus (which Isaiah is discussing) through the length of Judah is roughly 185 miles, or 1,600 stadia.

Jeremiah, speaking of historical Babylon, speaks of the wine of God's wrath and the associated slaughter:

(Jeremiah 25) {15} This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. {16} When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them..."

Isaiah, speaking of a time where Jerusalem's grain will never again be given "as food for your enemies and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled",¹¹⁶ tells of the coming savior whose "reward is with him and [whose] recompense accompanies him":¹¹⁷

(Isaiah 63) {1} 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? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." {2} Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? {3} "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. {4} It was for me the day of vengeance; the year for me to redeem had come. {5} I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm achieved salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. {6} I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."

¹¹⁶ Isaiah 62:8.

¹¹⁷ Isaiah 62:11.

The context puts this also at the time of God's Wrath. This scripture in chapter 63 is related to the one previously quoted in chapter 34 about Edom:

(Isaiah 34) {1} Come close, you nations, and listen. Pay attention, you people. The earth, everyone in it, the world, and everything on it will listen. {2} The Lord is angry with all the nations. He is furious with all their armies. He has claimed them for destruction. He has handed them over to be slaughtered. {3} Their dead bodies will be thrown out. A stench will rise from their corpses. Mountains will be red with their blood. {4} All the stars in the sky will rot. The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll. The stars will fall like leaves from a grapevine, like green figs from a fig tree. {5} When my sword is covered with blood in the heavens, it will fall on Edom and on the people I've claimed for destruction. {6} The Lord's sword is covered with blood. It is covered with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of rams' kidneys. The Lord will receive a sacrifice in Bozrah, a huge slaughter in the land of Edom. {7} Wild oxen will be killed with them, young bulls along with rams. Their land will be drenched with blood. Their dust will be covered with fat. {8} The Lord will have a day of vengeance, a year of revenge in defense of Zion. {9} Edom's streams will be turned to tar. Its soil will be turned to burning sulfur. Its land will become blazing tar. {10} They will not be extinguished day or night, and smoke will always go up from them.

The word "Bozrah" means "sheepfold" and it sometimes translated that way, but there was a town in Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea, of that name (modern Busaira in Jordan). It seems likely that Edom was meant literally in Isaiah but was also a type of the last-days Wrath of God. The final phase of that wrath begins in Revelation chapter 15 with the first of the seven last plagues.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6 seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7 seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues
The beginning of the millennium	<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	The gathering for Armageddon The 7 th Plague
The end of the millennium	The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem	The 7 th trumpet
The beginning of eternity	Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.	Eternity
Eternity	New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem	

Book 1 Endnotes

ⁱ The Mount of Olives is only mentioned explicitly twice in the OT, in the passage from Zechariah telling where Christ will come just prior to Armageddon, and a much earlier one, 2 Samuel 15:30-32. In this earlier passage, we are told that people used to worship God on the summit of the Mount of Olives. It is just possible that the end-times temple (or tabernacle) will be there, rather than on Mount Zion. Malachi 3:1 says Christ will suddenly come to his temple. It is true that that verse may apply to his first coming, since it refers to God's messenger who will precede him, but the following verse describes his coming in terms of the Day of the Lord.

ⁱⁱ In the NIV, the term "son of man" appears 100 times, all but seven of them in Ezekiel where the term refers to him. In all but two of the references, the Hebrew word for man is "adam", which is related to the word for "Adam", the first man. "ben adam" actually occurs 156 times in the OT, usually just translated "men". "ben ish" occurs 10 times, meaning "the son of a man", and "ben enosh (or the Aramaic enash)" twice, in Psalm 144:3 and in Daniel 7:13.

ⁱⁱⁱ There are eight periods of 3 1/2 years mentioned in Daniel and Revelation. These are:

Verse	Summary	Duration	Events
Dan 7:25	Time of the Antichrist's rule	time, times, half a time	temple desecrated wars against Jews
Dan 9:27	Antichrist prohibits sacrifices	"middle of one seven"	Middle of a seven-year covenant
Dan 12:7	Time of the Antichrist's rule	time, times, half a time	persecution of Jews Wars of the Antichrist
Rev 11:2	Jerusalem occupied by Gentiles	42 months	
Rev 11:3	Two Witnesses	1,260 days	Preaching in Jerusalem
Rev 12:6	Israel protected in desert	1,260 days	Israel in desert
Rev 12:14	Israel protected in desert	time, times, half a time	Israel protected
Rev 13:5	Antichrist exercises authority	42 months	

Four more related periods are mentioned in Daniel. First is the period from the desolation until the sanctuary is reconstituted (8:14). This is given as 2,300 "evenings and mornings". This is most likely 2,300 days, with the emphasis being on the evening and morning sacrifices (Exodus 29:38-39). It is quite likely this prophecy applies to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Its applicability to the end times is more uncertain. If it does, it stretches well into the Millennium.

The second additional period is the Seventieth Week (Daniel 9:27) in the middle of which the Antichrist breaks the covenant.

The third and fourth periods are mentioned together and briefly at the very end of Daniel. 1,290 days is given as the amount of time from the setting up of the desolation during which the distress (12:1) continues.

It extends farther than the time, times, and half a time during which the power of the Jews will be broken (12:7). It is possible this extra month is the time of the last seven plagues.

Finally, 1,335 days is mentioned, possibly showing an additional month and a half. This last is very obscure, though possibly includes preparation for the gathering at Armageddon.

Tapestry:

The Book of Revelation

**by David Justin Ross
and Brian J. Elmenhurst**

Book 2

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Introduction

In book 1 we read that Satan is cast down and is making war on God's people. Under the reign of the Antichrist, this translates into the persecution and killing of many millions of Christians. This period is known as the Great Tribulation period. The Antichrist also institutes a "voluntary" individual identifier known as the Mark of the Beast that is somehow permanently imbued on the person both physically and spiritually. It ties him to the Antichrist and his world. No one will be able to function economically in the world without the mark. Therefore, the pressure to take the mark is severe. Note that there are those who do not take the mark and yet are not Christians who, if caught, will also be persecuted and possibly put to death. The Great Tribulation and the Antichrist's rule start at the midpoint and last 3 ½ years.

Book 2 describes the beginning of God's Wrath on the Antichrist and his world. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 bring 2/3 of God's woes on the world and those who have allied with the Antichrist and have received his mark. The Great Tribulation and this portion of God's wrath happen virtually simultaneously. While God's people are suffering under rule of the Antichrist, so those who follow the Antichrist are suffering from God's wrath.

Chapter 11 introduces the two witnesses who are untouchable by the Antichrist or his servants. They are in place for the period that the Antichrist is in power. They will preach repentance and are most likely be the medium through which God's wrath is introduced.

Unlike other events, the length of God's Wrath is not expressly given in chapters 8-11. Since we equate it with the presence of the two witnesses, it is most likely about as long as the Great Tribulation.

The events in chapters 8, 9, and 10 start from the midpoint of Daniel's Seventieth Week and proceed from there. Chapter 11 then backtracks to the midpoint and introduces the two witnesses. It then covers the time from then to the end of chapter 10.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 begins with the opening of the seventh and final seal. These are seals on a scroll, possibly the deed to the earth. With the opening of the final seal, we might expect the scroll itself to be opened now. It is possible that is exactly what happens and that the remainder of Revelation shows the contents of the scroll. More likely, however, is that the seventh seal contains the remainder of the judgments which are to come, but not the contents of the scroll.

As we remember from the Olivet Discourse¹, the disciples asked Christ what would be the sign of his coming. If the Olivet Discourse could be considered a synopsis of the events prior to His return, then Revelation Chapters 4-22 may be seen as an expansion of Christ's reply. Then the sequence of events would be: In each of the first six seals (chapter 6) a sign is given, then in each of the first six trumpets (chapters 8-10 discussed in this book) a sign is given, followed by six plagues (chapter 15-16) with each giving a sign. To reiterate, six signs are revealed in the seals, six signs are sounded by the trumpets, and six signs are manifested by the plagues.

Once this pattern of 6-6-6 is finished, the completion of the seventh plague completes the seventh trumpet which completes the seventh seal². In other words, the seventh seal contains all the trumpets, and the seventh trumpet contains all the plagues. This pattern of completed signs works especially well considering that seven is the number of completion³. This pattern supports the hypothesis that while the sixth seal announces God's Wrath, it does not contain it. The Wrath instead starts with the seventh seal.

It should be mentioned that there is, within this period, a fourth group of seven judgments, but it, the Seven Thunders, takes place in the sixth, not the seventh trumpet. This is discussed in Chapter 10.

**(Revelation 8) {1} When he opened the seventh seal,
there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.**

The final seal is now broken and even heaven holds its breath. There are, for a brief time, no songs of praise and worship, no prayers for vengeance, no voices sounding. A parallel passage from Zephaniah also shows silence before the coming of the Day of the Lord, as well as the equating of the Day of the Lord and the Wrath of God.

¹ See Appendix 2 in Book 1: The Olivet Discourse and Revelation

² Point 3 in Main Points in the Commentary.

³ 'Seven was symbolic in ancient near eastern and Israelite culture and literature. It communicated a sense of "fullness" or "completeness."'

*(Zephaniah 1) {7g} Be silent before the Sovereign LORD, for the day of the LORD is near."*ⁱ

Several other times the silence of God is seen as a precursor, sign, or companion of his wrath. Isaiah⁴ cried out that God's silence would mark his total punishment on Israel, and David viewed God's silence as a punishment equal to death.⁵ Amos⁶ spoke of a time when there would be a famine of the words of the Lord. It is possible all or some of these are in view in this passage.

(Revelation 8) {2} And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. {3} Another⁷ angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. {4} The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand.

Who are "the seven angels who stand before God"? We know from Job that all angels present themselves before God,⁸ but the definite article here indicates that they are a special group. There are two possibilities for who they are. Seven angels are mentioned in Chapter 1:20, where the seven stars in the hand of Christ were equated to the seven angels of the seven churches to whom John addressed the book. Their position there, in Christ's hand, and here, "before God" is certainly consistent. It is possible that those seven churches were chosen because they represent various kinds of churches both in John's day and throughout church history. If their angels are the agents of God's judgment, then that may have a tie-in to the promises made to each of the churches which will be fulfilled at the time when all the judgments have been completed.

The second possibility is more intriguing. From Biblical sources, we know that Gabriel stands before God,⁹ and so he may be one of the seven. It is likely Michael is another, for he is called "one of the chief princes"¹⁰ and an archangel,¹¹ and plays a prominent part in the War in Heaven.¹² Directly parallel is this section from the deuterocanonical

⁴ Isaiah 64:12.

⁵ Psalm 28:1.

⁶ Amos 8:11.

⁷ The word means another of the same kind.

⁸ Job 1:6.

⁹ Luke 1:19.

¹⁰ Daniel 10:13.

¹¹ Jude 1:9. The term archangel only appears here, where it is applied to Michael, and in 1Thessalonians 4:16 where Christ returns for his people "with the voice of the archangel".

¹² Revelation 12:7.

book Tobit: “I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One”.¹³

We know the names of all seven archangels from the deuterocanonical book 1 Enoch¹⁴ which gives the seven as Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraqael, Gabriel, and Remiel.ⁱⁱ

The prayers and incense are discussed in detail in connection with Revelation 5:8. They appear here at the start of the trumpet judgments for the last time, to be replaced by the plagues held in the same bowls. We see here the requests of the souls under the altar¹⁵ being granted by God initiating His wrath, from entreaty for judgment to the judgment itself. The prayers of the saints were merely held by the elders in the initial mention. Now, for the first time we see, they are offered up to God. Since the prayers are for vengeance, it is interesting to note how fast they are answered once they are offered.ⁱⁱⁱ

(Revelation 8) {5} Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

The thunder, rumblings, lightning, and earthquake are the announcement of the three seven-fold judgments¹⁶ and the completion of the six seals. They are followed by the full implementation of the seventh seal that starts the seven trumpet judgments. The hurling of the censor is significant for two reasons. First, the same censor which offered up the saint’s prayers for vengeance is the instrument of God’s answer to those prayers and the commencement of his Wrath. Second, in each of the first three trumpet judgments something afire is hurled at the earth,¹⁷ which may indicate that the censor holds part or all of the trumpet judgments.

The fire on the altar, implicit in the burning incense in verse 4, is made explicit when it fills the censor for judgment in verse 5. Both Isaiah¹⁸ and Ezekiel¹⁹ saw fire in connection with the throne of God. A seraph brings a live coal from the altar to Isaiah, presumably the same altar from which the angel here gets his. That coal brings purification to the prophet, while the coal from the fire here brings purification to the earth.²⁰ Ezekiel sees something even closer. A man in white linen, presumably an angel,

¹³ Tobit 12:15.

¹⁴ 1 Enoch 20:2-8.

¹⁵ Revelation 6:9-10

¹⁶ Revelation 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, and 16:18.

¹⁷ hail, fire, and blood upon the earth with the first trumpet, a huge blazing mountain on the sea with the second trumpet, and a blazing torch on the fresh waters for the third trumpet.

¹⁸ Isaiah 6:6.

¹⁹ Ezekiel 10:2.

²⁰ God’s wrath as an element of purification may be seen in Ezekiel 24, especially vv. 9-14.

is told to take coals from among the Cherubim and scatter them over Jerusalem as a sign of God's judgment. In all these cases the view is one of fire as both purification and judgment, a theme found throughout Scripture.^{iv}

(Revelation 8) {6} Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

Seven trumpets are blown only one other place in Scripture: when Joshua took Jericho.²¹ On the seventh day of the siege, seven priests marched around the city seven times blowing trumpets. After the priests blew a long blast, the people all shouted, and the walls fell.

Trumpets as the precursors or announcers of the judgment of God are much more common. Joel²² prophesied that a trumpet will announce the Day of the Lord, and Zephaniah²³ said that day is accompanied by a trumpet call. In the New Testament trumpets are repeatedly associated with Christ's return to earth. He will return with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet call of God,²⁴ and at the last trumpet the dead in Christ will rise and living believers put on their immortal bodies.²⁵ Christ himself referred to this gathering of his elect in concert with a trumpet call.²⁶

(Revelation 8) {7} 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. {8} 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, {9} a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. {10} 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-- {11} 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. {12} 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

²¹ Joshua 6.

²² Joel 2:1.

²³ Zephaniah 1:14-16.

²⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:52.

²⁶ Matthew 24:31.

turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

The first four trumpet judgments are targeted directly at the livability of the earth and not directly at a class of people. They could hit in quick succession or be prolonged throughout the first part of the 3 ½ years of the Antichrist. Most likely the latter since the earth is still habitable but definitely unpleasant for the majority of the remaining people. As noted before, the first three are closely related, with them all being the result of something falling to earth from heaven and being directed against the earth, the sea, and the fresh waters. That grouping occurs elsewhere in Revelation, with God being given credit for creating those three expressly.²⁷

Several of these judgments are clearly only partial. With trumpet 1, 1/3 of the earth, trees, and all the grass are burned up. With trumpet 2, 1/3 of the sea turns to blood, killing 1/3 of the sea creatures and destroying 1/3 of the ships on the sea. With the third trumpet, 1/3 of the fresh waters are turned bitter, killing many people.

The first trumpet looks like a meteor storm, perhaps a comet that has shattered into many small pieces before approaching the earth. Meteor storms which start fires are unusual but not unheard of.²⁸ This will be far worse than anything Man has seen, but no worse than what the earth has seen several times in the past.²⁹

While the first trumpet judgment looks like a swarm of many relatively small meteors, the second looks like a single, but larger meteor which impacts the sea. The impact itself would throw up cubic miles of water and sea bottom into the air and the tidal waves would destroy much both on and under the water. It is quite possible the associated ecological disaster could trigger a red tide³⁰, which would kill much of the sea life in the affected areas.

The third trumpet looks like more meteors. The ashes from the fires from this and the first meteor would pour tons of ash into lakes and streams, filling them with sodium hydroxide (lye), which is both poisonous and has a bitter taste. With the fourth trumpet, the sun, moon, stars, day, and night all lose 1/3 of their light. This darkens the sky, a natural consequence of the fires from trumpets one and three and the water and rock from the second trumpet. The impact that destroyed the dinosaurs darkened the sky completely for perhaps three years and eliminated most of the species then living. The results of these impacts in Revelation, as bad as they are, are milder than what the earth has already seen.

²⁷ Revelation 14:7.

²⁸ Tunguska, in Siberia 1906 and the associated forest damage, and probably the Great Chicago Fire and the Great Midwest Wildfires of October 1871.

²⁹ The K-T boundary meteor impact that destroyed the dinosaurs and other extinction events, for example.

³⁰ A red tide is an algal bloom. Algal blooms can be of many colors. The algae that cause the blooms can release toxins harmful to other water life.

Like the fifth seal³¹, the fifth trumpet is preparatory, but with the sixth trumpet 1/3 of mankind dies.

(Revelation 8) {13} 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!"

As bad as things are, they are about to get worse. The eagle's proclamation of Woe! Woe! Woe! is itself annunciatory. The judgments associated with the three Woes are the events of the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets.

The grouping together of the three angels with trumpets into a single announcement by the eagle is the first of two three-angel heavenly announcements, the other being in Revelation 14³² before the plagues start.

³¹ Revelation 6:9-11

³² Revelation 14:6-12

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6 seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7 seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7th trumpet
The beginning of the millennium	<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague
The end of the millennium	<p>1,000 Years</p> <p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p> <p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
The beginning of eternity	<p>Eternity</p> <p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	

Chapter 9

The trumpet judgments are divided into two parts: the first four trumpet angels which seem to be the results of the announcement of the angel who hurled the censor, and the last three announced by the eagle flying in mid-heaven crying “Woe Woe Woe”. Though both sets of judgments are initiated in heaven, they are of very different kinds.

Up until now, all the events which have happened on the earth - the six seals³³ and the first four trumpets - can be explained in purely physical terms, not requiring anything obviously supernatural. Whether or not the first three trumpets are supernatural, their effects on the earth will be devastating.

Chapter 9 is devoted to the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments which are the first two woes announced at the end of Chapter 8. The entire book of Joel is parallel to the three Woes and sheds significant light on them (and they on it).

(Revelation 9) {1} 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. {2} 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.

Chapter 1³⁴ makes it clear that a star means an angel. This is the first time in the judgments when anything alive has come from heaven to earth. The intervention by God is getting more direct, and the effects are about to get more overtly supernatural.

Keys are mentioned in three other places in Scripture. Christ holds the keys to death and Hades³⁵ and the key of David.³⁶ He also holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven, which he has given to his Church.³⁷

Both the keys to the house of David and the keys to the kingdom of heaven come from a Messianic prophecy in Isaiah:

³³ Revelation 6

³⁴ Revelation 1:20.

³⁵ Revelation 1:18.

³⁶ Revelation 3:7.

³⁷ Matthew 16:19.

(Isaiah 22) {21} I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. {22} I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. {23} I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will be a seat of honor for the house of his father. {24} All the glory of his family will hang on him: its offspring and offshoots--all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to all the jars.

The other two times a key is mentioned in Revelation, it is in connection with opening the Abyss (here) and closing it up again³⁸ after binding Satan and imprisoning him there for the Millennium.

The Abyss, like so many other things, is mentioned seven times in Revelation³⁹. The Greek word “abussos” simply means “without bottom”, or “bottomless”. It is used in three different senses in Scripture. In the Septuagint translation of Genesis 1:2 it is used to translate the Hebrew “tehom” which the NIV translates as “the deep”. The same Hebrew word in Psalm 148:7 means the ocean.

The second meaning of Abyss, and the primary one in the New Testament, is the abode of demons⁴⁰. Since “abussos” also means the bottomless pit, it is about as far as possible from the presence of God, appropriate for demons. All appearances in Revelation are in that sense, as is its use in Luke.⁴¹ The one remaining time it appears in the New Testament, in Romans⁴², it means the realm of the dead.

The three senses or meanings of Abyss are: 1) The deep or ocean, 2) The abode of demons, and 3) The realm of the dead.

The overlap in these senses, both for “abussos” in Greek and “tehom” in Hebrew, may be found in Psalm 71:20 (Psalm 70:20 in LXX⁴³). There, “tehom” is used for the abode of the dead. LXX translates it “abussos” (Psalm 70:20 in LXX), equates to the use in Romans as the realm of the dead.

³⁸ Revelation 20:1.

³⁹ Revelation 9:1, 9:2, 9:11, 11:7, 17:8, 20:1, and 20:3

⁴⁰ Strong's Concordance for the definition of “abussos”

⁴¹ Luke 8:31.

⁴² Romans 10:7, where the NIV translates it “the deep”. “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’”^[E] (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

⁴³ Septuagint

Perhaps some support for equating the Abyss with the ocean comes from Job 26:5. The NIV says, "The dead are in deep anguish, those beneath the waters and all that live in them." Perhaps a better translation would be "The dead are in anguish, those who lie (or dwell) beneath the waters."

It is likely John was referring to both the realm of the dead and the abode of demons.⁴⁴

Scripture has another name for the prison where demons are kept awaiting judgment, and that is Tartaros, the Greek word for the dwelling place of the damned.

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment...⁴⁵

The word here translated "hell" is "Tartaros". If the locusts⁴⁶ are demons, then it is likely Tartaros and the Abyss are the same place. This supposition is strengthened by Satan being bound in the Abyss through the Millennium, although it should be noted that he is not kept there until his judgment⁴⁷: he will be released briefly before Judgment Day. If the locusts are demons manifested physically, this is the only place in scripture where demons have a specific physical form.

Note also there is smoke, and through the furnace, the idea of fire is associated with the Abyss. Peter, speaking at the Church's first Pentecost, referred to this day:

(Acts 2) {19} I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. {20} The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. {21} And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

It is interesting to note that this reference, a quote by Peter of the prophet Joel⁴⁸ which explicitly refers to the Day of the Lord, is the only other reference to smoke in the New Testament.

⁴⁴ In the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Hell is both the abode of the dead (from which Christ leads the blessed dead) and of demons.

⁴⁵ 2 Peter 2:4

⁴⁶ Revelation 9:3

⁴⁷ Revelation 20:3

⁴⁸ Joel 2:30-32a.

(Revelation 9) {3} And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. {4} 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. {5} 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. {6} During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

Note that the locusts have the authority only to attack those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Three things should be pointed out about this. First, it strongly implies that there are people around who do have the seal of God. This includes the 144,000⁴⁹ and the innumerable multitude of Christians.⁵⁰ Both groups, and only those groups, have God's seal.

Second, since the seven trumpet judgments, like the seven plagues, are part of God's Wrath and since Christians are not appointed unto wrath⁵¹, the locusts do not afflict God's people.

Third, the passages from Acts and Joel may give a clue to the purpose of these locusts. It is, at least in part, to drive those who are on the fence, who are as of yet neither God's nor Satan's, to make up their minds. It is getting increasingly difficult to be a fence-straddler. There is still time for people to choose God, but the time is growing very short. Still, here at the beginning of God's Wrath, there is yet time. There are three groups of people at this point: those who are sealed by Satan; those who are sealed by God; and those who rejected being sealed by Satan but have not accepted Christ. Those who have God's seal have no need for repentance; those with Satan's seal have no ability to repent. The third group, the fence-sitters, can still choose. But they are running out of time.

(Revelation 9) {7} The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns⁵² of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. {8} Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. {9} They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing

⁴⁹ Revelation 7:3.

⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.

⁵¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:9

⁵² stephanos, the victory wreath.

into battle. {10} They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.

Note how cautious John is in describing what he sees. The locusts “looked like” horses, they wore “something like” gold crowns, their faces “resembled” human faces. When John writes this way, it is often a sign he is describing something supernatural.⁵³ These are, of course, most unusual locusts. Most likely, they are demons, released from the Abyss to torment those not sealed with God’s seal. They will do so for five months, establishing how long the first Woe lasts.⁵⁴

The closest parallel to this is from Joel, also in a prophecy about the Day of the Lord:

(Joel 2) {2b} 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. {3} 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. {4} They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. {5} With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle.

(Joel 2) {10} Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. {11} 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? {12} 'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' {13} 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.

⁵³ Contrast his description of clearly supernatural things - God’s throne etc. with things on earth, even the beast. The latter are generally far more precisely described.

⁵⁴ We are later told The first Woe is ended, and two more are yet to come, and the same for the second and third. From this we know that the three Woes do not overlap.

The locusts⁵⁵ in both passages look like war horses, sound like chariots in motion, have lions' teeth,⁵⁶ and have as one of their purposes the bringing of repentance from those still willing to turn to God. There are two crucial differences, however. First, as verse 11 in this chapter makes clear (see below), the army of locusts from the Abyss is commanded by Abaddon, almost certainly a demon despite being called an angel. In contrast, God leads the army in Joel. Second, the army in Joel lays waste the land,⁵⁷ while those in Revelation are specifically prohibited from destroying any green growing thing.⁵⁸

It is likely that Joel sees as a single event what John is shown as three different events. There are vast armies assembled in each of the three Woes: the locusts from the Abyss from the fifth trumpet, the army of 200 million from the sixth, and those who gather at Armageddon from the seventh.⁵⁹

(Revelation 9) {11} They had as king over them, the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

If their appearance were not enough, their having a king establishes they are not actual locusts, for Scripture teaches that locusts have no king.⁶⁰ Abaddon appears seven times in Scripture, here in the New Testament and six in the old where Abaddon is Destruction personified.⁶¹ In all but one of these⁶² Abaddon is linked to the dead or Hell in some form, either as Sheol,⁶³ Death,⁶⁴ or the grave.⁶⁵ Abaddon comes from the Hebrew "abad" whose meaning includes being lost, perishing, and destroying. Hardly a name for one of God's angels. Apollyon appears only here. It is from Greek "apoleia", which means "destruction". "Apoleia" appears twice in Revelation,⁶⁶ both in the context of the Beast who comes from the Abyss and goes to "destruction".

(Revelation 9) {12} The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come. {13} The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of

⁵⁵ That the army in Joel are locusts is clear from verse 25: "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."

⁵⁶ Joel 1:4,6.

⁵⁷ Joel 2:3.

⁵⁸ Revelation 9:4.

⁵⁹ The parallels with Armageddon are clearest from Joel 3.

⁶⁰ Proverbs 30:27.

⁶¹ Job 26:6, 28:2, 31:12, Psalm 88:11, Proverbs 15:11, 27:20.

⁶² Job 31:12.

⁶³ Job 26:6, Proverbs 15:11, 27:20.

⁶⁴ Job 28:22 where the Hebrew word "maveth" is used for death.

⁶⁵ Psalm 88:11 where "qeber" (= tomb) is used.

⁶⁶ Revelation 17:8 and Revelation 17:11.

the golden altar that is before God. {14} It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

The first Woe is now completed. The second Woe has a third of the population dying and it contains the 7 thunders.

The river Euphrates is mentioned twice in Revelation: here and in 16 when it is dried up to make way for the kings of the East. This is the second group of four angels mentioned in Revelation. The previous group were restraining the winds (God's judgments)⁶⁷ until the 144,000 could be sealed. These are not restraining anything. They themselves have been bound for this day, and they are now released. The killing of unrepentant mankind begins in earnest now.

(Revelation 9) {15} 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 only other places angels are bound are in Revelation⁶⁸ (where Satan is bound during the Millennium) and in Jude:

Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

It is possibly some of these angels who are released, but that is hard to say.

(Revelation 9) {16} The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

200 million is the largest number mentioned in Scripture, and it is directly told to John. It is possible this is supposed to be the size of an actual army. If so, it is another example of John looking forward in time, for it is unlikely there were 200 million people on the earth when he wrote.

(Revelation 9) {17} 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

⁶⁷ Revelation 7:1-4

⁶⁸ Revelation 20:1-2.

came fire, smoke and sulfur. {18} A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. {19} 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.

Notice that, on the heels of death being stopped for 5 months, death and dying have resumed on a grand scale.

It is tempting to say that the 1/3 of mankind that is going to be killed is the natural consequence of the first four trumpets where a 1/3 of the earth is destroyed. That may be the case that the deaths are a result of natural disasters. It could be that after 1/3 of the world's resources are gone that war breaks out and these bizarre images that John is describing are his interpretation of modern mechanisms of war. It is also true that "natural" disasters such as large volcanic eruptions could be the reason for fire, sulfur (brimstone), and smoke. Several of the Earth's past extinction level events were caused by volcanic activity.

More likely, however, like with the first Woe, John is most likely describing something that is primarily supernatural. Another argument for it being obviously supernatural is that it is a counter to the Antichrist's demonstration of supernatural powers. The final and maybe the most compelling argument for the Woe being an obvious supernatural event is that those with God's seal are not among the casualties: only those who didn't have God's seal were killed by the demons. Remember God's people are not appointed unto Wrath⁶⁹.

The horses and riders here appear to be as demonic as the locusts in the first Woe, only grander. Locusts, though small, travel in swarms. The same is true here. The horses convey a large size and are numbered at over 200 million.

Instead of locusts that had bodies that look like horses and faces that appear human, here we have horses that have heads that appear like lions.

The locust has a king controlling them. Here each horse has a rider. These riders have a breastplate of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow.

It is interesting that fire is red, smoke dark blue, sulfur is yellow. This sounds a great deal like gunpowder, described in a day long before gunpowder was invented.

The power of the locusts is the sting in their tail. The power of the horses is through their tails as well as their mouths which spew the three plagues: fire, smoke and

⁶⁹ 1 Thessalonians 5:9

brimstone. All these plagues are associated with our view of Hell. It may be the foretaste for those on earth of what Hell is like.

(Revelation 9) {20} 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 worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. {21} Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

God allowed the demons loose on the world and they tormented the people of the world. Not only did the sixth trumpet give them a taste of Hell with fire, brimstone, and smoke, it gave them a foretaste of what it will be like to be tormented by the demons of Hell through the first two Woes. Yet they don't repent and are still worshipping demons and idols, as well as practicing lifestyles counter to God's plan.

So why does God use demons to carry out his wrath? God of course can use anything he pleases. It is ironic that since the people of earth have been effectively worshipping Satan, prince of demons, since the middle of the Seventieth Week, God is merely giving them what they asked for. It is, perhaps, instructive that this time, mankind does not repent.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6 seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7 seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed</p> <p>The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	<p>The seven plagues</p> <p>The 7th trumpet</p>
The beginning of the millennium	<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	<p>The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague</p>
The end of the millennium	<p>1,000 Years</p> <p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p> <p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
The beginning of eternity	<p>Eternity</p> <p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	

Chapter 10

We are currently in the period of the Second Woe, which is the sixth trumpet. Chapter 10 describes events that occur just prior to the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

(Revelation 10) {1} Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. {2} He was holding a little scroll^v, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, {3} and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.

Three “mighty angels” appear in Revelation. The first asks who is worthy to open the scroll,⁷⁰ the second is here, and the third announces the destruction of Babylon⁷¹. The first is there for the start of the judgments, the second gives John⁷² the little scroll detailing the thunder judgments, and the third proclaims the final judgment on the earth.

This scroll is not the same as the one opened by the Lamb in Chapter 6 (see endnote on verse 2). It bears far closer resemblance to the little scroll of Ezekiel (see below).

The “seven thunders” are possibly the wrath of the Spirit, though remembering what happens to those who add to the prophecies of this book, we are not going to speculate. It is no more fruitful than trying to decide what Christ wrote on the ground⁷³ when presented to the woman taken in adultery.

(Revelation 10) {4} And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

⁷⁰ Revelation 5:2.

⁷¹ Revelation 18:21

⁷² Revelation 10:9

⁷³ John 8:6,8.

This is the only thing in Revelation which is sealed up. Note also that this is during the sixth trumpet - the seventh trumpet does not sound until Chapter 11:15. In addition this records the seven thunders, but they are not included in the seventh of the previous series as stipulated at the beginning of chapter 8. As it is, we can say nothing further about it. That doesn't mean the seven thunders are unimportant; it merely means that we know nothing about them or their associated events.

(Revelation 10) {5} Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. {6} And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay!

The key idea from this scripture is to emphasize once again that there is no more delay in God's execution of His Wrath.

(Revelation 10) {7} But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

What is the "mystery of God"? It is possibly those things revealed in prophecy - "to seal up vision and prophecy" as it said in Daniel⁷⁴. Notice, however, that the mystery of God will be accomplished *before* the seventh trumpet sounds. So far as we can tell, the "mystery of God" remains mysterious. It may well concern the events of the seven thunders.

If it does not refer to the events of the seven thunders, it may relate to other mysteries given in scripture. The preponderance of those concern the nature of Christ and the nature of the Church.

In Romans we have:

(Romans 16) {25} Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, {26} but now revealed and made known through

⁷⁴ Daniel 12:4

*the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God,
so that all nations might believe and obey him--*

Similarly, in Ephesians:

*(Ephesian 3) {6} 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.*

Both of these indicate that the mystery they are referring to is that Gentiles are to be incorporated into the church. Notice that Romans 16:26 says that the mystery is made known through the prophetic writings while Revelation 10:7 says that the mystery of God would be accomplished as was told to the prophets, which is essentially the same thing.

Much hangs on the word “accomplished”. If it means “done in its entirety”, then it is difficult to tie it to any particular thing. If, on the other hand, it means “completed”, then it may refer to the salvation of the last of the Gentiles who will be saved. This is somewhat supported by the next chapter which makes it clear that this takes place in the time of the trampling of Israel by the Gentiles. It is possible that no other Gentiles will be saved henceforward. That other Jews will be, we know from Zechariah:

{10a} And I will pour out on the House of David and the
inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and for mercy.

This will take place when Christ appears in the heavens.

Elsewhere we have pointed out that the Pretribulational view of the end times requires that many things be duplicated. Among those things is the “last trumpet”. First Corinthians 15⁷⁵ says that the Rapture takes place “at the last trumpet”. As we read scripture, this is the last trumpet because it is, well, last. The seven trumpets of Revelation do not come after it. If they did, it would not be the “last” trumpet.

The last trumpet must be either the seventh trumpet here or one later still. The latter seems far more likely. The seventh trumpet is the Wrath of God and covers a significant amount of time before Christ returns at the “last” trumpet. Since the last trumpet, the return of Christ, and the Rapture all take place at the same time after the Wrath is over,

⁷⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:52.

we believe the “last” trumpet is blown after the seven trumpets of Revelation.

(Revelation 10) {8} Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." {9} So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." {10} I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. {11} Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

This is directly parallel to a passage from Ezekiel:

(Ezekiel 2) {9} Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, {10} which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.

(Ezekiel 3) {1} And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." {2} So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. {3} Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. {4} He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them..."

A major difference, of course, is that Ezekiel goes to speak to the house of Israel,⁷⁶ while John is to speak to many nations.

⁷⁶ Ezekiel 3:5-6.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>3 ½ Years</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6 seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7 seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months</p> <p>The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p>
<p>The end of seven years</p> <p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p>	<p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	<p>The seven plagues</p> <p>The 7th trumpet</p>
<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>The beginning of the millennium</p>	<p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	<p>The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague</p>
<p>1,000 Years</p> <p>The end of the millennium</p>	<p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p> <p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
<p>Eternity</p> <p>The beginning of eternity</p>	<p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	

Chapter 11

By showing John the events surrounding Christ's return, God spoke to John in a symbolic language which he could understand (being fluent in the Old Testament and other Jewish teachings of his day), and which was sufficiently rich to convey his meaning to us in a very different day. The symbols encapsulated the events into a series of complex, but finite images. By doing so, God was able to show John the detailed events of several years in a relatively small number of visions. Though the symbols are strange to our minds, they were an efficient way for God to speak to John. John could be shown events in a form which he could comprehend and transmit, while visions of the literal events would have been incomprehensible to him, and hence uncommunicable. There are two reasons for that. First, for the visions from heaven, limited human minds cannot comprehend or assimilate the infinite unless it is intentionally filtered for us. This is, after all, one reason God became a man - to become something we could understand. In the same way, the visions John sees of events in heaven translate the infinite into something his human mind can both comprehend and communicate.

Second, the visions of earth, while finite, may not have been comprehensible to John either, had they been presented literally. A man riding forth on a white horse and dressed in weapons of war conveys the idea of conquest in a language all ages can understand. If, instead, John had been shown literal images of twentieth-century tank and aerial warfare - or twenty-first century battles fought with space-based lasers and computer algorithms in cyberspace - he could not have communicated them. He could not even have seen them, for you cannot even see what your brain cannot comprehend.

One disadvantage to showing John the events rather than telling them to him is that it takes multiple visions to show different things taking place at the same time. One of the more difficult things about Revelation is understanding when a vision refers back to something which has already been seen in another guise. In Chapter 7 we see, from a heavenly perspective, the great multitude who were martyred in the Great Tribulation. The perspective is from heaven, and we see them symbolically in ways that communicate how they look to God. The same events - their martyrdom - forms part of Chapter 13 where we see it this time from an earthly perspective where it is part of the depredations of the Antichrist and False Prophet. The murders occur on earth, their victims are in heaven and two visions are required to communicate this.

Chapters 8 and 9 reveal both the heavenly perspective and the earthly manifestation of those heavenly events. Chapter 10 describes the seven thunders from a heavenly perspective, but any earthly manifestations are sealed from view.

Chapter 11 shows God's Wrath from an earthly perspective. These events begin at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week with the trampling of the holy city and the introduction of the two witnesses.

(Revelation 11) {1} 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. {2} 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.

In Revelation, a total period of time of 1003 1/2 years is specifically delineated, the thousand-year Millennium and a three and one half year period preceding it. Periods of three and one half years are delineated five times in Revelation. Here, John is told Jerusalem will be trampled on for 42 months. Immediately afterwards, God's two witnesses testify for 1,260 days. In the following chapter, the woman crowned with stars flees to the desert to escape the dragon. There she will be taken care of for 1,260 days⁷⁷ and for "a time, times, and half a time"⁷⁸. In Chapter 13,⁷⁹ the beast who rises from the sea exercises his authority for 42 months. It is very likely these time periods are identical to the same of equal duration in Daniel.⁸⁰

Ezekiel 40-42 has a lengthy passage measuring the Last Days temple, but in none of them does the man with a measuring rod measure the outer court.

(Ezekiel 40) {1} In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city--on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me and he took me there. {2} In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. {3} He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand.

This description is closer than the one given in Zechariah 2 where the city of Jerusalem is measured in connection with the restoration of the city, not with its time of exile.

⁷⁷ Revelation 12:6.

⁷⁸ Revelation 12:14.

⁷⁹ Revelation 13:5.

⁸⁰ Daniel 7:25, 9:27 (the period during which sacrifice is prohibited), and 12:7. All of these refer to the reign of the Antichrist. Daniel 7:25 supports the idea that the Antichrist will lose control of Jerusalem and the rest of his empire at the end of the 1,260 days.

For a period of 42 months, the outer court of the temple will be trampled by the Gentiles. As Chapter 12 explains, this is because believing Israel will be driven into exile for that period.

(Luke 21) {24} 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.{25} "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.."

If you read the Olivet Discourse⁸¹ in Matthew 24 and compare it with the parallel passages in Luke 21, one major difference strikes you. The general flavor of Matthew 24 concerns events of the end times, primarily during the period of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Luke, on the other hand, up to verse 25, sounds more like a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In reality, both the destruction by the Romans and the end-times occupation are probably in view. The trampling of Jerusalem⁸² and the corresponding "Times of the Gentiles" thus have two fulfillments in view. The first fulfillment was the control of Jerusalem by non-Jews from 70 A.D. to 1967 when the city was recaptured during the Six Day War. The second will be an occupation of the city by the forces of the Antichrist which will last for three and one half years and will end with the return of Christ.

Zechariah saw the beginning of the exile, and the driving into exile of half the city:

(Zechariah 14) {1} A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. {2} 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.

And Malachi foresaw its end:

(Malachi 4) {1} "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble,

⁸¹ See Appendix 2 in Book1: The Olivet Discourse and Revelation

⁸² The word in both Luke and Revelation is "pateo" for "trample". It is used in only two senses in the NT: For Jerusalem being trampled by the Gentiles (the two passages quoted here) and for Christ or his followers trampling the slaves of Satan (Luke 10:19, Revelation 14:20 and 19:15). The latter two examples are used for Christ trampling the wine press of God's Wrath, which is at least in part engendered by the Gentiles' attacks on the Jews and Jerusalem.

and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. {2} But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. {3} Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty.

(Revelation 11) {3} And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

The close proximity of the 42 months during which Jerusalem will be under Gentile control and the 1,260 days of the witnesses' testimony make it very likely the two times are coterminous or very nearly so. The two witnesses are killed⁸³ by the Antichrist⁸⁴, which, since they are killed in Jerusalem,⁸⁵ strongly implies the Antichrist controls Jerusalem, so the two times at least overlap. Since the time of the two witnesses is mentioned later than the Gentile occupation, it seems contrary to a normal reading of Scripture to have the witnesses preaching significantly earlier than the start of the 42 months of occupation.

(Revelation 11) {4} These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. {5} 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. {6} 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.

Who these two are has never been answered completely. There are three approaches to determining their identity. The first starts with the closely parallel scripture in Zechariah:

(Zechariah 4 {11} Then I asked the angel, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?"

⁸³ Verse 7.

⁸⁴ See Chapter 13 for discussion of the beast from the sea.

⁸⁵ verse 8.

{12} Again I asked him, "What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?" {13} He replied, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I said. {14} So he said, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth."

Zechariah first asks concerning the two olive trees in 4:4. A few verses earlier,⁸⁶ Joshua the high priest is prophesied about, while Zerubbabel the governor is the subject of a prophecy immediately⁸⁷ afterwards. This coincidence of position, and the great importance of these two in rebuilding the temple, makes it tempting to equate them with the two olive trees. Their being linked in Haggai,⁸⁸ whose entire prophecy was concerning the two of them, gives some further support to this interpretation.

Though it is very likely that the two witnesses are in some way related to the two olive trees Zechariah sees, it is unlikely they are the same. For one thing, there is only a single lampstand in Zechariah, with two golden pipes,⁸⁹ while in Revelation there are two lampstands. In addition, though Joshua and Zerubbabel were very important in rebuilding the temple, and Joshua was in some respects a type of Christ,⁹⁰ there is no indication anywhere in Scripture that they will have a roll to fill beyond their normal lifetimes.

The second possibility is that they are Enoch and Elijah. The book of Hebrews⁹¹ declares that men are to die once and then be judged, and these two never died. Enoch was taken bodily to heaven⁹² and Elijah was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire,⁹³ and so many see in them the prime candidates for the two witnesses. Various apocryphal books support this conclusion or at least show the early church was convinced the two were Enoch and Elijah. A strong one is from 2 Esdras,^{vi} a deuterocanonical book, where various signs which will precede the End of the Age are given, including, "And they (the people of the earth) shall see the men who were taken up, who from their birth have not tasted death."⁹⁴ This almost certainly refers to Enoch and Elijah.

Also note that, if the two prophets are Enoch and Elijah, they did not perish in their fallen nature but were taken by God. At the same time, they could not have qualified for

⁸⁶ Zechariah 3:9.

⁸⁷ Zechariah 4:6.

⁸⁸ Haggai 1:1.

⁸⁹ Zechariah 4:12.

⁹⁰ See especially Zechariah 6:12. Referring to Joshua the high priest, this says, "Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD.'" Since Christ is the fulfillment of the various Branch prophecies, and since "Jesus" and "Joshua" are the same Hebrew name, perhaps the Messiah's name is prophesied here.

⁹¹ Hebrews 9:27.

⁹² Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5.

⁹³ 2 Kings 2:11.

⁹⁴ 2 Esdras 6:26b.

a resurrected body at the point they were taken since Christ has not yet died. Like the Apostles, Enoch and Elijah were still considered alive at that point in time. If the two men, who never died and were still alive at the time of Christ's resurrection, are then killed then they would be the same as the Apostles who are awaiting their resurrection bodies. However, unlike the Apostles, the two witnesses will be *resurrected* at the end of the 1260 days. This puts them in the same category as those in Mathew 27:52. Both those in Mathew 27:52 and the two witnesses are now in their resurrected bodies. As we have pointed out elsewhere, one purpose of the Rapture⁹⁵ is to put all believers in the same state – in their resurrection bodies. The rest of the Saints who have died will be resurrected at the 1335-day mark.

Stronger support still for the two being Enoch and Elijah is the Gospel of Nicodemus. In this passage, Christ has just led the blessed dead from Hades to Paradise.

*And as they were entering the gate of Paradise, two old men met them. The holy fathers asked them, "Who are you who have not seen death nor gone down into Hades, but dwell in Paradise with your bodies and souls?" One of them answered, "I am Enoch, who pleased God and was removed here by him. And this is Elijah the Tishbite. We shall live until the end of the world. But then we shall be sent by God to withstand the Antichrist and to be killed by him. And after three days we shall rise again and be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord."*⁹⁶

This certainly shows that in the third or fourth century when the Gospel of Nicodemus was written, there was a strong opinion concerning who the two witnesses would be.

The theory that they are Enoch and Elijah has the added appeal that between them they represent the world before the flood and after it.

As convenient as this opportunity for Enoch and Elijah to die at last is, there are some problems with it. First, not all humans die once. Lazarus⁹⁷ presumably died a second time, as did Tabitha⁹⁸ and others, while those Raptured at Christ's Return will never taste death.⁹⁹ Thus, it is not necessary for Enoch and Elijah to come back to earth or to die at all.

We can point out, however, that all the cases of someone dying more than once are miracles. And miracles disrupt the normal process of things for a particular purpose.

⁹⁵ See Appendix "The Rapture"

⁹⁶ The Other Bible, p 377 IX.

⁹⁷ John 11:14.

⁹⁸ Acts 9:37.

⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

With Lazarus and Tabitha, the miracle was their being resurrected into their mortal bodies. The miracle of Enoch and Elijah is very different: they were “taken” and there is no evidence they either died or were transformed into resurrection bodies.

Another reasonable objection to Enoch as one of the two is that while details of Elijah’s first ministry match well with what the two witnesses do, nothing is said of Enoch which matches the work of the witnesses.

A third possibility for the identity of the two witnesses takes note of how similar the actions and accompanying judgments that the two witnesses bring upon the earth are to those of Moses¹⁰⁰ and Elijah.¹⁰¹ Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets, thus the whole Old Testament complete, which make them the appropriate witnesses to the Jews in their final peril.

Additional support for the witnesses being Moses and Elijah comes from the way the verse actually refers to them: “The two witnesses of me”. Perhaps the best known two witnesses of Christ are Moses and Elijah who appeared with him on the Mount of Transfiguration.¹⁰² Elijah did not die,¹⁰³ and there is some uncertainty about the death of Moses. When Moses died, having been denied entry into the Promised Land, God himself buried him.¹⁰⁴ As a result, no one know where his tomb is.¹⁰⁵ There also seems to have been a dispute concerning his body,¹⁰⁶ so there is some mystery about his death. As pointed out above, however, Moses having already died seems not to be an impediment to his being one of the witnesses.

When John the Baptist came, the priests and Levites thought he might be one of three people:¹⁰⁷ The Christ, Elijah, or The Prophet. Malachi prophesied that Elijah would come before the “great and dreadful day of the Lord,”¹⁰⁸ which is why Elijah was expected. John denied he was Elijah,¹⁰⁹ but was, according to Christ,¹¹⁰ at least a partial fulfillment of the prophecy. Christ himself also implied¹¹¹ that Elijah’s coming was yet future.

¹⁰⁰ cf. Exodus 7:17 with Revelation 11:6b.

¹⁰¹ cf. 2 Kings 1:10 (fire from heaven) with Revelation 11:5. It is true that Elijah called down fire from heaven to kill his enemies and the two witnesses bring fire from their mouths, but the difference seems small. cf. 1 Kings 17:1, Luke 4:25, James 5:17 (drought) with Revelation 11:6a. The plagues which accompany the first six trumpets, and the first six plagues are very similar to those afflicting Egypt before the exodus.

¹⁰² Luke 9:30ff.

¹⁰³ 2 Kings 2:11.

¹⁰⁴ Deuteronomy 34:5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Deuteronomy 34:6.

¹⁰⁶ Jude 9, quoting.

¹⁰⁷ John 1:19-25.

¹⁰⁸ Malachi 4:5.

¹⁰⁹ John 1:21.

¹¹⁰ Matthew 11:14.

¹¹¹ Matthew 17:11.

The Prophet who was expected was to be one like Moses.¹¹² It is possible that Malachi meant Elijah to be the fulfillment of this prophecy since he referred to “the prophet Elijah” who is to come.¹¹³ Nonetheless, the priests’ question in John’s Gospel indicated that they, at least, believed the Christ, the Prophet, and Elijah to be distinct. It is also possible that Malachi 4 means to imply that Elijah will both come and complete his ministry before the coming of the Day of the Lord - before God smites the land with a curse. This may, on the other hand, just mean he will finish his ministry before the fury of the wrath of God - that is, before the start of the last plagues, which certainly look like God’s curse.

It is possible that these two may not be Moses restored to life and Elijah, but two who are like them, as John the Baptist was like Elijah. In any event, if one of them is not Elijah and yet Elijah must come, then it is hard to see where in Revelation he is mentioned.^{vii}

They might be witnesses in another sense: witnesses before God of the depredations of the Antichrist and False Prophet.¹¹⁴ On several occasions God calls two witnesses¹¹⁵ against mankind, and these two, whatever other prophecies are fulfilled by their coming, certainly fulfill this purpose as well.

The authors believe the evidence is strongest for the two witnesses being Enoch and Elijah but will not be doctrinaire on the subject since scripture doesn’t state who the two witnesses are.

In verse 7, we read about the completion of the 1260 days. In the timeline this happens just prior to the seventh trumpet.

(Revelation 11) {7} Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. {8} Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. {9} For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. {10} The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will

¹¹² Deuteronomy 18:15-19. This is usually taken to refer to Christ, but his distinction from “the Christ” in the priest’s question seems to indicate he is another person, associated like Elijah with the coming of the Messiah.

¹¹³ Malachi 4:5 The interpretation that the two witnesses are Moses and Elijah is bolstered by the verse before. The two verses together read:

(Malachi 4:4-5) Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. {5} See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful Day of the LORD comes.

¹¹⁴ Deuteronomy 17:6.

¹¹⁵ e.g. Deuteronomy 4:26, 30:19 (heaven and earth), Isaiah 8:2 (Uriah and Zechariah)

celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

As it was with their Lord's crucifixion, the two witnesses will be killed. The conjoining of these two events in John's mind is clear from verse 8. Unlike Christ, they will lie unburied, gawked at by people from all over the earth.^{viii} Their killer is the beast from the Abyss. As seen in Chapter 13, the beast from the sea and this beast from the Abyss are almost certainly the same, though with a slight difference in emphasis. The beast of Chapter 13 primarily represents the person of the Antichrist. It acts more like a person. The beast¹¹⁶ of Chapter 17 primarily represents the empire of the Antichrist, and by extension, all the anti-Jewish and anti-Christian empires of history. In any event, it is the Antichrist who kills the two witnesses, either directly or through his governmental power.

Jerusalem being equated with both Egypt and Sodom occurs several places in Scripture, but the most relevant is a passage from Amos:

(Amos 4) {10} "I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD. {11} "I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD. {12} "Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

While Chapter 10 ended with the seven thunders, Chapter 11 continues to the resurrection of the two witnesses.

(Revelation 11) {11} 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. {12} 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. {13} 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.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix "The beasts of Revelation"

Evidently, there are still, at this late date, those in Jerusalem who still belong to God. Some have wanted to say this giving of glory to God is false, only done out of fear, but there is no evidence of this. As we discussed above, the events of the fifth trumpet¹¹⁷ left room for some to still repent. Though the initial events of the sixth trumpet¹¹⁸ fail to bring men to repentance, some may yet come during the sixth trumpet, although the hour is very late. Christ delays his coming until all who can be saved are saved.¹¹⁹ Here, at the conclusion of the sixth trumpet, the second woe, it is perhaps still not too late. These would then be the people mentioned by Joel:

(Joel 2) {31} The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. {32} 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.

Note that the word translated “deliverance” can also mean “those who are delivered”. Some in Jerusalem will be saved, even during the Day of the Lord¹²⁰. When the witnesses are killed and resurrected, we have come to the end of the milder part of the Wrath and are about to begin the Fury of God.

(Revelation 11) {14} The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon. {15} 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."

The Hallelujah Chorus from Handel’s Messiah joyfully proclaims the last part of verse 15 “and he will reign for ever and ever”.

At this point the sixth trumpet is concluded. The seventh trumpet is about to sound the call for the Fury of God. The 1260 days have passed. and the time has now come for Christ to begin his reign on the earth.

This is still not the last trumpet. Christ will return at the final trumpet,¹²¹ raising the dead and translating the living. Given the prominence of the seven trumpet judgments

¹¹⁷ Revelation 9:1-12.

¹¹⁸ Revelation 9:13-21.

¹¹⁹ 2 Peter 3:9-10.

¹²⁰ See Appendix “The Day of the Lord”

¹²¹ 1Corinthians 15:51-52.

in Revelation, it seems very unlikely that there could be a “last trumpet” before the seven blown by the seven angels. This alone should be enough to show the Rapture has not taken place yet. 2 Peter 3:9-10 indicates two things. Christ delays his coming so that all who can be saved are, and that when he comes “like a thief”, the heavens will disappear, and the earth be laid bare. There is no room in 2 Peter for a secret Rapture. The thief in the night is in exactly the same place in 2 Peter as it is in Revelation: just before Christ returns in glory.

(Revelation 11) {16} And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, {17} 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. {18} 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."

Who the twenty-four elders are is not addressed in Revelation, though it is tempting to make them the 12 patriarchs of Israel and the 12 apostles. Which brings up the question of whether John saw himself.

The time of grace has ended; the time of judgment has come. The destruction of the despoilers of the earth and of the persecutors of God’s people will now begin. The sixth seal foresaw the coming of God’s wrath. There are two words used for wrath in the New Testament. One is “orge” which is used both at the sixth seal and at the seventh trumpet and “thumos”^{ix} used for the seven bowl judgments¹²²

(Revelation 11) {19} 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.

Once again, the lightning, rumblings, thunder, and earthquake announce the transition from one set of judgments to another. This earthquake is not the same one as in verse 13.

¹²² Revelation 15

It is interesting to note that the last time the Holy of Holies was revealed was when Christ was crucified and the veil of the temple was torn apart.¹²³ Note that at that time, not only was the Holy of Holies revealed, but dead saints were raised and seen by many:

(Matthew 27) {51} Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, {52} and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; {53} and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

With the completion of the seven plagues, we have arrived at the time just before Christ's return. For 2000 years Christ has been at the Holy of Holies according to Hebrews. This is consistent with where we see him by the Father's throne as the Lamb. It is now time for him to leave the Holy of Holies and return to earth.

We are nearing the completion of the 7-7-7¹²⁴ mentioned in Chapter 8. We will see the completion in Chapters 15 and 16, which will be discussed in Book 3.

¹²³ Matthew 27:51-53.

¹²⁴ Seals, trumpets, bowls/plagues.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period 3 1/2 Years	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6 seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7 seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed</p> <p>The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7th trumpet
45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days	The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague	
The beginning of the millennium	Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon	
1,000 Years	The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem	
The end of the millennium	Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.	
The beginning of eternity	New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem	
Eternity		

Book 2

Endnotes

ⁱ It is interesting to note that immediately following this warning (or a continuation of it) Zephaniah seems to speak of a gathering of Israel just before the coming of the Day of the Lord:

(Zephaniah 2:1-2) Gather together, gather together, O shameful nation, {2} before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the Lord's wrath comes upon you.

ⁱⁱ 1 Enoch 20 is worth quoting in its entirety:

{1} And these are the names of the holy angels who watch. {2} Uriel, one of the holy angels, who is over the world and over Tartarus (the abode of the dead). {3} Raphael, one of the holy angels, who is over the spirits of men. {4} Raguel, one of the holy angels, who takes vengeance on the world of the luminaries. {5} Michael, one of the holy angels, to wit, he who is set over the best part of Mankind and over chaos. {6} Saraqael, one of the holy angels, who is set over the spirits who sin in the spirit. {7} Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who is over paradise and the serpents and the Cherubim. {8} Remiel, one of the holy angels, whom God set over those who rise.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is not clear how much literalness should be placed on the mechanism of the angel offering up the prayers to God. Scripture teaches (1 Timothy 2:5) that Christ is the only mediator between God and man, and so angels are not needed to offer our prayers. In the Old Testament the offering of incense at the golden altar in the Holy of Holies was the work of the high priest, a function taken over entirely by Christ (Hebrews 3:1, 8:1-2) who works in the true Holy of Holies, God's throne room.

This has led some to see this "other angel" as Christ himself, but there is no particular indication that the angel is a mediator. Since the end of the episode is that he hurls the censor full of fire to the earth, starting the Wrath of God, his role as an agent of God's judgment, common in Scripture, is more in view. The prayers are not primarily in view here. Rather, the judgment they asked for is.

Assuming these prayers are the ones offered by the martyrs under the altar (6:9-10), it is interesting to note that there was considerable delay from the time they made their prayers until those prayers were offered up before God, but no delay between that and the prayers being answered. It is tempting to read into this a parallel of the delay Christians often observe in having their prayers answered.

^{iv} Fire appears as judgment and as purification both as intentional acts of God in several places, including here, Psalm 21:9, when Satan is thrown into the Lake of Fire, and the refiner's fire that purifies Christians.

^v "biblaridion". This, and the related words "biblion" and "biblos" are derived from the city of Byblos, a transshipment point for papyrus. "Biblos" taken by itself means any inscribed paper, hence "book" or "scroll". "Biblion", a diminutive of "biblos", by NT times had come to mean the same thing as "biblos". This loss of diminutive meaning led to the formation of "biblaridion", a diminutive of "biblion" unknown in classical Greek. In Chapter 10, the Textus Receptus has "biblaridion", while some manuscripts have the spelling variant "biblidarion". A few have "biblion". Because textual support for "biblaridion" is strong,

attempts (e.g. *Byers*, p. 52, note 9) to equate this scroll with the one opened by the Lamb based on both being “biblion” are very weak. It is almost certain they are two different scrolls.

^{vi} This fascinating, and somewhat bizarre, apocalypse was written (with later Christian additions) by a Palestinian Jew near the end of the first century. This makes the book a Jewish contemporary of Revelation. It has many interesting things in it which cast some light on apocalyptic thought at the time John wrote, but like many extra-biblical books contains much that is strange. It proclaims that the Messiah will be revealed for a period of 400 years, after which he and all humans will die, after which there will be a new earth (2 Esdras 7:28ff.).

^{vii} One problem with the theory that one of the two witnesses is Elijah is the nature of his ministry as outlined by Malachi:

He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse (Malachi 4:6).

This does not fit very well with what we are told of the prophesying of the two witnesses, which seem to be a witness of judgment rather than reconciliation. In reply to this it should be mentioned that we know nothing about what they prophecy, only what happens to those who oppose them. The reaction of many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem after their resurrection (Revelation 11:13) may indicate their ministry was at least in part of reconciliation. John the Baptist is certainly a prototype here. His ministry combined repentance (Matthew 3:2) with judgment (3:7) and it is likely so will that of the two.

^{viii} It is, of course, possible that these people are all in the city of Jerusalem. It is possible, however, that this foretells a day in which events in Jerusalem are instantaneously presented around the earth, something which in John’s day would have been miraculous, and which in our own is commonplace.

^{ix} Using Strong’s Concordance, “Orge” means anger that is considered, planned, while “thumos” is more spontaneous, an outburst. The difference is that between “anger” and “fury”. Anger may be considered, contemplated, its results planned while fury is a sudden outbreak of passion.

Tapestry:

The Book of Revelation

**by David Justin Ross
and Brian J. Elmenhurst**

Book 3

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Introduction

In Book 1 we read that Satan is cast down and is making war on God's people. Under the reign of the Antichrist, this translates into the persecution and killing of many millions of Christians. This period is known as the Great Tribulation. The Antichrist also institutes a "voluntary" individual identifier known as the Mark of the Beast that is somehow permanently imprinted on the person both physically and spiritually. It ties him to the Antichrist and his world. No one will be able to function economically in the world without the mark. Therefore, the pressure to take the mark is severe. Note that there are those who do not take the mark and yet are not Christians, who, if caught, will also be persecuted and possibly put to death. The Great Tribulation and the Antichrist's rule start at the midpoint of Daniel's Seventieth Week and last 3 ½ years.

In Book 2 we read about God's Wrath on the Antichrist and his world. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 bring 2 of the 3 of God's woes on the world and those who have allied with the Antichrist and have taken his mark. The Great Tribulation and this portion of God's wrath happen virtually simultaneously. While God's people are suffering under rule of the Antichrist, so those who follow the Antichrist are suffering from God's wrath. Chapter 11 introduces the two witnesses who are untouchable by the Antichrist or his servants. They are in place for the period that the Antichrist is in power. They will preach repentance and are most likely be the instrument through which God's wrath is introduced.

Unlike other events, the length of God's Wrath is not expressly given in chapters 8-11. If we use Daniel's¹ timeframe, it is most likely 1335 days. The events in chapters 8, 9, and 10 start from the midpoint of Daniel's Seventieth Week and proceed from there. Chapter 11 then backtracks to the midpoint and introduces the two witnesses. It covers the time from there to where chapter 10 ends.

In Book 3, chapter 15 starts where chapter 11 left off. The first two Woes² lasted 1260 days and are considered partial judgments, due to the "1/3" referenced by the first four trumpets. The 1260 days, or 42 months, are now completed, and we are in the 30-day period that is implied by Daniel's 1290-day period. The 3rd Woe, which is 30 days long,

¹ Daniel 12:12

² Revelation 8-10

completes the 1290 days. The plagues in the third Woe are full judgments and no one could survive for long with such depleted life-giving resources.

(Daniel 12) {11} "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days..."

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 introduces the final Woe and its set of judgments, which are the plague or bowl judgments. The judgments have been growing increasingly severe and of shorter duration as they have proceeded. The Seventieth Week of Daniel's³ 1260 days is now completed, and we have entered a 30-day period of scouring and purifying the earth which completes the Wrath of God. These last judgments are also called his "Fury".

(Revelation 15) {1} I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed.

This is the third⁴ sign to appear in heaven, the first two being the Woman crowned with stars⁵ and the fiery red⁶ dragon.⁷ It is not said whether these are the same seven angels as those with the trumpets, but the great similarity between the trumpet and plague judgments may indicate that they are. In which case, they may be the seven angels of the seven trumpets that were in His presence as discussed earlier.

The word "wrath" translated from "thumos", which means an outburst, an almost uncontrolled anger. God's fury now begins. It will last only a short time, but the results on the earth will be disastrous.

(Revelation 15) {2a} And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name.

This vision is of things in heaven. The angels with the plagues are ready, arrayed in heaven for all to see. Their presence is associated with those who have died during the

³ See Appendix 1: Daniel's 70th Week

⁴ Revelation 12:1, 12:3, 15:1.

⁵ Revelation 12:1 The woman is the mother of both Jews and Christians.

⁶ The definition of the Greek work "purros" is fiery red. The NKJV translates it as fiery. The NIV translates it as red.

⁷The fiery dragon is Satan, the originator of the persecutions.

persecutions of the Antichrist. As is frequent in Revelation, punishment is associated with, and is vengeance for, persecution of believers. This scene in heaven therefore sets the context for what is about to hit the earth hard.

Those John sees standing at the throne of God, around the glassy sea (which is just before the throne⁸) are martyrs, and yet they are victorious. Though slain, they are not defeated. In God's view, they are not harmed in any way. These martyrs are included in those mentioned by Christ in the Olivet Discourse⁹ as recorded by Luke. Taking the scripture literally, they are those who were martyred in the Great Tribulation during the Beast's persecutions. This would make them the same as the innumerable multitude John saw with Christ in Revelation chapter 7¹⁰.

*(Luke 21){16} You will be betrayed even by parents,
brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of
you to death. {17} All men will hate you because of me.
{18} But not a hair of your head will perish. {19} By
standing firm you will gain life.*

Here in Revelation, we see that promise fulfilled.

The first appearance of these martyrs was just before the initiation of the trumpet judgments. Here, the second sighting, is just before the plagues. As we have seen before, the vengeance of God was prayed for by the martyrs of past ages¹¹ and offered up to God from the golden incense bowls¹² at the beginning of the seven trumpets. There, the bowls held their prayers for vengeance, and they were told to wait until the number of their brothers should be filled up. Now we see that it has been completed. They are the ones that the saints under the altar were told to wait for. At last, the full number of the martyrs stand before God, and the same incense bowls¹³ holds the last plagues, the final and complete vengeance of God.

⁸ Revelation 4:6.

⁹ See Appendix Olivet Discourse and Revelation 7

¹⁰ Revelation 7:9-17.

¹¹ Fifth seal, Revelation 6:9-10.

¹² Revelation 5:8.

¹³ Revelation 15:7.

(Revelation 15) {2b} They held harps given them by God {3} and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. {4} Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

This is the third song sung before the throne. The first¹⁴ was that started by the four living creatures and the elders and spread to embrace all of creation. At that song, the elders held harps and golden bowls full of incense. The second¹⁵ song was sung just by the 144,000, the firstfruits of a redeemed Israel, and possibly the firstfruits of the Great Tribulation martyrs. They also had (or were accompanied by) harps. This third song is sung by the rest of the martyrs. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb¹⁶ and is also accompanied by harps.

That one song is the song of both Moses and the Lamb shows that both serve the same God, and that both Jews and Christians are God's people. It probably also indicates that the group before the throne contains both Jews (likely the 144,000) and Gentiles.

The song feels like a cleansing breath or reflection before the Fury starts, similar to the silence in Heaven prior to the beginning of the Wrath in the Sixth Seal.

(Revelation 15) {5} After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. {6} Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests

The temple in heaven was opened with the sounding of the seventh trumpet.¹⁷ In chapter 14 three angels¹⁸ associated with the harvest of the earth came out of the temple. Now come the seven angels with the seven last plagues. It is interesting to

¹⁴ Revelation 5:8-13 which is prior to the start of Daniel's 70th week.

¹⁵ Revelation 14:1-3 which is at the midpoint.

¹⁶ John 1:29.

¹⁷ Revelation 11:15-19.

¹⁸ Revelation 14:15,17,18.

notice that when the seven plagues are complete, we never hear of the temple again. In fact, we are told the New Jerusalem has no temple¹⁹ because God and the Lamb live there.²⁰ The things on earth are only a shadow of the reality which is in Heaven²¹, but the real Temple which we have seen here in Revelation is in Heaven. Therefore, when heaven and earth merge, the shadows disappear - and so, apparently, do those things of which they were the shadows. Paul foresaw the day when the images of things dimly seen as in a mirror will be replaced by reality:

(1 Cor 15) {12} Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

Their golden sashes across their chests are much like the garb of Christ when he first appears in Revelation.²² A sash was part of the uniform of the sons of Aaron,²³ and may reflect priestly functions, which may be associated with the incense bowls (only the high priest could offer incense). The priestly functions are not those of the angels, but of Christ. These angels may be a sort of proxy for Christ, carrying out his direct will, since now he is about to reclaim the earth. They are dressed like him because they perform his will. This supports the idea that they are the angels in His presence²⁴ discussed in chapter 8.

Shining clothing is a mark of angels,²⁵ and may be the reflected glory of God.

(Revelation 15) {7} Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever.

Just as they were associated with the seal²⁶ judgments, the four living creatures are associated with the seven last plagues.

¹⁹ Revelation 21:22.

²⁰ Revelation 21:3, 21:22.

²¹ Hebrews 10:1

²² Revelation 1:13.

²³ Exodus 28:3-4.

²⁴ Revelation 8:2.

²⁵ E.g. Luke 24:4, Acts 10:30.

²⁶ Revelation 6

In the deuterocanonical book Tobit,²⁷ Raphael says he is “one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One”. Note that the 24 elders²⁸ are both in the presence of God and hold bowls of prayers. They do not, however, offer them up. That is left to this being who specifically called an angel.²⁹ He presents both incense and the prayers of the saints.³⁰

We therefore have three groups of seven angels: the seven angels that Tobit says present the prayers of the saints and are in the presence of God, the angels with the seven trumpets in chapter 8 who are called those who “stand before God”, and these seven angels who come out of the temple and are carrying the golden bowls filled with plagues. All three sets come from the temple and all there are associated either with the prayers of the saints or with the result of those prayers, the wrath of God. They are therefore likely to all be the same angels.

(Revelation 15) {8} And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

The temple is now shut up until all is completed, and indeed though we will twice more hear voices from within the temple (at the start³¹ and at the end³² of the plagues), we will never again see inside it.

²⁷ Tobit 12:15.

²⁸ Revelation 4:10

²⁹ Revelation 8:3.

³⁰ Revelation 5:8.

³¹ Revelation 16:1.

³² Revelation 16:17.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6th seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7th seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses</p> <p>The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7th trumpet
<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>The beginning of the millennium</p>	<p>The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	
1,000 Years	<p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p> <p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
Eternity	<p>The end of the millennium</p> <p>The beginning of eternity</p> <p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	

Chapter 16

In chapter 15, seven angels were holding bowls containing plagues. Chapter 16 executes the delivery of these last seven plagues.³³ The plagues parallel the trumpet judgments, but unlike them, the plague judgments are total.ⁱ

(Revelation 16) {1} 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.” {2} 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.

Note that these sores are on those with the mark, rather than, as with fifth trumpet, on those without God’s mark. The Greek uses the singular for “sore”. It might be speculated that the mark gives them an infection. It is probable that there are three groups of people: 1) those sealed by God with His mark, 2) those sealed by Satan with this mark, and 3) those who have not received either. If that is the case, the latter may be spared the consequences of this first bowl and maybe even the following bowls.

It is probably a mistake to make too much of the double designation of who gets the sore(s); those who take the mark and worship the image of the beast. Since the mark of God cannot be physically forced on someone, it is very likely that the mark of the beast must also be taken voluntarily. While it could be strongly compelled, it cannot be physically implanted in someone against their will. See, for example, the commentary on the mark in chapters 13 and 14. This would imply that the “and” in verse 2 and elsewhere is two properties of the same person, not two different categories of people.

(Revelation 16) {3} 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. {4} The third

³³ These can be variously called the bowl judgments or the plague judgments. The bowls are probably the bowls that originally held the prayers of the saints, and the plagues are the final punishment on the earth for their deaths.

angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. {5} 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; {6} for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.” {7} And I heard the altar respond: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”

It is not so much that the people of the earth have blasphemed or denied God or that they have rebelled against him, but that is certainly part of it. However, their most egregious sins are that they have attacked and slaughtered his holy people throughout the ages and most particularly in the days of the Antichrist. It is appropriate that the retribution is the turning of waters into blood. They have killed the saints, desiring their blood. They wanted blood, now God has given them what they wanted, in surfeit.

The reason for the plagues is made clear in verse 6 by stating it outright, and it is made clear to the world through the bloody corruption of the sea and fresh water. It seems unlikely that life could continue for more than a few days if all the sources of water were destroyed. Since the plagues certainly last longer than that, perhaps some limitation is seen either in the water sources or the number of days. The other way to understand how the contamination of all the waters may play out is to look at how it was manifested when God turned the waters of Egypt to blood. The Egyptians had to dig near the rivers to get drinkable water³⁴. The Egyptian’s plight may foreshadow the events of this plague. In that plague, all the open water sources were contaminated but localized to the area where the Egyptians lived. In the plague in chapter 16, it is worldwide, but may still refer only to surface water.

Notice it is the altar which responds to the statement of the angel who poured his plague upon the waters. Almost certainly, it is the souls of the martyrs, first seen at the fifth seal³⁵, who respond from beneath the altar. It cannot be the voice that spoke from between the horns of the altar,³⁶ for that is probably Christ himself speaking. There are two reasons for this. First, all the events concerning the reclamation of the earth seem

³⁴ Exodus 7:24

³⁵ Revelation 6

³⁶ Revelation 9:13.

to be in His hands and the hands of his angels. Second, the horns of the golden incense altar have a place in atonement³⁷ for the sins of Israel. Since Christ is the redeemer, it is possible this is an image of Him, though atonement is hardly the image in view here.

(Revelation 16) {8} The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. {9} 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.

Whether God does this via massive solar flares, switching the magnetic poles, or something else that will remove the earth's protection, it is going to be unbearably hot. Add this to the very low supply of potable water and you have a recipe for misery and death. Yet, again, just as at the sixth trumpet,³⁸ men refuse to repent.

(Revelation 16) {10} 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 {11} and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

They go from too much light to too little. Apparently, everyone will see that the kingdom of the Beast has gone dark, but that punishment is compounded on those who have the sores from taking the mark. Together the darkness and the gnawing of their tongues in agony may be the darkness that can be felt, as in the 9th plague on Egypt,³⁹ and it may be further attacks by demons on those with the mark.

(Revelation 16) {12} 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.

Isaiah tells how this will happen:

³⁷ Exodus 30:10, Leviticus 4:1-7.

³⁸ Revelation 9:20.

³⁹ Exodus 10:21-23.

(Isaiah 11) {15} 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.

This prophecy is part of Isaiah 11 which is clearly a Messianic/Last Days prophecy. Perhaps this scorching wind is a result of the heating by the sun in verse 8.

This drying of the Euphrates has two purposes. Here in Revelation, it is to make it easier for the kings of the east to get to Armageddon.⁴⁰ In Isaiah, it is to facilitate the return of scattered Jews to Israel after the reign of the Antichrist is broken.⁴¹ It shows that even things which help evil may have as their ultimate purpose the benefit of the good.

(Revelation 16) {13} 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. {14} 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.

The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet represent Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. These three beings expel demons from their mouths, who in turn perform miracles for the purpose of convincing the kings of the whole world to gather at Armageddon for the final battle. Some of those kings, namely the kings of the east, will have their passage cleared for them by the angel who dries up the Euphrates.

This passage has a parallel of sorts in the Old Testament:

(1 Kings 22) {19} Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. {20} And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his

⁴⁰ Revelation 16:16

⁴¹ Isaiah 11:16.

death there?' "One suggested this, and another that. {21} Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' {22} " 'By what means?' the LORD asked. " 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. " 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.' {23} "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."⁴²

In 1 Kings, the lying spirit is put by God into the mouths of Ahab's prophets for the purpose of bringing him to a battle where he will be killed. The concept of God sending lying spirits is worthy of significant study but is outside the scope of this book. Suffice it to say that the spirits sent out by Satan, the Antichrist, and the False prophet lead the kings of all the world to come to Armageddon and to the last battle where they too will meet their deaths.

Let's recap where we are. The seven seals have been opened. The Antichrist and False Prophet have slaughtered millions of Jews and Christians. For three and one-half years, two witnesses, probably either Moses and Elijah or Enoch and Elijah, have prophesied in the streets of Jerusalem, performing wondrous signs and killing with fire from heaven all who would harm them. God's wrath has attacked the earth, first partially through the seven trumpets, and now completely through the first six plagues. We are at the very end. The kings are gathering for the final battle of this age. We have been through seven years of hell on earth, with sign after sign as prophesied by Old Testament prophets, Christ himself, and shown to John in detailed vision after detailed vision. And what is the next thing we are told?

(Revelation 16) {15} "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."

This phrase is used many times throughout the New Testament.ⁱⁱ It was first used in the Olivet Discourse and then quoted in several epistles. It is used to justify the belief that there is a "secret" rapture of Christians which marks the beginning of the seven-year period. There are two reasons why people take this view: 1) The mistaken belief that

⁴² 2 Chronicles 18:18-22 is nearly identical.

everyone will be caught off guard and 2) the correct one that Christians are not appointed to God's wrath.⁴³

However, if anything is NOT like the coming of a thief, it certainly must be Christ's return. So, this seems to be the granddaddy of all oxymorons.

Here, just as Christ is about to return in glory, we are told he comes like a thief. Paul declares that "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night for those who are in darkness". For those Christians who have lived through the Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God, this will not be a surprise.

The point of the Thief in the Night scriptures is that the world is caught off guard, but not God's people. We are to be watching for the signs, but not foretelling when Christ will come, and we should be prepared for him when he does return. Both the five wise and five foolish virgins were sleeping, but the five wise ones had prepared for their Lord's return.⁴⁴

(Revelation 16) {16} Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Armageddon is from the Hebrew 'Har-Megiddo', which simply means the hill of Megiddo. Megiddo was a fortified town in the north of Israel, southeast of Mount Carmel. Because it was located on the main road connecting Syria and Egypt, it was the site of important battles in the past⁴⁵. It will be the gathering place for the final battle between the forces of the Antichrist and the Jews⁴⁶.

This place is also called the Valley of Jezreel and the Plain of Esdraelon.⁴⁷

(Hosea 1) {11} Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint

⁴³ 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

⁴⁴ Matthew 25:1-13.

⁴⁵ It was the site of an important victory of the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III over a coalition of kings about 1438 BC. Several battles in the Old Testament were fought near Megiddo (e.g. Judges 5:19, 2 Kings 23:29, 2 Chronicles 35:22). See also Joshua 17:16; Judges 6:33; 1 Samuel 29:1; Hosea 1:4-5.

⁴⁶ Revelation 16:16, Zechariah 12:10-11.

⁴⁷ "Esdraelon" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Jezreel". It is the modern name for that valley.

themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

The Valley of Jezreel (God sows) is on the southeast part of the great plain that divides Galilee from Samaria. This fertile region lies northwest of Mt. Gilboa, extending from the city of Jezreel to Beth Shan. In a broader sense the name is applied to the entire lowland region, stretching from the Jordan Valley to Mt. Carmel, and encompassing the Valley of Megiddo, today known as the Plain of Esdraelon. The entire valley was the only natural east-west route through Palestine.

(Revelation 16) {17} 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!"

"It is done"⁴⁸ echoes Christ's last words on the cross, "It is finished",⁴⁹ but it also echoes the beginning of the Bible. It occurs one other place in Revelation, when God makes all things new, the new heavens and the new earth.⁵⁰

(Revelation 16) {18} 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. {19} 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. {20} Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. {21} 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.

The combination "megas polis" ("great city") is used eight times in Revelation. The first use, telling where the bodies of the two witnesses will lie, is clearly Jerusalem because it is where Christ was crucified.⁵¹ Verse 19 is more problematic. While "great city" refers

⁴⁸ "ginomai", literally "it is complete", a cognate with "genesis", "beginning".

⁴⁹ "teleo", literally "it is paid".

⁵⁰ Revelation 21:6.

⁵¹ Revelation 11:8.

to Babylon six times in chapters 17 and 18, it probably here refers to Jerusalem. Supporting this is the following from Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 25) {15} This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it:..." {18-25} Jerusalem ... Egypt ... the Philistines ... Edom, Moab and Ammon ... Tyre and Sidon ... Dedan, Tema, Buz ... Arabia ... Zimri, Elam and Media; {26} and all the kings of the north, near and far, one after the other--all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. And after all of them, the king of Sheshach will drink it too.

(Jeremiah 25) {30} Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: "'The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth..." {33} At that time those slain by the LORD will be everywhere--from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be mourned or gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground.

These two prophecies appear to apply to the same end time events, the culmination of God's wrath and the destruction of those who oppose him. Now notice that verse 19 lists three things in order: the great city, the cities of the nations, and Babylon. If the great city is Jerusalem then the order is identical to that in Jeremiah: Jerusalem, a list of gentile nations, and finally Sheshach. Sheshach (ששך) is mentioned nowhere but here. Using the Atbash Cipher in which the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet is replaced by the first, the second to last by the second, and so on, ששך decodes to בבל or bbl (Babel, hence Babylon). Since the "great city" is first in verse 19, it must stand for Jerusalem.

At this point in Revelation, we switch from concentrating on Jerusalem to concentrating on both physical and metaphysical Babylon and the judgment that befalls it. Verse 19 both completes the 30-day period and ushers in the start of the 45 days which are covered in abbreviated form in verses 20 and 21. Throughout Revelation, rumblings, lightnings, earthquakes and so on mark the start and completion of each of the series of judgments. Here they complete the fury of the wrath of God.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6 seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7 seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses</p> <p>The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	<p>The seven plagues</p> <p>The 7th trumpet</p>
<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>The beginning of the millennium</p>	<p>The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	
<p>1,000 Years</p> <p>The end of the millennium</p>	<p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p> <p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
Eternity	<p>The beginning of eternity</p> <p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	

Book 3

Endnotes

ⁱ The parallels between the seven trumpets and seven plagues are quite close, where the plagues complete the partial judgments started by the Trumpets:

Trumpets	Plagues
1. hail, fire, blood burn 1/3 of earth, trees, and all the grass.	Bowl poured on land, sores on those marked by the beast.
2. 1/3 of the sea turns to blood, 1/3 of sea life dies.	All of sea turns to blood, all sea life dies.
3. 1/3 of fresh waters turn bitter, many die.	All rivers and springs turn to blood.
4. 1/3 of sun, moon, stars, day, and night darkened.	Sun torments people with fire.
5. Abyss opened, demons released, attack unsaved.	Kingdom of the beast is darkened, men in agony.
6. Angels at Euphrates released, war kills 1/3 of men.	Euphrates dried, kings go to Armageddon.

ⁱⁱ The thief in the night scriptures:

(Matthew 24:43-44) 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.

(Luke 12:39-40) But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-4) Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

(2 Peter 3:10) 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.

(Revelation 3:3) 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.

(Revelation 16:15) "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."

See Appendix 7 "The Thief in The Night"

Tapestry:

The Book of Revelation

**by David Justin Ross
and Brian J. Elmenhurst**

Book 4

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Introduction

In Books 1-3 (chapters 8-16) we saw the rise of the Antichrist and his initiation of the Great Tribulation. In conjunction with that event, we saw the beginning of The Wrath of God. The events in those chapters occur in the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week.

In Book 4, chapters 5, 6, and 7 we are at the beginning of Daniel's Seventieth Week, the last week (i.e. period of seven years) of the 70 times 7 (490 years) fulfillment of God's prophesy on the nation/people of Israel. To date 483 of those years have passed. The last seven years are still to come. While like the other 483 years, the final seven have primarily to do with the people of Israel, but this time Christians will also be in the mix as well, they will participate in the harshness of the Antichrists and his dominions. Concurrently, the world will also begin to face God's wrath for what they have done to His servants.

In Chapter 5 we are in heaven where we see a scroll with seven seals. The desire of those in Heaven is to have it opened. However, no one is found that is worthy to break the seals except the Lamb of God.

Chapter 6 has a heavenly perspective with direct earthly results. As each seal is broken, a corresponding action occurs on earth. None of those events on earth explicitly point to the beginning of the seven-year period. During this time the world's conflicts are increasing, setting the stage for someone to bring peace, but we will not know we are in the Seventieth Week until the Antichrist is revealed at the middle of the period.

Chapter 7 presents the heavenly perspective on what has occurred on earth over the seven years, particularly after the midpoint. This chapter is linked to chapter 14 since it is also mostly told from a heavenly perspective, though it addresses what has happened and will happen on earth, particularly concerning the sealing of 144,000 Jews and their death at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. It also shows the beginning of the Wrath of God.

Chapter 5

Except for John's entry into heaven (and he is just an observer), the scene in Chapter 4 is timeless. The worship around the throne is perpetual and repeated. Change begins with the introduction of the Lamb at the beginning of Chapter 5: God, in the person of Jesus Christ, is about to reclaim the earth.¹ Heaven's invasion of earth is appropriately introduced by the One who in His person mixes the eternal and the temporal.

(Revelation 5) {1} Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.

Ascribing a hand to the one on the throne is as far as John will go in describing the occupant in human terms. The metaphor of God's hand for his power and strength and for his ability to convey prophetic gifts is used throughout the Bible², but portrayals of the hand of God as a literal appendage are much less common. The ten commandments were inscribed by the finger of God,³ and in a vision Ezekiel saw both God's hand and a scroll⁴. Later, Ezekiel was carried by a spirit (or the Holy Spirit) who "stretched what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem"⁵. Amos saw the hand of God holding a plumb line⁶, and Daniel, in the famous vision of the handwriting on the wall⁷, saw a supernatural human hand. This latter may have been an angel,⁸ however. Note that except for the writing of the ten commandments, all of these are in visions of judgment. Apparently, though God's hand is spoken of in many contexts, it is seen mostly in judgment.

In this passage, God's hand holds the seven-sealed scroll, the opening of which will occupy much of the remainder of Revelation. The Greek word used for scroll is "biblion", which can also mean book. There were books at the end of the first century when Revelation was written, but they were still rare, not coming into general use until the following century. This has been used to argue that Revelation was written in the second century and could not be the work of John the Apostle, but the argument is specious. Revelation 6:14, which uses "biblion", states "The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up". You can't roll up a book.

¹ Job 19:25-26.

² e.g. Exodus 6:1,8, Deuteronomy 2:15, Joshua 22:31, Isaiah 5:25, Luke 1:66, 1 Peter 3:22 (where Christ is at God's right hand, consistent with where he finds the scroll).

³ Exodus 31:18, Deuteronomy 9:10.

⁴ Ezekiel 2:9.

⁵ Ezekiel 8:3.

⁶ Amos 7:7.

⁷ Daniel 5:1ff.

⁸ Daniel 5:24.

But what is this scroll? It is curious that Revelation never says directly. One possibility is that it is a contract of some kind. Both marriage contracts and property contracts were written on scrolls and sealed.⁹ The scroll may be the marriage contract between Christ and his Church. The timing of events in the last chapters of Revelation gives support to this interpretation. The last event associated with the opening of the seventh seal is the destruction of the prostitute of Babylon, and the next event mentioned after it is the marriage supper of the Lamb.¹⁰ One problem, though, is that in verse 2 it declaims, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” Were it a marriage contract, the most likely question would have been “Whose is it to open?” Also, a marriage contract is from the groom to the bride, so presumably she, not he, would open it.

Another possibility is that the scroll is the deed to the earth. This is a better fit for several reasons. First, the events that unfold as the scroll is unsealed are more appropriate to the cleansing of the earth before it is taken by its true owner than for a marriage contract. Second, the Lamb is worthy to open the scroll because he was slain and is the redeemer of mankind. As the events of the seven seals unfold, Christ is reclaiming his creation. Third, when the seventh trumpet sounds. Loud voices in heaven proclaim, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ”.¹¹ Since the seven plagues are contained within the seventh trumpet and the seven trumpets are within the seventh seal, when the seventh seal is fully opened, Christ takes possession of the earth. Interpreting the scroll as the deed to the earth probably captures an important piece of the scroll’s meaning, but a more complete explanation requires looking at scriptural parallels.

Several similar scrolls are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. The first is from Isaiah. He is given a prophecy against Jerusalem which had a near fulfillment¹² when Nebuchadnezzar captured the city in 586 or 587 BC and will have a far fulfillment in the time of the Antichrist. God speaks first to Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 29) {3} I will encamp against you all around; I will encircle you with towers and set up my siege works against you... {5} But your many enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff. Suddenly, in an instant, {6} the LORD Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire.

He then speaks to the nations that have attacked Jerusalem.

⁹ The ketubah or marriage contract can be presented in the form of a scroll. It is between the groom and the bride and is meant to protect the bride. It often lays out the financial obligations the groom has toward her. See Jeremiah 32:6-16 for a property deed in the Old Testament.

¹⁰ Revelation 19:7-9.

¹¹ Revelation 11:15.

¹² See Appendix 8 Principles of Exegesis: Principle 3

(Isaiah 29) {10} The LORD has brought over you a deep sleep: He has sealed your eyes (the prophets); he has covered your heads (the seers). {11} For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, "Read this, please," he will answer, "I can't; it is sealed."

Here, as in Revelation, is a sealed scroll which, is reasonable to assume it, contains a prophecy of a period of chastisement for the people of God followed by doom for his enemies. Daniel reports a similar scroll.

(Daniel 12) {1}"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. {2} Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. {3} Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. {4} 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."

Both these scrolls contain messages of distress and deliverance for the righteous and doom for the wicked. Since these messages are remarkably similar to what unfolds as the scroll in Revelation is unsealed, it is likely the latter is in some way God's answer to the former two Old Testament books. Neither Jerusalem's enemies in Isaiah nor Daniel himself would understand the events prophesied in these two sealed scrolls, since the time of the end was not yet come. In Revelation, the time has come, and the scroll is unsealed. In a juxtaposition to Daniel's sealing up the words of his scroll, John is told *not* to seal up the words of his prophecy, because the time is near¹³.

Once the seven seals are opened, we hear no more of the scroll. Its contents are never read, and after Chapter 5 it is never again mentioned. This seems odd, given its obvious importance. What can this mean? The answer was hinted at above.

At the time of John's writing, documents were sealed to keep them from being opened and read. They were sealed by placing a soft substance like clay across the opening and imprinting it with a symbol that signified the owner. The seals were not part of the

¹³ Revelation 22:10.

content. It seems likely, therefore, that the content of this scroll is the events which happen after it is unsealed, where events are shown, not read. The scroll is more like a movie than a book. The movie is about Christ retaking the earth and the final victory of Him and his people over evil. This is consistent with the very first verse of Revelation where the book is called "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to **show** his servants what must soon take place."¹⁴

(Revelation 5) {2} And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" {3} But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. {4} I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. {5} Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

The mighty angel is unnamed, and it is probably futile to speculate which one it is, particularly since all angels are called "mighty ones".¹⁵ He (or others like him) appear twice more in Revelation. The next appearance is in Chapter 10 where a mighty angel brings John a little scroll to eat, and the final example in Chapter 18:21 where a mighty angel hurls a boulder into the sea, acting out the judgment against Babylon. In each case the scroll has to do with the judgment of the earth.

The mighty angel calls out for one who can open the seals, but no one is worthy to do so, and so John weeps until he is told to stop by one of the elders. Christ has triumphed and is able to open the scroll. Christ's triumph is over death and sin, as the songs which follow attest. Because he is **worthy** to open the seals, he is therefore **able** to open them.

The Lion of Judah originates in Jacob's last words to his sons.

{Genesis 49}{9} "...You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness - who dares to rouse him? {10} The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his."

The last sentence was taken by the Jews as being Messianic, and Christians believe it will be fulfilled by Christ at his return.

¹⁴ Revelation 1:1.

¹⁵ Psalm 103:20.

Christ is the Root of David, since he is both a descendent of David¹⁶ and his ultimate successor as king. Christ calls himself “the Root and the Offspring of David”.¹⁷ The image of the Messiah as the Root of David comes from Isaiah 11 where the prophet, speaking of the Millennium, says “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”.¹⁸ Jesse, David’s father, stands for David himself.

(Revelation 5) {6} Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

In the center of the throne, in the very place of Godⁱ, stands the one who is worthy and able to break the seals and open the scroll. Christ is the Lamb of God¹⁹, and his worthiness stems from his triumph in rising from the dead and thereby redeeming those who trust in Him. That triumph in turn stems from his sinlessness. Even standing by the throne of his father, Christ’s death wounds are apparent to all who see him. Since John is the only gospel writer to mention the wounds in Christ’s resurrection body²⁰, it is perhaps no surprise he alludes to them here. Remember that Jesus and John were particularly close, and his friend’s death wounds would have made a particularly strong impression on John.

Three times in Revelation John refers to Christ as a lamb having been slain.²¹ Christ is the Passover Lamb, sacrificed to remove sin.²² Redemption by a lamb goes back to Abraham and Isaac.²³ Lambs as sin offerings are mentioned repeatedly in the Old Testament,²⁴ though other animals are also used. The Messiah is first described as a sacrificial lamb by Isaiah in the famous fifty-third chapter of his book. Speaking of the coming Messiah, the prophet wrote:

(Isaiah 53) {7} He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

¹⁶ Luke 3: 23-38

¹⁷ Revelation 22:16.

¹⁸ Isaiah 11:10.

¹⁹ John 1:29

²⁰ John 20:27.

²¹ Revelation 5:6, 5:12, 13:8.

²² 1 Corinthians 5:7.

²³ Genesis 22:1-18.

²⁴ e.g. Leviticus 4:32, Numbers 6:12.

Christ is twice called the Lamb of God by John the Baptist²⁵, and Peter, in a strongly parallel scripture to this current one, says:

(1 Peter 1) {18} For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, {19} but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. {20} He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

This is, however, a most unusual lamb. Besides looking as if it had been slain, it has seven horns and seven eyes.ⁱⁱ Creation was complete on the seventh day, and anything that numbers seven usually signifies completion or being filled up. The seven eyes almost certainly signify the same thing as the seven lamps blazing before the throne of God²⁶ since both are called “the seven spirits of God”.ⁱⁱⁱ

The seven spirits are discussed in detail elsewhere, as they most likely refer at least in part to the Holy Spirit. The Lamb has seven eyes, which probably means Christ manifests the Spirit fully. The seven eyes of God are tied with the Messiah in a prophecy of Zechariah. God is speaking:

(Zechariah 3) {8} “Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. {9} See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,” says the LORD Almighty, “and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.”

The Branch is another title of Christ,²⁷ and Christ is also the stone that the builders rejected²⁸ and the one who removes the world’s sin.²⁹

The Lamb’s seven horns probably mean the same thing as Christ’s later title “king of kings and lord of lords”³⁰: Christ is the supreme ruler. Horns are used many times in

²⁵ John 1:29, 36 Only John’s gospel contains this account, and possibly the emphasis there and in Revelation on Christ as the Lamb of God is further evidence for John’s authorship of Revelation.

²⁶ Revelation 4:5.

²⁷ E.g. Isaiah 4:2, Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah 14:19, Jeremiah 23:5, Jeremiah 33:15, Zechariah 3:8, Zechariah 6:12

²⁸ Matthew 21:42.

²⁹ John 1:29.

³⁰ Revelation 17:14 and 19:16.

Scripture as symbols of kingship. Samuel equates them³¹, as do David³² and Daniel³³. The seven horns would therefore signify completeness of royal power.

Christ therefore fully possesses both royal and spiritual power. This is just what Zechariah said about the Messiah. The Branch, "will ... rule on this throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two."³⁴

(Revelation 5) {7} He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. {8} And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. {9} And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. {10} You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Christ is worthy to take the scroll. It is not given to Him, but it is His by right to take. Similarly, when he returns to earth³⁵, he will take back the world which was made through him.

In verse 8 both the living creatures and the elders fall down before the Lamb. This act of worship, the same act they perform periodically before God³⁶, shows once again that Christ is himself God and worthy of worship.

The elders are holding harps. Though the text is not completely clear, it seems best to ascribe the harps to the elders alone, rather than to both the elders and the four living creatures. Harps appear three times in Revelation, and except for a passing mention in 1 Corinthians 14:7, nowhere else in the New Testament. The elders have them, the 144,000 sing a song with the sound "like that of harpists playing their harps"³⁷, and the tribulation martyrs³⁸ are given harps. Those who say the twenty-four elders are humans see a particular symmetry here. In their view, the twenty-four elders represent both the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles, Israel and the Church. So, too, do the two groups

³¹ 1 Samuel 2:10.

³² Psalm 89:20-27.

³³ Daniel 8:21.

³⁴ Zechariah 6:13b.

³⁵ Revelation 19.

³⁶ Revelation 4:9-10.

³⁷ Revelation 14:2.

³⁸ Revelation 15:2.

who are given harps: the 144,000 are from Israel while the martyrs of Chapter 15 are Gentile. These three scenes are the origin of the popular idea that people in heaven play harps for all eternity.

Besides their harps, the elders hold bowls of incense which are equated with the prayers of the saints. The original equation of incense and prayers in Scripture is in Psalm 141.³⁹ Another linkage occurs in Luke 1:10.

There is a nice set of overlapping images presented around the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven plague judgments. Incense and prayers are mentioned together here, just before the first seal is opened and in 8:3-4 just before the first trumpet sounds. In the corresponding place before the seven plagues, there are no prayers or incense mentioned, but bowls are. These bowls hold the last seven judgments⁴⁰ which is the vengeance the martyrs prayed for,⁴¹ so in this fashion they still hold the prayers of the saints.

The martyrs themselves also appear in one way or another before each of the three series of judgments. They are not directly seen in heaven before the first seal, but they are certainly included in those mentioned in verses 9 and 10, particularly since verse 10 states they will reign on earth and Chapter 20 tells of the reign of the martyrs. They are mentioned expressly at the end of Chapter 7, just before the first trumpet sounds, and again in 15:2, just before the seven last plagues. This fugue of incense, prayers, bowls, and martyrs is one of the many reasons Revelation is a joy from a literary as well as from a religious perspective.

The song in verses 9 and 10 tells why Christ is worthy to open the seals. His death redeemed people from all the earth. The earth is Christ's because He made it,⁴² because he bought it with his blood, and because he will wrest it back from Satan when he returns to earth.

The song the elders sing is "a new song", as is the one sung by the 144,000 in Chapter 14. Several of the psalms prefigure this song of the elders, especially Psalm 98:1. "Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him." The Messiah is several times called God's arm, the most famous in Isaiah 53, so it is likely that Psalm 98 is messianic.

God told Moses at Sinai that the Israelites would be for Him "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"⁴³. In Revelation, this verse is three times applied to Christians. In 1:6, John used it in giving thanks to Christ, the One from whom came the prophecies of the book.

³⁹ Psalm 141:2.

⁴⁰ The same Greek word (phialay) is used of both sets of bowls.

⁴¹ Revelation 6:10.

⁴² John 1:3

⁴³ Exodus 19:6.

It is used here in the song of the elders, and again in 20:6. Like Christ himself, believers will be both kings and priests.

It is clear from Revelation 5:10 that all Christians are to be a kingdom and priests “and they will reign on the earth”.⁴⁴

(Revelation 5) {11} Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. {12} In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" {13} Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" {14} The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshipped.

The song spreads from the throne and takes in more and more of creation until every living thing is included. At the center is God who sits upon the throne, and with him the Lamb. Their actions and their persons are the object of the song. Close around the throne, leading the singing, are the four living creatures and then the twenty-four elders whose worship is directed by them. In the next circle are more than a hundred million angels. This number is second in the Bible only to the two hundred million mounted troops of Chapter 9. This number may be meant literally, but unlike in the latter case John does not say he was told the number. Daniel, in similar circumstance saw the same number of angels, expressed the same, around the throne of God.⁴⁵

From the angels the song expands farther, and John hears the voices of all the inhabitants of heaven and earth singing the praises of God and the Lamb, and finally coalesces back to the center.

Verse 13 presents a problem when it says every creature on earth sang the praises of God and the Lamb. There are several ways to interpret this. The first possibility is that it is just Christ's followers who are singing, since the unsaved would be unlikely to join in. The use of “every” precludes this interpretation.

⁴⁴ Why Christians who have died prior to Christ's return will be in the first resurrection and not just part of them will be dealt with in Book 6 (Chapters 20, 21, & 22).

⁴⁵ Daniel 7:10.

A second possibility is that John is speaking figuratively. He can only trust his own ears and therefore could not possibly have known that every earthly creature was singing. John therefore spoke with purposeful exaggeration to make the point that everything on earth belongs to God. As he says a hundred million angels two verses earlier, so he says every creature here. The quantities are not meant to be exact.

The difficulty with this is that while “ten thousand” is often used in Scripture as a figurative term⁴⁶, “every” is much more definite. To ignore its literal meaning without substantial evidence violates the principle of interpretation we have been following: The Bible is to be taken literally except where the metaphor is obvious.⁴⁷

A third possibility is that John is teaching a form of universal salvation here, and what we are seeing is the eventual future state of all then living on the earth. The timing of these events makes this view impossible. The Lamb is about to open the first seal. This is taken by premillennialists of every stripe to be at the beginning of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. Since this is significantly less than seven years from the issuance of the mark of the Beast⁴⁸, and since John says all who take the mark will spend eternity in torment⁴⁹, he is not teaching universal salvation.

The most likely interpretation is that here, at the beginning of Christ’s reclamation of the earth, we are seeing the universal harmony which will prevail when the process is complete. In Ephesians 1:10 we learn of a time when God will “bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. It is possible that verses 11-13 look forward to that time. In any event, at this point in John’s vision it is still a long time until all creation will be brought under Christ, but the process is about to begin.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Leviticus 26:8, Deuteronomy 32:30, and 1Corinthians 4:15

⁴⁷ Appendix 8: Principles of Exegesis, Principle 1

⁴⁸ Revelation 13

⁴⁹ Revelation 14:9-11

⁵⁰ Romans 8:19-20

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 begins what might be called the history of the end of the world. In a series of visions in this and the following fifteen chapters, John is shown the events leading up to God's purging the world of the evil done by humanity. Following this is establishment of Christ's everlasting kingdom. As mentioned before, the authors believe these visions are to be taken literally and not spiritualized away.

(Revelation 6) {1} 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!" {2} 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. {3} When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" {4} 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. {5} 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. {6} 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!" {7} When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" {8} 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.

The first six seals are opened in straight sequence with only a small amount of commentary added to the third, fifth, and sixth seals. Within this rapid-fire presentation of the first six seals, the first four seals form a group of their own, the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse". The first four seals are the only ones announced by the four living creatures, one being announced by each creature. John had mentioned the creatures in the order lion-ox-man-eagle, but it is unclear whether he means that order when he speaks of "one of the four", "the second", "the third", and "the fourth". In any event, attempts to draw significance from which creature is associated with which horseman appears to be futile.

Since the four horsemen appear to be called up by the four creatures around the throne of God, and since they are clearly malevolent, it is therefore possible that the havoc they bring about is part of the Wrath of God. This interpretation is taken, for example, by some supporters of a pre-Tribulation rapture, arguing from it that since this is at the beginning of the Seventieth Week, and since Christians are not appointed to wrath,⁵¹ Christians must be removed from the earth prior to this period.

This argument is specious, for several reasons. First, just because we are not appointed to Wrath doesn't mean we aren't around when it happens. God exercises his wrath in the presence of his people many times in scripture, the most obvious being on the Egyptians as the Hebrews are being rescued from them. Further, it is uncertain whether the four horsemen are called forth to bring destruction on the earth or just to show John in the vision. The command to "come" is used several times in Revelation, sometimes to call John to show him something and sometimes within his visions. John is called to heaven (4:1), called to see the punishment of the Whore of Babylon (17:1), and called to see the Bride of Christ (21:9). On the other hand, the two witnesses are called to heaven (11:12), the faithful are called from Babylon (18:4), and the birds are called to eat the slain of Armageddon (19:17). In addition, the Spirit and the bride of Christ invite everyone to come to him, (22:17) and John calls on Christ to come back to earth (22:20). Therefore, to use the word "come" as a mechanism to determine that the four horsemen are directly part of God's wrath is inconclusive.

Two of these calls are unrelated to the wrath of God: John's initial call to heaven (4:1) and his call to see the Bride (21:9). In addition, there are several things related to God's wrath that are not called forth in any way by someone in heaven. When the sixth seal is opened, we are told that it is the start of the Wrath of God,⁵² which means it cannot be starting at this point. Further, the sixth seal is not, announced by anyone.

It is true Christ opens the seals, and in that sense causes or allows to happen all the events of Revelation. But surely, he cannot be said to will the martyrdom of the saints which is mentioned in connection with the fifth seal. That slaughter seems more appropriately a cause of God's wrath than its result.

Supporting the claim that the role of the four living creatures is causative is an interesting parallel in Zechariah 6. The prophet sees four sets of horses, each pulling a chariot. Three of the four sets match the color of a horse here, and the remaining horses, dappled and ashen, are rather close to "pale". The horses and chariots in Zechariah are called "the four spirits of heaven". The four cherubim around God's throne are commonly known as God's chariot although not explicitly called that.⁵³ Therefore, the four spirits in Zechariah may be the four living creatures in a different

⁵¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:9; See Appendix 6 "The Rapture

⁵² Revelation 6:17.

⁵³ The strongest case for the Cherubim being God's chariot is in Ezekiel 1

(but related) guise. Since the living creatures each call forth a horseman, there is the intriguing possibility that the horses which carry the four horsemen are representative of the four living creatures. In any event, the four creatures call forth the four horsemen, but whether for display or to command their work cannot be said.

The second, third, and fourth horsemen do not appear to be actual men, instead being war, scarcity of resources, pestilence, and death (with hell) personified. A problem with this solution, however, is that Chapter 20 relates the time when Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire.⁵⁴ Also thrown into the lake at various times are the Antichrist and the False Prophet,⁵⁵ Satan,⁵⁶ and all whose names are not written in the book of life.⁵⁷ Since these others are all real individuals, it seems a peculiar mix to have Death and Hades be just symbols. In some apocryphal books of the New Testament period, Death and Hades are personified. In the “Gospel of Nicodemus”,⁵⁸ Christ has been crucified and is not yet risen. Death and Hades hear him breaking down the doors of the realm of the dead, and Hades asks Death, “Is this Enoch, is it Elijah”, and Death replies, “No. Not yet are the six thousand years accomplished.” Enoch and Elijah, neither having died, are possibly meant here as the two prophets at the end of the age.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, it is most likely Death and Hades are not actual persons and are thrown into the fire to convey the message that after the Judgment, there will be no further use for death (there are no more mortals) or for Hades (where the evil dead are kept until Judgment Day⁶⁰). It is therefore best to take them and the second and third horsemen as personifications rather than actual persons.

The nature of the first horseman is more problematic. If the last three horsemen are not actual people, it is strongly tempting to take the man on the white horse as a symbol as well. Against this, many have noted the parallels between him and the rider in Chapter 19. Both horses are white, both men are conquerors, and both men are crowned. It is almost universally agreed that the latter rider is Christ, and, at first reading, the parallels are strong. In the end, however, the differences are stronger. First, the horseman is “a conqueror bent on conquest” and the natural results of such conquest follow in the next three seals. Second, though he indeed is crowned, he is given his crown, something that would be difficult to say of Christ. Christ’s crown is the royal diadem, while the horseman’s crown is a victory wreath. Third, in Chapter 19 Christ has many crowns, demonstrating his role as king of kings and lord of lords, and he wages war justly, which

⁵⁴ Revelation 20:14.

⁵⁵ Revelation 19:20.

⁵⁶ Revelation 20:10.

⁵⁷ Revelation 20:15.

⁵⁸ Second century, “The Other Bible”.

⁵⁹ See Revelation 11:3ff.

⁶⁰ Luke 16:23, where the word translated “hell” in the NIV is “hades”, tells where they are held. Revelation 20:15 shows their final destination.

is not stated of the rider here. Christ's weapon is the sword of his mouth, far more powerful than the bow of the rider. It would be reasonable to see the rider here as an imitation of the true king of kings, and the most powerful such imitator is the Antichrist. This is not yet, however, the beast who rises from the sea in Chapter 13 and is completely the creature of Satan. This man wears a victor's crown; the beast wears many royal diadems. This man is the Antichrist early in his career, on the rise but yet to win his empire. He is a mighty warrior, but only a man. Given the horsemen with him, he is bad enough here; he will become much worse.

Even if the rider is symbolic, he probably stands for the troubles which precede and accompany the rise of the beast. It is perhaps significant that he is not said to engage in conquest during the period of the first seal, but only to be "bent on conquest".

Many have pointed out the strong similarity both in order and in content between the four horsemen and the time Christ calls "the beginning of birth pains"⁶¹. All the seals have strong parallels within the Olivet discourse. These parallels are not surprising since Christ's statements to his disciples on the Mount of Olives and Revelation are the two most complete accounts of end time events.⁶² In Matthew 24, Christ is asked, "when will this (the destruction of the temple) happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"⁶³ He answers with a series of signs which will mark the time before his return.

(Matthew 24) {4} Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. {5} For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, ' and will deceive many. {6} 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. {7} Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. {8} All these are the beginning of birth pains."

If the first horseman is the Antichrist, his arrival parallels Matthew 24:5. Verses 6 and 7a clearly parallel the second horseman, War, and 7b the third, famine. No earthquake is mentioned in connection with the four horsemen, but earthquakes happen several times in Revelation, the first as part of the sixth seal. The next thing Christ mentions⁶⁴ is the persecution and martyrdom of many of his followers, which fits well with the fifth seal. It therefore seems best to take Revelation 6:1-8 and Matthew 24:4-8 to be parallel and equate the period of the four horsemen to "the beginning of birth pains".^{iv}

⁶¹ Matthew 24:8.

⁶² See Appendix "The Olivet Discourse".

⁶³ Matthew 24:3.

⁶⁴ Matthew 24:9.

The first horseman probably also marks the beginning of Daniel's Seventieth Week.⁶⁵ Revelation never speaks of a seven year "Tribulation" period, but only of three periods of three and one-half years which are likely concurrent. Nonetheless, since Daniel speaks of a period of trouble for the Jews in the latter half of his Seventieth Week, it seems natural to equate that distress with the equal-length periods in Revelation. If this is correct, the first horseman may be called forth at the time the prince in Daniel signs the covenant with many of the Jews at the start of the Seventieth Week.⁶⁶

(Revelation 6) {9} When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. {10} They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" {11} Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

Martyrdom is a major theme of Revelation, and comfort and encouragement for martyrs a major purpose for its being written. Christ, of course, is the primary martyr, and it is his martyrdom that allows him now to open the scroll and later to retake the earth.⁶⁷ Wherever Christ appears in the book, his death is prominently mentioned. When John first⁶⁸ speaks of Christ, his shedding of blood is mentioned. Christ appears in three guises in Revelation: 1) as the risen savior,⁶⁹ 2) as the Lamb who was slain,⁷⁰ and 3) as the reconqueror of the earth.⁷¹ In the first, Christ himself proclaims his death and resurrection.⁷² In the second, he is the Lamb looking as if it had been slain⁷³ whose shedding of blood for his people show his worthiness to open the scroll.⁷⁴ In the third, the King's robe is dipped in blood.⁷⁵ Besides being redeemer of those who follow him, he is also the example of those martyred for him.

Like their master before them, a vast number of Christians, and many faithful Jews, will be killed during the Seventieth Week in the worst persecution the world has ever

⁶⁵ Daniel 9:24-27.

⁶⁶ Daniel 9:27.

⁶⁷ Revelation 19:11-21.

⁶⁸ Revelation 1:5.

⁶⁹ Revelation 1:13ff.

⁷⁰ Revelation 5:6.

⁷¹ Revelation 19:11ff.

⁷² Revelation 1:18.

⁷³ Revelation 5:6.

⁷⁴ Revelation 5:9.

⁷⁵ Revelation 19:13.

seen.⁷⁶ This persecution will be worse for Christians than what the Church underwent in the first three centuries of her existence, and probably worse for Jews than Hitler's holocaust.^v

With the opening of the fifth seal, John is shown the souls of those who, throughout the ages, have been killed because they professed Christ. Those beneath the altar are not the martyrs of the Great Tribulation, for that is yet future.⁷⁷ John was no stranger to persecution. His brother James was stabbed to death by Herod,⁷⁸ and John himself was imprisoned and exiled for proclaiming the word of God.⁷⁹

The altar in heaven is mentioned eight times in Revelation, at the fifth⁸⁰ and seventh⁸¹ seals (three times), the sixth⁸² (twice) and seventh⁸³ trumpets, and the third bowl⁸⁴ judgment. Though John does not say here what the altar is made of, in 9:13 we learn it is gold. This is important because in Solomon's temple, as in Moses' tabernacle before it, there were two altars. The altar of burnt offering was overlaid with bronze and located in the Holy Place⁸⁵. On it the slain animals were offered up to God. The second altar, smaller and of gold, was the altar of incense within the Holy of Holies,⁸⁶ immediately before the ark.⁸⁷ No offerings other than incense were to be offered on the golden altar.⁸⁸

The Holy of Holies is a shadow of God's throne room, and it is appropriate that the altar John is shown is the golden altar. There is no need for the bronze altar of sacrifice in heaven, because Christ's sacrifice has atoned for our sins for all time. The golden altar, however, holds incense bowls filled with the prayers of the saints. This is the sacrifice God now requires.⁸⁹

John sees the souls^{vi} of the martyrs, rather than their bodies. They will not receive their bodies until the first resurrection.⁹⁰ Since these are people martyred from the beginning of the church, and John specifically says he saw their souls, we may be sure they have not been resurrected yet. Since the dead in Christ are to be resurrected

⁷⁶ Matthew 24:9.

⁷⁷ v 11.

⁷⁸ Acts 12:2.

⁷⁹ Acts 4:3, Revelation 1:9.

⁸⁰ Revelation 6:9.

⁸¹ Revelation 8:3,5.

⁸² Revelation 9:13, 11:1.

⁸³ Revelation 14:18.

⁸⁴ Revelation 16:7.

⁸⁵ Exodus 27:1-2, 28:43.

⁸⁶ Exodus 30:1, Hebrews 9:3-4.

⁸⁷ Exodus 30:6.

⁸⁸ Exodus 30:9.

⁸⁹ Revelation 8:3-4.

⁹⁰ Revelation 20:4-5.

before the Rapture,⁹¹ the presence of their souls here indicates the Rapture has not yet taken place. Since we are told they must wait until their full number is filled up, the Rapture likewise cannot take place at least until the Great Tribulation is over.

There are two camps concerning those who have died. The first is either that they are unconscious until Christ's return and are then resurrected; or, if they are not in Christ, they are resurrected at the final Judgment. The second is either that they are conscious and in Heaven with Christ waiting to reclaim the Earth; or, they are conscious in Hades separated from Christ waiting for the final Judgment.

Those who believe that the dead are unconscious until the resurrection mainly use the scripture they have "fallen asleep"⁹² to support this. There are Old Testament references that also support this view, such as "the dead know nothing"⁹³. The other view takes the phrase "fallen asleep" as a euphemism as a corporeal death in this world. It is not meant to reflect the condition of the soul's consciousness. There are important scriptures that support this view. The Lord himself taught the parable of Lazarus and the rich man⁹⁴ which teaches the consciousness of the dead, both righteous and unrighteous. He also told the thief on the cross that they would be together in Paradise that day.⁹⁵ This presumably took place when Christ descended into Hades and led out the believers of all ages.

Paul, likewise, taught that Christians who have died were with the Lord⁹⁶ without bodies.⁹⁷ Lastly, the souls under the altar are conscious and expressing their frustration.⁹⁸ The righteous dead will receive their resurrection bodies when Christ returns,⁹⁹ and then they will "come to life" in a physical form,¹⁰⁰ but they are already in heaven and conscious. It is such that John sees here and in Chapter 20.^{vii}

Verse 10 teaches that one of the major reasons God will judge the inhabitants of the earth is to avenge the deaths of martyrs. The judgment of the persecutors must wait until the full number of the blessed martyrs is complete. When does that take place? It clearly cannot take place until very near the end of the Great Tribulation, since those martyrdoms are what the Great Tribulation is about. Therefore, since God's judgment on the world does not take place until after the Great Tribulation, the Great Tribulation cannot be a part of that judgement. The Day of the Lord¹⁰¹ is the judgment of God upon

⁹¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

⁹² 1 Corinthians 15:6, 15:18, 15:20 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13 ⁹³

Ecclesiastes 9:5

⁹⁴ Luke 16:19-31.

⁹⁵ Luke 23:43.

⁹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9.

⁹⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:3.

⁹⁸ Revelation 6:9-10

⁹⁹ 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 20:4.

¹⁰⁰ Revelation 20:4.

¹⁰¹ Appendix 4: "The Day of the Lord and the Wrath of God"

the world, so therefore the Great Tribulation is not a part of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord comes later, after the completion of the Great Tribulation. This is consistent with the Trumpets and Plagues (but not the first six seals) being God's judgment on the world. Since, according to Joel,¹⁰² the darkening of sun and moon comes before the Day of the Lord, and according to Jesus¹⁰³ it comes after the Great Tribulation, the order is consistent: First the Great Tribulation, then the darkening of sun and moon, and then God's judgment in the form of the Day of the Lord.

(Revelation 6) {12} 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, {13} and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. {14} The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. {15} 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. {16} They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! {17} For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

One question that needs to be addressed about this passage is the use of the Greek word "pas" and translated as "every" in connection with slaves and free men. It is dangerous to establish doctrine on the meaning of a single word, but nonetheless the picture here is of everyone on earth trying to hide from God.

If "pas" here literally means "every", then one of two things must be true. Either there are no believers on the earth at this time or else they are also hiding in the hills, terrified along with the rest of Mankind. Granted, what is apparently a world-wide vision of an angry God and Christ would be the most terrifying thing imaginable, that wrath would not be aimed at Christians. Nevertheless, it is possible that they also are hiding in terror.

If there are no Christians on the earth at this time, the time is either immediately after the Rapture, or else the martyrdoms mentioned under the fifth seal¹⁰⁴ were so widespread as to encompass *all* Christians on the earth. This last is possible but seems

¹⁰² Joel 2:31.

¹⁰³ Matthew 24:29.

¹⁰⁴ Revelation 6:11.

inconsistent with the presence of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:13) which takes place at about this time. The former would support a pre-Wrath Rapture in which all the Christians missed by the Antichrist and False Prophet are removed from the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation but before the beginning of the Wrath of God.

It is probably not necessary, however, to make a single word carry such a burden. “Pas” does generally mean “all” or “every”, but it can also mean “all sorts of”.¹⁰⁵ Even when it means “all”, it can be used in hyperbole, as in Matthew 2:3 where “all Jerusalem” is in uproar along with Herod, and Matthew 3:5 where “all” Judea went out to John the Baptist. It can even refer to something where parts are known to be missing - as in the 14 generations from Abraham to David are referred to as “all” the generations.¹⁰⁶ Likewise “all sin” which shall be forgiven to man¹⁰⁷ specifically does not include blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

It is important to look at the point of the scripture to see if it is consistent with its target and the rest of scripture. This verse is about God’s Wrath, which is directed at everyone who rejects Christ, from slave to nobility, but not at God’s people. The terror that comes over everyone makes sense because of the crimes they committed against them by the world.

Isaiah has another passage with relevance here:

{Isaiah 2} {10} Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty! {11} The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. {12} The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled), {16} for every trading ship and every stately vessel. {17} The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, {19} Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. {21} They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 4:23.

¹⁰⁶ Matthew 1:17.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 12:31.

In this passage, which almost certainly applies to the same period of time, God's anger is aimed at the proud and lofty. Earlier in the same chapter¹⁰⁸ Isaiah makes it clear he is speaking about Judah and Jerusalem, and particularly those within them who are disloyal to God.¹⁰⁹

Here, at the announcement of God's Wrath,¹¹⁰ it is the proud and the mighty who flee to the mountains seeking protection from God. Christ, in the Olivet Discourse,¹¹¹ tells those who are in Jerusalem, when they see the armies coming, to flee to the mountains. This is fleeing from the Antichrist which will take place just before the beginning of the martyrdoms referred to in the fifth seal. It is important to note that there are two groups of people in view: Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. For the Jewish Christians (and possibly faithful Jews) they flee the Antichrist to the mountains and God will provide succor and protection. The Jewish Christians who did not flee and the Gentile Christians will be persecuted.¹¹² God declares His Wrath on the earth and after 42 months, the shoe is on the other foot. It is the time for those who persecuted and martyred the saints to flee. Jewish Christians flee to the mountains for protection when the Antichrist is revealed. Their persecutors flee to the mountains when God and Christ are made known from heaven and their wrath, vengeance for the persecutions, begins. For them, the mountains offer no protection.

Is the sixth seal part of the Wrath of God? No. It announces the wrath and gives the reason for it (the martyrdom of the saints), but it is not part of it. This is straightforward to establish: since the darkening of the sun and moon occur *before* the Day of the Lord,¹¹³ since that darkening is part of the sixth seal, and¹¹⁴ the Day of the Lord and the Wrath of God are the same, the sixth seal cannot be part of the Wrath. Evidence that "their wrath has come" is announcing the Wrath which is yet future comes from a parallel passage from Isaiah. He prophesies against an apostate Israel:

(Isaiah 7) {7} Doom has come upon you--you who dwell in the land. The time has come, the day is near; there is panic, not joy, upon the mountains. {8} I am about to pour out my wrath on you and spend my anger against you; I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices.

¹⁰⁸ Isaiah 2:1.

¹⁰⁹ Isaiah 2:8.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix 4 "The Day Of The Lord".

¹¹¹ Matthew 24:16.

¹¹² Revelation 12:13-17

¹¹³ Joel 2:31.

¹¹⁴ See Appendix 4 "The Day of the Lord".

X Years		
3 ½ Years	<p>Beginning of seven year period</p> <p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p><u>The mid-point</u></p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6th seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7th seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p><u>Flee to the mountains</u></p> <p><u>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</u></p> <p><u>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</u></p> <p><u>The 3rd angel - Judgment</u></p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days	<p><u>The end of seven years</u></p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7th trumpet
45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days	<p><u>The beginning of the millennium</u></p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague
1,000 Years	<p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p> <p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
Eternity	<p>The end of the millennium The beginning of eternity</p> <p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	

Chapter 7

At the end of Chapter 6 the Wrath of God is announced as the people of earth flee to the mountains in terror. It was announced there but it had not yet begun. While the sixth seal announces God's Wrath, it is the opening of the seventh seal (at the beginning of Chapter 8) that initiates it. In the meantime, John is shown the events of Chapter 7.

This chapter follows two groups of God's people, a group who are alive on earth and receive God's seal on their forehead and another, much larger group who have been killed before we meet them. The first group are Jews, the second group are the Gentiles, but they are both the people of God.

(Revelation 7) {1} After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.

The four corners of the earth, though a common metaphor today, is uncommon in Scripture. The term "four corners of the earth" occurs twice, both times in Revelation,¹¹⁵ "four corners of the land" occurs once.¹¹⁶ and "four quarters" of the earth or sky occurs twice more.¹¹⁷ More common is the term "four winds". Both terms are almost always used metaphorically to mean in or from all directions. The current verse seems to be an exception, since the number of corners and winds is equaled by the number of angels.

It should first be mentioned that though here scripture refers to the four winds of the earth, in most places where the four winds are used to mean every direction, they are the four winds of the heavens.¹¹⁸ That they are the same thing can be seen in Mark 13:27 where Christ sends his angels to gather his elect from "the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens".

It is possible that the four winds of the earth and the four living creatures are tied together here in the same way they are in Zechariah 6:1-5.¹¹⁹ In Zechariah the horses of the chariots he saw match the four horses of the four horsemen in Revelation. Zechariah is told that the four chariots are the four spirits of heaven.¹²⁰ The term translated "spirits" in "four spirits of heaven" in Zechariah is identical to that used for winds in the "four winds of heaven" in the Old Testament. It is therefore possible that the four creatures are in view here, but going against that interpretation is that though

¹¹⁵ The other place is Revelation 20:8 where, after the Millennium, Satan stirs up the nations "in the four corners of the earth" in a final attack on God before the Last Judgment.

¹¹⁶ Ezekiel 7:2.

¹¹⁷ Isaiah 11:2, Jeremiah 49:36.

¹¹⁸ E.g. Jeremiah 49:36, Daniel 8:8, Zechariah 2:6.

¹¹⁹ The word used here for spirit also means wind.

¹²⁰ Zechariah 6:5.

“ruach”, the Hebrew word for wind in Zechariah can also mean spirit, “anemos” the Greek word used here just means wind.

The four angels are restraining the winds, but more important, they are restraining God’s Wrath. The wind as an agent of God’s justice is not mentioned again in Revelation, but destruction falls on the land and the trees with the first trumpet judgment¹²¹ and on the sea with the second.¹²² Since there are no judgments associated with the seventh seal itself, these are the next judgments to be unleashed. It should be noted, however, that the restraining of the winds is not a judgment. The judgment in view here is what will happen when the winds are no longer restrained.

(Revelation 7) {2} Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: {3} "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."

The judgments of God against land and sea and trees will be deferred until God’s servants can be sealed. The Wrath of God, due upon an unrepentant earth, will be delayed until His people on earth who confess Him can be claimed by putting His mark upon them. The people of God have His mark, and later¹²³ Satan’s followers will implement a parody of that mark on those who worship the beast.

Note that the seal (mark) is put on the people of God and *then* His Wrath starts. The mark of God¹²⁴ will protect his people from his Wrath, just as the blood on the doorposts on the first Passover¹²⁵ protected the Israelites. They are not removed from the period of Wrath - the Israelites did not leave until just before Pharaoh’s destruction was complete – but they are protected from the plagues, albeit not necessarily from all the consequences of them.

This passage in context tells us where we are in time. The Wrath of God has been announced, but it has not yet begun. The restraining of the four angels is a restraint of that Wrath. We are therefore just before it commences, just prior the mid-point of Daniel’s Seventieth Week, and just preceding the revealing of the Antichrist.

Verse 3 is the second “wait a minute” in Revelation; the first is the fifth seal.¹²⁶ In short, both the martyrs and the angels are told to wait a brief while before the wrath of God is

¹²¹ Revelation 9:7.

¹²² Revelation 8:8.

¹²³ Revelation 13:16

¹²⁴ See Revelation 9:4.

¹²⁵ Exodus 12:13.

¹²⁶ Revelation 6:10

unleashed. In the former case, they are told to wait until the full number of martyrs is complete. In this case, it is until the seal of God is placed on all his servants. Chapter 7 shows the reasons for those two “waits”: the 144,000 are sealed and the innumerable multitude is martyred.

(Revelation 7) {4} Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. {5} From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, {6} from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, {7} from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, {8} from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

Some have maintained that these 144,000 are Jews who will evangelize the world for Christ in the End Times. There are two problems with this hypothesis. First, though they are undoubtedly Jews, there is no indication either here or in their other two mentions¹²⁷ that they are evangelists. The second is that they are killed by the Antichrist shortly after they are sealed and hence will have little time to evangelize.

Lists of the tribes of Israel are a chronic problem. They are listed several times in scripture, often with different tribes included or removed. This is not the place to investigate this fully, but some observations can be made. We present the three most prominent listings of the tribes:

¹²⁷ Revelation 14:1, 3

Genesis 49	Ezekiel 48	Revelaeon 7
Reuben	Reuben	Reuben
Simeon	Simeon	Simeon
Levi	Levi	Levi
Judah	Judah	Judah
Zebulun	Zebulun	Zebulun
Issachar	Issachar	Issachar
Dan	Dan	
Asher	Asher	Asher
Naphtali	Naphtali	Naphtali
Joseph	Joseph	Joseph
		Manasseh
Benjamin	Benjamin	Benjamin

In all three lists, Levi is included on the same level as the other tribes but is excluded when the division of the land of Israel is given,¹²⁸ since Levi was not allocated land as a territory of their own, being responsible for temple service.

Dan is excluded here. Several reasons have been given, the two most common being that Jacob himself¹²⁹ calls Dan a serpent by the roadside and the supposition that the Antichrist is from the tribe of Dan. The first is unlikely, since the very scripture where Dan is called a serpent, Jacob says, "Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel."¹³⁰ The second is impossible, since the Antichrist, like all the other Beasts in history, is a Gentile.¹³¹

(Revelation 7) {9} 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.

These are Gentiles, as is clear from them being from every nation, tribe, people, and language. John tells us later that white robes stand for righteous acts. The previous martyrs under the altar were given white robes to wear and told to wait until the number of their brethren to be killed was completed. Here it has been. It is possible, of

¹²⁸ Joshua 13:33.

¹²⁹ Genesis 49:16-18.

¹³⁰ Genesis 49:16.

¹³¹ Daniel 11:37. Daniel says the king who is to come will show no regard for the gods (plural) of his fathers.

course, that this multitude is the Church of all ages, but that is unlikely. First, those under the altar are those who are the martyrs of all ages. Since they were given white robes and told to wait till the full number of martyrs is complete, it is far more likely we are here seeing the fulfillment of that prophecy. Second, and decisive, is that they are said to have “come out of the Great Tribulation”.¹³² Since they are martyrs, this would mean they are those killed in the persecutions of the Great Tribulation.

How much time elapses between verses 8 and 9? The indication of time passing is given in the use of “meta tauta”, “after this things” both in 7:1 and in 7:9. “Meta tauta” is used many times in the New Testament and has about the same sense of a gap in time as “afterwards” does in English. It may mean a simple progression: this happened and then this other thing happened, or it may represent a considerable passage of time. The general sense, however, is of a significant amount of time. When simple progression is meant with no gap of time, “kai” (and) is usually used.¹³³

All this fits together well: first, in the 5th seal, the souls under the altar are told to wait. The 144,000 are sealed with the Mark of God and then forty-two months of the Great Tribulation occurs during which multitudes are martyred. They then appear here in white robes just like their brothers under the altar. There is a definite, if short, gap between the promise to those under the altar to the sealing of the 144,000 and another, longer one, between that and the appearance of those martyred during the Great Tribulation. There is no such gap between the appearance of the multitude and the sounding of the seventh trumpet (which marks the end of the Great Tribulation), just as there is no gap between the resurrection of the two witnesses and the appearance of the 144,000, now presumably dead, with Christ.¹³⁴ The presumption, therefore, should be that the “waiting time” of the fifth seal is for the 144,000 to be sealed. There are essentially two parts to the Wrath of God: the partial judgments of the trumpets and the complete ones of the plagues. They are all part of the payback for the martyrdoms of all ages, but during the first part more martyrs (the innumerable multitude) are being killed. Once the plague judgments start after the resurrection of the two witnesses, the Antichrist has lost power and the martyrdoms have ceased. As we shall see, the period of the Fury of the Wrath of God, the period of the plagues, isn’t an improvement in conditions on earth.

The great multitude is nowhere spoken of as sealed, but only those who have been sealed are resurrected to life. When were they sealed? If they are Christians, they were sealed when they accepted Christ. This process is mentioned several times in scripture:

(2 Corinthians 1) {21} Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, {22} set his seal of

¹³² Revelation 7:14

¹³³ Revelation 5:1, 5, 6.

¹³⁴ Revelation 14:1.

ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

(Ephesians 1) {13} And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, {14} who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

(Ephesians 4) {30} And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

While the number of the Jews is given (144,000), these martyrs are beyond counting. This indicates that their number is greater than any other number in Revelation. The two largest numbers given in Revelation are the more than one hundred million angels around the throne¹³⁵ and the 200 million demon soldiers¹³⁶ released at the sixth trumpet. If the multitude is numberless, it seems reasonable to believe there were substantially more than 200 million of them, which was about the world population in 100 AD. If only 50 percent of the professing Christians were killed today that would be in excess of 500 million.

This would have been impossible in John's day – that would essentially be all the people on the earth, not just Christians. If the Rapture takes place at the end of the Seventieth Week (so Christians are not removed from the earth but instead suffer the Great Tribulation), and if most Christians who are alive at the start of the Great Tribulation are martyred, their number could easily number in the many hundreds of millions. It is no surprise the Bible puts such emphasis on the end times and prophecies of Christ's Return. It is likely that a majority of all the Christians who ever lived will go through them. It is important to remember that the seal does not protect believers from bodily harm, but spiritually supports Christians through Satan's tribulation. The second function of the seal is to protect us from God's Wrath, similar to how the blood on the doorposts in Egypt protected the Israelites.

The martyrs are carrying palm fronds. In Leviticus 23:40 palm fronds were used to celebrate the first fruits festival. It is interesting to note that the martyrs are not themselves first fruits, nor are they called that. Their carrying palm branches indicates that they are celebrating the festival of first fruits. The 144,000 are later¹³⁷ called first fruits, presumably the first fruits of a redeemed Israel.

¹³⁵ Revelation 5:11. As stated before, this number may not be meant literally, since John neither says he counted them or that he was told their number.

¹³⁶ Revelation 9:16.

¹³⁷ Revelation 14:4.

(Revelation 7) {10} And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." {11} All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, {12} saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

In this case, the Great Multitude, standing before the throne of God, starts the praise, followed by the angels that surround the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures.

(Revelation 7) {13} Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" {14} I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

It is nearly universally agreed these people are martyrs, killed during the Great Tribulation, which will last for 3 and ½ years, rather than saints raptured before the Great Tribulation. Otherwise, it would not be a tribulation. Their robes are white because Christ's blood is the purifier that removes our sin.

(Revelation 7) {15} Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. {16} Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. {17} For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

We will see both groups again, the 144,000 in Chapter 14 and the multitude in Chapter 15. In both cases, they are dead and with God.

Several additional things concerning these two groups can be said. Both groups are mentioned twice: just before the seven trumpets and just before the seven bowls. This parallels the prayers of the saints before the seven seals and before the seven trumpets.

The 144,000 are sealed in preparation for the Wrath of God and the Great Tribulation. They are therefore protected from the Wrath of God, but not from Satan's wrath. Most of those Jews who are sealed, like most of those Gentiles who were sealed by the Holy Spirit, will nevertheless be killed by Satan and his minions.

This sealing seems to be parallel to a similar one in Ezekiel 9:

(Ezekiel 9) {3b} Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side {4} and said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." {5} As I listened, he said to the others, "Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. {6} Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple.

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p style="background-color: yellow;">The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
3 1/2 Years	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6th seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7th seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p><u>Flee to the mountains</u></p> <p><u>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</u></p> <p><u>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</u></p> <p><u>The 3rd angel - Judgment</u></p>
The mid-point	<p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	The wrath of God The 7th seal
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7th trumpet
45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days	<p>The gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	
The beginning of the millennium	<p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p>	
1,000 Years	<p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
The end of the millennium The beginning of eternity	<p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	
Eternity		

Book 4

Endnotes

ⁱ This passage gives a somewhat different slant to John 14:6, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” The word “dia”, translated as “through”, can mean “on account of”, “because of”, or “by way of”. This scripture is usually taken to mean that only believers in Christ can draw near to the throne of God, and this certainly is the primary meaning of the verse. Nonetheless, it may secondarily apply to Christ’s physical presence at the throne of God.

ⁱⁱ The number seven is mentioned 55 times in 31 verses in Revelation. There are seven churches, seven spirits, seven golden lamp stands, seven stars, seven lamps, seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb, seven angels, seven thunders, seven heads on Satan, the Beast from the sea, and the beast ridden by the Whore of Babylon, seven golden bowls, seven hills, seven kings, and of course seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven plagues. Besides this, the altar of God is mentioned seven times, as is the Abyss.

ⁱⁱⁱ When the seven spirits were last seen, in Chapter 4, the scene in the throne room was eternal, separate from the earth, and the spirits were just a part of the perpetual worship. Now, earth is about to experience its most direct divine intervention since Christ’s first coming. The addition of the active statement “sent out into all the earth” to the description of the spirits is another manifestation of this change.

^{iv} Jeremiah (Chapter 51) issued a lengthy prophecy against Babylon which resembles in many ways the prophecies of Revelation Chapters 17 and 18. Where Jeremiah’s prophecy is discussed in detail in the commentary on those two chapters, one verse is worth quoting here because of its close similarity to what Christ said, “Do not lose heart or be afraid when rumors are heard in the land; one rumor comes this year, another the next, rumors of violence in the land and of ruler against ruler.” (Jeremiah 51:46)

^v It is very hard for us in America to picture what it is like to face death for our faith. We live our lives free of persecution and the threat of martyrdom. This is partly a testimony to the freedom and tolerance of our society, and partly because we have become so lukewarm we no longer present much of a threat to those whose master is Satan. We think our freedom is the norm, but it has not been so throughout much of history and it is not in much of the world today. If you want to find this out, go to, say, Saudi Arabia and start proclaiming the gospel on a street corner.

Because our lives as Christians are so secure, it horrifies us to think of them being otherwise. This has led many Christians to reject the idea that our brothers and sisters alive at the Seventieth Week will mostly be martyred, thinking (and often writing) that God would not do that to his bride. God, of course, will not do it to his bride. Satan (in the person of the Antichrist and the False Prophet) will. God has warned us that it is coming, and that it will be worse than anything the Church has ever seen. We ignore his warning at our peril.

^{vi} The Bible teaches that humans have three parts: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 4:12), other scriptures simply designate two parts, soul and body (Matthew 10:28, Revelation 18:13). When three are in view, they are, approximately, the material part of man (the body); his life, the part that animates the body (the soul); and the part of him that thinks and worships (the spirit). When only two are mentioned, spirit and soul are combined. We say approximately because 1) there is some disagreement among Christian teachers as to the exact relationship among these three and 2) a human is only complete when all three are together. The only clear distinction is that the spirit appears to be our gifts, both natural and supernatural. This is supported in the cases of Elisha receiving Elijah’s spirit when he was taken and Jesus’ declaration about John the Baptist (Matthew 17:10-13). The resurrection of our bodies is an important doctrine of Christianity: we will not be complete until our bodies are resurrected. Christians will not spend eternity as disembodied souls.

^{vii} Many people confuse the concepts “the immortality of the soul” and “the resurrection of the dead”, thinking they are equivalent. Those who believe in the immortality of the soul believe the dead will be

resurrected because man was created immortal. His fate depends on his relationship with Christ, but his immortality itself is part of the soul's nature. In this view, the dead are conscious between their death and

resurrection because an unconscious soul is a contradiction in terms. Such is not the teaching of the Bible, however. Scripture clearly teaches the resurrection of (or from) the dead, but the concept of the immortality of the soul enters modern thought more from Plato and the Greeks than from Scripture.

The Bible teaches that man is by nature mortal and that it takes a specific act of God to give him immortality (Romans 6:23). When he resurrects us, what is naturally mortal becomes naturally immortal (1 Corinthians 15:53). The soul that sins, dies (Ezekiel 18:4). Its continuing or restored life is the sovereign choice of God. Note that this view says nothing at all about whether the soul is conscious between death and the resurrection. To find out, we need to look at the rest of Scripture.

In considering the soul between death and resurrection, we will set aside the NT scriptures which say the dead have fallen asleep (e.g. John 11:11, 1 Corinthians 11:30). This is how the dead appear to the living and says nothing of their state of consciousness. The passages from the OT, however, which speak of the unconscious (or non-existent) state of the dead are not as easily dealt with. Several verses say the dead are insensate (e.g. Psalms 88:10-12 and 115:17), but the most explicit is probably from Ecclesiastes (9:5b): "the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten." If these were the only verses on the state of the dead, we should be forced to believe they are unconscious at least, and probably non-existent.

Nonetheless, there are scriptures to the contrary, both from the OT and the NT. Job tells us that some of the dead are in anguish (Job 2:6) and both Isaiah (14:9) and the author of 1 Samuel (28:7-20) imply the dead can at least be roused. Isaiah says hell rouses the dead to taunt the king of Babylon. This passage is doubtless meant figuratively, but it seems very unlikely an inspired prophet would imply a doctrine (the consciousness of the dead) if it were false. Similarly, whether the Witch conjured Samuel or a spirit masquerading as Samuel, the passage certainly reflects a belief that the dead can be conscious. All these passages show that the OT revelation was not as complete as the NT on this (as on many) issues. As we will discuss below, the state of the dead may have been more shadowy, less well-defined before Christ's resurrection.

The NT, on the other hand, has numerous scriptures which state or imply that the dead are conscious. The three most important are from Christ himself. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Christ says (Luke 16:20-31) that the rich man is in torment and Lazarus is being comforted, situations which demand consciousness. Though this is a parable, it is very unlikely our lord would imply a false doctrine even in figurative speech.

The second statement of Christ's about the state of the dead was his promise to the repentant thief on the cross (Luke 23:43). Christ says the two would be together in Paradise that day, which certainly implies the thief would be conscious. Christ even appears to contradict a misimpression of the thief. The thief had said "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (v 42), that is, when Christ returned. Christ responds that he will do as the thief asked, but immediately, not at the end of the age. The thief on the cross was probably the first person in history to have Christ waiting for him on the other side.

Christ's third statement is in his dispute with the Sadducees over the resurrection of the dead. Christ says (Luke 20:37-38), "but in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive." While Christ expressly refutes the Sadducees on the resurrection, he also implies the consciousness of the dead because God cannot be the personal God of someone who is insensate.

These scriptures establish the conscious state of the dead, but do not clearly state where the dead are between death and resurrection. Lazarus, presumably, had no memory of where he had been between his death and his resurrection at Christ's command. If he did, that information is lost, and such speculation is futile.

Several words are used to describe the location of the dead between death and resurrection. In the OT, by far the most common is “sheol”, a word of uncertain origin. It is nearly always translated (NIV) as “the grave” or (less commonly) “death”. It is usually seen as the common destination of the good and the bad. The NT uses the Greek word “Hades” for the abode of the dead, generally without regard for whether they are good or bad (the references in Revelation 20, in connection with the second resurrection and the Last Judgment may imply it is just the abode of the evil - which it would be anyway if the good were all resurrected at the first resurrection). Christ rose from Hades (Acts 2:27 - see Greek) and from Sheol (Psalm 16:10 - See Hebrew), equating the two, and making it very likely they both simply mean the abode of the dead.

This finds support in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man was in Hades. His relative nearness to Lazarus and Abraham (Luke 16:23) may indicate they are all in Hades, though in well-separated parts. It is true that Hell is visible from Heaven (Revelation 14:10-11), but the proximity here seems stronger. The word “hades” is here (NIV) translated “hell”, which is a problem with the translation, not with the meaning of the word.

Another word, Greek “geena” from Hebrew “gehenna”, is usually translated “hell”. It describes the eventual destination of the evil. Almost every time it is used, it is associated with fiery punishment (e.g. Matthew 18:9, Mark 9:43). Since all who do not follow God are cast into the Lake of Fire following the Last Judgment (Revelation 20:15), it seems appropriate to equate gehenna and the Lake of Fire. The Hebrew word “Gehenna” means “valley of Hinnom”, a place southwest of Jerusalem. Its association with evil and with fire goes back to the time of the kings and before. “[Ahaz, king of Judah] burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and sacrificed his sons in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites” (2 Chronicles 28:3).

Paradise, from Greek “paradeisos”, is used three times in the NT. The repentant thief is promised it (Luke 23:43), Paul’s acquaintance is taken there (2 Corinthians 12:4), and it is promised to all Christians (Revelation 2:7). Heaven, a common translation of the Greek “ouranos”, is the abode of God (e.g. Acts 7:55, Revelation 4), the ultimate destination of the followers of God (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:1) and where Christ is until his return to earth (Acts 3:21). Ultimately, Paradise is a part of Heaven, since believers are promised both.

When Christ died, he went to Sheol (Psalm 16:10 - see Hebrew) or Hades (Acts 2:27 - see Greek). He did not, between his death and resurrection go to Heaven (John 20:17). If he was in Paradise with the thief as promised, Paradise was not then in Heaven, and yet it seems that it ultimately will be. Possibly, when Christ descended into Hades, preached to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19), and freed many captives (Ephesians 4:8), he pulled Paradise out of Hades and planted it in Heaven. That assumption makes all the verses consistent.

After Christ’s resurrection and before the Last Judgment the blessed dead are conscious, with God in Heaven, and the lost are conscious and in prison in Hades.

Tapestry:

The Book of Revelation

**by David Justin Ross
and Brian J. Elmenhurst**

Book 5

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Introduction

Chapter 16 ends with the summoning of the kings of the earth to Armageddon and the inflicting of the seventh and final bowl judgment on the earth. At the beginning of Chapter 17 the 1260 days of the Antichrist's rule have ended, and we are in the middle of the seventh bowl judgment. God's wrath has taken its toll, and it has been too much for the Antichrist. He is no longer concentrating on exterminating Jews and Christians, but he is trying to keep his kingdom together and to recapture what he has lost, including Jerusalem. The killings have stopped because he has other severe problems. Right now, at the time of the seventh bowl, he is assembling his forces at Armageddon for his final assault on Jerusalem and his futile attempt to oppose Christ's return.

As the seventh bowl was poured out, a voice from within the temple shouted, "It is done".¹ As mentioned previously, this echoes Christ's last words on the cross ("It is finished"²), but it also echoes the beginning of the Bible, since "γέγονεν" (it is finished) is cognate with "γένεσις" (genesis).

With the seventh bowl judgment, the focus of Revelation switches from the rule of the Antichrist and his kingdom to "Babylon" for the next two Chapters. The hardest question to answer here, and the most important, is "What is Babylon?" The meaning of these two Chapters and indeed of a substantial part of the book of Revelation hinges on the answer to that question. Interpreters have come to many conclusions about the identity of Babylon, including Rome (because the Great Prostitute³ sits on seven hills and because Rome was the anti-Christian enemy of John's day) and the literal city of Babylon on the Euphrates.

After careful study, the authors have concluded that Babylon plays the same role in Satan's scheme of things as Israel does in God's and can, in this way, be viewed as a kind of Anti-Israel. Israel is many things in the Bible. First, they are a specific group of people, the descendants of Jacob, who were chosen to receive the oracles and promises of God. Second, Israel is a land, the land promised to Abraham as the inheritance forever of his descendants, then land over which the Messiah will reign forever upon David's throne. Beyond these designations, and growing out of them, is spiritual Israel, the people of God, whether believing Jews or Gentile followers of Christ. Thus, Israel has both a

¹ Revelation 16:17.

² John 19:30.

³ Revelation 17

physical and a spiritual meaning. Likewise, Babylon is both something physical and something spiritual.

Babylon is referred to somewhat differently in Chapters 17 and 18, with the last verse of Chapter 17 providing the bridge. Throughout Chapter 17, Babylon is called a woman, indeed a prostitute, riding on a beast. In Chapter 17 the woman and especially the beast have very broad symbolic meanings. In Chapter 18, by contrast, Babylon has much more specific meaning as the city of Babylon (or, perhaps, its successor of the last days, the capital of the Antichrist), and, by extension, the last days empire of the Antichrist.

The disentangling of the Great Prostitute and the beast on which she rides presents the most difficult problems of interpretation in Revelation. Chapter 17 makes the most sense if the Great Prostitute stands for several different but closely related things, some of which are associated with historical Rome and others with historical Babylon. She is the false politically compromised religious system which dominated each of the successive anti-God empires and will, for a time, dominate the last one, that of the Antichrist. She is not, however, the empires themselves. She embodies the priests who challenged Moses in Egypt during the captivity, Assyria that Israel prostituted herself with after seeking political protection, Babylon both of the tower of Babel and of Nebuchadnezzar, Haman of Persia, the Greek Seleucid kingdom of Antiochus Epiphanes whose very name means "God made manifest", the emperor-worshipping Rome and the emperor-worshipping last days empire. She is, indeed, the motivating power of the beast empires. In the last days, she is a false religious system which comes together thoroughly with the secular powers of the day, and which is eventually destroyed by them.

Chapter 18 concentrates on another aspect of the anti-God empires, their economic importance. There are numerous prophecies of the fall of Babylon, and several of them have significant points of agreement with this one. The major one is from Jeremiah, Chapters 50 and 51. We will discuss these examples where appropriate in the text.

In Chapter 19 we finally see the comeuppance of the prostitute. The battle of Armageddon is completed. Her judgment is now, and her sentence is executed. The prayers of the martyrs are finally fulfilled. The Chapter begins with rejoicing and worship, a joyful contrast to the two previous Chapters. It is seen from a heavenly perspective.

Chapters 17, 18, and 19 present both Heavenly and Earthly perspectives. By the end we have passed the 1290 days and entered the final 45 days of Satan's hold on the world.

Babylon figures prominently throughout these chapters. It will be helpful to keep in mind that it is more than just a fixed empire in a specific place at a point in time. It is a

pseudonym that describes actual empires that align with a certain ideology that stands against God. It has resurfaced (Biblically speaking) several times (As mentioned before, Rome was referred to as Babylon in John's time) and will twice more after John's time: once briefly and then finally under the Antichrist.

Chapter 17

Chapters 17 and 18 are easier to understand, and far easier to see where they fit with the rest of Revelation if we see the timeline of Revelation being continuous from Chapter 16 to Chapter 19, with 17 and 18 outside the timeline and describing *why* Babylon is destroyed, not *when*.

At the end of Chapter 16 we are at the end of the seven bowl judgments, at the time when the armies of the earth are gathering at Armageddon. The timeline recommences at the beginning of Chapter 19

At the start of this interlude, an angel comes to show John what the consequences of the battle will be: not just the destruction of the Antichrist and his empire, but destruction of the Beast empire system across the ages.

(Revelation 17) {1} One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.

The seventh bowl judgment has been poured out already,⁴ but the gathering for the last battle has not yet taken place, so seeing where we are on earth seems straightforward: we are at the end of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. But a closer look at the beast that the Prostitute is riding shows that everything about her and the beast she is on has much broader significance in the scheme of things than the time at which she is shown to John. As we shall see, she and the beast she rides relate to the anti-God religious and political systems across time.

The Great Prostituteⁱ sits on many waters, but she also rides the scarlet beast.⁵ This would be confusing if we weren’t later told that the waters on which she sits are “peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages”,⁶ emphasizing her control of the secular world. It also gives a hint of the beast on which she is riding. However much that beast resembles the beast from the sea that is the Antichrist, this beast is not the Antichrist because it isn’t just a single person.⁷ As we explore the symbolic nature of the

⁴ Revelation 16:17.

⁵ See Appendix 3 “The Beasts of Revelation”

⁶ Revelation 17:15.

⁷ This is another place where the symbolism concerning the Antichrist can be difficult and confusing. We are told that the Beast ridden by the Great Prostitute is also a “king”, indeed the head of the final Beast

attributes of the beast we will see they primarily fall into two categories: symbols that point to the beast including the empire of the Antichrist and symbols spread across time showing the meaning of the Prostitute's mount across history.

The literal Babylon was also described as being by "many waters". Jeremiah, speaking of Babylon's destruction, gives this parallel prophecy:

(Jeremiah 51) {13} You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be cut off.

Because Babylon sat on the Euphrates River surrounded by extensive canal and waterworks, and because Jeremiah is referring to the literal Babylon of his day throughout Chapter 51, this might argue that the Prostitute is the literal city of Babylon, but the subsequent descriptions of the beast she rides indicates a much more general meaning for her. It is much more likely that her sitting on "many waters" means she controls and has controlled many nations and peoples and that while the reference here harkens back to Jeremiah, presumably to show the Babylon of his day is included in the symbols here, the reference to 'many waters' here is figurative – as the text explains, as opposed to the literal meaning of 'many waters' in Jeremiah.

This is the second of three times John is told to "Come and see". The first was the initial call to see the events of the future.⁸ The other two deserve special attention. Here, John is called to see the Great Prostitute and to witness her punishment. The third time he is called it is to see the Bride of Christ.⁹ The two women are a study in contrasts. The first is a prostitute, a spiritual adulteress; the second is a faithful bride. The first is arrayed in the worldly finery of her profession, the second in fine linen, bright and clean.¹⁰ Though their introductions to John are the same, the two women could not be more different.

(Revelation 17) {2} With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

empire. So, in this sense the Beast from the Sea in Chapter 13 and the mount of the Prostitute *are* the same thing, the Antichrist. But while the Beast from the Sea is *only* the Antichrist, the mount of the Prostitute is the Antichrist as "one of" the Beast empires that preceded him, in other words as seen in the context of history.

⁸ Revelation 4:1.

⁹ Revelation 21:9.

¹⁰ Revelation 19:7-8.

In scripture, adultery nearly always means spiritual adultery, and the one committing it is usually Israel.¹¹ It almost always means worshipping other gods, but it can mean political prostitution.¹² The term probably originates with the temple prostitutes or shrine prostitutes that some of the fertility religions practiced (especially the worship of Asherah == Astarte).¹³ As part of the worship, and to make money for the shrines, there were women and men whose sexual favors were for hire.

It is likely that at least in part the Prostitute is a corrupt politico-religious system that has controlled, and been controlled by, evil governments throughout time and will, for a while, have the same relationship with the Antichrist's empire of the Last Days. Supporting this is the flight of the three angels¹⁴ through the heavens with warnings containing both religious and political implications. The first angel concerns God and Christ, God's creation of the world and his judgment of it. The second concerns the Prostitute, with emphasis on her effect on the nations of the earth. The third concerns the worship of the Antichrist and the taking of his mark. All three warnings are both religious and political.

Because of the religious associations of the Prostitute and since she sits on seven hills and is called "the great city who rules over the kings of the earth",¹⁵ some have seen in her an apostate Roman Catholic Church. She is dressed in purple (the royal color) and scarlet¹⁶, which are very close to the colors worn by the princes of the Roman church.

There are, however, problems with tying the Prostitute to the Roman Catholic Church. For one thing, it is by no means certain that calling the woman a prostitute means that she should belong to God but doesn't, which would be the case were she the Roman Church. In fact, it is extremely unlikely that is what is meant.

There are two different words for adultery in Greek and the NIV's translation is confusing here. First, in Greek scripture, the primary word for adultery is "moicheia" (μοιχεία). It is specific to the case of adultery (being unfaithful towards you spouse) and it is the Greek word used whenever the commandment against adultery is quoted. The Hebrew word which the Greek translates always meant either spiritual adultery or marital unfaithfulness.

¹¹ e.g. Leviticus 17:7, 20:4-5, Jeremiah 3:9, Hosea 4:12. See especially Ezekiel 16 and 23.

¹² Ezekiel 16:28-29.

¹³ Deuteronomy 23:17, 1 Kings 14:24

¹⁴ Revelation 14:6-13.

¹⁵ Revelation 17:18.

¹⁶ Revelation 17:4

The word used here, however, is “porneia” (πορνεία) which means “sexual immorality or fornication”. It is a broader term than “moicheia”, and though it can include adultery,¹⁷ it primarily is the sin of a harlot, not an adulteress. The use of “porneia” here is suggestive that the woman is most likely *not* affiliated with the church and therefore is pagan rather than apostate, although it is difficult to be certain.¹⁸

(Revelation 17) {3} Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

The beast on which the woman sits closely resembles both the dragon (Satan) in Chapter 12 and the beast from the sea (the Antichrist) in Chapter 13. For more detail on the comparison see Appendix 3. The position of the woman, sitting on the beast, indicates a position of control. As we will see, this position is temporary.

(Revelation 17) {4a} The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls.

The word scarlet has two associations with the woman. First, the beast she rides is scarlet, matching the fiery red of the satanic dragon.¹⁹ Second, her clothing is scarlet. Scarlet has two different correlations, both in view here. First, because the dye which produced the color was costly, the color is associated with wealth, an idea further conveyed by her gold and jewels. It is quite often the color of good or pure things, from the clothing of a noble family²⁰ to the curtains of the tabernacle.²¹ David, in his lament for Saul, spoke of the prosperity of the kingdom under Saul:

(2 Samuel 1) {24} O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.

Secondly, scarlet also conveys the idea of sin. Isaiah says that “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”.²² The ideas of wealth and sin are not altogether separated in scripture. In the prophets, for example, the idea of finery in general took

¹⁷ See, for example, Matthew 19:9 where “porneia” is the grounds for divorce and any other grounds is “moichao” (variant of “moicheia”).

¹⁸ This is not to say there won’t be apostate churches in the last days. See for example 1 Timothy 4:1.

¹⁹ Revelation 12:3.

²⁰ Proverbs 21:31.

²¹ Exodus 26:1.

²² Isaiah 1:18.

on some negative connotations, primarily because of the unfaithfulness that often accompanies wealth. James warned the church that it was the wealthy who exploited them.²³ Jeremiah, predicting the fall of Jerusalem, described the city in ways very similar to the vision seen by John:

*(Jeremiah 4) {30} What are you doing, O devastated one?
Why dress yourself in scarlet and put on jewels of gold?
Why shade your eyes with paint? You adorn yourself in
vain. Your lovers despise you; they seek your life.*

Jerusalem here, having prostituted herself to the nations around her, finds that they hold her in contempt and despise her. As we shall see, the same betrayal by her adulterous lovers awaits the woman.

**(Revelation 17) {4b} She held a golden cup in her hand,
filled with abominable things and the filth of her
adulteries.**

The Prostitute is finely (if extravagantly) dressed and carries a golden cup. Instead of being filled with fine wine, however, it is filled with filth, the product of her fornications.²⁴ The word translated here as “abominable things” is the same translated “Abominations” in verse 5.

There are two closely related cups associated with the Prostitute. Here she carries the cup of her abominations. She is drunk with the blood of the saints which, among other things, are figuratively in the cup she holds.

But as we will see below, God also gives her a cup to drink, one filled with the fury of his wrath.²⁵ It is appropriate that God pour out his wrath on her for shedding the blood of the saints, the primary cause, as we have seen several times, of the wrath of God. It is instructive that “thumos”, the Greek word for wrath or fury, is used both for God’s fury²⁶ and the “maddening” filth of the Prostitute’s adulteries.²⁷

John now sees the woman in more detail:

²³ James 2:6.

²⁴ Metaphorically referring to Idolatry or idolatrous.

²⁵ Revelation 16:19.

²⁶ Revelation 16:19.

²⁷ Revelation 18:3.

**(Revelation 17) {5} This title was written on her forehead:
MYSTERY
BABYLON THE GREAT
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

In scripture, a mystery is usually a religious secret, often one which has been or is about to be revealed. That is the case here. What the Prostitute is, is about to be revealed.²⁸ Mysteries are common in scripture. Christ talks of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven which are revealed to the disciples, but not to the masses,²⁹ and Paul of the mystery of Christ³⁰ and the Christian religion.³¹ The Rapture is called a mystery,³² as is the coming rule of Christ over all things³³ and the ability of Gentiles to partake of God's kingdom along with the Jews.³⁴ The workings of the man of lawlessness are also called a mystery.³⁵

The word used here for "ABOMINATIONS"³⁶ appears six times in the New Testament. Twice it means things in general which are detested by God,³⁷ twice here for the abominations of Babylon the Great, and twice the "abomination that causes desolation"³⁸, the idol set up in the temple by the Antichrist and false prophet.³⁹ The same word is used for the Antichrist's idol in the Septuagint translation of Daniel.⁴⁰

The woman has several meanings. She is not a person, for we never see her punished eternally as we do the Antichrist and the False Prophet (and even Death and Hades). She is carefully contrasted with the Bride of Christ which also isn't one person. The

²⁸ Revelation 17:7.

²⁹ Mathew 13:21 where "secrets" translates the Greek "musterion", the word translated here as "mystery".

³⁰ Colossians 2:2.

³¹ Romans 16:25, 1 Corinthians 2:7.

³² 1 Corinthians 15:51.

³³ Ephesians 1:9.

³⁴ Ephesians 3:6.

³⁵ 1 Thessalonians 2:7 (secret translates "musterion").

³⁶ "βδέλυγμα".

³⁷ Luke 16:15, Revelation 21:27.

³⁸ Mathew 24:15

³⁹ "shiqquts", the Hebrew word translated abomination, nearly always refers to idols in the OT. This makes it likely that the "abomination that causes desolation" will be an idol.

It is curious to note that practically the only place where "shiqquts" does not refer to idols is in Nahum's lengthy prophecy concerning Nineveh, where it means "filth" (Nahum 3:6). The Prostitute's cup is variously said to contain abominations and filth.

⁴⁰ Daniel 9:27

faithful bride is differentiated with an unfaithful one and the pure woman with the impure. There are plenty of scriptures where Israel plays the harlot both with other gods and with the political powers of the nations around them, instead of worshiping God and trusting in him for their protection.

Some of the saints are within her,⁴¹ which at least implies that she may be the apostate Church which may still hold some true believers. The best interpretation probably takes all these things into account. The Prostitute is a system which, for a time, dominates the beast empire of the Antichrist as it has the Beast empires of the past. In its final form the system takes power again during the period before the Antichrist becomes truly Satanic.⁴² That system contains many religious elements, probably including most of the “religious leaders” of the time, who have cooperated fully with the governmental system of the rising Antichrist. It is possible that she bears the form of a church, perhaps even the Roman Church, but it is a church far more compromised by the Beast system than any today.

The Prostitute wields considerable political power throughout the earth, dominating the political system. Her adulteries are political and religious, but the political predominates. The mixture of political acts with religious imagery may mean that the religious system of the last days is secular in the extreme, giving only lip service to religious perspectives.

The use of ‘porneia’ for her sexual transgressions indicates that the Prostitute’s prostitution is not primarily with gods but with men. If the Prostitute represents false religion, which seems likely, then the false religion of the Last Days, at least before the worship of the Antichrist is initiated, is likely secular. Things of God are rendered to Caesar. World-wide humanism takes the place of the worship of the true God.

The Prostitute is worse than compromised. She actively participates in the persecutions of God’s people in the last days, as the next verse shows:

(Revelation 17) {6} I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

The Prostitute persecutes and has persecuted the people of God. In this she is directly associated not only with the persecutions of the Antichrist but also of the persecution of Christians from Rome forward.

⁴¹ Revelation 18:4.

⁴² Revelation 13:1.

Again, the NIV translation is deceptive here. In Greek the word following saints is “kai”⁴³ which can be properly translated by the conjunction “and”. This shows two groups of people in view. In addition, the word “saints” can be translated as God’s “holy⁴⁴ ones” or “holy people”. Given that, this passage translates as “with the blood of God’s holy people and of those who testify about Jesus”. Since several of the beast empires predate Christianity, it makes sense we have two groups in view here: Jewish people and Christians. If the Jewish people were not meant, it is hard to see who she persecuted before Rome since Christians didn’t then exist.

We will return to the woman after looking at the beast she rides.

(Revelation 17) {7} Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.

The interpretations of the Prostitute and the beasts of Revelation 13 and 17 are among the most difficult in the book. Their close resemblance of the beasts with each other and with the Dragon (Satan) was discussed in detail in Appendix 3. Here we will concentrate more on their differences.

Parts of this scripture seem clear, such as the identity of the beast of Chapter 13 with the Abomination of Desolation mentioned by Christ in the Olivet Discourse, while others, such as the meaning of the seventh head of both the beast of Chapter 13 and the beast of Chapter 17 are far more obscure.

The close resemblance of the beast in Chapter 13 to the one here and of both to the Dragon was discussed in detail in Appendix 3. We will review and extend that analysis here.

As we begin to analyze the mount of the Prostitute, it is helpful to quote again the relevant comparison text from Chapter 13.

(Revelation 13) {1b} And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. {2} The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. {3}

⁴³ “Kai” is the Greek word used by the SBL Greek New Testament (SBLGNT)

⁴⁴ The definition of holy “set apart by (or for) God, holy, sacred” Strong’s Greek Lexicon.

One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast.

In the current Chapter we have:

(Revelation 17) {8} The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come. {9} “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. {10} They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. {11} The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction. {12} “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast...”

Here we encounter the second “call for wisdom” in Revelation. The first was the number of the Beast in Chapter 13.⁴⁵ Both calls deal with how the beast is to be identified.

In distinguishing the two beasts, let’s start with the seven heads and ten horns, which both beasts have. The ten horns are ten kings who will be a part of the Antichrist’s last-days empire.

In Chapter 17 they are specifically called kings while in Chapter 13 they have crowns, the symbol of kingship. They are to be distinguished from the “kings of the earth” who mourn the destruction of Babylon and are present in other ways in scripture. They are the ordinary rulers of countries, not the ten that helped assemble the Antichrist’s kingdom.

Daniel saw these ten kings in two of his visions, that of the toes of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Chapter 2 and of the ten horns of the beast in Daniel 7. In Chapter 13 they are part of the symbolism of the Antichrist because they will play an important part in his rise to power. In Chapter 17 they are a property of the Prostitute’s

⁴⁵ Revelation 13:18.

mount, but though that mount has meaning across time (as the analysis of the seven heads will show) we are specifically told that they will in the future gain power for a short period along with the eighth king, the Antichrist. In other words, though they are shown on a beast that has meaning across time, they are specifically said to acquire their meaning when they and the Antichrist rise to power. Since they are a part of his symbology, they are subservient to him. Both references to the ten horns are meant to refer to the Last Days.

That isn't the case, however, with the seven kings. In Chapter 13, the seven heads are people, each bearing a blasphemous name. This no doubt means that whoever the heads represent, they are Satan's, not God's. This is further supported by the dragon having seven crowned heads. It is extremely likely that saying a horn or a head has a crown and saying it is a king mean the same thing.

In Chapter 13 one of the heads has a fatal wound that has healed. Or at least it *seemed* to have been fatal. If all we had was this initial introduction of the Antichrist we really could not say what this means. But it is cleared up in verses 12 and 14 where it is made clear it is the Beast itself – the Antichrist – who has the 'fatal' wound.

Since we know the 10 kings are creatures of the Last Days (From Daniel as well as from Revelation 17 as we have shown), it is best to take the Beast of chapter 13 to be a creature of a specific time period, namely the Seventieth Week of Daniel. This is why he is invariably taken to be the final Beast emperor, the Antichrist.

The beast of Chapter 17, on the other hand, spans all time, referring to all the Beast empires (though it also, as is made clear near the end of Chapter 17, refers to the final one, that of the Antichrist).

It will clarify what is going on if we note that as we move through Chapter 17 we go more and more from the mount of the Prostitute representing the Beast empires of all time to it representing the final one, that of the Antichrist. That transition is completed when we transition late in Chapter 17⁴⁶ from discussing the seven crowned heads (the empires across time) to discussing the ten kings (the coalition that leads to the creation of the final beast empire of the Last Days).

In Chapter 13 one of the heads of the beast has a seemingly fatal head wound. We have seen above that this applies to the Beast of the last days. That would imply that the "fatal" head wound that is "healed" by Satan is a parody of Christ's death and resurrection. Though the text doesn't say so directly, most interpreters, including the present authors, take this as a miraculous (or miraculous appearing) healing of the

⁴⁶ Revelation 17:12.

Antichrist which fills the world with wonder and makes many follow him. For this reason, we have placed that near-death at the mid-point of the Seventieth Week when the Antichrist is revealed (and when he becomes completely a creature of Satan).

Let's look at the seven heads in more detail. Other than to say that one of the seven heads had a head wound, little is said of the seven in Chapter 13. It is possible they are the seven remaining kings after three are overthrown by the "little horn" in Daniel 7, though that is little more than speculation.

In Chapter 17, however, the seven kings are made specific – they are the seven Beast empires that precede the final one of the Last Days. They show that the imagery of the mount of the Prostitute – as distinguished from that of the Beast in Chapter 13 – is *not* of a moment in time but extends across all human history. While there are seven heads in both cases, there are eight beast empires in Chapter 17: the five that were, the one that is, the one that will come for a short time. The eighth is the beast itself.⁴⁷ All but the final one corresponds to one of the heads. That these empires occur across time supports the hypothesis that the symbols in the mount of the Prostitute have a more cross-time meaning than the symbols in the Beast from the sea.

There are other differences between the two beasts. One is where they arise and where they go. The beast of Chapter 13, a man, rises from the sea ("θαλάσσης"). The beast of Chapter 17 rises from the Abyss (ἄβύσσου), a word that can mean sea but also means the abode of demons. Thus, where the two beasts rise from is parallel but not necessarily identical. Their destruction is even more interesting. The Antichrist is seized at the Last Battle and thrown alive, along with the False Prophet, into the Lake of Fire.⁴⁸ We do not see the destruction of the amalgam of beast empires of Chapter 17, though we are told (verse 8) that it goes to its destruction. Scripture supplies two hints of what this means. First was the statue from Nebuchadnezzar's dream.⁴⁹ It represents a series of empires across time but is destroyed all at once during the time of the last empire by the stone not made by hands.⁵⁰ Thus, its existence is across time but its destruction once and for all is the work of an instant.

Second is the way the emphasis with respect to the beast of Chapter 17 shifts from the empires across time to the final one, just in time for it to be destroyed with the defeat of the beast of Chapter 13 (seen again in Chapter 19) at the Last Battle. This temporal

⁴⁷ This probably says better than anything else what all this means. The beast is itself a king (or empire) while its own seven heads are seven more kings.

⁴⁸ Revelation 19:20

⁴⁹ Daniel 2:31-45.

⁵⁰ Daniel 2:34.

juxtaposition shows that with the destruction of the final beast kingdom, the entire system of anti-God kingdoms will be destroyed.

Let's look now in detail at the meanings of the seven heads on the mount of the Prostitute. We are told that the seven heads have two meanings which, at first, seem completely unrelated: they are both seven "kings" or empires across time and also seven literal hills. This can be quite confusing and there are many possible interpretations of this scripture, but the most logical is the following. The broadest meaning of the Prostitute is that she represents the politico-religious system that controls the beast empires of all time, including that of the Antichrist, at least until he "rises from the Abyss" and takes full power. The more specific meaning (and the one most applicable to John) is that at the time John has the vision, she is controlling the Roman Empire. That Rome is meant is clear: in John's time as now, Rome is the city on the seven hills. The use of the present tense in verse 9 ('sits') and again in verse 18 ('is') where the woman is called the great city which rules (present tense) over all the earth would seem to clinch it, for in John's day the Roman Empire ruled all the world that mattered. In other words, the statement about the Prostitute sitting on seven hills is a statement about who the Prostitute is and where she is located in John's day, but not for all time. Where she is in the Last Days is much less clear. So much for the seven hills. Now for the seven kings as kings.

Of the seven kings, we are told that five have fallen (by the time when John was seeing them). **Egypt** lasted from the unification of upper and lower Egypt by Medes in about 3100 BC until it effectively lost its independence to the Assyrians in 671 BC. **Assyria** was an empire from approximately from 2025 BC until 609 BC when it fell to a coalition of Babylon and the Medes. **Babylon**, in turn, lasted (the neo-Babylonian Empire) from 626 BC until 539 BC when it was conquered by the Medes and the Persians.

Medo-Persia as an important empire began with Cyrus the Great in 550 BC and ended when it was conquered by Alexander the Great of Macedon in 330 BC. The **Greek** empire was founded by Alexander around 336 BC. Upon his death in 323, his empire split into four pieces, but since they were all very Hellenistic, and since Daniel speaks of the break-up of Alexander's empire 'to the four winds',⁵¹ the successor empires (particularly that of the Seleucids) are considered part of the "Greek" beast empire. The most anti-Jewish of the Seleucid emperors was Antiochus IV Epiphanes⁵² who ruled from 175 BC until 163 BC and plays a major part in the book of the Maccabees. The Seleucid empire fell to the Roman Republic in 63 BC. At the time when John saw this vision, **Rome** ruled much of the known world. It had been a monarchy from its founding (traditionally, 753 BC) until 509 BC when the kings were overthrown and the Republic

⁵¹ Daniel 11:4.

⁵² His name means God made manifest.

instituted. The Roman Republic lasted from then until 27 BC when Augustus Caesar became its first emperor. It remained an empire until it fell, in 476 AD for the Western Empire and 1453 AD for the Eastern or Byzantine Empire. Since it was at least nominally Christian starting in the fourth century, it makes little sense to call it a beast empire thereafter.

Notice something important: From the unification of Egypt in the fourth millennium BC until the Christianization of Rome in the fourth century AD there always was at least one Beast empire in existence. That changed with the Christianization of Rome. This ending for a time of the explicitly anti-God system of empires may explain the astonishment of the inhabitants of the earth at the reappearance of a Beast empire in the last days.⁵³

The identities of the first six empires are widely accepted by Biblical scholars. The identity of the seventh is anything but certain. One possible interpretation, and the one tentatively adopted here, is that the seventh king, the one who will remain for a little while, was Adolf Hitler and his Third Reich. The primary arguments for this are that he was the greatest enemy of the Jews to date, he called his 'empire' "the Thousand Year Reich", in mimicry of the Millennium, and his empire wasn't around long.

The eighth and final beast empire is that of the Antichrist. But what are we to make of verse 17:11 where it says, "He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction"? The word translated "belongs to" is the Greek "ek" which simply means "from" or "one of". Some have thought that this meant that the Antichrist was some kind of Satanic "reincarnation" of one of the beast emperors of the past, usually the Emperor Nero. More likely is that it simply means he more closely resembles one of them than he resembles the others. Or even that he shares their common basis in Satan.

We already know that his empire is a kind of recreation of Rome from the iron and clay feet of the final empire in Daniel (where Rome was characterized as being made of iron). This interpretation: that he is a re-creation of a previous beast emperor and his kingdom a kind of re-creation of Rome (supported by the mixed iron and clay of Daniels' last empire)⁵⁴ has a symmetry to it

We now turn from the parts of the beasts to the beasts themselves. The beast of Chapter 13:2 is a composite: it has a mouth like a lion⁵⁵, the feet of a bear⁵⁶, and it

⁵³ Revelation 17:8.

⁵⁴ Daniel 2:40-45.

⁵⁵ Daniel 7:4.

⁵⁶ Daniel 7:5.

resembled a leopard⁵⁷. These make it very much like the first three beasts of Daniel Chapter 7.

The fourth beast of Daniel 7 appears to be missing, but it is worth noting how it is described in Daniel.

(Daniel 7) {7} 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. {8} 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 human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

This seems to fit very well with the ten kings who, for a while, will share power with the Antichrist.⁵⁸ We will discuss them later, but for now we note that these similarities show that the beast of Chapter 13, though not explicitly called out as a composite of other beast empires, certainly looks like one. The beast of Chapter 17 is closely related to the other beast empires as we have seen (and is the eighth and last of their number). We see this as near-parallel between the two beasts.⁵⁹

We now come to another strange such near-parallel. Of the seven heads of the beast of Chapter 13, one has a head with a seemingly fatal wound, but the wound has been healed. As we have discussed, this is generally taken to mean that the Antichrist will receive such a mortal wound and apparently miraculously survive it. This miraculous survival will make everyone marvel at him and will lead to or assist in his rise to world power. Since he is a man, this apparent fatal wound and its healing makes him a parody of Christ and his death and resurrection.

The beast of Chapter 17 is interesting. The beast here is a system of powerful governments, and not a person. We are told this beast was, is not, and yet will come (verse 8). Consider what we said above about the beast empires from Egypt to Rome: there never was a time after the rise of Egypt when there wasn't a beast empire on earth. But since the fall of Rome (and ignoring the mysterious seventh empire), there has not been such a system active on the earth. It will come again with the empire of

⁵⁷ Daniel 7:6.

⁵⁸ Revelation 17:12.

⁵⁹ For a more complete description of the Beasts reference Appendix 3: The Beasts of Revelation.

the Antichrist. Hence it was, is not, and yet will come, which will make people marvel. Add to this that the Antichrist's empire is a kind of resurrected Rome, the parallels are complete.

The Antichrist's empire, like all the beast empires of history, will be overseen and directed by Satan.⁶⁰ Seen this way, the parallels in the images of death and resurrection associated with the beast become clearer. In so far as it applies to the man, the Antichrist will be wounded, the wound will appear fatal, and he will live. This will astound people and help him establish his rule.

In addition, Daniel predicted that the Roman empire would split into, or be reconstituted from, 10 pieces.⁶¹ That last division would be destroyed by the establishment of God's kingdom,⁶² and hence pertains to the time of the end. Since the Roman Empire fell, and yet the ten toes/horns are from it, it will also be "resurrected" in the last days. It is in this form that the beast kingdom system also will die and be "resurrected" to appear again in the Last Days as discussed above.

(Revelation 17) "{12} The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. {13} They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. {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."

In Chapter 13 very little is said about the meaning of the ten crowned horns of the beast there, but here they are members of some sort of ten-nation alliance that support (willingly or unwillingly) the Antichrist as he rises to power. Assuming these are the same ten horns that are associated with the fourth beast of Daniel 7, there will be trouble within the alliance, and the Antichrist will at some point have to subdue three of them. However well or poorly they get along with each other, these ten have three things they hold in common: they effectively receive their power for a short time through the Antichrist,⁶³ they hate the Prostitute and are willing to unite to help him destroy her,⁶⁴ and they hate Christ.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Revelation 13:1. See also Appendix 3 on the similarities between the beast and the Dragon.

⁶¹ Daniel 2:33, the toes of the statue, Daniel 7:7.

⁶² Daniel 2:44.

⁶³ Revelation 17:12.

⁶⁴ Revelation 17:16.

⁶⁵ Revelation 17:14.

King of Kings is a title of Artaxerxes⁶⁶ and Nebuchadnezzar,⁶⁷ but Lord of Lords is only given to God.⁶⁸ Three times⁶⁹ King of Kings and Lord of Lords are used in concert, all in the New Testament. In the first of these, the title is applied to God the Father,⁷⁰ while in the other two it is applied to Christ. This use alone establishes the divinity of Christ, since how can there be two king of kings or two lord of lords?

(Revelation 17) {15} Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. {16} The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. {17} For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled.

What is the purpose of God which the Beast and the ten kings inadvertently bring about? Clearly, it is the destruction of Babylon, but this leads to a timing problem. Since the Beast dominates and uproots three of the ten kings when he arises,⁷¹ their giving the beast their power to rule would seem to take place at the time the Antichrist received his empire, which is at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week. The problem with this is that the destruction of Babylon presumably does not take place until the seventh plague, since that is where this interlude in Chapter 17 takes place. Since the Prostitute is given to drink of the “fury of the wrath” of God, and since that is a formula for the seven last plagues, the Prostitute’s destruction is very late, after the Seventieth Week has ended and the kings of the earth are gathering for Armageddon. Although it certainly is possible that the delegation of authority which took place three and one half years earlier was for the purpose (as seen by God) of destroying Babylon, one would prefer a closer coupling in time.

The importance of this temporal spacing depends on just what is meant by Babylon. If it means all false or compromised religion throughout history, then there is no problem with the spacing. It would seem to mean that, from God’s perspective a major reason

⁶⁶ Ezra 7:12.

⁶⁷ Ezekiel 26:7 and Daniel 2:37.

⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 10:12, Psalm 136:3.

⁶⁹ 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, Revelation 19:16.

⁷⁰ This is without dispute, since Paul goes on to say that no one has seen or can see him.

⁷¹ Daniel 7:8.

for the Seventieth week is to destroy the anti-God politico-religious system once and for all. This view has a certain appeal to it.

If she represents a specific city without also representing the false religion, then one of four things must be true:

1. The kings of the earth give their authority to the Beast late in his reign and her destruction follows soon thereon. This seems unlikely since, according to Daniel, at least three of the kings were forced into submission to the Antichrist as a part of his rise to power.
2. The kings of the earth give the Beast their authority at the midpoint of the Seventieth week and her destruction follows soon after. This would seem to require that there are two destructions of Babylon, one in Chapter 17 which takes place near the midpoint, and which has to do with Babylon as a symbol of false religion, and one in Chapter 18 which is a political and economic destruction which happens during the seventh plague. The only alternative would seem to be that these two Chapters are badly out of sequence or are a strange retrospective with no clear meaning at the time within the seventh plague where they are placed.
3. It takes about three and one-half years for the Beast and ten kings to accomplish God's purpose.
4. Chapters 17 and 18 stand outside the flow of time of the Seventieth Week. This was discussed briefly in the introduction to this book where it was pointed out that if those two chapters were not present, the flow of time would still make sense. Under this viewpoint, probably the most likely, there is no point in trying to draw a timeline from Chapters 17 and 18 because they describe *why* Babylon and the beast system are destroyed and not *when*.

Jeremiah saw this day as well:

(Jeremiah 51) {1} This is what the LORD says: "See, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon and the people of Leb Kamai. {2} I will send foreigners to Babylon to winnow her and to devastate her land; they will oppose her on every side in the day of her disaster.

"Leb Kamai" is an Atbash cypher for "Chaldeans" or Babylon, meaning "heart of those who rise against me". This supports the idea that Babylon is representing all those who have risen against God across time.

**(Revelation 17) {18} The woman you saw is the great city
that rules over the kings of the earth.”**

As we mentioned above, here at the end of Chapter 17 we transition from the more general view of Babylon as the system that has controlled the beast empires to a specific city.

In their day, both Babylon and Rome ruled over the kings of the earth, and while tenses are uncertain in these two Chapters, the use of the present here seems to clinch it for Rome being the woman at the time John is writing. Additional support for this comes from 1 Peter 5:13 where Peter sends greetings from “Babylon” when he is almost certainly in Rome. The apocryphal book 2 Esdras also uses Babylon for Rome.⁷² Isaiah had a similar prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon:

*(Isaiah 47) {5} Sit in silence, go into darkness, Daughter of
the Babylonians; no more will you be called queen of
kingdoms.*

⁷² 2 Esdras 3:1. This part of 2 Esdras is contemporary with Revelation.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 continues the ideas of Chapter 17. Insofar as they can be fit into a timeline, (see above) they are events of the seventh bowl judgment. The seventh bowl judgment completes the seven trumpet judgments, which in turn completes the seven seals. We speculated at the start of the opening of the seals that the scroll being opened was the deed to the earth, something Christ has by right of creating. We see here and in the next Chapter the removal of the last resistance to his ownership.

(Revelation 18) {1} After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.

John sees another angel, making it clear that something different is being proclaimed. This is an unusual occurrence. When angels present themselves to us on earth it is in some sort of corporeal form. We may or may not recognize them as supernatural beings. In this case it is not definite, but certainly plausible that those on earth are seeing an angel unmasked and in his full glory. The result is that the earth is illuminated by him. It would not be surprising since we are very close to Christ's return at this point. The supernatural world is no longer veiled and how it impacts the physical world has become obvious. We are about to see what "great authority" has been given him.

(Revelation 18) {2} With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.

Isaiah foresaw a similar result for Babylon:

(Isaiah 21) {9} Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: 'Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!'

We are seeing from Heaven's perspective how Satan and his minions have set up residency in the world/society and the worst concentration of Satanic authority is represented in Babylon. Remember that the kingdoms of the world belong to Satan. Jesus does not deny this when Satan offers it to him.⁷³

⁷³ Matthew 4:8

The Bible has a long list of birds which are classified as unclean and for various reasons.⁷⁴ A good number of them are birds of prey. Ironically, birds also play a role after Armageddon.⁷⁵ In this case it is safe to say that the implication is the symbols of Babylon's corruption have become real.

(Revelation 18) {3} For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.

The first part of this verse echoes verse 2 of Chapter 17, while the second part introduces something new. The implication is that we are looking at the same thing but from a new angle. The additional angle is the wealth and greed associated with Babylon. Nahum has a similar story to tell of Nineveh:

(Nahum 3) {16} You have increased the number of your merchants till they are more than the stars of the sky, but like locusts they strip the land and then fly away.

The type of adultery in Revelation 18, from God's view, is idolatry and it is God's main complaint against the Israelites. Today we are hard pressed to find such pagan abominations, at least in the western world. In Chapter 13, though, we see them reemerge at their greatest and most complete (worldwide) than any time throughout history. The whole world is required to worship the image of the beast or die, followed by the taking of the mark to be able to function within society.

(Revelation 18) {4} Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;

The message is clear: do not participate in her sins e.g., greed, power, sexual immorality etc., so that you will not be punished as she will be. Notice that the warning is not to *stay* out of her, but to *come* out of her, strongly implying that Christians and Jews can be "in" Babylon. If, for example, Babylon is the combined religious and secular authority of the last days, it is possible that there will be Christians within the system, at least early on, before refusal to worship the image of the beast becomes a capital offense.⁷⁶ Once

⁷⁴ Leviticus 11:13-19

⁷⁵ Revelation 19:17-21

⁷⁶ Revelation 13:15

it becomes clear what the system is, God's people must get out of it, because if they do not, they will participate in its corruption.

While it is likely that a literal departure from a system (or perhaps even a place) is meant here, that is not all that is meant. The sins associated with the Prostitute and the warning to leave her closely parallel a passage in Colossians. There, Paul warned individual Christians against the kinds of sins associated with the Prostitute and those who have sinned with her. It associates greed with idolatry, which the rest of scripture links with harlotry. Paul also says that the practice of such things was once the normal habit of the Christians (before they became Christians) and still needs to be put to death. Such things cause God's wrath.

(Colossians 3) {4} When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. {5} Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. {6} Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. {7} You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

It is not clear whether Paul means the wrath of God will apply to a time on the earth (as it does in the warnings concerning Babylon) or at the Judgment or both, but the voice from heaven and Paul are effectively speaking about the same things and issuing the same warning.

The voice John hears from heaven is not God speaking, but an angel, since verse six mentions God in the third person. When we are at this point in the timeline is not clear, though Chapters 17 and 18 have events that span at least the second half of the Seventieth Week. It is likely that this call is roughly contemporary with the midpoint or just afterwards since it is associated with God's Wrath. It is tempting to make this contemporary with the call in Matthew 24 to head for the hills. The purpose of the two calls have an interesting difference, however. The purpose of the call in the Olivet Discourse is to flee Jerusalem because it is about to be conquered. This call is not a warning to escape the Antichrist, but one to escape sin and the plagues. It also differs from the other calls to come out of Babylon (see Isaiah scriptures below) in that they are calls, after Babylon has fallen, for the Jews to return to the Holy Land. However, this is a call while Babylon is yet powerful; to come out to escape her sins and therefore, later, escape her plagues. Here, the escape precedes the judgment, and indeed is a call to avoid that judgment. There, the call is to leave the wreckage and go home.

Since a major reason Babylon is destroyed is because of her participation in the slaughter of the saints, it is possible that the sharing in her sins has the double meaning

of not becoming willing participants in them and not becoming the victim of them. The former is the primary meaning here, as “so that you will not receive any of her plagues” makes clear.

It is most likely the plagues referred to here are the seven last plagues. The exit of Christians from spiritual Babylon has a partial parallel in the exit of the Jews from literal Babylon. Note that the Jews did not escape first and then Babylon fell. They survived through the fall.

*(Isaiah 48) {20} Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians!
Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it
out to the ends of the earth; say, "The LORD has redeemed
his servant Jacob."*

And again:

*(Isaiah 49) {8} This is what the LORD says: "In the time of
my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will
help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a
covenant for the people, to restore the land and to
reassign its desolate inheritances, {9} to say to the
captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'
"They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every
barren hill..."*

Note, however, that the Jews' departure from Babylon was the result of her fall and was a joyous return home, while the one from the end-times Babylon is cautionary. It is not the Rapture since it is also the result of choice. If Christians had no choice about leaving Babylon, there is little reason to demand they leave lest they suffer her plagues. On the other hand, nowhere in scripture does it indicate that participating in the Rapture is voluntary.⁷⁷

There are other Biblical examples that parallel this event. Noah was told to separate himself and build the Ark and Lot with his family was told to flee Sodom and Gomorrah.

**(Revelation 18) {5} for her sins are piled up to heaven,
and God has remembered her crimes.**

⁷⁷ Why would any Christian want it to be?

The Greek literally says her sins are glued⁷⁸ together up to heaven, quite possibly a hearkening back to the first sin associated with Babylon, the building of the tower of Babel.

(Genesis 11) {2} As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. {3} They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. {4} Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

The "remembered" in verse 5 cannot refer to the same time as the "remembered" at the end of Chapter 16, since there the time in view is during the seventh plague. At that point, it is too late to flee from Babylon to avoid her plagues. What is meant is that God's people are to flee from Babylon and her sins now, at the time of the warning since later God will destroy her for them. It is not at the time the Prostitute is shown to John during seventh bowl judgment. This dual timeframe is consistent with our being told the beast on which she rides had not yet ascended from the sea or abyss.⁷⁹

(Revelation 18) {6} Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup.

Jeremiah also calls for this reverse Golden Rule to do to Babylon as she has done:

(Jeremiah 50) {15} Shout against her on every side! She surrenders, her towers fall, her walls are torn down. Since this is the vengeance of the LORD, take vengeance on her; do to her as she has done to others. ... {29} Summon archers against Babylon, all those who draw the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. Repay her for her deeds; do to her as she has done. For she has defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

This is the flip side of Christ's warning about judging:

⁷⁸ Strong's Lexicon Κολλάω (kollaó) "meaning "glue" or "to stick"

⁷⁹ Revelation 17:8.

(Matthew 7) {2} or in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

And Paul's:

(Galatians 6) {7} Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

All these hearken back to the Law in Exodus:

(Exodus 21) {23} But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, {24} eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, {25} burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

All these show that man is not to take revenge on his own. God is the one who will take revenge.

(Romans 12) {19} Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord

Man may still, however, be the agent of God's vengeance:

(Revelation 18) {7} Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.' {8} Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.

Again, Isaiah saw something similar:

(Isaiah 47) {5} "Sit in silence, go into darkness, Daughter of the Babylonians; no more will you be called queen of kingdoms. ... {7} You said, 'I will continue forever-- the eternal queen!' But you did not consider these things or reflect on what might happen. {8} "Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.' {9} Both of these will

overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells.

(Revelation 18) {9} When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. {10} Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: 'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!'

The kings of the earth do not mourn her exactly, they mourn the loss of her power and, through her, their own. Three times “Woe, Woe” is sounded over Babylon: by the kings,⁸⁰ the merchants,⁸¹ and the sailors who carry the goods of the merchants.⁸² Three times the destruction is said to have taken place in one hour.⁸³

Jeremiah said:

(Jeremiah 51) {8} Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed.

Who are these kings of the earth and what is their relationship to the ten kings who share authority with the Antichrist and give him their power?⁸⁴ The latter will cause the destruction of ‘Babylon’ (though they are merely acting out God’s will),⁸⁵ while the former lament it.

Kings of the Earth:

- Often just means its literal meaning - the rulers of the various kingdoms.
- Ruled over by the Prostitute. 17:18.
- Committed fornication with the Prostitute.
- Summoned by the unholy trinity to fight Christ at Armageddon (Rev 16:14, 19:19).

⁸⁰ Revelation 18:10.

⁸¹ Revelation 18:16.

⁸² Revelation 18:19.

⁸³ Revelation 18:10, 17, 19.

⁸⁴ Revelation 17:13.

⁸⁵ Revelation 17:16.

- Those who are actually at the final battle and are killed by Christ at his appearing.
- Will eventually be ruled over by Christ after Armageddon (Rev 1:5, Psalm 2:1-9, Rev 21:24)

The Ten:

- Arise before the Beast, from Rome (Daniel 7:24)
- Three of them are subdued by the Beast (Daniel 7:24)
- Give their authority to the Beast (Rev 17:12-13)
- Are presumably among those slain at Christ's return.

The best explanation is probably that the ten kings are tightly associated with the Beast, and have no significant existence without him, at least once he has seized power. They are doubtless among the nations gathered at Armageddon, but there are others there as well, summoned by Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet. The ten kings work in one accord with the Beast, while the remaining rulers of the earth are dominated by him to a lesser degree. The ten are a literal number, prophesied both by Daniel⁸⁶ and John.⁸⁷ The ten are an integral part of the Beast empire, and of the Beast empires of all ages. They appear as horns on the heads of Daniel's fourth beast, of the Dragon⁸⁸ and of the Beast from the Abyss.⁸⁹

The kings of the earth, on the other hand, are an unspecified number of rulers. They are linked with the Beast, and like him, hate Christ and his people,⁹⁰ but their loyalties are somewhat divided. These kings mourn the fall of commercial Babylon.

There is another point that needs to be made. Satan's power on earth is crumbling under the assaults of the trumpet and plague judgments and he turns upon his own. When the Beast attacks Babylon, Satan's house is divided, and, as predicted, his end has come:

(Mark 3) {24} If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. {25} If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. {26} And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.

Christ, of course, said this in response to the Pharisees' argument that he cast out demons by Satan's power, but it applies equally well here.

⁸⁶ e.g. Daniel 7:7.

⁸⁷ e.g. Revelation 13:1.

⁸⁸ Revelation 12:3.

⁸⁹ Revelation 13:1, 17:3.

⁹⁰ Psalm 2:2, Revelation 6:15, 19:19.

(Revelation 18) {11} "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more-- {12} cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble;

It is probably worth pointing out here that the gold, precious stones, and pearls that no one buys any more are exactly what was worn by the Prostitute.⁹¹

The second group of mourners of the fall of Babylon are now in view. Notice the merchants don't mourn because of the loss of her, but of their income. It is clear that even this late, there was wealth to be made in commerce.

(Revelation 18) {13} cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men. {14} "They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' {15} The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn {16} and cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! {17} In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!" "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. {18} When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' {19} They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!

⁹¹ Revelation 17:4a.

It is interesting to note that when famine is announced with the third seal, the wine and the oil are not touched, which may indicate that luxury items are unaffected. This is supported here with the listing of wine and olive oil with things of substantial worth.

The third group, the seamen, now mourn Babylon. Their lament is essentially identical with the others, first the cry of woe and then the observation that Babylon has fallen in one hour.

The twenty-fourth Chapter of Isaiah is one of the most complete Old Testament prophecies of the events immediately preceding the return of Christ. Early in this passage, the prophet foretold the end of commerce on the earth:

(Isaiah 24) {1} See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants—{2} it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. {3} The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word.

The perspective now shifts from the merchants to the saints. They are told to rejoice at the destruction. This makes it likely the destruction is once again the result of the pleas associated with the fifth seal.

(Revelation 18) “...{20} Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.” {21} Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again..."

The boulder the size of a millstone echoes two famous passages about Babylon. The first is where Daniel describes the great statue with a golden head, silver chest, bronze thighs, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay.⁹² The head of the statue is Babylon, the chest Persia, the thighs Greece, the legs Rome, and the feet the empire at the end of the age. These represent five of the beast empires of history. A rock, not cut by human hands, struck the statue on its feet. This not only smashed the feet, but the entire statue at the same time. The vision of Nebuchadnezzar shows in highly symbolic form what John sees more literally when Christ returns in triumph, destroys the beast's empire,

⁹² Daniel 2:31-35.

and hurls the beast into the Lake of Fire. As we saw in Chapter 17, the Beast represents all the beast empires as well as his own, and in destroying him Christ destroys all of them at the same time. There are several similarities between John's vision here in Chapter 18 and Nebuchadnezzar's. Both systems are "headed" by Babylon. Here, the Beast is ridden by her, while in Daniel the golden head represents Nebuchadnezzar's empire. The two stones have some similarities. The one in Daniel is not cut by (or, presumably impelled by) human hands. This certainly means that it is thrown by God. The rock here is thrown by an angel, the agent of God. Both stones destroy the perverse Satanic system, and the events related to the stone being thrown involve the ushering in of the Millennium.

The second close parallel is with the scroll at the end of Jeremiah 51:

(Jeremiah 51) {59} This is the message Jeremiah gave to the staff officer Seraiah son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign. {60} Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon--all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. {61} He said to Seraiah, "When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. {62} Then say, 'O LORD, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither man nor animal will live in it; it will be desolate forever.' {63} When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. {64} Then say, 'So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall.'"

Both John's vision and Jeremiah's instructions involve an object to be thrown into water and a proclamation to be made that a sudden fall is the method of Babylon's destruction. In both cases, the object is hurled, signifying that Babylon's fall will not be accidental.

(Revelation 18) {22} The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. {23} The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's

great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.

Note the strong parallel with Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 51) {26} No rock will be taken from you for a cornerstone, nor any stone for a foundation, for you will be desolate forever," declares the LORD. {29} The land trembles and writhes, for the Lord's purposes against Babylon stand-- to lay waste the land of Babylon so that no one will live there. {37} Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives. {43} Her towns will be desolate, a dry and desert land, a land where no one lives, through which no man travels. {48} Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, for out of the north destroyers will attack her," declares the LORD.

If the words of Jeremiah of the complete destruction of Babylon had been fulfilled in his day, or as a result of the fall of Babylon to the Persians, they probably will not be fulfilled again in the end times. Babylon, however, was *not* destroyed at the time of the Persian conquest. That it still existed in the time of Artaxerxes of Persia is seen from Ezra 4:9 where Babylon is listed in a list of administrative regions. Indeed, we know from history that Babylon was an important city in the time of Alexander the Great who wanted to make it his capital and who died there.

Though Babylon faded in importance, it was never destroyed the way the prophets foresaw. Therefore, that destruction must be for a time yet to come. That this is true seems clear from this passage from Isaiah which put the destruction of Babylon at the time of the Day of the Lord and says the Medes will be the agent of Babylon's destruction:

(Isaiah 13) {1} An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw: ... {9} See, the day of the LORD is coming --a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger-- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. {10} The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. {11} I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. {12} I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the

gold of Ophir. {13} Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger. {17} See, I will stir up against them the Medes, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold.

The Medes will destroy the city as the agents of God, but the symbolism of darkened sun and moon indicate this will happen in the Last Days. Since Isaiah says the Medes will destroy Babylon and John that it will be the Beast and the ten kings, does this mean the Medes are part of the ten nations? This is unlikely. Today, the Medes have no national identity and have been submerged into the general Iranian population. More likely the Medes, if they exist at all in the Seventieth Week, are part of the kings of the East who are called to Armageddon by the Beast.

It is therefore likely that Isaiah saw two things simultaneously: the capture of Babylon by Darius and the eventual destruction seen as well by John.

(Revelation 18) {24} In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth."

Once more the destruction of Babylon, which is carried out like by wrath of God, is because of the persecution of the people of God. The implication here is that Babylon was responsible for all the slaughters of all God's people throughout the ages. This strengthens the idea that Babylon in Revelation represents the religious, political, and economic systems that dominated all the Beast empires of all ages, including the last one.

Jeremiah proclaimed that Babylon would fall for the same reason:

(Jeremiah 51) {45} "Come out of her, my people! Run for your lives! Run from the fierce anger of the Lord. {46} Do not lose heart or be afraid when rumors are heard in the land; one rumor comes this year, another the next, rumors of violence in the land and of ruler against ruler. {47} For the time will surely come when I will punish the idols of Babylon; her whole land will be disgraced and her slain will all lie fallen within her. {48} Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, for out of the north destroyers will attack her," declares the Lord. {49} "Babylon must fall because of Israel's slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon..."

Notice here that Babylon falls because of Israel's slain while the empire of the Antichrist and all the beast empires of history are destroyed because of their shedding the blood of the saints. Note also that we never actually see the destruction of Babylon in Revelation 18. It is still future here, and in fact does not become past tense until Chapter 19.

This interlude concerning Babylon is among the most difficult sections in the book of Revelation. It contains a very cryptic references to beasts past and future. It is very difficult to fit into a timeline in its own right, at least in part because John and the interlocutors in the prophecy keep switching tenses. It is rarely clear where the temporal reference point is supposed to be. Is it John's own day or the time which he is looking at in the vision itself?

The relationship of the internal timeline(s) of these Chapters and that of the surrounding ones is also unclear. If the initial verses of Chapter 19 are read immediately after the conclusion of Chapter 16, the sequence makes perfect sense. This helps put the events of 17 and 18 into perspective. They are shown to tell **why** Babylon is destroyed. The timing of the events, obviously prior to the destruction, is not that important. The purpose of the vision in Chapters 17 and 18 is not to show those events (since most of them have been seen in different forms elsewhere in Revelation) as part of a timeline, but to show them as evidence of Babylon's sins. She will be destroyed because of what she has done, regardless of when she did it.

It would be remiss not to point out how we are to view and live within the world now. Many aspects of the description of Babylon are easy to see today. As mentioned earlier, after Christ's 40 days of fasting, Satan said that he would give Him the Kingdoms of the World if He worshiped him. Christ did not deny his claim to the world or his ability to give them to someone. They do belong to him.⁹³

How are we to live our lives in this world? Hebrews and 1 Peter tells us we are foreigners and exiles.⁹⁴ This is not our home. We should never try to make it so. We are to live out our earthly lives here as we would at home with Christ. Christ essentially says we are to live **in** the world not to be **of** the world.⁹⁵ We are to live as good citizens and are not to break the laws of the land⁹⁶ unless they compel us to violate our life in Christ.

⁹³ Matthew 4:7-8

⁹⁴ Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 1:17 & 2:11

⁹⁵ John 17:9-19

⁹⁶ Romans 13:1-4, 1 Peter 2:13-17

If this is lived out, it will be much less likely that we will be caught up in Babylon's sins and we will be ready to flee from exile⁹⁷ when God calls us out of Babylon.

⁹⁷ 1 Peter 2:11

Chapter 19

The timeline of Revelation works smoothly if Chapter 19 follows on directly from the end of Chapter 16 and Chapters 17 and 18 are presented to show what happens to “Babylon” and why but not when. We saw there that some of the symbolism only makes sense if the events signified took place over a significant part of the Seventieth Week.

We thus start Chapter 19 with the announcement that the destruction of the great Prostitute has taken place. Since that takes place before the capture of the Antichrist (since he participates in that destruction), it takes place before the gathering at Armageddon. Now, after celebrating the destruction of the world system, we see the capture and punishment of the Antichrist.

(Revelation 19) {1} After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, {2} for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

A great multitude cries out in triumph and praise at God’s having destroyed Babylon. It is here for the first time that the destruction of Babylon is certainly behind us. Yet again it is stressed that she was destroyed because she shed the blood of the saints. This multitude is quite possibly the same one seen in Chapter 7, the martyrs from the Great Tribulation.⁹⁸ Supporting the assumption they are the same is that both their praises start with “Salvation belongs to our God”⁹⁹ and that the slaying of the first multitude is a proximate cause of God’s wrath and in particular his destroying Babylon on whose head was the blood of all the martyrs.¹⁰⁰ We have come full circle from the fifth trumpet. There, martyrs of previous ages called out for God’s vengeance on the earth for their killing. They were told to wait until the full complement of their numbers was filled up. Then, in Chapter 7 we saw those whose deaths completed the number of the slain. In Chapter 16, deep in the fury of the wrath of God, the sources of fresh water are turned to blood, a fitting (and acknowledged¹⁰¹) punishment of those who slaughtered the saints. Again, the punishments associated with the wrath of God are tied into the

⁹⁸ Revelation 7:9.

⁹⁹ Revelation 7:10, 19:1.

¹⁰⁰ Revelation 18:24.

¹⁰¹ Revelation 16:6.

martyrdom suffered by the saints. Three times Babylon is said to be guilty of killing God's people.¹⁰² God's wrath is primarily vengeance for how the corrupt politico-religious system has treated his people.

**(Revelation 19) {3} And again they shouted: "Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."**

Twice smoke is seen to rise forever in Revelation. Those who take the mark of the beast will be tormented forever before God and his angels in the Lake of Fire,¹⁰³ and the smoke of Babylon's destruction rises up forever. These two are related, but there is a significant difference. Those who serve the Beast are human beings and can be punished. Since they are thrown into the lake of fire, there is smoke associated with their punishment. The anti-God system of the beast empires across time, however, is not a person and can therefore be destroyed but not punished. It is burned up but those fires never stop smoking.

Those who take the mark are both willing participants in the Beast system and its victims. The irony is that though those participants carry out the Beast's plans against God's people, putting many of them to death, the result is that those martyrs are immediately beyond the reach of the Beast. They are not any longer within reach of Satan, even as accuser, for he has been cast down from heaven before this.¹⁰⁴ By killing the martyrs, Satan's minion has removed them forever from his grasp.

The participants in the Beast system, however, are not so fortunate. Like all who wittingly or unwittingly serve Satan, they find the covenant they have made is a covenant of death, in this case eternal destruction (for Babylon) and the Second Death (for those with the mark). Just as the Beast, at the end, turns on Babylon, so Satan leads those who follow him to eternal misery.

A close parallel to Babylon's destruction is that of Edom. As discussed in Chapter 14, the smoke of Edom's destruction will also rise forever:

(Isaiah 34) {9} Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! {10} It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.

¹⁰² Revelation 17:6, 18:24, 19:2.

¹⁰³ Revelation 14:10-11. Cf. Revelation 20:15.

¹⁰⁴ Revelation 12:9

It is probably no coincidence that so many of the descriptions of destruction of Israel's enemies contain "Day of the Lord" imagery. This is true for Edom,¹⁰⁵ Babylon,¹⁰⁶ Damascus,¹⁰⁷ Egypt,¹⁰⁸ Nineveh,¹⁰⁹ Tyre and Sidon and all the nations of the world.¹¹⁰ The fall that occurs at the battle of Armageddon and the destruction of Babylon is the stroke from the rock not cut by hands.¹¹¹ The whole system of anti-God governments will be finally destroyed when Christ returns to earth to rule on David's throne.

(Revelation 19) {4} The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!" {5} Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!" {6} Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Here we have another instance of praise by the elders and falling in worship before God. The upshot of this song of praise is that God is in control. He reigns in heaven, his throne, and He is in control of all the events which happen there and on the earth. He is the God who tells the end from the beginning¹¹² so that we know that he is in charge. He is also about to reign on the earth in the person of His and David's son. It is appropriate that this is presaged by the shout of a great multitude in heaven. This multitude is quite likely the same great multitude we have seen sporadically since Chapter 7: the martyrs of the earth, and by extension, all God's people in heaven.

(Revelation 19) {7} Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. {8} Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) {9} Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the

¹⁰⁵ Isaiah 34.

¹⁰⁶ Isaiah 13.

¹⁰⁷ Isaiah 17.

¹⁰⁸ Isaiah 19, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Nahum.

¹¹⁰ Jeremiah 25.

¹¹¹ Daniel 2:34, 44-45.

¹¹² Isaiah 46:10.

wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

The Bride of Christ is the Church, the believers of all ages. The bride has been made ready, and the wedding is about to take place. The full number of the saved is now complete, for the final scouring of the earth has come. Remember what Christ told us in parables to be ready for: the return of the bridegroom. Now he is returning. He has finished preparing a place for us and is coming back now to take us to it.

The images of the relationship between Christ and the Church, as those of God and Israel, have a significant sexual (intimacy) component that to some modern ears sounds strange, but it is not so to many peoples on earth today and was certainly not in Christ’s time or the prophets’.

(Ezekiel 16) {4} On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. ... {6} Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" {7} I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you who were naked and bare. {8} Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. ... {15} But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his.

The same angel who showed John the destruction of the Great Prostitute is still with him and is telling him about the Bride of Christ. We have here the contrast between the faithless and the faithful woman. Note also that the wedding of Christ and his bride does not take place until after the Great Prostitute is destroyed.

(Revelation 19) {10} At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

This is the first of two times (the other is Revelation 22:8) that John falls at an angel's feet and is rebuked for trying to worship him. Both times, the angel states that it is God who should be worshipped, and that he is a fellow servant with all who serve God. The angel is one of the seven with the last plagues, possibly the very last since under his dominion is the destruction of Babylon. That work is now finished.

Why does John fall at his feet now? In both cases where John does so, the angel has just finished saying that what he has presented have been the direct words of God, and it is likely that the angel, especially in his function as God's direct mouthpiece, seems even holier to John than usual, and this is what provokes the sudden act of attempted worship.

(Revelation 19) {11} 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. {12} 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. {13} He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.

This is the Second Coming, Christ's Return to earth. Does this seem like a thief in the night to you? This is the event which every eye shall see. It is for this reason Christ warned us not to believe it when we are told he is out in the desert or in the inner rooms. That is not the way he will return and not the way we are to look for him. False Christs will have secret appearances, but not the real one. As the lightning flashes across the sky, so will his coming be.¹¹³

This is the ultimate man on a white horse, not the charlatan of the first seal. It has been a long journey from the first appearance of the counterfeit until the coming of the real thing. There will be those who are impatient and will follow phony Christs as they appear and will not have the patience to wait for the Master who is coming. But what a difference! Christ is no longer the slain Lamb; he is the conquering or reclaiming king. The crowns on his head here are not the victory wreath but the royal diadem. Satan wore many diadems, and so did the beast from the abyss, and that was appropriate, for then the kingdoms of the earth were Satan's, the prince of this world. They are his no longer. In rapid succession, the Beast, his supporters, and his master will be seized and eliminated. And Christ will do it all with a command.

¹¹³ Luke 17:24.

And yet, while showing his majesty, he is wearing a robe, the royal robe of deep red. And it is indeed the royal robe, but it is also the martyr's robe, for it is both the color of royalty and the color of spilled blood.

Once before, John had seen Christ wearing a crown and robe of royal purple:

(John 19) {2} The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe {3} and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.

There is an interesting parallel to this Revelation scripture in Isaiah 62:11. The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "*Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.'*" The word here for Savior is the Hebrew "yesha", the root of the name Yeshua or Jesus.

(Revelation 19) {14} The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. {15} 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.

The armies of heaven are both angels and redeemed humanity. That they include men is clear from Revelation 17:14 where Christ's called, chosen, and faithful followers will be with him at Armageddon. Besides, we were just told who was given white linen, bright and clean - Christ's bride. It also includes angels since we are told that, when Christ comes, all his holy ones will be with him,¹¹⁴ which certainly includes the angels, who are called "holy ones" more often than are the saints. Christ himself said the angels will be with him when he comes.¹¹⁵

This event was shown many times to the prophets:

(Jeremiah 25) {30} Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: "The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth." ... {33} At

¹¹⁴ Zechariah 14:5, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, Jude 1:18.

¹¹⁵ Mark 8:38.

that time those slain by the LORD will be everywhere--from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be mourned or gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground.

And again:

(Isaiah 30) {27} See, the Name of the LORD comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; his lips are full of wrath, and his tongue is a consuming fire. {28} His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck. He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; he places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray. {29} And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. {30} The LORD will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail.

And again:

(Zechariah 14) {2} 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. {3} Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. {4} 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. {5} 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. {6} On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. {7} It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime--a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. {8} 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. {9} The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On

that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. {12} This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

Note that Zechariah refers to it as a unique day, a day without daytime or nighttime. He goes on to say that toward evening there will be light. From the words “without daytime or nighttime” alone it is not possible to determine precisely the lighting of that day, but it is probably a dark, cloudy day. First, if it were not dark, there would be no need for the contrasting statement that “when evening comes there will be light”. In addition, Joel told us that that day was a day of “darkness and gloom”.¹¹⁶

The contrast that there will be light in the evening is interesting. It is, of course, possible that with the battle over, the clouds will clear away, letting in the fading sunlight. Another possibility, however, is that it is Christ himself who provides the light. This is appropriate, since the last battle takes place on the last day of this present age. The Millennium begins that evening, following the Jewish reckoning of days from evening to evening. This fits with the Olivet discourse where Christ says sun, moon, and stars will lose their light, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky “with great glory”.¹¹⁷ Since most of the uses of “glory” in the New Testament are strongly connected with light, it is likely that what Zechariah saw was part of the return of Christ.

(Revelation 19) {16} On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Elsewhere God the Father is called King of Kings and Lord of Lords.¹¹⁸ If any more were needed, this presents strong evidence that Christ is God.

(Revelation 19) {17} 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, {18} 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.” {19} Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies

¹¹⁶ Joel 2:2.

¹¹⁷ Matthew 24:29-30.

¹¹⁸ E.g. 1 Timothy 6:15.

gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

Now we see the Last Battle from the heavenly perspective, the perspective from which resurrected believers see it. Now, while Armageddon is the place where the kings of the earth gather for the final battle, the fight itself, such as it is, will almost certainly take place at Jerusalem rather than sixty miles away at Armageddon. We start the argument for this with a parallel passage from Joel:

(Joel 3) {1} In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, {2} I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.

Two things about this passage in Joel are in dispute: when does it take place and where. As for when, there are two events with substantial support in the literature: the last battle before the millennium and Judgment Day. Supporting the latter is that the nations are “brought down to the Valley of Jehosophat”¹¹⁹ where God will “put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel.” The name Jehosophat means “God judges”. That together with Joel 3:2 would indicate some sort of trial or judgment is to take place there. That much supports as least the possibility that this is discussing the Last Judgment, but Joel continues later in the same passage:

(Joel 3) {10} Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, “I am strong!” {11} Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, Lord! {12} 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. {13} 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! {14} Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. {15} The sun

¹¹⁹ See Glossary “Valley of Jehoshaphat”

and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. {16} The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

Nothing about the Last Judgment elsewhere in scripture speaks of preparing for war, invokes “Day of the Lord” imagery, or speaks of swinging the sickle for harvest. While there is no such imagery associated with the Last Judgment, there certainly is associated with the final battle with the Antichrist. We therefore conclude that it is much more likely that this is the final battle at the end of this age than the Last Judgment.

Further evidence that the Last Judgment is not in view here is the rather clear statement that the Last Judgment does not take place on earth:

*(Revelation 20) {11} Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. **The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.** {12} 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 fact that earth and the heavens had no place at the Last Judgment makes it conclusive that the Last Judgment does not take place on earth.

Another possibility is that the vision in Joel takes place with the final revolt at the end of the Millennium when Satan is released.

(Revelation 20) {7} When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison {8} and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. {9} 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.

Again, there are no Day of the Lord images, no talk of a harvest, just sudden destruction. Though there is an attempt at another battle, there is no indication that that final uprising involves anyone except the nations at the far corners of the earth. This

contrasts with both the battle after the gathering at Armageddon and the Last Judgment where all the nations of the earth will participate.

The use of Day of the Lord imagery, the harvesting of the earth, the universality of those preparing for battle all support that it is the battle following the gathering at Armageddon, at the time of Christ's return, that is meant in the scripture from Joel.

Now, given the battle referred to in Joel 3 is the one for which people were gathering at Armageddon, where does it take place? There are several strong hints. First, it takes place in the "Valley of Jehoshaphat". It should be remembered that Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, not Israel. Armageddon is within the borders of the Northern Kingdom. It seems very unlikely to be a place referred to as the "Valley of Jehoshaphat" in an area he never ruled. In addition, though there are several theories of where that valley is located, they are all in Judah, not Israel.

The most convincing argument that the last battle takes place at Jerusalem, however, is that it takes place as Christ returns.¹²⁰ We know that Christ returns to the Mount of Olives. We know this both from Acts Chapter 1 (that Christ will return as he left) and from Zechariah 14:4 (that when the Messiah comes, he will set foot on the Mount of Olives). Add to this two other things, and it seems conclusive that the Last Battle will take place at Jerusalem. First, one of the several possible places for the location of the 'Valley of Jehoshaphat' is the central part of the Kidron Valley between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem.¹²¹

Second is the previously quoted verse from Joel 3:16. Speaking of that day, Joel says "*The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem*". While Christ can, of course, make himself heard all the way from Jerusalem to Armageddon and destroy his enemies remotely, it seems more likely he both shouts and acts from Jerusalem and its environs, strongly implying that is where the Antichrist and his armies have come for the battle.

Assuming therefore that the last battle is outside Jerusalem and, given the fact that a short time earlier the Antichrist was still in control of Jerusalem (where he had killed the Two Witnesses), there remains the question of how he lost control of the city between the killing of the Witnesses and the gathering at Armageddon. *That* he is not in control seems certain from the fact that scripture tells us repeatedly that he will trample the city for forty-two months, which time is now over. Presumably sometime during the plagues and the destruction of "Babylon" he leaves the city.

¹²⁰ Revelation 20:11-15.

¹²¹ That part of the Kidron Valley was first called the Valley of Jehoshaphat by the Pilgrim of Bordeaux in 333 (Catholic Encyclopedia, entry on Valley of Jehoshaphat).

It is very likely that his entire kingdom is in shambles at this point, regardless of what he nominally controls. If he is separated from Jerusalem and wants it back, then at least part of why he gathers the armies at Armageddon is to try to regain God's city. But nonetheless, the main reason for the gathering and for the last battle is to fight against Christ and his armies. We know that from the previous Chapter that regardless of anything else, both the Antichrist and the ten kings associated with him, have a single purpose: to fight against Christ and his followers.

(Revelation 17) {12} The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. {13} They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. {14} They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.

The last battle is over almost before it can begin, emphasizing that the time of the Antichrist is over and Christ has reconquered the earth.

(Revelation 19) {20} 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. {21} 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.

In verse 21 we see that those who are members of the armies of the Antichrist and who fight at Jerusalem are killed at Christ's return. Zechariah gives a more detailed description of their deaths:

(Zechariah 14) {12} this is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

This sounds remarkably like the deaths from radiation for those close to a nuclear blast. All those fighting, all the Antichrist's soldiers, will be killed. The nations from which they come have a different fate. From the same passage:

(Zechariah 14) {16} 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 Festival of Tabernacles.

Why this feast of all the Jewish festivals? It is likely so that those who opposed him can come and worship him while Christ is reigning in Jerusalem. Revelation 21:3 says,

(Revelation 21) {3} And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

The word used here for 'dwelling place' is σκηνή, which means tabernacle or dwelling place. It is the same word used in the Septuagint (Greek) version of the passage in Zechariah 14.ⁱⁱ

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6th seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7th seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon</p> <p>The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7 th trumpet
The beginning of the millennium	<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	The gathering for Armageddon The 7 th Plague
The end of the millennium	The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem	
The beginning of eternity	Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.	
Eternity	New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem	

Book 5

Endnotes

ⁱ The word used here is πόρνη (porné) which is defined as prostitute or harlot and metaphorically means idolatrous community. There are various translations of this: NIV uses the great prostitute, NKJV has the great harlot, KJV translates to the great whore. These all have the same meaning, but perhaps with different perceptions and connotations to our modern ear. Using the word “Whore” is more of a pejorative and assaults some sensibilities. Certainly, the Whore of Babylon is very familiar, widely used and an accurate and appropriate description. Here we will use the NIV’s translation, mainly to keep the commentary in sync with the text used.

ⁱⁱ A full discussion of the feasts of Israel and their relationship to Christ would require a book all its own and, indeed, several such have been written. But a summary is in order here. There are seven annual feasts given in Leviticus 23 for the Israelites, four in the Spring and three in the fall. The Spring feasts were closely tied to events near the end of Christ’s first coming, while the three Autumn feasts play significant roles in his second. This alone should show plainly that the Jews were and remain God’s people. We Christians are grafted on, but the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29-32).

The Spring Feasts:

Pesach (Passover)

Chag HaMotzi (Unleavened Bread)

Reshit Katzir (First Fruits)

Shavu’ot (Pentecost – Summer harvest)

Christ was crucified on Passover, buried on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, resurrected on First Fruits, and gave the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Christ is the Passover lamb and God’s instrument for salvation of everyone as Passover was for salvation of the Jews from the Egyptians. Christ is the bread of the covenant and the bread of life, the first fruits of those resurrected, and the giver of the Holy Spirit, the means of harvest of God’s people.

The Autumn Feasts:

Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets) preparation for the Day of Atonement, The Seven Trumpets

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement - redemption) Turning of the Jews to the Messiah at his return (see Zechariah 12:10)

Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles or Harvest Festival) - rejoicing that God’s dwelling place is with man. Nations whose soldiers fought at Jerusalem come to Jerusalem to worship God.

Christ’s return is preceded by the Wrath of God, the period of the Seven Trumpets. This is the last period in which those who are not God’s can repent before his return. When the Messiah comes (or returns), the Jews will, according to Zechariah, look on him whom they have pierced and

mourn, leading them to recognize him (Zechariah 12:10). Finally, as we see in Revelation 21:3, God's dwelling place is now with man and always will be. The reason the survivors of the nations will go to Jerusalem for the Festival of Booths (Sukkot) is to participate fully in God now dwelling with men.

Tapestry:

The Book of Revelation

**by David Justin Ross
and Brian J. Elmenhurst**

Book 6

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Introduction

Book 6 covers the final four chapters of Revelation and presents the transition from the present age through the Millennium and into eternity. Chapter 19 ended with the capture of the Antichrist and the False Prophet and with both being thrown alive into the lake of fire while their followers who had gathered to fight against Christ were slain with a word from the Lord. Chapter 20 begins where Chapter 19 left off, with the events following the battle of Armageddon. We start at the very last hour of the current age.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 begins immediately after the destruction of the armies of the Antichrist.

(Rev 20) {1} And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. {2} He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. {3} 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.

Isaiah saw the same thing:

(Isaiah 24) {21} In that day the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. {22} They will be herded together like ¹prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. {23} The moon will be dismayed, the sun ashamed; for the Lord Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders—with great glory.

The use of “in that day” and of signs in the sun and the moon show that Isaiah is referring to the Last Days. In the Isaiah passage, the powers in the heavens (Satanic forces) and the kings of the earth (those who fought at the final battle) will be gathered and bound for a long time. When Christ returns, those who opposed him will be slain (the soldiers who fought at Jerusalem), imprisoned, and held either for the final rebellion at the end of the Millennium or for the final judgment afterwards. The word translated here as “punished” in verse 22 can also mean “released”. Both seem in mind in the equivalent verses in Revelation.

This is particularly true with Satan, the only one that Revelation says will be imprisoned and then released, will certainly both be released *and* punished “after many days”.

Note that the word translated “punished” in verse 22 can also mean “released”. Both fit the parallel verses in Revelation well, particularly for Satan.

¹ In Revelation, those fighting against God at Jerusalem will be slain at Christ’s coming. Therefore, the ones herded together cannot include them, but likely includes those who sent them into battle (i.e. the Kings of the earth).

The verses here in Revelation strongly echo the events surrounding the fifth trumpet² when a star fell from heaven and unlocked the Abyss, though it is not clear that the angel coming down from heaven and the star which fell from heaven are the same. As was noted at the time, stars are generally angels in Revelation, and it is unlikely that the task of unlocking the Abyss would be put in the hands of a fallen angel, so it is possible they *are* the same. This angel, however, has a different job than the first. The first one opened the Abyss to release the demons which would plague the earth during the remainder of the Wrath of God. This angel will seal it up again. The Abyss is also called Tartarus in scripture.³

The one the angel seizes is called four things: the dragon, the ancient serpent, the devil, and Satan. These are the same four descriptors used when the dragon first appeared in heaven.⁴ They are all the same individual so it is clear just who is meant. The dragon, standing for Satan, appears only in Revelation. The serpent is the serpent who tempted Eve and is only here (and possibly obliquely in Isaiah 27:1) and in the parallel verse in Chapter 12 equated with Satan. “The devil” appears only in the New Testament and is identical in meaning to Satan.⁵

According to Jude, Satan is not the only angel bound in chains:

And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.⁶

The chains are everlasting but their binding, at least their current binding, is not eternal. This would indicate that these angels both are and will be punished by being bound with chains, making this another example of punishment before judgment. These are probably the same angels Peter mentions,⁷ with Jude giving more detail for the reason.ⁱ Both sets are held in darkness until they are judged, possibly by humans.⁸

For the duration of the Millennium, Satan will not be able to deceive the nations. This at least means he will not be able to do what he has just done, that is stir up the nations of the earth against God’s people. At the end of that time, he will be set free one last time and will once again gather followers in a vain assault on Israel.

² Revelation 9:1ff.

³ 2 Peter 2:4 where the word translated “hell” in the NIV is Tartarus in Greek. Both the Abyss and Tartarus are where fallen angels are held against their time of judgment.

⁴ Revelation 12:9.

⁵ Matthew 4:8-11.

⁶ Jude 6.

⁷ 2 Peter 2:4.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:3.

While the passage here does not say Satan will not be able to deceive anyone (just the nations, still in view from the abortive battle at Jerusalem), it is logical to extend the sense to believe that Satan will not be able to deceive anyone during the Millennium.

The passage does not say his minions are also bound in the Abyss during this period, but it is likely that such is the case. Note that though demons are held in the Abyss prior to this time,⁹ Satan has not been here before. Until he was cast to the earth, he was in heaven.¹⁰ His angels at that time were cast down with him, but they seem to have gradually been locked up in Tartarus/the Abyss as time has gone on. We see some of that with the Gadarene swine.¹¹

{4} 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 worshipped 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. {5} (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. {6} 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.

Four last-days judgments are mentioned in scripture, and it is important to keep them straight. We will briefly look at each of them here and see when they take place and who is involved so that when we encounter them as we proceed, we can put them in proper context.

First, we consider Matthew 19:28 which tells of the judgment of the 12 tribes by the 12 apostles.

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The first question that arises is, what kind of "reigning" is going on in the various scriptures. The reigning is either judging in the sense of the Judges in the days before Saul became king or it is judging the state of men's souls. Whenever judging is done by

⁹ e.g. Luke 8:31.

¹⁰ Revelation 12:7-9.

¹¹ Matthew 8:28

people, it is the former type. Only God judges men's souls. So we start by pointing out that whenever something human (other than their souls) is being judged, the judges are people and the judgment is administrative. Here in Matthew 19 the judgment is clearly administrative since it is the twelve apostles who are doing the judging of the twelve tribes.¹²

When do the events of Matthew 19 take place? The "renewal of all things" seems to match with Revelation 21:5a:

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new."

The renewal of all things and making all things new seem to certainly refer to the same events. But who is seated on this throne in verse 5? In verse 6 he calls himself "The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last." Alpha and Omega appear three times in Revelation. In Revelation 1:8 this designation refers to the Father. In Revelation 22:13 Jesus says it of himself. A hint is given in Revelation 22:3 when it says "the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city (the New Jerusalem) and his servants will serve him." Note that both "throne" and "his" are singular. There is only one God. True, the throne of the father in heaven is sapphire, but that does not mean the throne on earth must be. It seems likely the use of the singular is definitive.

It is therefore likely that this is the same period of renewal mentioned in Matthew 19:28, which is after the coming of the New Jerusalem. Note that what is promised here in Revelation 22 (and, by extension, in Matthew 19) is not so much a criminal judgment as a reigning, political one. The 12 Apostles will judge the 12 tribes in the sense the judges before Saul judged the tribes of Israel.¹³ That judgment will be eternal.

The judgment in Revelation 5:8-10 is also political, though unlike the one in Matthew 19, it is on the earth and therefore must be before the end of the Millennium.

{8} And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. {9} And they sang a new song, saying:

¹² Presumably the people who constitute the twelve tribes, the people of Israel.

¹³ It is possible, though less likely, that the setting up of thrones in Revelation 20:4 (which clearly takes place at the beginning of the Millennium) and the judging in Revelation 22 are an example of a compression of last days timelines. More likely, however, is that the judging in Revelation 20 is temporal and temporary (for the duration of the Millennium and that in Revelation 22 is eternal and perpetual. That would make the latter the "making new" of the former.

In any event, the judgment in Revelation 20 is not of the eternal state of men's souls.

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

{10} You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

Because they reign on the earth, this is the same judgment as that seen in Revelation 20:4. Those on the thrones, therefore, are “persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

Both of these judgments have to do with reigning, but not with the state of anyone’s soul. The other two judgments are very different.

In Matthew 25 Christ speaks of what has come to be called the Sheep and Goats judgment:

{31} “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. {32} 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. {33} He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

{34} “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. {35} 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, {36} 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.’

{37} “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? {38} When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothed you? {39} When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

{40} “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

*{41} “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. {42} For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, {43} 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.’
{44} “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?’*

{45} “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

{46} “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

There is some conflation of time going on here. Christ comes with his angels at the end of the current age, the beginning of the Millennium. But he sits on his glorious throne at the end of the Millennium when the old heavens and old earth are swept away. This conflation is not uncommon, particularly when Christ is describing events of the end of the age and the world to come. Because everyone will be judged at the Sheep and the Goats judgment, it seems clear we are talking about the Last Judgment (the fourth judgment in scripture) and that the Last judgment and the Sheep and Goats judgment are the same.

The Last Judgment is discussed explicitly in Revelation 20:

{11} Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. {12} 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. {13} 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 they had done. {14} Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is

the second death. {15} Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Who is present at the Last Judgment? The answer is everyone who has ever lived (with the possible exception of the Antichrist and False Prophet). “The dead” in verse 12 therefore means *all* the dead.

It seems redundant to be judging people who were raised at the first Resurrection being here to be judged, but that is answered by the presence of the two sets of books. At the Last Judgment people’s state of salvation is determined by whether they are in the Book of Life. Their deeds have nothing direct to do with whether they are in the Book of Life (a person with a deathbed conversion, for example, will be in the Book of Life but have no positive deeds listed for him in the other set of books).

The Last Judgment and the Sheep and Goats judgment are the same thing, with the account of the Sheep and Goats judgment being somewhat more abbreviated, particularly when it comes to the two sets of books. The two judgments have the same people (everyone), the same outcome (people are judged according to their deeds). In the description of the Last Judgment in Revelation 20 “deeds” are divided into choices for Salvation and good works (which follow such choices)

Everyone is judged both on their state of salvation (whether they are in the Book of Life) and their deeds, and they are rewarded or punished in accordance with what is found in the books. Good works are not, in once sense, necessary for salvation – since salvation comes from having your name in the Book of Life which in turn comes from faith in Christ. On the other hand, good works *are* necessary for salvation because a saving faith *will* manifest in good works. The fact that at the Last Judgment there are two sets of books shows this dichotomy, particularly when coupled with the Sheep and Goats judgment which seems entirely based on works. Knowledge that good works necessarily follow a saving faith resolves the seeming paradox.

Now that we have set out the four “judgments”, we return to the text of Revelation where understanding which judgment (of the earth or of the souls of men) is in view will help clarify the relevant scriptures, particularly with respect to what people are in view.

Revelation 20:4-6 reads:

{4} 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 worshipped 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. {5} (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. {6} 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.

This first resurrection, we know from elsewhere in scripture, includes all who served Christ across time, martyred or not. They are raised contemporaneous with or just prior to the Rapture. Note that John sees the *souls* of those martyred and that they came to life. In verse 5 it says that this is the first resurrection. If the Rapture is in view in Revelation anywhere, it is here. But if this is the first resurrection, what are we to make of Lazarus, Jairus' daughter and those who came out of their tombs at the time of Christ's resurrection?

(Matthew 27) {52} and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. {53} They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

All of these are brought back to life but are not transformed into their resurrection bodies. Like Lazarus, they will again die. Only Jesus assumes his resurrection body prior to the "first resurrection" of Revelation 20.

All the believers that John sees at the first resurrection – all the believers of all time – are the ones who come to life. We know that the dead saints will be raised *before* the Rapture. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians:

(1 Thessalonians) {15} According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. {16} For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. {17} After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

John is witnessing here the fulfillment of what Paul foresaw in 1 Thessalonians: the resurrection of the blessed dead of all ages and the transformation of those still alive.

Since this is called the *first resurrection* there can be no general resurrection before it, and since the Rapture cannot precede the resurrection, the Rapture cannot have already taken place. This alone rules out a pre-Tribulation Rapture.

So exactly who are those who participate in the first resurrection? We know that it must be the blessed dead of all ages because 1 Thessalonians 4:15 says that those who are alive and greet Christ at his coming will not join Christ before those who have already died at that time. All who *are* alive will join Christ in the air. Since all the living believers and all the dead believers comprises all believers, that is who will be resurrected at the first resurrection. Verse 6 in the current chapter says that those who are a part of the first resurrection will reign with Christ for the Millennium. This gets support from Revelation 5:10 where it says that *all* whom Christ has purchased will reign with him on the earth.

It is therefore the thrones for believers of all ages, transformed or resurrected, who will reign with him on earth, including the 12 Apostles.

John also sees some other subsets of the blessed dead. In verse 4 he sees the souls of those beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the Beast nor taken his mark. It specifically says (verse 4) that they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Does this mean only believers who were literally beheaded were resurrected? No. πεπελεκισμένων, the word used in Verse 4, (when used at least of inanimate objects) can mean cut off or cut down. Thus, it is likely that we are seeing a part (those martyred by beheading) used for the whole (all who were martyred in the Great Tribulation).

This brings us to verse 5 “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” Those who come to life at the end of the Millennium for the Last Judgment are all those who died apart from God across all time and in the Last Days but it must also include those who entered the Millennium in their earthly bodies and die sometime during the thousand years, regardless of their spiritual state. They will be resurrected to face judgment, both for their spiritual state and for their deeds. It is also possible (perhaps likely) that those who participate in the first resurrection will have their deeds judged at the Last Judgment and rewards given for their eternal state.

We will have more to say about the Last Judgment when we get there in the commentary.

Revelation 20 marks the end of the current age and the beginning of the Millennium. But what *is* the Millennium? The word “χίλιοι” literally mean a thousand and in each of the uses in Revelation it is coupled with “ἔτη” meaning years. The period of a thousand years occurs six times in Revelation 20, in six sequential verses, and nowhere else:

(Revelation 20) {2} He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years (χίλια ἔτη)

{3} 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 (χίλια ἔτη) were ended.

{4} 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 worshipped 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 (χίλια ἔτη).

{5} The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years (χίλια ἔτη) were ended. This is the first resurrection.

{6} 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 (χίλια ἔτη).

{7} When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison (χίλια ἔτη)

The thousand-year period of Satan's confinement and the 1000-year reign of Christ, mentioned here at the same time seem certain to be the same period. It might seem obvious that all of these refer to a period of 1000 years where the saints and Christ will co-rule and Satan will be confined, but there are several questions that have been raised over the years about this period. The most important two are, "where does this reign take place?" (meaning is it on earth or in heaven) and "is it literal?".

Neither verse four nor verse six, the only two places in the bible where a thousand-year co-reign of the saints with Christ is mentioned, says where it takes place. This has led some to say the reign is from heaven. But a verse in Revelation chapter 5 rules that out:

(Revelation 5) {9} And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. {10} You have made them to be a

kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

Whoever these people are, they reign on earth. Also strongly supporting that this takes place on earth is John’s location when he sees the thrones set up. He is on earth, as he has been for several chapters. The Millennial reign of Christ will therefore be of the earth and take place on the earth. His followers, as promised, will rule with him there.

The other question is whether this is meant literally. Unsurprisingly, there are schools of thought that, having taken prophetic scripture literally up to this point, get to the Millennium and start to spiritualize it away.

The three main approaches to the Millennium are Amillennialism (literally no-Millennium), Post-Millennialism, and Pre-Millennialism. These are discussed in detail in the Appendix on the Millennium and there is no reason to repeat the discussion here. The authors hold to the pre-Millennial interpretation, believing that the Bible teaches a literal thousand-year reign of Christ and his followers on earth.

The next question about the Millennium is who the inhabitants of millennial earth are and in what state they exist. We know that many will be there in their living bodies. Daniel 7:12, speaking of what happens to the nations of the earth after the destruction of the Antichrist, says that though they are stripped of any authority, they are allowed to survive for a while. For them to survive they presumably need citizens. We know this is the case from Zechariah. There will be the survivors of the nations that attacked Jerusalem in the last battle. Not the attacking soldiers of those nations – they are all killed by Christ – but everyone else from the nations. Zechariah 14:16 says:

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 Festival of Tabernacles.

In addition to these, it is likely that there will be survivors who are not believers (and hence not raptured) who also did not take the mark but managed to avoid being killed by the Antichrist.

More problematic are all the people who worshipped the Beast and took his mark. After Revelation 20:4 the mark is never mentioned (those who take the mark are last mentioned in Revelation 19:20) and though those who take the mark will be punished eternally, it isn’t clear what happens to them in the meanwhile. It is possible that some of them live and eventually die in the Millennium, to be raised again and eternally condemned at the Last Judgment. More likely, however, is that those who took the mark are among those killed by Christ when he returns. If this is true, there will therefore be no mark-takers in the Millennium.

When scripture says this is the *first* resurrection, what is meant by “first”? Some, particularly those who support a pre-Seventieth Week Rapture, maintain that it is first in kind or priority, rather than first in time. They say it cannot be first in time because Christ, Moses, and the blessed dead have already been resurrected prior to this mention in Revelation. It is true that Christ was resurrected, but he is called the firstborn of the dead.¹⁴ It is not at all clear that Moses, when he appeared with Christ on the mount of Transfiguration had been resurrected. His appearance there is certainly evidence for the conscious state of the dead, but not for a multi-stage “first resurrection”. As discussed in the chapter on the Rapture, this breaking apart of the resurrection of the blessed into two or many ‘first’ resurrections is just one of the many events which must be split into several pieces to make a pre-Seventieth Week Rapture work.

The order of events at the resurrection are given several places in Scripture. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says that Christ will come from heaven, the dead will rise first and then those who are alive will be transformed. 1 Corinthians 15:23 states clearly there is only one resurrection of the just (besides Christ’s own) and that it takes place when Christ returns.¹⁵ It is the “resurrection of the righteous”¹⁶ and the “resurrection from the dead”.¹⁷

Very little is said in Revelation about life on earth during the Millennium or how the resurrected and non-resurrected inhabitants interact. Isaiah gives some indication:

(Isaiah 2) {2} In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. {3} Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. {4} He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

And again,

¹⁴ Revelation 1:5, 1 Corinthians 15:20.

¹⁵ We leave aside the resurrections of Matthew 27:52-53. There simply is not enough information given in scripture to say what is going on there.

¹⁶ Luke 14:14, Acts 24:15.

¹⁷ Luke 20:35.

(Isaiah 11) {6} The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling^[a] together; and a little child will lead them. {7} The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. {8} The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. {9} They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

While it is likely that much of what Isaiah sees in this second section is symbolic, the essential ideal is that during the thousand years the earth will be suffused with the peace of the Lord. That peace will not last.

{7} When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison {8} 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. {9} 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.

Satan will be set free at the end of the thousand years and go out once again to stir up the nations against Israel and Jerusalem and lead them against her. These nations are said to be at the four corners of the earth, that is, a long way from Jerusalem. They are called Gog and Magog, but who they are if anything specific is meant, is nearly impossible to say. Gog appears eleven times in Scripture. The first place is in 1 Chronicles 5:4 where he is listed as the grandson of Joel. It is not clear who Joel is, though he appears to be a descendent of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel. Nothing further can be said about him other than that he had a son named Shimei.

There are then nine mentions of Gog in Ezekiel, where it appears to refer to a country or region, not a person. Gog is said to be of the land of Magog¹⁸ which is the only place Gog and Magog are paired other than in Revelation. The final mention is here in Revelation 20:8.

Many attempts to identify Gog, Magog, Meshek, Tubal, and others associated with them have been made, none with noticeable success. About all that can be said, and that with little confidence, is that they are far from Israel, possibly to the north or northeast.

¹⁸ Ezekiel 38:2. The other verses in Ezekiel are 38:3, 38:14, 38:16, 38:21, 39:1, 39:11, and 39:15.

Magog is mentioned five times in scripture. In Genesis 10:2 and 1 Chronicles 1:5 he is a son of Japheth and brother of Gomer, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshek, and Tiras. In Ezekiel 38:2 he is associated with Meshek and Tubal as though he were their overlord. The same association is in Ezekiel 39:1-6. Finally is the verse here in Revelation.

Whatever Gog and Magog are, when Satan is released near the end of the Millennium, they will launch a war against Israel. As happens at the battle that destroys the Antichrist, those who fight against Jerusalem are destroyed by fire from heaven, though this time not specifically from the mouth of Christ.

{10} 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.

Satan now becomes the third and final member of the unholy trinity to end up in the lake of fire, and there he and the Antichrist and the False Prophet will remain forever. We doubt they will enjoy each other's company.

Once the Antichrist, False Prophet, and Satan have moved into their eternal state, it is time for mankind to do the same. The next thing John sees is the Last Judgment and, as the throne of that judgment appears, both earth and sky cease to be, fleeing from the presence (literally *face*) of him who sits on the throne.

{11} 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. {12} 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.

Who is seated on the throne? There really are only two possibilities, Christ or the Father. Supporting that it is Christ is a parallel scripture in Matthew:

(Matthew 25) {31} "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. {32} 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. {33} He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

The fact that Christ will appear in his heavenly glory seems consistent with the earth and sky fleeing from his presence. It is not precisely because Christ is appearing that causes this – he has, after all, been on earth for a thousand years at this point – but because his glory is too much for the created realm.

Others maintain it is the Father, not Jesus, who is sitting on the White Throne. They point out that John throughout Revelation refers to the Father as “he who sat upon the throne” and that he here refers to the judge the same way. They also call in support on such scriptures as John 12:47 where Christ says, “I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.” This view neglects a number of things, however. First, this throne is different from God’s, being white instead of sapphire (cf. Ezekiel 1:26), so there is no reason to equate their occupants. Second, the parallels between Revelation 20:11-15 and Matthew 25:31-46 both in context and in content are so strong they must describe the same events. Third, 2 Corinthians 5:10 makes it clear that all must appear before Christ to be judged for their deeds:

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,
so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things
done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

Those who teach that this judgment is separate from that of Matthew 25 maintain that the sheep and goats judgment takes place at the beginning of the Millennium and the Great White Throne judgment at the end. It is true that Christ refers to the sheep and goats judgment occurring when “the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him”¹⁹ and he certainly appears in glory at the start of the Millennium. But as we have seen, the sheep and goats account is likely a parable about the Last Judgment and not a direct prophecy.

Regardless of the relationship of the sheep and goats judgment with the Last Judgment, the sheep and goats judgment cannot take place at the start of the Millennium. Since the second resurrection takes place at the end of the Millennium, it seems impossible that they can be judged before they are resurrected. Therefore, the only time their judgment can take place is after their resurrection after the end of the Millennium. Finally, the results of the sheep and goats judgment and the great white throne judgment are so close that it makes it very likely that the Last Judgment includes the sheep and goats judgment.²⁰

Some, accepting that there is only one Last Judgment, maintain it must take place at the beginning, not the end of the Millennium because those sitting on the thrones as the

¹⁹ Matthew 25:31.

²⁰ It should, perhaps, be pointed out that some have seen a third eternal judgment (besides the Last Judgment and the sheep and goats judgment), the Great White Throne judgment. It seem unnecessary to duplicate judgments. All three sort people into their final states and therefore are almost certain to be the same set of events.

Millennium begins are presumed to require a judgment to get there. First, nowhere in Scripture is it said that the condition of the dead after death but before judgment is the same for the blessed and the lost. On the contrary, the parable of Lazarus and the rich man²¹ and Peter's discussion of the pre-judgment state of the lost²² both show a distinction. If there is a distinction, then their actions have determined their destinies prior to judgment. The passage in 2 Peter makes it clear that punishment can begin before judgment, and so, presumably, can eternal life.

Finally, there is a parallel passage from Isaiah that speaks of a long period of time between the imprisonment of evildoers and their punishment:

In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days.²³

Who is it that are judged at the Great White Throne judgment? It is the dead of all ages, now resurrected either as part of the first or the second resurrection. Those resurrected as part of the first resurrection will not be condemned,²⁴ but it is not certain that those who are part of the second universally will be. In addition to the unsaved dead of all ages and those killed at Christ's return, those resurrected in the second resurrection will include those who died natural deaths during the Millennium. Presumably some of them will have become followers of Christ.

Each person, Christian and non-Christian,ⁱⁱ will be there and his deeds will be judged. His fate is determined, however, not by what is written in the books that contain his deeds, but by whether his name is in the book of life. His reward is determined by what he has done but his fate is determined by whether he belongs to Christ. Those who have built on the foundation of Christ, whatever they have built, will be saved, but their deeds will be tested to see whether they survive and receive a reward:

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned

²¹ Luke 16:20ff.

²² 2 Peter 2:5-9.

²³ Isaiah 24:21-22.

²⁴ Revelation 20:6, though their deeds will be judged.

up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.²⁵

There are numerous scriptures supporting the fact that we will be judged according to our deeds but will escape condemnation because of the blood of Christ. Not receiving a reward is *not* condemnation! Paul speaks of this in several other places as well:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.²⁶

And again:

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.²⁷

John also, in his first letter, indicates we will all face the day of judgment, but we have nothing to fear.²⁸

There is some indication that not only men, but also angels will be there.²⁹ In any event, angels who have sinned face their own judgment.

The judge at the Great White Throne judgment is as we discussed above, almost certainly Christ. The throne is, appropriately, called both God's judgment seat³⁰ and Christ's.³¹ Christ himself made it clear that this was his judgment, given to him by his father:

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son...³²

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:10.

²⁷ Romans 14:10-13.

²⁸ 1 John 4:17.

²⁹ 2 Peter 2:4.

³⁰ Romans 14:10.

³¹ 2 Corinthians 5:10.

³² John 5:22.

Simultaneous with the appearing of the Great White Throne, Earth and sky disappear and cease to be. This is the preparation for the new heavens and new earth to come.³³ Several times, both earth and sky have been damaged or partially destroyed during the Wrath of God. In particular, the heavens rolled up like a scroll, and all places on earth were badly shaken by earthquakes. In the process of earth going away, its dead are released for the second resurrection and judgment.

{13} 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. {14} Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. {15} If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Paul³⁴ stated that the last enemy to be defeated was death, and here both death and Hades, the abode of the dead, are destroyed. The two were linked in the fourth seal, and they are linked here. There will be no more need for them now when all people and angels have reached the places they will spend eternity. It is interesting to note that there are three sources for the dead: the sea, death, and Hades. All three of these are now to be destroyed, the first two here by being thrown into the lake of fire, while the sea disappears with the earth and is not found in the new earth.³⁵ If there is a significance to this three-fold source of the dead, it is by no means clear. It is possible that the division is “the sea”, standing for the Abyss (with its association with demons), as the source of the truly evil dead, and “Death and Hades” as the source for the rest, but this is unclear.

Some have seen in the Lake of Fire the destruction of the lost, not their eternal punishment. Unfortunately, that is unsupported by either this text or by any other New Testament text.

³³ See Chapter 21.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:26.

³⁵ Revelation 21:1.

Chapter 21

(Revelation 21) {1} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

At the end of Chapter 20 in connection with the White Throne Judgment, the earth and heaven pass away. Now, we see their replacement, the new heaven and the new earth wherein God will dwell with man for all eternity. The new heavens and new earth are mentioned several times in scripture. Isaiah speaks of them:

(Isaiah 65) {17} See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. {18} 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. {19} 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. {20} 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; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

There appears to be a conflict between what Isaiah says in verse 20 and what John says two verses from now in Revelation.³⁶ Isaiah implies there will still be death in the New Jerusalem on the new earth, but John states plainly that there is no more death in the New Jerusalem. And how could there be? Death has been thrown into the lake of fire. There are two possibilities. The first is that Isaiah speaks of the Millennium and the reference to the new heavens and earth are part of one vision undistinguished by Isaiah. This would be consistent with their often being less detail in the Old Testament prophesies of a series of events than in New Testament ones. And that they sometime confound prophetic elements that the New Testament makes separate.

The second is that he may be speaking of the deathless state as a long-lived one.

Peter also speaks of the new heaven and new earth:

(2 Peter 3) {13} But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

³⁶ Revelation 21:4.

The statement in the first verse of this chapter that there will not be any sea on the new earth is interesting. Several times³⁷ in Revelation the combination “heavens and earth and sea” are used to mean all of creation. Showing a major difference between the old and new creation, that is not the case here. The sea, at least in Revelation, often has a bad connotation. It was the nations on which the Great Prostitute sat, and the source of the Antichrist. It is closely tied to the Abyss (the deep) where demons are imprisoned. The view of the sea as something hostile to humanity probably stems from the Israelites not having much use for it.

Another possibility, harkening back to the sea being humanity in the vision of the Great Prostitute is that this verse may mean that there will be no more “Gentiles”. The number of times it is said that the survivors of the anti-Israel nations (pretty much “gentile” by definition) will come to Jerusalem to celebrate Jewish festivals³⁸ would indicate that, at least in a religious sense, that will be true.

{2} I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

We are told several places in scripture that we are to look for an eternal city, uncorrupted, the home of righteousness. Hebrews 13:14 says, for example, “for here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for a city that is to come.” Here, we are told that the New Jerusalem is arrayed like a bride, but we are not told who the bridegroom is. Later, we will be told it is Christ. We know from Ephesians that the Church is the bride of Christ:

(Ephesians 5) {25} Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her {26} to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, {27} and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

We will look at why the New Jerusalem, rather than the church, is called the bride here and in verses 9 and 10 when we get to the latter.

{3} And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. {4} He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or

³⁷ E.g. Revelation 14:7.

³⁸ E.g. Zechariah 14:16-19.

mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

God will at last dwell with men again. As it was in Eden, when God walked with men, so it will be in eternity. The promise God made to Israel if it kept their covenant, the final blessing he promised them, he now keeps through all eternity, but not because men have deserved it. Instead, the blood of Christ has done it. In Leviticus, God promised:

I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.³⁹

This will finally be fulfilled, literally, at the end. Ezekiel said:

My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.⁴⁰

All things are now new: the heavens and the earth,⁴¹ God's covenant with his people,⁴² a new name for each person,⁴³ a new heart and a new spirit in Israel's chest.⁴⁴

{5} He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." {6} He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

³⁹ Leviticus 26:11-12.

⁴⁰ Ezekiel 37:24-28.

⁴¹ Isaiah 66:22

⁴² Jeremiah 31:31.

⁴³ Revelation 3:12.

⁴⁴ Ezekiel 36:26.

In verse 3 John hears a loud voice from the throne but does not say who is speaking. Now, it is he who is seated on the throne who speaks. But who is that? The last person we saw seated on a throne was Christ at the White Throne Judgment. The designation Alpha and Omega might seem to answer the question. In Revelation 1:8 God says of himself that he is the Alpha and the Omega, but in Revelation 22, Jesus calls himself the Alpha and the Omega.⁴⁵ This is part of a pattern in Revelation, starting with the end of the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment: it is difficult to tell whether it is God the Father or God the Son seated on the throne for judgment and on the throne here. Both the Father and the Son call themselves the Alpha and the Omega. Perhaps the best interpretation is that once the dwelling of God is with men again, the separations and different functions of the persons of the Trinity are much less important than now when the Father rules in heaven, the Son was incarnate on earth, and the Spirit guides the Church.

This is quite similar to a scripture from Isaiah, where God tells what it will be like in the end:

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. One will say, 'I belong to the LORD'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's,' and will take the name Israel. "This is what the LORD says-- Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.

Many times, God calls himself the first and the last.⁴⁶ “First and Last,” “beginning and end”, “Alpha and Omega” all refer to God, sometimes to the father and sometimes to the son. They mean the same thing as “He who was and is and is to come” and show that God encompasses all things temporally as well as in all other ways.

{7} Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Overcoming means two things. First, it means overcoming sin, living as Christ’s new creation. Second, and particularly relevant to Revelation, it means enduring trials, both the normal ones of life and those caused by persecution. It probably also means enduring all the events of the End Times as portrayed in Revelation.

⁴⁵ Revelation 22:13-16. This is another indicator that Jesus is God.

⁴⁶ e.g. Isaiah 44:6, 48:12, Hebrews 7:3, Revelation 1:17.

This also completes the circle of the book of Revelation, since each of the letters to the churches at the beginning of the book made a promise to those who are victorious.⁴⁷

(Revelation 21) {8} But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

Those who have not overcome sin will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. That death is the more permanent one, the spiritual death. Just as the second life, the life eternal is a spiritual life, so is the second death. This does not mean it is ghostly or only half real, nor that these words are merely symbolic. Spiritual things are more real, more solid, more important than material things. Our existence in heaven will be more real than our existence here among the shadows. And the death of the spirit which the lost will undergo will be worse than physical death.

(Revelation 21) {9} One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." {10} And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

John, in the Spirit for the fourth and final time in Revelation, sees the bride in the guise of the New Jerusalem. It is appropriate that he is shown this by one of the angels holding the bowls that originally held the prayers of the saints and then God's wrath at their persecution.

Though John is told again that he will be shown the New Jerusalem, this verse does not mean he was shown the New Jerusalem twice, once here and once at the beginning of this chapter. This is all part of the same process. There he saw it descending from heaven. Here, he sees it in detail.

There is, however, a problem. Both Revelation 21:2 and 21:9-10 strongly indicate that the New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ. John is told he will be shown the bride of Christ and is immediately shown the New Jerusalem. In Chapter 19, John was told the bride of Christ was made ready. Revelation 19:7b-8 says that the fine linen in which the bride is arrayed stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people, strongly implying that the bride is God's holy people. Then, immediately thereafter, John was shown the armies of heaven, containing the saints of all ages, coming to earth dressed in "fine linen, bright and clean", clearly indicating that they are the bride.

⁴⁷ E.g. Revelation 3:12.

We have been told⁴⁸ that the Church is the bride of Christ, and that seems to be at least part of the meaning of the white-clad riders from heaven who follow Christ. It is also consistent with the parables Christ told about himself, calling himself the bridegroom.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the clear sense of this passage is that Jerusalem is the bride of Christ. How can his bride be both his people and a city?

Calling Jerusalem the bride of God is consistent with verses from Jeremiah:

{Jeremiah 2} (1) The word of the LORD came to me: {2} "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown."

What, then, is the relationship between the Church and the New Jerusalem? First, the New Jerusalem is the place Christ has been preparing for us these two thousand years, and now he is presenting it. As Revelation 21:27 states, it will be the dwelling place of God's people and only God's people.⁵⁰ Since the Jews will be converted to their Messiah when Jesus returns,⁵¹ all of God's people will dwell here and the New Jerusalem stands for what it contains, all those who are God's.

Perhaps Ephesians explains this relationship best:

(Ephesians 2) {19} Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, {20} built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. {21} In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. {22} And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

We, the church, are the building, a holy temple to the Lord. We are to be the dwelling in which God lives now by his Spirit but in the New Jerusalem in his fullness. The followers of God are the New Jerusalem.

John then goes on to describe how the city appears to him.

⁴⁸ E.g. Ephesians 5:25-27.

⁴⁹ Matthew 25:1ff for the parable of the ten wise and ten foolish virgins. Matthew 9:15 for Christ as bridegroom for his followers. John 3:29 where John the Baptist calls Christ the bridegroom.

⁵⁰ Revelation 21:27.

⁵¹ Zechariah 12:10.

(Revelation 21) {11} It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

The light of the city is from the glory of God who dwells in it. The entire city shines like a precious stone. Exactly what stone, however, cannot be known. The stone we know as jasper is neither transparent nor precious. What is meant here seems more like diamond than the opaque brown stone we know as jasper.

{12} It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. {13} There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. {14} The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

While it doesn't say so explicitly, it would appear that each gate is named for a tribe of Israel and each foundation has the name of one of the twelve apostles. It is not clear what is to be made of the specific decorations of the city. Why, for example, are the apostles the foundations and the tribes the gates? It is interesting that there are twenty-four of them, presumably the same twenty-four who are the elders around the throne of God. Both the gates and the foundations are on the periphery of the city, as the thrones of the twenty-four elders were around the throne of God.⁵²

{15} The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. {16} The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

The New Jerusalem certainly appears on a grand scale. While the length of a stadium varied from place to place and time to time, it is roughly 2/15 of a mile. Thus 12,000 stadia is approximately 1,600 miles, making the city a cube not a lot smaller than the moon.

(Revelation 21) {17} He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using.

Like the stadium, the cubit varies in length, but is roughly 18 inches, making the wall a bit over 200 feet thick.

⁵² Revelation 4:4.

{18} The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. {19} The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, {20} the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. {21} The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

Probably one should be cautious interpreting what exactly is meant by the decorations of the city. To start with, gold is not transparent (verses 18 and 21). It is quite likely that this is a symbol like the Lamb who was slain is a symbol: a non-literal way of picturing a literal truth. Christ is the Lamb of God and was slain. But while the image John saw looks like a lamb, Christ doesn't. Similarly, the New Jerusalem will be a literal thing where those who are Christ's will dwell with God for all eternity. But whether it literally has foundations of carnelian and chrysoprase is another thing. While the literal is a real possibility, it is more likely that all the brilliance of the decoration is meant to convey to a less jaded generation than ours the eternal glory those who are the Lord's will reflect from him for all eternity.⁵³

{22} I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. {23} The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. {24} The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. {25} On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. {26} The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. {27} Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

There is no longer a temple, even though it is God's dwelling place. All the nations will share in the light of God. Only the pure - and the purified - can enter it. Our dwelling there is at the end of the process that starts with justification, leads on to sanctification, and ends in glorification. Isaiah saw the end of this, as he did so much else:

⁵³ One particular thing should be mentioned about the decorations: "pearly gates" are the entrances to the New Jerusalem, not heaven.

Speaking of the final state of Jerusalem, he wrote:

(Isaiah 60) {18} No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. {19} The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. {20} Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. {21} Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever. They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendor. {22} The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly."

Notice how this chapter ends: God will bring about the new and purified Jerusalem 'swiftly'. This, of course parallels the very end of Revelation where Christ says he is coming 'soon'. In neither case does it mean he will do so immediately. It is more likely that it means that when the time is ripe, it will happen in a short period of time. It is not a statement of when that period of time will take place. God, like Aslan, calls all times 'soon'.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 continues the description of the New Jerusalem, the home of the saints.

(Revelation 22) {1} Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb {2} down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Note that the tree of life grows on both sides of the river. There are trees of life, not just one. Also remember where the tree of life was originally: in Eden, the paradise of God. We are back in Eden after all this time.

{3} No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

Note not two thrones but one for Christ and the Father.

{4} They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. {5} There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Not only will there be a 1000 year reign by his followers with Christ on the earth, they will reign forever with him in the new earth.

{6} The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." {7} "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

This promise to come soon has been mocked for millennia. This is nothing new. Even in the New Testament there were those who said, “Where is the promise of his coming?” Peter said this would be particularly bad as the end neared:

(2 Peter 3) {3} Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. {4} They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” {5} But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. {6} By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. {7} By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. {8} 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. {9} The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. {10} 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 done in it will be laid bare. {11} Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives {12} 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. {13} But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

There are several things to notice about this scripture. First, it is clear that Peter expects the scoffers who arise in the last days to be far in his future. He reports them saying, “ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has.” If the last days were imminent in Peter’s day, or Peter believed them to be, he could not have prophesied that sometime in the far future scoffers would come questioning Christ’s return. His answer to the scoffers in his day, and in ours, is the same: God created everything and that its final disposition is also in his hands. “Soon” means whatever God says it means.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ This is essentially the answer Aslan gives to Lucy in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*: “I call all times soon.”

The parallel scripture on the New Jerusalem in Isaiah⁵⁶ cited in the previous chapter, gives a different explanation: when the time spoken of in the prophesy comes around, the events of the prophesy will happen quickly, in rapid sequence. Isaiah was told by the Lord that once the Lord started to do the things of the end times, he will do them swiftly. "In its time, I will do this swiftly", he says.

{8} I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. {9} But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

John, as he did in his gospel, testifies that he who wrote the book was he who saw the visions, putting his personal seal on his witness. John then, for the second time, tries to worship an angel and is told not to. He must worship God, not another creature. Once again John wants to worship an angel when the angel is speaking directly as God's mouthpiece.

{10} Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. {11} Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

Unlike Daniel, John is not told to seal up the words of the book, because the time is near. Perhaps equally relevant is that, unlike with the prophesies of Daniel, there are no other intermediate prophesies to be fulfilled before the ones in Revelation. Daniel had the Incarnation, the destruction of Jerusalem, and many other things that had to be fulfilled before the end. All those things had taken place when John was shown the visions he records here. There will be no further clarification of the events of the End Times until those times are upon us.

{12} "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. {13} I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. {14} "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right

⁵⁶ Isaiah 60:22.

to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

It isn't completely clear whether it is the angel speaking on behalf of Christ, or Christ himself speaking. In the final analysis, it does not matter. It is Christ who will return to judge the earth and the "quick and the dead" of all ages. From their deeds will come their rewards. From whether they have washed their robes in the Lamb's blood will come the determination of their destiny.

{15} Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

Those who are God's but not yet inside may enter through the perpetually opened gates of the New Jerusalem. Perhaps that though the city is their dwelling place, there are reasons for them to be outside. But those who are not Christ's cannot enter in. That, presumably, is what the angels at each gate are for. Outside, away from the city, is the outer darkness to which such will be banished, and where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

{16} "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." {17} 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.

Christ now adds his personal testimony that the words of this prophecy are from him, sent to John through his angel. This is just as it was at the start of the book. He then adds that anyone can come to him and get the water of life, promised to the Samaritan woman, for free.

{18} I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, I will add to him the plagues described in this book.

Both the Old and new Testaments warn against adding to the prophecies of God. Proverbs 30:6 says, "Do not add to his words or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."

On a personal note, from this comes a great deal of trepidation in teaching the meaning of prophecies in Revelation.

{19} 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.

Since the only place we know of outside the holy city is a domain of wailing and gnashing of teeth, this is a powerful warning. Unfortunately, many so-called Christian denominations “take away” the words of prophesy every time they ignore them or spiritualize them. God means what he says, and he intends us to know that he does.

{20} He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. {21} The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

We have previously discussed the possible meaning of “coming soon”. Whatever we conclude, Christ is coming back to earth, soon as he counts soon, and perhaps, soon as we do.

Per Christe totam, da mihi potam!

X Years		
Beginning of seven year period	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror; Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<p>The mid-point</p> <p>The Great Tribulation Over 200,000,000 Christians are killed Jerusalem is trampled for 42 months The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days Faithful Israel flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days The 1st beast exercises his authority for 42 months</p>	<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (image); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6th seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7th seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p> <p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p> <p>The wrath of God The 7th seal</p>
The end of seven years	<p>30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days</p> <p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues The 7 th trumpet
The beginning of the millennium	<p>45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days</p> <p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	The gathering for Armageddon The 7 th Plague
The end of the millennium	The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem	
The beginning of eternity	Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment. New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem	

Book 6

Endnotes

ⁱ Perhaps, but just perhaps, these are the “Sons of God” who found the “Daughters of men” so fair and begat the Anakim (Genesis 6:2).

ⁱⁱ The more you read Revelation, the closer you see it tied to the rest of Scripture. Even Proverbs has this parallel: “The LORD works out everything for his own ends-- even the wicked for a day of disaster (Proverbs 16:4),” where the day of disaster is either Armageddon, or more likely, the Last Judgment.

Tapestry:

The Book of Revelation

**by David Justin Ross
and Brian J. Elmenhurst**

**Glossary, Appendices, and
Complete Timeline**

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Glossary

This glossary presents some of the important words associated with the book of Revelation and with the study of the End Times. Some appear in Revelation, others elsewhere in scripture, and yet others are commonly used to refer to people or events of the period but without direct support from scripture. Many times, the same event or subject is referred to in multiple ways, sometimes with slight differences in meaning. Where important to the current study, such differences are briefly touched upon.

Abyss. The "bottomless pit", from the Greek for 'without bottom'. A prison and abode for demons. When Christ frees a demon-possessed man (Luke 8), the demons beg not to be sent into the Abyss. As part of the fifth trumpet judgment (Rev 9), an angel unlocks the Abyss and "locusts" which seem to be demons, are released. The many-horned beast of Revelation 17 comes up from the Abyss, and Satan is cast there at the start of the **Millennium** (Rev 19). In the Septuagint, the same Greek word is used in Genesis 1 for "the deep".

Antichrist. The prefix "anti" means both "against" and "opposite". This man is both Christ's opponent and his opposite. "Antichrist" is used four times in scripture, all of them in John's letters.¹ There, John calls "antichrist" anyone who denies Jesus, but implies there will be an actual person called the Antichrist. Scripture nowhere identifies this person explicitly, but nearly all scholars equate the Antichrist with the prince of Daniel's **Seventieth Week** and the first **beast** of Revelation 13. Some maintain the rider on a white horse of the first seal² is the Antichrist at the beginning of his career. The similar term (pseudo-Christ) is used by Christ to refer to the false messiahs that will arise.³

Antitype (see Type).

Apocalypse. Literally "revealing" is the first word (Ἀποκάλυψις) of the Book of Revelation and gives the book its name. Although people will sometimes refer to Revelation as "the Apocalypse of John" or "the Revelation of John", this is inappropriate. The book is, as it states in its opening verse, is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The book's opening verse shows that it is meant to be understandable and that the symbols used

¹ 1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3, and 2 John 1:7

² Revelation 6:2.

³ Matthew 24:24

throughout are meant to reveal and not to hide its meaning. Note that the word is singular.

Appearing. See **Glorious Appearing**.

Armageddon. From Hebrew ‘Har-Megiddo’, the hill of Megiddo. Megiddo was a fortified town in the north of Israel, southeast of Mount Carmel. Because it was located on the main road connecting Syria and Egypt, it was the site of important battles in the past.⁴ It will be the gathering place for the armies of the Antichrist that will march against Jerusalem late in the Wrath of God and just prior to Christ’s return.⁵ Technically, there is no “battle of Armageddon” in the Last Days. What battle there is, is at Jerusalem and never really gets underway before Christ returns and puts an end to it by seizing the **Antichrist** and the **False Prophet** and killing their armies at his **Second Coming**.

Beasts. See Appendix 3 “The Beasts of Revelation”.

Blessed Hope. Mentioned only in Titus 2:13 where it is equated with Christ’s “**glorious appearing**”. The hope is called blessed because three things happen then:⁶ Christ returns in glory, the blessed dead are resurrected, and living believers are transformed. to be with Christ forever. As Christ's resurrection is the central fact of Christianity, the Blessed Hope is the central hope of Christians.

There is substantial disagreement among Bible-believing Christians about the timing and relationship of the Blessed Hope, the **Second Coming**, and the **Glorious Appearing** of Christ.⁷

Book of Life. Where the names of the blessed are written. All whose names are written there will live eternally with Christ. All whose names are not written in the Book of Life will be condemned. This separation will take place at the **White Throne Judgment**.

⁴ It was the site of an important victory of the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III over a coalition of kings about 1438 BC. Several battles in the Old Testament were near Megiddo (e.g. Judges 5:19, 2 Kings 23:29, 2 Chronicles 35:22).

⁵ Revelation 16:16, Zechariah 12:10-11.

⁶ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

⁷ For more detailed discussions of these disagreements, see **The Rapture** Appendix 6.

Day of Christ. Also called the Day of the Lord Jesus. The terms are unique to Paul's letters and refer to the time of Christ's return and his judgment, particularly in its aspects of reward.⁸ Also called "that Day".

Day of the Lord. See the Appendix 4 "The Day of the Lord and The Wrath of God".

End of the Age. See **End Times**.

End of the World. See **End Times**.

End Times. In its most general usage this refers to everything from the birth of Christ to the appearance of the new heavens and new earth after the **Millennium**. Only "End Times" and "**Last Days**" refer to the entire period, with both "end" and "last" referring to this current age but generally (and somewhat haphazardly) also including the Millennium. "**The End of the Age**" is more specific, referring to the events of **the Seventieth Week of Daniel** (qv) and just after. "**The End of the World**" is often erroneously applied to events of the Seventieth week but the earth isn't replaced with the new earth until after the Millennium.

False Prophet. The second beast of Revelation 13. He is described as a beast out of the earth with two horns like a lamb but speaking like a dragon. He makes all who do not belong to God revere the **Antichrist** whose authority he exercises. He institutes the worst persecutions of the **Antichrist's** reign, and with the **Antichrist** he is thrown alive into the **Lake of Fire** after **Armageddon**. He is first called the False Prophet in Revelation 19.

First Resurrection. The resurrection of the righteous to everlasting life⁹. Because "first" can mean first in priority as well as first in time, some take the First Resurrection to be a series of events, starting with Christ's own resurrection and including the resurrection of dead believers at the **Rapture**, the resurrection of those martyred by the **Antichrist**, and, in some views, a resurrection of the blessed who die during the **Millennium**. Others, who take the word 'first' to mean first in time, believe all the righteous dead are resurrected together at Christ's return to earth. This view finds support in Acts 24:15 and fits best with a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:4-5. The need for "first" to

⁸ See 1 Corinthians 1:8, 3:13, 5:5, 2 Corinthians 1:14, Philippians 1:6, 1:10, 2:16, 2 Timothy 1:18, 4:8.

⁹ Revelation 20:5.

mean first and “last” to be last means the **Rapture** must be at the end of the Seventieth week since 1Thessalonians 4:15 “we who are still alive shall not precede those who have fallen asleep”.

Glorious Appearing. One of the names scripture gives to the **Second Coming**. Christ’s return is called his ‘appearing’ in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus¹⁰. In the last, it is called his ‘Glorious Appearing’. His return in power is called ‘glorious’ many times in the Gospels¹¹. Post-Tribulation rapturists believe Christ’s appearing and the **Second Coming** are identical. Pre-Trib and Mid-Trib rapturists believe the **Second Coming** includes a prior stage when Christ meets the saints in the air but does not then come to earth.

Great Tribulation. See **Tribulation**.

Jacob’s Trouble. Mentioned in Jeremiah 30:7. It is the time of the Antichrist’s persecution as seen from the perspective of the Jews rather than the Christians. After the period of trouble, no longer will foreigners enslave them (verse 8). This links it to the period of the persecutions of the Antichrist because only after he leaves Jerusalem can it be said foreigners will never again enslave Jerusalem. It also leads to the time when “David their king” (Jesus, the son of David) will be raised up for them and they will serve him. The end of the period is equated with the **Wrath of God** in verses 23-24 of Jeremiah 30.

Lake of Fire. The final destination of all who are not God’s. The **Antichrist** and the **False Prophet** are thrown into the lake of fire after **Armageddon**¹². After his final rebellion at the end of the **Millennium**, Satan joins them¹³, and at the **White Throne Judgment** all those not in the **Book of Life** are sent there along with Death and Hades¹⁴.

Last Days. See **End Times**.

Millennium. See Appendix 5 “The Millennium”

¹⁰ 1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 1:10, 4:1, 4:8, Titus 2:13.

¹¹ e.g. Matthew 16:27, 19:28, 24:30, 25:31, Mark 8:38, 10:37, 13:26, Luke 9:26, 21:27.

¹² Revelation 19:20.

¹³ Revelation 20:10.

¹⁴ Revelation 20:14-15.

Olivet Discourse. See Appendix 2 “Olivet Discourse”

Rapture. See Appendix 6 “The Rapture”

Second Coming. The return of Christ to the earth. Although this term does not appear in the Bible, the coming of the Messiah to earth to reign in glory is probably the event most prophesied in both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament, it is referred to in many ways, most commonly in the prophecies of the eternal rule of David's seed. In the New Testament, it is called Christ's coming¹⁵, the **Glorious Appearing**¹⁶ or just the **Appearing**¹⁷.

For those who hold the Post-Tribulation view of the **Rapture**, the Second Coming is a single event which take place at the **End of the Age**: at the completion of the **Wrath of God**. For other premillennial views, the Second Coming is composed of pieces that happen at different times. Though they disagree on timing (see **Rapture**), all schools of premillennialism agree that the following events are part of Christ's return” the dead in Christ will be raised, living believers will receive new bodies, Satan will be bound, and Christ will set up his kingdom.

Second Death. The casting of unbelievers into the **Lake of Fire** at the **White Throne Judgment**. Most Christians believe unbelievers will suffer eternally for their rebellion against God, but some think they will be destroyed.

Second Resurrection. Resurrection of all those not resurrected at the first resurrection.

Seven Bowls.¹⁸ The plagues unleashed upon the world at the end of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. They are the bowls of God’s fury, and each bowl contains a plague. The seven bowls are contained within the seventh trumpet. The seven plagues are:

1. Festering sores on those who worship the beast.
2. Sea turns to blood and all sea creatures die.
3. Rivers and springs turn to blood.
4. The sun is allowed to scorch people with fire.

¹⁵ e.g. Matthew 24:3.

¹⁶ Titus 2:13.

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 6:14.

¹⁸ Revelation 16.

5. A darkness that can be felt falls on the kingdom of the beast.
6. The River Euphrates dries up to prepare the way for the kings of the east.
7. Lightning, thunder, rumblings, earthquakes, and giant hail stones.

Seven Plagues. See “Seven Bowls”.

Seven Seals.¹⁹ The first of four groups of seven judgments upon the earth. In most cases, the seventh of the previous series includes all seven of the next series. The exception is the Seven Thunders (see below).

The first six of the seals are opened in chapters 6 of Revelation and the seventh in chapter 8. The seals close a scroll given by the Father to the Son. The seventh seal has within it the seven trumpets. The seven seals reveal:

1. The man on the white horse, probably the Antichrist before he assumes full power. He is the first of the “four horsemen”.
2. War and the power to kill. It is the natural accompaniment of the conqueror on the white horse. This one’s horse is red.
3. Famine, which is a familiar accompaniment of war. His horse is black.
4. Death, followed by Hades. Death naturally follows war and famine, and Hades following most likely means that all four of the horsemen are demonic or at least evil.
5. The souls of those who have been killed for their faithfulness to the word of God. They are under the altar in heaven, awaiting the completion of the number of martyrs.
6. The signs in the heavens and the earth: earthquake, darkening of the sun, the stars falling to earth. The sixth seal also announces the imminent arrival of the Wrath of God, which will be detailed in the seven trumpets.
7. There is silence in heaven and then the seven trumpets sound.

Seven Thunders. These appear in Revelation chapter 10. They differ from the other three series in two ways. First, they occur during the sixth trumpet, not the seventh. Second and perhaps more important, what they say is sealed up and not revealed.

Seven Trumpets. The first four of these are presented in Revelation chapter 8, the next two in chapter 9, and the seventh in chapter 11. The final three of these are accompanied by an angel shouting “Woe!” The seventh trumpet contains the seven bowl judgments, the last plagues. The seven trumpets reveal:

¹⁹ Revelation 5-8.

1. Hail and fire upon the earth. One third of the trees and all the grass is burned up.
2. A “great mountain” plunges into the sea and turns a third of the oceans to blood. A third of all sea life dies and a third of all ships are destroyed.
3. A poisonous “star” called Wormwood²⁰ poisons one third of fresh water and poisons many people.
4. A third of the light from heavenly bodies is taken away.
5. The fifth trumpet is also the first “Woe!”. “Locusts” are released from the Abyss to plague, but not kill, those without the seal of God for five months.
6. The second “Woe!”. The river Euphrates is dried up to prepare for the kings of the east.
7. The third “Woe!”. This ushers in the seven last plagues.

Seventieth Week of Daniel. See Appendix 1 “Daniel’s 70th Week”.

Thief in the Night. See Appendix 7 “The Thief in the Night”.

Temple. This is the house of God on earth, the center of Israelite worship. It was first built by Solomon (using materials gathered by David). That temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 or 586 BC. It was rebuilt during the Persian rule of Israel in around 516 BC. The temple structure built then was simple and considerably upgraded and improved by Herod the Great in the first century BC. It was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. The so-called second temple is the temple that Antiochus Epiphanes profaned in the second century BC.

As presented in the main text of this commentary, the temple will play an important role in the Last Days as it is where the Antichrist will be revealed, the sign Christ tells us in Matthew 24 to be on the watch for. Because the temple does not exist currently, it must be rebuilt before or early in the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

Tribulation. A period of testing. There have been various times throughout history when Jews and Christians have undergone tribulation and many have been martyred. Christ taught that shortly before his return there would be a period of **Great Tribulation**, a persecution of believers worse than any other²¹. Jeremiah called this time of Jewish

²⁰ It is interesting to point out that the Ukrainian word for “wormwood” is “chornobyl”. This has led some to postulate that the events of the third trumpet are some kind of nuclear meltdown (or perhaps a reactor falling from a satellite).

²¹ Matthew 24:21, Mark 13:19, Revelation 7:14.

persecution the time of “**Jacob's Trouble**²²”. The tribulation is the wrath of Satan not the **wrath of God**. Christians are not subject to God’s wrath. The Israelites in Egypt is a good example – God’s wrath wasn’t aimed at them – but they had consequences from it.

Students of prophecy often apply the term "Tribulation Period" to the **Seventieth Week of Daniel**. Because this term does not occur in scripture, and because it leads to confusion with the "Great Tribulation", the term "Tribulation Period" is to be avoided. In this book, the "Great Tribulation" designates the period of testing referred to by Christ in the **Olivet Discourse**. It is only a portion of the **Seventieth Week**, primarily or exclusively in the second half.

Tribulation Period. See **Tribulation**.

Type and Antitype. Prophecies often have a near- and a far-term fulfillment, with the far-term fulfillment being more complete. Thus Antiochus Epiphanes (type) fulfilled some, but not all the prophecies of Daniel concerning the prince who is to come. The **Antichrist** (antitype) will fulfill all of them.

Valley of Decision. See **Valley of Jehoshaphat**.

Valley of Jehoshaphat. Physically, this is the valley separating Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. It is where, according to Joel,²³ the nations that gathered at **Armageddon** will come to fight against Jerusalem and be destroyed by Christ at his return. Also called the **Valley of Decision**.

White Throne Judgment. The final judgment of mankind by Christ. It occurs after the **Millennium** and after the final rebellion of Satan²⁴. It is the time when Christ separates the sheep from the goats²⁵. All the dead will be judged according to their deeds²⁶, and

²² Jeremiah 30:7.

²³ Joel 3:2. All of Joel 3 is (at least as an antitype) about the destruction by Christ of the armies of the Antichrist. The failure of the armies to recapture Jerusalem is indicative of the promise (verse 17) that foreigners will never again successfully invade Jerusalem.

²⁴ Revelation 20:11.

²⁵ Matthew 25:31-46.

²⁶ Revelation 20:12.

those whose names are not written in the **Book of Life** will be thrown into the **Lake of Fire**²⁷.

Wrath of God. See Appendix 4 “**The Day of the Lord and The Wrath of God**”.

Wrath of the Lamb. This is only in Revelation 6:16 where it is conjoined with the wrath of he who sits on the throne, that is, the **Wrath of God**. It is possible there is meant to be two different wraths mentioned in this verse, but the absence of additional scriptures makes that conjecture problematic.

²⁷ Revelation 20:15.

Appendix 1: Daniel's 70th Week

The Seventieth Week of Daniel corresponds with the seven-year period preceding the return of Christ. That the events of the Seventieth Week and those of the Last Days refer to the same period is made clear by Christ himself in the Olivet discourse when he refers to the abomination that causes desolation, mentioned by Daniel, as the sign that reveals the Antichrist and thus is the first sure sign that the Last Days are upon the world. This event takes place at the midpoint of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Revelation from chapter 4 until the end offers a detailed description of the events of the period first revealed to Daniel by the angel Gabriel.

The discussion offered here is necessarily brief, concentrating on discussing the prophecy itself. For a thorough and instructive discussion of this period see Sir Robert Anderson's "The Coming Prince."²⁸ Though written in 1894 it is still an excellent book about the Seventieth Week.

Near the end of the seventy years of exile of the Jews in Babylon, Daniel was visited by the angel Gabriel while he was praying concerning Israel. Gabriel told him²⁹

(Daniel 9) {24} "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 Place. {25} "Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out 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. {26} After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death 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. {27} 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 at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

In this Appendix we will first go through this prophesy line by line and discuss its meaning and application, and then we will see how the events it foretells fit with the events of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation.

The length of time and purpose of the prophecy. Right at the start we must decide what "Seventy 'sevens'" means. Though often translated "weeks", the word has a broader meaning, and is used throughout scripture to simply mean a group of seven things. Genesis 29:18 shows that in the appropriate context, the word can mean years. The use of a single unit (e.g., one seventh of a "week") for a year is made explicit in

²⁸ https://www.whatsaiththescripture.com/Text.Only/pdfs/The_Coming_Prince_Text.pdf.

²⁹ Daniel chapter 9. All the Daniel references in Appendix 1 are from the 2011 NIV revision.

Leviticus 25:8, Ezekiel 4:6, and Numbers 14:34. Interestingly, in each case, as here in Daniel, God is speaking of Israel's iniquity and atonement for it. It therefore seems safe to take "sevens" here to mean a period of seven years and thus Gabriel is speaking to Daniel about a period of 490 years.

The purpose of these years, Gabriel says, is to finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, bring in everlasting righteousness, bring prophecy to an end, and anoint the Most Holy Place. This is appropriate since Daniel had been contemplating and praying about the end of the seventy years of exile and the restoration of his people. Gabriel is telling him when it will take place.

While it is tempting to take "the Most Holy Place" to be "the Most Holy One" (which would be consistent with the "anointed one" of later in the prophecy, that reading is unlikely (though still possible). The words used here are **מָשַׁח** and literally translate as "to anoint the most holy" or, possibly, "to anoint the Holy of Holies". While it can refer to a person, different words are used where the anointed one is clearly a person: **מָשִׁיחַ** the anointed one or Mashiach (Messiah). It is therefore best to take this as meaning a place (such as a restored or cleansed temple) that is anointed.

Starting in verse 25, the period of which Gabriel speaks is divided into three parts. The first, forty-nine years in length, covers rebuilding Jerusalem from the destruction under Babylon. It will be a time of trouble and turmoil, as indeed it proved to be. Then comes a period of 434 (62 sevens) years after which the Anointed One³⁰ will come but will be put to death and the city and the temple will be destroyed. Then, finally, the "ruler" (different from the Anointed One) will make a covenant with many for seven years but break that agreement in the middle of the period, end temple sacrifices, and set up "an abomination that causes desolation" in the temple. This desolation will last until the ruler is destroyed.

Let's look at the first two periods briefly and discuss the third in more detail.

The word to restore Jerusalem. The first question to ask is what does the "word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" mean? The word translated "word" can mean "commandment" but does not have to. It seems likely that, since this is the beginning of the period covered by one of the most important prophecies of the Messiah, the Bible would mention this commandment or word and, one would hope, give a date.

The Bible mentions four possibly relevant proclamations. The earliest is in the first year of king Cyrus. It is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 36:22,23 and again in Ezra 1:1 and 6:3. It was prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 44:28). The decree as reported in scripture only concerns rebuilding the temple, though Isaiah prophesies that Cyrus will rebuild both the temple and the city. Because of Isaiah's prophecy, this decree must be considered as a possibility for the starting point of the prophecy. The first year of Cyrus' reign was 538 BC.

³⁰ As stated above, the word used here means "anointed one" and can be used specifically for the Messiah.

The second, mentioned in Ezra 6:12,13, was made by Darius I in about 520 BC in the first year of his reign. It was to carry out what had already been ordered by Cyrus and is therefore unlikely to be the starting point of Gabriel's prophesy.

The third was given by Artaxerxes I in the 7th year of his reign, in 458/457 BC. It is recorded in Ezra 7:12-23. It also has to do only with the rebuilding of the temple.

Finally, there was a second decree given by Artaxerxes I in Nissan³¹ in the 20th year of his reign, 444 BC. This is recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8. 1 Nisan of that year was (probably) on 5 March. It alone, of the recorded letters and proclamations concerning Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jews, refers to rebuilding the city. Although it is a long time since Gabriel spoke to Daniel, this has the best chance of being the start of the prophecy of Daniel 9 because it speaks of rebuilding the city, something required of the decree.³²

Two rulers. Two different "rulers" are mentioned in this prophecy. First, "the Anointed One" is called a ruler. As mentioned in a footnote above, the word used for "the Anointed One" is also used for Messiah. The Bible invariably uses "anointed" to refer to a person or thing set aside for the Lord. It is specifically used repeatedly for the kings of Israel³³ and Judah and for Jesus³⁴. This first ruler will be put to death sometime after the end of the sixty-two "sevens" or 483 years following the start of the prophetic period.

Also, after the end of the 483 years, the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed, along with the temple. Those who destroy the city after the death of the Anointed One are called the people of the ruler who will come. This person is the second ruler mentioned in the prophecy. A close reading of verse 26 indicates that the destruction of the city will occur *before* this ruler appears but after the killing of the Anointed One. Since both of those events take place after the end of the 69th week and prior to the covenant with the many (the 70th week), there seems to be a gap separating the last week from the others. Supporting this is that actions by the ruler himself are not described until after this destruction (which was by his people and not by him) and the wars and desolations. The first action of this second ruler himself takes place sometime later, the confirmation of a "covenant" with many for a period of one week. This week is almost certainly the final week of the prophecy, Daniel's Seventieth Week. Halfway through the "week" he will break the covenant, stop temple sacrifices, and set up "an abomination that causes desolation".

This second ruler will have some connection with the Roman Empire, since the Romans were the people who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. The connection with Rome is consistent with other prophesies in Daniel, especially the feet of iron and clay in the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. There, Rome is the legs of iron, and a

³¹ The first month of the Jewish religious year and the seventh of the civil year.

³² Daniel 9:25.

³³ See, for example, 2 Kings 23:30, 1 Chronicles 11:3, 1 Chronicles 16:22.

³⁴ See Acts 4:27, Acts 10:38.

fragmented kingdom of mixed iron and clay descends from it. As we discuss in the Appendix 3 The Beasts of Revelation, Rome, the antichrist kingdom that “is” at the time Revelation was written, is of a similar nature to the others and serves as a “type” of antichrist kingdoms.

In another Appendix we show how all this applies to the other prophecies about the Last Days, especially the Olivet Discourse and Revelation.

Application to Antiochus Epiphanes. Biblical prophecies, as we discuss elsewhere, often have two fulfillments, a near-term incomplete fulfillment and a longer-term complete one. Christ’s first and second comings provide the greatest example of this. We expressed the importance of possible double fulfillment of prophecy in Principles of Exegesis number 3 in the Introduction.³⁵ The prophecy of the Last-Days king who sets up a pagan statue in the Temple in Jerusalem is another major example of this dual fulfillment. The actions of the Seleucid emperor Antiochus Epiphanes are the near-term fulfillment and the desecration of the temple by the Antichrist is the far-term.

For many reasons, Antiochus Epiphanes IV is well understood to be a “type” of the Antichrist and the Seleucid empire to be one of the Beast empires. (See Appendix 3 The Beasts of Revelation). To best understand the events of the last days, we want to pay particular attention to his actions.

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, his empire was divided among his generals. Cassander became king of Macedon, Ptolemy king of Egypt and surrounding territory, Lysimachus controlled Thrace and western Anatolia, and Seleucus controlled eastern Anatolia and the remainder of Alexander’s conquests as far east as the borders of India. Seleucus was an ancestor of Antiochus Epiphanes (whose name means God made manifest), who ruled the Seleucid Empire from 175 BC until his death in 164 BC. He is the king who fought with the Maccabees³⁶ and in 168 BC attacked Jerusalem and pillaged the temple. He had a statue of Zeus placed in the temple. This was the near-term fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel concerning the Abomination of Desolation.³⁷

As Antiochus was getting ready to invade Israel, he made an agreement with a substantial party of Israelites that we might call gentile-sympathetic. That agreement included many secularizing changes, including naked athletic events, and led to the placement of the statue of Zeus. Antiochus also did not honor the agreement going forward.³⁸ In this desecration, Antiochus prefigured the actions of the Antichrist. As will

³⁵ “Much can be learned of a far-term prophecy from its near-term fulfillment”

³⁶ See the deuterocanonical books 1 and 2 Maccabees.

³⁷ Examples of how this near-term prophecy was incomplete include that there was no coming of the Messiah, no cutting off of the Messiah, and no room between the earliest possible date of the decree to restore Jerusalem (538 BC) and the dates of Antiochus.

³⁸ It perhaps should be said that the Maccabean revolt made continuing the agreement essentially impossible anyway.

be the case with the Antichrist, there were some who at first saw Antiochus as Israel's friend and supporter. It is possible that Isaiah foresaw this agreement.

The covenant of death. Isaiah speaks of Israel making a covenant with death,

(Isaiah 28) {14} Therefore hear the word of the Lord, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. {15} You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the realm of the dead we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place. {16} So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic. {17} I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. {18} Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the realm of the dead will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it. {19} As often as it comes it will carry you away; morning after morning, by day and by night, it will sweep through..."

Robert Van Kampen, in his excellent pre-Wrath book *The Sign*,³⁹ makes a case that this refers to the covenant made with the Antichrist. As justification he mentions three specific things. First, the text on either side of the mentions of the covenant of death is clearly prophetic. Second, since Antiochus Epiphanes (see below) is a type of the Antichrist and since a covenant was, indeed, made between him and the paganizing Israelites, it makes sense that there is also an end-times antitype of the same prophecy. Finally, he points to Isaiah 28:16: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic." This falls between the two mentions of the covenant with death and almost certainly refers to Christ, whose first coming was between the two mentions of the covenant.

Let's look at Van Kampen's three points. The text surrounding the two mentions of the covenant is indeed prophetic as, obviously, is most of the book of Isaiah. But not all prophecy has to do with the end times so that argument that this text is eschatological is weak. Second, the type-antitype argument does have weight, but the covenant with Antiochus Epiphanes can be the type of the covenant with the Antichrist without either having anything to do with this prophecy in Isaiah.

The most compelling of Van Kampen's arguments is the prophecy of the cornerstone, falling right between the two mentions of the covenant. Beneficial trust in this cornerstone is presented by Isaiah in direct contrast to fatal trust in the covenant of death. Peter, quoting this prophecy in 1 Peter 2:6, refers to the Messiah as the cornerstone. This is clearly far in the future from Isaiah and makes it likely that the "covenant of death" also (at least in part) applies far in Isaiah's future. Whether or not

³⁹ Van Kampen, Robert, *The Sign*, Crossway Books, 1992, p 462.

this passage in Isaiah refers to the end times, there will be a disastrous covenant made between “the many” and the Antichrist.

Application to the end of the age. While the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks had a near-term partial fulfillment in the depredations of Antiochus Epiphanes, complete fulfillment will come with the Beast of Revelation at the end of the age. Some have seen the gap between the first 69 weeks and the final week to be the period of the Church Age and hence evidence that the Church must be removed before a 70th week can occur for the Jews (the pre-Tribulation Rapture). The text, however, does not support this view. Jews are present today and the Church will be present during the Seventieth Week (since the Antichrist kills hundreds of millions of Christians during that period). Gabriel’s message is for the Jews and, though it mentions their Messiah, does not address the Church at all. Nothing about the presence or absence of the Church during the Seventieth Week can be gleaned from this prophecy.

Gabriel makes it clear that this period will “seal up vision and prophecy”. Since there are prophecies⁴⁰ that won’t be *unsealed* until the time of the end, prophecy cannot, presumably, be sealed up until after that. Therefore, Gabriel is stating this prophecy includes, at least in part, teachings about the end of the age. If that is the case, then the second ruler is the Antichrist, the first Beast of Revelation. Strongly supporting this is Christ’s application of this prophecy to the time of the end in the Olivet Discourse. All of Matthew 24 is applicable but of particular importance is Christ’s speaking (in the context of the end of the age) of “when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel”. This setting up of the abomination (what it is, we discuss elsewhere) is the first true sign of the approaching end of the age and strongly anchors Daniel’s Seventieth Week to the period of the Antichrist’s rule.

The scripture in Daniel 9 concerning the Seventieth Week is:

(Daniel 9) {26b} War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. {27} 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 at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

Now that we have established that the Seventieth Week is during the end times, let’s analyze these verses about it in the context of the events of Revelation and the Olivet Discourse. In the latter, Christ, while speaking of things that appear to be indications of the end but are merely precursors, says:

(Matthew 24) {6} 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. {7} Nation

⁴⁰ Daniel 12:4.

will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. {8} All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Wars and rumors of wars, wars between nation, famines and earthquake are, Christ tells us, not indications of the end of the age but merely indicators in that direction. They are, in fact, the standard for a lot of mankind. They are an exact parallel with Daniel 9:27b that “wars will continue until the end and desolations have been decreed.” These are events of the gap between the 69 weeks and the final one. Gabriel’s prophecy implies that the wars and desolations lead into the ascent of the second ruler. In this sense, they *are*, as Christ says, the beginnings of birth pangs. They are the same events discussed in Revelation chapter 6 where they are also introductory to the reign of the Antichrist.

In Revelation 6 and 8 Christ opens the seven seals that usher in the end of the age. The first seal introduces the Antichrist (possibly), but he is not yet revealed to the world. He is a king, and he goes forth on a white horse to conquer. The second seal shows the natural outcome of his attempts at conquest, war, driven by a rider on a red horse. The third seal introduces a rider on a black horse, famine, the natural outcome of war. Finally, the fourth seal introduces a pale horse, ridden by death and followed by Hell. These four horsemen introduce the time of the end. They are the birth pangs of the Olivet Discourse and the wars and desolations of Daniel 9. They lead to the reign of the Antichrist, but in all three cases there is little to separate the beginning of his reign from the time before it – except for the covenant. From the smooth flow from normal (if dismal) life into the kingdom of the Beast attested to in Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation 6, it may not be clear when the covenant is made that this is the covenant that starts the Seventieth Week.

Making that covenant, nonetheless, is the first recorded act of the reign of the Antichrist. The covenant, possibly a treaty ending the wars that were just referred to (and which he was instrumental in starting), will be for a period of seven years. In Daniel we find out that he will break it after three and a half years. In both Daniel and Revelation, we see that breaking the covenant will be accompanied by persecutions; in Daniel, of the Jews (the cessation of sacrifices and offerings); in Revelation of both Jews and Christians.

Revelation teaches that at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week the Antichrist will be “killed” and “resurrected” and thereafter be far more monstrous than he was before. He will institute persecutions that will kill millions of people. That period of tribulation will be instituted when the False Prophet, the second beast of Revelation, gives life to the image of the Antichrist and forces people to worship it. This is almost certainly the abomination described in Daniel and by Christ. The desolation it causes is related in Revelation and discussed in the body of this commentary.

Both Revelation and Daniel indicate that though the Antichrist will bring great misery and death, his reign will not last forever. Daniel merely says that his end will be poured out on him, while Revelation thoroughly describes the events leading to that end from the final war against Israel until the Beast is thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Appendix 2: The Olivet Discourse and Revelation

Sometime shortly before he was seized and put to death, Jesus was teaching in the temple. He left it after delivering a blistering attack on the scribes and the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. Peter, James, John, and Andrew pointed to the beautiful temple, its decorations, and its associated buildings. Jesus told them that the temple, the house of God and center of the Jewish religion, would be so completely destroyed that not one stone would remain on another. The disciples naturally took this destruction to be an event of the Last Days and later, when Jesus and his men were on the Mount of Olives outside the city, some of his disciples came to him privately and asked him about what he had said.

Christ's response has entered history as the Olivet Discourse. It covers not only the destruction of the temple and the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans but also the events of the Last Days, particularly those of Daniel's Seventieth Week. The Discourse is given in four places in the gospels:

- Matthew 24:1-42
- Mark 13:1-33
- Luke 17:22-37
- Luke 21:5-33

Although it is given in the context of the 12 apostles being sent by Jesus to the lost sheep of Israel, Matthew 10:17-22 has text that essentially duplicates text found in Mark 13 and Luke 21.

With some minor reordering of events, all three gospels give very similar accounts. Matthew's account is the most complete and is generally what is meant when "the Olivet Discourse" is mentioned in biblical commentary. Mark's account provides some additional details, as does Luke's. Luke's account, because it occurs in two different parts of the gospel, needs to be reassembled, but when it has been it closely matches the others.

We have put together the three accounts, matching similar or identical verses and putting the additional material from Mark and Luke in its proper place in a set of tables at the end of this chapter. From these tables we have created the general text used in the commentary below. We use the text from Matthew where it exists, then the text from Mark where it exists and Matthew does not or where the text in Mark is more complete or detailed than Matthew. Then finally we will use any leftover pieces from either of the two sections from Luke. We then provide commentary on the resulting text and tie its events to the Seventieth Week and to Revelation.

(Matthew 24) {1} Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. {2}"Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

{3} As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples⁴¹ came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

There is a major difficulty, highlighted by only a few verses, that runs through the Olivet Discourse: it seems to be talking about two related but very distinct events. We will summarize the problem here and then illustrate it when we get to the relevant verses. The problem can be stated plainly: though the three accounts of the Olivet Discourse are nearly verse-by-verse identical, the emphasis of Luke seems to be very different from the emphasis of the other two. As we will see, Matthew and Mark state that the sign of the end of the age will be the “abomination that causes desolation” which we know from Daniel is the Antichrist taking his place in the temple, setting up an idol and beginning perverse religious practices including declaring himself God. This is clearly an event of the Last Days, taking place as we have seen in the middle of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. This is the sign we are to wait for concerning the end of the age and Christ’s return and clearly answers the “what will be the sign of your coming” question. But though it deals with a profanation of the temple, it does not deal with its destruction. The temple was or will be profaned by a foreign conqueror twice, once when Antiochus Epiphanes did so during the times of the Maccabees and once when the Antichrist does.

Luke, on the other hand, gives the sign as “when you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.” This answers the question “when will the temple be destroyed such that no stone remains on another.” This, too, happened twice in history, under Nebuchadnezzar in 587 or 586 BC and under Titus in 70 AD, with the latter still future when Jesus spoke.

The second major difference between the two accounts has to do with the immediate aftereffects of the sign. Both accounts speak to a time of great distress, though Luke adds that “they” (presumably the defenders and people of Jerusalem) 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.”⁴² This latter seems to imply a long period of time, particularly when we remember that the Seventieth Week (of which the great distress is the major event of the second half of that week) is decreed for the

⁴¹ Mark tells us they are Peter, James, John, and Andrew.

⁴² Luke 21:20,24.

Jews, not the Gentiles, and that therefore is not a part of the “times of the Gentiles”, that is, the period between the first 69 of Daniel’s weeks and the final one.

To summarize the problem: the two accounts – Matthew/Mark and Luke – seem certain to come from the same set of prophecies. A glance at the parallel accounts at the end of this Appendix shows that except for the verses mentioned above, essentially identical words are used. And yet they seem to apply to two very separate events. Further complicating this, the text from Matthew 10 is clearly in the context of the 12 apostles going to the cities of Israel. This, of course, happened well before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. and clearly has nothing to do with the Last Days. And yet, it duplicates multiple verses that are also given in Mark 13 and Luke 21.

Some secular scholars state the Luke was compiled late in the first century and revised well into the second. They base this primarily on the fact that Luke seems to contradict and give a different emphasis to some of Paul’s letters as to various details of Paul’s teachings. This would, they say, rule out its ascription to Paul’s sometime companion Luke. From this weak argument those scholars go on to argue a late (at least 80 AD) date for the gospel. Since that date is after the destruction of the temple, some of those scholars then argue that the differences in Luke’s and Matthew’s accounts that we discuss here represent a “cleaning up” of the prophecy to make it fit the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70. Since, however, the book of Acts, originally a single work from Luke, ends before the death of Paul in 67 AD and hence most likely before the start of the Jewish revolt and well before the destruction of the temple, it is unlikely it was written as an intentional change from the original form in Mark.

The problem that the Olivet Discourse applies to two events separated by centuries begins with the last verse quoted above. As a follow-on to Christ telling them the temple would be destroyed, they naturally ask when that would take place. They then apparently assume that the destruction of the temple will be part of the events immediately preceding the return of Christ. Thus, what was probably intended as a single question is really three separate but related questions. The first was when the temple would be destroyed and left without one stone on another. Second was what will be the sign of Christ’s return in glory, and third what will be the sign of the end of the age. Were they treated separately, the account in Luke primarily deals with the destruction of the temple and its aftermath under the Romans while the other two accounts present the desecration (but not destruction) of the temple by the Antichrist. Under this (reasonable but by no means certain) interpretation, the scriptures in Matthew 10 fall in the period before the destruction of the temple. Matthew 10, viewed alone, seems to be instructions to the disciples to start their travels immediately. That would mean a period long before the destruction of the temple. Evidence that the instructions were meant for the more distant future is found in Matthew 12 which is connected to Matthew 10 by a series of “at that time” links. In Matthew 12:1 Jesus is

walking with his disciples through grain fields. The disciples therefore cannot be off preaching to the cities of Israel and therefor the prophecies of Matthew 10 are not “immediate”.⁴³

There are scriptures that tie the three events together. Most important is that Greece (Antiochus Epiphanes), Rome (Titus here but many other emperors especially including Nero), and the final kingdom of the Antichrist are each one of the eight antichrist kingdoms referred to in Revelation 17.

It is from this ambiguity of the question, perhaps, that arises the ambiguities in Christ’s responses, or at least the ambiguities in the different presentations of the Discourse. Just as the disciples asked about events that occurred at different times but were in some way related, and just as many prophecies have a near and a far-term fulfillment, so Christ’s answers often apply generally in a relatively timeless way and also apply very specifically to a particular event of the Last Days. We shall discuss this in what follows.

The disciples’ three questions asked about events separated by thousands of years. In particular, the destruction of the temple, and presumably the last destruction the temple would undergo, took place in 70 AD when the Romans put down the Jewish revolt. While this event was cataclysmic, it was not a sign of the end of the age or the return of Christ (though see below). The other two questions – the sign of Christ’s return and the sign of the end of the age – are indeed closely related events of the end of the age.

Let’s begin the interpretation of the Olivet discourse by examining the type/antitype pairings concerning the temple in Jerusalem.

There are three events concerning the temple that must be discussed. Twice the temple was or will be desecrated by a pagan conqueror. This pair of events is the type/antitype pair of fulfillments of Daniel’s Seventieth Week prophecy of the “abomination of desolation”. The “type” is the profanation of the temple when Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem in 168 BC, set up a statue of Zeus within its sanctuary, and sacrificed a pig on its altar. His very name is a blasphemy, since Epiphanes means “God made manifest.”

The “antitype” is the profanation at the middle of the Seventieth Week of Daniel when the Antichrist, having also conquered Jerusalem, sets up an apparently living idol and forces people to worship it.

⁴³ It is possible that the events of Matthew 10 cited in the main text and the Olivet Discourse table include a near and a far term fulfillment, applying like the Olivet Discourse to both the time just before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. *and* to the events during the reign of the Antichrist. In that context it is possible that the prophesies have a near term fulfillment in the missionary trips of the disciples and a far term fulfillment in the work of the 144,000 in Revelation 7.

Finally, and historically located between the other two, was the destruction of the temple by Titus and the Romans in 70 AD during the suppression of the Jewish revolt. Of the three, this is the only one in which the temple is destroyed.

In addition, and fitting with Christ's answer to the disciples, there is a type/antitype pair of the Roman and the Antichrist's invasion of Israel and capturing of Jerusalem. In both cases the pagans besiege Jerusalem and take the city.⁴⁴ As we shall see, Christ warns his followers that when they see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, they are to flee the city and surrounding countryside. Josephus records that Jewish Christians, knowing of this prophecy, left when the Romans besieged Jerusalem in 70 AD, did not participate in the futile defense of the city, and did not join many of the defenders in getting slaughtered. This event is the "type" of a similar one in the middle of the Seventieth Week. We will discuss these two events again when we reach that part of the Olivet Discourse. We discuss them here primarily to point out the confusion behind the disciple's questions and the origin of interpretations of the Discourse in that confusion.

(Matthew 24) {4} Mat 24:4-8. Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. {5} For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. {6} 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. {7} Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. {8} All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Jesus starts his answer to the disciples' questions by telling them not to be alarmed by every calamity they hear of and not to think of it as part of the events of the Last Days. It is likely that he put the destruction of the temple by Titus in that same category: a disaster that, nonetheless, was not a sign of the end of the age. Among the things he tells them that they might confuse with signs of the end of the age and his return are liars claiming to be Christ, wars, and their associated famines, and earthquakes.

Christ also, however, is careful to not completely separate the events he discusses from the time of his return. There will then be one who claims to be the Messiah, namely the Antichrist. While John warns us that there are many antichrists, there is also a special one at the end of the age. His rise is part of the Last Days, being the first seal of Revelation and the first of the four horsemen. He will deceive most of the world.

The wars and rumors of wars and the clash of nations and kingdoms are events of every age but are also associated with the Antichrist's wars of conquest and power consolidation during the time of the second seal of Revelation. There also will be famines in every age but also specific famines associated with the third seal. Christ points out that while not all such events are signs of the end of the age, some very

⁴⁴ This also occurred when Nebuchadnezzar took the city, but that was long before Christ made his prophesy and hence not included in it.

specific forms of them, namely the ones associated with the first four seals, are “the beginning of birth pangs” that indicate the possibility that the end of the age is approaching.

This distinction of the general – there will be wars in every age – and the specific – the Antichrist will wage war – conveys a clear lesson for us. We are not to be thinking that every disaster we hear of is a sign of the end of the age while, at the same time, we are to be aware that some disasters of these kinds will indeed provide an indication that the end of the age is approaching.

(Mark 13) {9} You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. ... {11} Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. {12} Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

(Luke 21) {18}. But not a hair of your head will perish.

(Matthew 24) {9b} and you will be hated by all nations because of me. {10} At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, {11} and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. {12} Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, {13} but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

This first thing that needs saying here is that these prophecies appear to be out of order. You cannot tell it from Mark or Matthew’s account, but Luke 21:12 says, speaking of the signs in the heavens discussed above, “But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake.” This addition in Luke follows the same order as Revelation: the persecutions of the Antichrist proceed the signs in the heavens (which are associated most with the Wrath of God).

These things have multiple historical fulfillments. There has been persecution of Christians in every age, including our own, with possibly the worst being early in Church history with the persecutions under the Roman emperors before the empire became Christian. Since those started around the time of the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans, it is likely Christ has those persecutions at least partially in mind in these verses. But it seems certain that he also has in mind the persecutions of the Great Tribulation during the Seventieth Week.

This is similar to Matthew 24:5 where Christ talked about false teachers across many ages who claimed to be him, but in doing so, he also undoubtedly also meant the

Antichrist of the Last Days. There have been and will be false prophets of any age but also, in the Seventieth Week, a single False Prophet who will perform miracles and who is the second beast of Revelation. The time of which Christ speaks will be very hard on humanity, but those who follow Christ all the way through will be saved. This does not mean that they will not suffer loss or be killed. It means the same thing that Luke 21:18 means: ultimately, they will be saved for eternity.

(Matthew 24) {14} And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

It is worth pointing out again that the doctrine that Christ can come at any time is not the same thing as the doctrine that no one knows when Christ will come. The former is contradicted repeatedly in scripture, including here, while the latter is taught repeatedly including later in the Olivet Discourse. Clearly if the end cannot come until after the preaching of the gospel to all nations, then it cannot be “any time” until after that was complete.

Once again, this verse has multiple referents. Christ told his followers to make believers of all nations and the spread of Christianity followed close on Pentecost and has continued through our day. It is a characteristic of the Church age. But we also know that there will be a special proclamation of the gospel late in the Seventieth Week. This is symbolized by the first angel of Revelation chapter 14: “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.” This takes place late in the Seventieth Week, not long before the harvesting of the earth.

(Matthew 24) {15} So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-

(Luke 21) {20} When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. {21} 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.

(Matthew 24) {17} Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. {18} Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.

(Luke 21) {22} For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.

(Matthew 24) {19} How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers. {20} Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.

At this point in the Olivet Discourse Christ explains the events around the mid-point of the Seventieth Week, centering around the revelation of the Antichrist. Matthew and Mark make it very clear that the event that makes it certain that the time of the end is at hand is the revealing of the Antichrist. That revealing, taking place at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week, is the sign for which Christians are to be looking, according to Christ. We need to take notice, however, that there is one important difference between the accounts in Matthew and Mark, on the one hand, and of Luke on the other. In the first two, the clear sign of the end of the age is the “abomination that causes desolation”, namely the Antichrist taking his stand in the temple and proclaiming himself God. In Luke, however, the sign is “Jerusalem being surrounded by armies” which is much less specific. As discussed above, this constitutes one of the primary difficulties in understanding the Olivet Discourse.

We know from Revelation that the Antichrist, after breaking the covenant with the Jews at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week, will take over Jerusalem and it makes sense, though is by no means certain, that that seizure will involve armies surrounding Jerusalem. It is, of course, possible that the original Olivet Discourse contained both a statement of Jerusalem surrounded by armies and the Antichrist being revealed, but we have no way to know that. Speculation that the account in Luke was altered to match Titus’ siege of Jerusalem (and for which there is no parallel to the desecrations of the temple under Antiochus Epiphanes and the Antichrist) is futile. It is, however, consistent with the type/antitype model of prophecy that as far as fleeing disaster is concerned, the capture of Jerusalem by Titus and his destruction of the temple and much of the city is a “type” of the end-times seizure of Jerusalem by the Antichrist, the desecration of the temple, and the launching of terrible persecutions. The Luke account, where it differs, seems to stress the “type” more while Matthew and Mark stress the “antitype” fulfillment in the Last Days.

The best interpretation seems to be that Christ is telling his followers to look for the Antichrist to be revealed and then they will know they are within the time of the end. They will also know they are to flee not only Jerusalem but also Judea to avoid what will be severe depredations on Christians and Jews by the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. Indeed, these scriptures are immediately followed by Christ’s warning of great persecution and other distress.

(Matthew 24) {21} For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again.

(Luke 21) {23} 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.

{24} 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.

(Matthew 24) {22} If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

These scriptures deal with the Great Tribulation, a time of horrific persecution of Christians and Jews following the revealing of the Antichrist. The two Matthew scriptures make complete sense in the sequence of events following the rise of the Antichrist. But what is to be made of the verse here from Luke? It makes it sound like the “distress” following the revealing of the Antichrist and Jerusalem being surrounded by armies is that many will be slaughtered and that some will be taken away as captives. Jerusalem will be controlled by the Gentiles “until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled.”

How do we reconcile this? First by discovering that the actual problems are here. There are two such, both associated with the verse from Luke. That verse makes it sound like a military conquest (many falling by the sword) followed by a (lengthy) time of exile from Jerusalem and the control of the city by the Gentiles. This certainly applies to the period of the Jewish revolt and the later Bar Kokhba revolt of 134-136 AD. By the end of that time essentially all Jews in Judea had been killed or exiled. The time of the Gentiles in Luke 21:24 would therefore apply to the period from the suppression of the Jewish revolt until the reestablishment of Israel in 1948.

Without the verse from Luke this section seems completely to apply to the period starting with the conquest of Jerusalem at the time of the revealing of the Antichrist until the end of his rule. That includes the period of the Wrath of God where the depredations on earth are so severe that they would be likely to extinguish life were they to continue for long. The period from the revealing of the Antichrist to the fall of his reign certainly seems to be a “Time of the Gentiles” in Jerusalem. One interesting point, however, is Daniel saying that the 70 weeks are for “your people” meaning the Jews. It is generally accepted by those who take the Bible literally that this is in contradistinction to the period of the Gentiles which takes place between the 69th and 70th weeks. It is difficult to see a three-and-a-half-year period during which the Antichrist rules Jerusalem as both a time dedicated to the Jews and a “time of the Gentiles”. We take it as the second half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week and therefore part of the times dedicated to the Jews.

This, of course, supports the view that Luke is talking about the period immediately after the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus when many were killed with the sword, many were forced into world-wide exile, and where the Gentiles were definitely in charge of Jerusalem and its environs. Arguing against that separate application is that the words of the rest of the recorded discourse are so nearly identical. We would have no problem

applying all of Luke's version to the days of the Antichrist were the sign not given as "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" and the verse here about exile of the Jews. Even those are not completely in conflict with the primary application of these prophecies to the time of Christ's return rather than to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple: when the Antichrist captures Jerusalem there will no doubt be people killed in the conquest and others exiled. Finally, the three and a half years that follow are certainly times of the city being trampled by the Gentiles.

To the authors it seems extremely likely that either Luke applies to the same events as Matthew and Mark or that Christ himself doesn't distinguish the events of the destruction of the temple from those associated with his return. This is, of course, consistent with what Christ says later in the discourse: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Perhaps the unknowns here as to how much applies to the conquest of Titus and how much to the reign of the Antichrist stem from Christ himself not knowing the full details of the future. It is possible he shares the same lack of distinction as to timing as his disciples do in asking their question(s).

(Luke 17) {22} Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it.

(Matthew 24) {23} At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. {24} For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible.

(Mark 13) {23} So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

(Matthew 24) {26} 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

During this period of terrible distress, many will raise false hopes by pretending to be either Christ or a genuine prophet. There will be many of these, but both the false Christs and the false prophets have, in the period of the Seventieth Week, a specific manifestation, namely the first beast (Antichrist) and the second (False Prophet). Without mentioning them specifically, Christ's mention of their primary characteristics at the time when the two beasts in Revelation appear shows that whether or not the false prophets and Christs of every age are meant by his prophecy, the specific ones of the end of the age certainly are.

These scriptures speaking of (and warning about believing) secret appearances of Christ are in direct contrast with the immediately following scriptures.

(Matthew 24) {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.

(Luke 21) {25b} On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. (26a) Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world,

When Christ comes back, there will be no doubt about it. First will come the period of the seven bowl judgments of the Wrath of God which will include signs in the skies but also the deaths of millions on earth.

(Luke 17) {24} For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. {25} But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

(Matthew 24) {28} Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. ... {30} They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

(Luke 21) {28} When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

(Matthew 24) {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.

Christ will not appear secretly when he returns. His return will be visible from many if not all places on earth, when, as was prophesied at Christ's assumption into heaven after his resurrection, Christ will return on the clouds of the sky.

Luke 17:24 deserves some discussion. Elsewhere in this Appendix we present the difficulties in completely reconciling the Matthew/Mark account of the Olivet Discourse with Luke's version in a few places. There can be no doubt that Luke 17:24 refers to the period of Christ's return. This makes it likely that all of Luke's version applies to the same things as the other versions.

Luke 17:25 says that Christ will be rejected by this "generation". Given the importance of that word later in the Olivet Discourse, it may be worth briefly discussing what it

means. The word γενεα is translated “generation” where it appears in scripture. It means generation in the sense of a period of time of roughly 30 years, but it can also mean a group of people sharing a common genealogy, that is, a race or ethnic group. So Luke’s words mean either that Christ will be rejected by the people alive at the time of his first coming or be rejected by the Jews. Of course, for the most part, he was rejected by both. We will discuss this some more when we get to Matthew 24:34.

Matthew 24:28 is one of the strangest in all of scripture and its meaning is extremely difficult to parse. The word translated “vulture” can also mean “eagle” but seems simply to mean carrion eaters. In interpreting this verse, it is probably best to not look at vultures circling a corpse as 21st century people (who rarely see either corpses or carrion-eating birds), with a certain revulsion, but rather as people used to a much closer connection to nature both in its good and its bad aspects. It is most likely, given the context, that this verse means that when there is an event on the earth (the body), there are signs in the sky (the circling carrion birds) and so it is with the return of Christ to earth – it will be accompanied by signs in the heavens. Indeed, the next verse says the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, along with his appearance in the clouds. These things are the anticipated signs. Anticipated by believers, that is. For the unbelievers, particularly those following the Antichrist at this time, it will be a time of great mourning.

When Christ returns in glory, one of the events to take place will be him sending his angels with a loud trumpet call to gather believers from one end of the earth to the other and from all over the heavens.⁴⁵ This is the Rapture of the saints and yet another piece of evidence that the Rapture is post-tribulation and takes place at the end of the age, not at the start of the Seventy Weeks. If this isn’t the Rapture and believers have already been removed from the Earth, it may refer to converts during the Seventieth Week, but absent any other hint of a gathering of the elect in Last Days scriptures, it is simplest to take this as meaning the Rapture. This is supported by a comparison of this verse from Luke’s account with the parallel verses from Matthew and Mark which is shown next above (Matthew 24:31). The fact that the verses immediately before these verses and those immediately afterwards are essentially identical in all three accounts indicates strongly that the redemption Luke’s account mentions is the same event as the angels of the Lord gathering the elect from everywhere.

Note exactly where the elect come from: from the four winds and from one end of the heavens to the other. The four winds clearly means “everywhere on earth”, which fits with the requirement that the gospel be preached everywhere. But the other half of the verse is interesting as well. It is true that Christ will return with his followers of all ages,

⁴⁵ Matthew 24:31.

now in their resurrection bodies. And these will clearly be coming from heaven.⁴⁶ There isn't much evidence they have been "gathered" since they are always with Christ, but it is possible that this verse means that all living believers and all dead ones will be gathered for Christ's return. But there is one other possible added meaning: that there will be believers off-earth who will also be raptured. We are in a period of history wherein humans are not just on the earth's surface. Currently they are also occupying the International Space Station and before long will be on the moon and Mars. There are likely to be believers among them and they, too, will participate in Christ's return.

Christ finishes this section by saying that when the signs begin – and here we likely can include the revealing of the Antichrist – all the events including the return of Christ in glory are going to happen soon. In Matthew 24:33 as in Luke 21:28 the appearance of the signs is to be taken as sources of hope because the final salvation of believers will follow shortly after.

Understanding that scripture teaches concerning the Last Days that "all will happen quickly" puts several things in proper context. First is the next verse, Matthew 24:34: "this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened". While this could mean that the Jewish people will not pass away or that Christ was wrong about how long it would be before his return, it is far more likely that this verse along with the Matthew 24:33 and Luke 21:28 and, indeed, Revelation 22:20 "Surely I am coming soon" (also translated "Behold, I come quickly") all mean the same thing: that the events of the end times will be cut short by Christ's return for the sake of the elect and that some of those who see the first signs – the revealing of the Antichrist – will see the final culmination in Christ's return.

Christ ends this section with an interesting reference: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." In Revelation 21, after the Millennium is over, John sees (verse 1) "a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." Christ's words certainly do outlast the heavens and the earth.

(Matthew 24) {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; {39a} and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.

(Luke 17) {28} It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. {29} But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ... {32}

⁴⁶ Revelation 19:7–9, 14; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 19:15, 16

Remember Lot's wife: {33} Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

(Matthew 24) {39b} That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

(Luke 17) {34} I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left.

(Matthew 24) {40} Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. {41} Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. {42} Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come

Christ ends the Olivet Discourse with a message of preparedness. If you cannot know when these events will take place – and even Christ does not know that – then all you can do is watch for them and be prepared. To the world, the end of the age will come like a thief in the night – devastating and unexpected – while to believers keeping watch it will not be a surprise.

Christ starts the section by saying that no one, not even the son, knows the day or the hour of his return. This is not to say we know nothing about it. The point of the Olivet Discourse is to show the signs that say it is starting. But the details of the lead-up are unknown and speculation about them is futile. The importance of, for example, the events of the first half of the Seventieth Week when the Antichrist is gaining power will only fully be realized when the looked-for sign of the revealing of the Antichrist appears.

Christ gives the examples of Noah's day and Lot's day. In each case, destruction came unexpectedly, in one case upon the world and the other on Sodom and Gomorrah. But that destruction was only unexpected by people who were not paying attention. They were living their normal lives, ignoring the signs, until destruction surprised them. But that destruction did not come upon those who were prepared – Noah and his family and Lot and his. That is our lesson, along with a final one: once you start on the road to Christ's return, you, like Lot's wife, must not look back and reconsider. Christ speaks of her to warn that those who try to keep their lives will lose them while those who are willing to die for Christ probably will but in doing so will find eternal life.

One more thing needs to be said about the end of this section. We are told of three situations where two people will be doing the exact same thing and one will be taken and one will be left. It is certainly possible that it has to do with gathering the wheat and the tares with the tares destroyed first (those taken) and the wheat gathered into the landowner's barn. More likely, however, is that it refers to the Rapture. When Christ returns those who believe in him will be transformed and will join him as he comes to earth and those who do not will be left to enter the Millennium in their ordinary bodies.

The Olivet Discourse is typically taken to end with chapter 24 of Matthew. And the accounts in both Luke and Mark do end there. But Matthew 25 seems to possibly be a continuation since it deals with two parables that say that we should be prepared at all times for the return of Christ and one that specifically deals with an event later than those related to Christ's return, namely the last judgment. While there are lessons to be learned from these parables, we will not include them here.

The following tables present the different versions of the Olivet Discourse in parallel, aligned text. The primary ordering is that of Matthew though both the other accounts follow essentially the same order sometimes with deletions and sometime with additions.

Matthew	Mark	Luke
Mat 24:1	Mark 13:1	Luke 21:5
Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings.	As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"	Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said,
Mat 24:2	Mark 13:2	Luke 21:6
"Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."	"Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."	"As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."
Mat 24:3a	Mark 13:3	
As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately.	As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately	
Mat 24:3b	Mark 13:4	Luke 21:7
"Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"	"Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"	"Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"
Mat 24:4	Mark 13:5	Luke 21:8a
Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you.	Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you.	He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived.
Mat 24:5	Mark 13:6	Luke 21:8b
For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, ' and will deceive many.	Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many.	For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them.
Mat 24:6	Mark 13:7	Luke 21:9
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.	When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.	When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."
Mat 24:7a	Mark 13:8a	Luke 21:10
Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.	Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.	Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
Mat 24:7b-8	Mark 13:8b	Luke 21:11
There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.	There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.	There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.
Mat 24:9a		
"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death,		

Matthew	Mark	Luke
Mat 10:17-18	Mark 13:9	Luke 21:12-13
Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.	"You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.	"But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them.
	Mark 13:10	
	And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.	
Mat 10:19-20	Mark 13:11	Luke 21:14-15
But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.	Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit	But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.
Mat 10:21	Mark 13:12	Luke 21:16
"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.	"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.	You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.
Mat 24:9b/Mat 10:22a	Mark 13:13a	Luke 21:17
and you will be hated by all nations because of me./You will be hated by everyone because of me	All men will hate you because of me,	All men will hate you because of me.
		Luke 21:18
		But not a hair of your head will perish.
Mat 24:10		
At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,		
Mat 24:11		
and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.		
Mat 24:12		
Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,		
Mat 24:13/Mat 10:22b	Mark 13:13b	Luke 21:19
but he who stands firm to the end will be saved./but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.	but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.	By standing firm you will gain life.

Matthew	Mark	Luke
Mat 24:14	Mark 13:10	
And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.	And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.	
Mat 24:15	Mark 13:14a	
So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-	When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong--let the reader understand--	
		Luke 21:20
		When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.
Mat 24:16	Mark 13:14b	Luke 21:21
then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.	then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.	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.
Mat 24:17	Mark 13:15	Luke 17:31a
Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house.	Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out.	On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them.
Mat 24:18	Mark 13:16	Luke 17:31b
Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.	Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.	Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything.
		Luke 21:22
		For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.
Mat 24:19	Mark 13:17	Luke 21:23a
How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers	How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!	How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!
Mat 24:20	Mark 13:18	
Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.	Pray that this will not take place in winter,	
Mat 24:21	Mark 13:19	Luke 21:23b
For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again.	because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now--and never to be equaled again.	There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.

Matthew	Mark	Luke
Mat 24:22	Mark 13:20	
If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.	If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.	
		Luke 17:22
		Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it.
Mat 24:23	Mark 13:21	Luke 17:23
At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it.	At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it.	Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them.
Mat 24:24	Mark 13:22	
For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible.	For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect--if that were possible	
Mat 24:25	Mark 13:23	
See, I have told you ahead of time.	So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.	
Mat 24:26		
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		
Mat 24:27		Luke 17:24-25
For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man		For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation
Mat 24:28		Luke 17:37
Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.		"Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."
Mat 24:29a	Mark 13:24-25a	Luke 21:25a
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,	But in those days, following that distress, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky,	There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars.

Matthew	Mark	Luke
		Luke 21:25b
		On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.
		Luke 21:26a
		Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world,
Mat 24:29b	Mark 13:25b	Luke 21:26b
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.	and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.	for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.
Mat 24:30	Mark 13:26	Luke 21:27
"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.	"At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.	At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
		Luke 21:28
		When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."
Mat 24:31	Mark 13:27	
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	And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.	
Mat 24:32	Mark 13:28	Luke 21:29-30
"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.	"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.	He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.
Mat 24:33	Mark 13:29	Luke 21:31
Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.	Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door.	Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.
Mat 24:34	Mark 13:30	Luke 21:32
I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.	I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened	"I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.
Mat 24:35	Mark 13:31	Luke 21:33
Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away	Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.	Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
Mat 24:36	Mark 13:32	
"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.	"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.	

Matthew	Mark	Luke
Mat 24:37		Luke 17:26
As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.		"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.
Mat 24:38		Luke 17:27a
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;		People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark.
Mat 24:39a		Luke 17:27b
and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.		Then the flood came and destroyed them all.
		Luke 17:28
		"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.
		Luke 17:29
		But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.
Mat 24:39b		Luke 17:30
That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.		"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.
		Luke 17:32
		Remember Lot's wife!
		Luke 17:33
		Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.
		Luke 17:34
		I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left.
Mat 24:40		Luke 17:36
Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.		(Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.)
Mat 24:41		Luke 17:35
Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.		Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."
Mat 24:42	Mark 13:33	
"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come	Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.	

Appendix 3: The Beasts of Revelation

In this Appendix we put together discussions of the various beasts throughout scripture with the descriptions given. We use our principles of exegesis to analyze them. There will be, as a result, considerable overlap with the discussion in Revelation chapter 13. The authors decided, in the interest of completeness, to lean toward duplication so that the beasts could be studied on their own in the context of the events of the Last Days.

We begin this section with a general discussion of beasts as presented throughout scripture. Because of the complexity of the subject and the intent of the current work, we will concentrate on those most relevant to understanding the events of the Last Days. In discussing the beasts in the bible and in Revelation, we will generally compare to the Antichrist, the beast from the sea in Revelation 13:1.

Beasts in Scripture

Throughout scripture various composite beasts are associated with the End Times, with opponents of God and the saints, or both. This is particularly the case in Daniel and Revelation. A full study of the beasts in scripture would require a book of its own. For our purposes, it is worthwhile looking at the beasts associated with various anti-God empires of history. These particular empires we refer to as “Beast Empires.”

What makes a people a “Beast Empire?”

1. **Important and generally negative impact on the Jews.**
2. **Has a symbolic beast associated with it in scripture (for past empires)**
3. **They are:**
 - a. **Egypt**
 - b. **Assyria**
 - c. **Babylon**
 - d. **Persia**
 - e. **Greece**
 - f. **Rome**
 - g. **Third Reich(?)**
 - h. **Empire of the Antichrist (the eighth and final)**

Beasts in Daniel. Daniel mentions relevant beasts in chapters 2, 7, and 8. In each case, they cover all of history as well as times leading up to and including the Last Days. In chapter 2 a man made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay is shown to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream that is subsequently interpreted by Daniel. The parts of the man are Babylon (gold), Media-Persia (silver), Greece (bronze), Rome (iron), and the Last Days kingdom

(iron and clay). These are some of the kingdoms that scripture sees to be of greatest relevance to the people of God across time.

In chapter 7, Daniel has visions of four beasts. The first, a lion with eagle's wings, is likely Babylon, though sphynx-like creatures are associated with many ancient kingdoms including Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Greece. The second beast is a bear, probably representing the Medes and the Persians. The third is a four-headed winged leopard which is most likely the four successor kingdoms of Alexander with particular emphasis on the Seleucid kingdom of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The fourth, called out as different from the others, had large iron teeth and ten horns. It almost certainly represents Rome and Rome's successor kingdom of the End Times.

Finally, in Daniel chapter 8 a ram with two horns (Media-Persia) is destroyed by a male goat with one horn that breaks into four. This is clearly Alexander the Great and the four successor kingdoms of his empire. From one of the four horns grows a "little horn". This little horn is both Antiochus Epiphanes (type) and the Antichrist (antitype).

We see in Daniel two competing but also complementary trends. First, the beasts and the kingdoms they represent are sequential, with each replacing the one before. The exception is Rome, for which the kingdom of the Antichrist is a successor, but not a replacement. The second trend is that the kingdoms are in some way related. The clearest representation of this is the statue of chapter 2, where the kingdoms are shown in one united figure. The significance of this is hinted at in Daniel in the ways they are portrayed and interlinked, but the true meaning isn't made clear in scripture until Revelation.

The beasts of Daniel are all included in the Antichrist Kingdoms of Revelation: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media/Persia, Greece and the Seleucids (these are the five that "were" in Revelation), Rome (the one that currently is), one that will come for a little time (possibly Hitler), and finally the Last Days kingdom of the literal Antichrist. John makes it clear that the final kingdom is "of and like the others". This stresses the composite but yet sequential nature of the kingdoms of Daniel, but also clarifies that they are all opposed to God and to his people.

Other beasts appear in the Old Testament besides the ones in Daniel. Of greatest significance (primarily because they are alluded to in Revelation in the context of the Last Days) are Rahab and Leviathan. Both can represent sea monsters (hence beasts from the sea), though Leviathan can simply be a crocodile or a whale.⁴⁷ We discuss the beast from the sea where it appears in Revelation.

Beasts in Revelation. The book of Revelation is the second source (after Daniel) of monsters related to the Last Days. They are central to the book, and all closely resemble each other. We shall discuss this similarity in detail below.

⁴⁷ Several species of whale continue to live in the Mediterranean, including sperm whales (up to 68 feet), fin whales (the second largest whales, up to 85 feet), pilot whales, and beaked whales.

Satan.⁴⁸ The first beast mentioned in Revelation⁴⁹ is Satan, who in Revelation is called “the Dragon”. His origin is in heaven, and it is the other beasts’ resemblance to him that mark them as his creatures. John sees him as a large red dragon with seven heads, seven crowns, and ten horns. This description, similar but not identical to the description of the other beasts of Revelation, indicates that he is their progenitor and controller.

The Antichrist.⁵⁰ The second, risen from the sea (or the abyss), is simply called “the beast” in Revelation. He is the Antichrist, ruler of the final anti-God kingdom of the Last Days. We call him here the Antichrist following centuries of tradition, but he is never called that in Revelation.

The beast from the sea and Satan are so similar in description that it is tempting to equate them, but this should be resisted. Two arguments show why. First, Satan is already active on the earth when this beast appears, having appeared in chapter 12. It is only in chapter 13 that the beast representing the Antichrist in all his power appears, possibly directly summoned by Satan. Second, this beast is given the authority of Satan, indicating they are separate. Rather than see them as the same creature, it is better to view the Antichrist, a counterfeit Christ in all ways, as being a counterfeit incarnation of Satan.

It must be observed that the rising of the beast from the sea is *not* the first appearance in Revelation of the man who is the Antichrist. He is most likely the first horseman who appears at the first seal. There, he is only a man. In chapter 13, after the man is apparently slain and resurrected, the beast is directly called forth by Satan and given authority over the nations of the world. He is also mentioned in chapter 11 where he kills the two witnesses, though in chapter 13 their murders are yet future. The summoning and rise of the beast from the sea is the revelation of the Antichrist at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week that Christ tells us to watch for. The man is now fully possessed by Satan and under his direct control. His symbology in Revelation is so similar to that of Satan’s because he is, at that point, fully a creature of Satan.

The False Prophet.⁵¹ Third is the beast from the earth which serves the second beast and carries out his orders. This is the “False Prophet”. His description is less detailed than that of any other beast in Revelation. He has two horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon, meaning he appears innocent and even holy, but speaks the words of Satan. That the False Prophet speaks like a dragon and carries out the commands of the Antichrist further shows that the Antichrist and Satan are completely aligned.

⁴⁸ Revelation 12:3.

⁴⁹ Revelation 12:3.

⁵⁰ Revelation 13:1.

⁵¹ Revelation 13:11.

The Prostituteⁱ of Babylon⁵² and her mount. Finally, the Prostitute of Babylon, called “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”, is seated on “the scarlet beast”, another creature resembling the other three. The prostitute and her mount represent two things. Specifically, she represents the final anti-God pseudo-religious system of the Last Days. The mount may also be seen as a composite of the anti-God systems of history, including that of the Antichrist.

This last can be seen in the seven heads of the mount. They represent two things, according to the angel’s explanation to John. First, they are seven hills on which the woman sits. By far the most sensible explanation is to take them as the seven hills of Rome, and perhaps also as representing a reincarnated Roman Empire in the Last Days. It is, of course, quite possible that the Last Days’ fake religious system will be headquartered in Rome.

The seven heads also represent seven evil empires across history, empires with particular animus toward the people of God. Five of the empires had fallen when John received his visions (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media-Persia, and Greece), one still existed (Rome), and one would come for a little while. This last is difficult to identify and may be yet future to us, though the “Thousand Year Reich” of Adolph Hitler is an excellent possibility. The Beast, the Antichrist of the Last Days, is said to be an eighth king but “of the seven”. This could have several meanings. It may simply mean he is like the other seven, but may also mean he is a continuation or resurrection of one of the others. This latter is consistent with his being in some sense a continuation or rebirth of the Roman Empire, consistent with the iron and clay feet of the statue in Daniel 2.

Though at first it seems very strange that the seven heads represent something as different as seven hill and seven kings, the two references fit together perfectly if the final Antichrist kingdom will be a sort of reincarnation of Rome (the statue in Daniel 2) and also “of the seven” prior anti-God kingdoms. Many interpretations are possible, but the most likely is that the final kingdom will both be a re-forming of Rome *and* closely resemble all the previous kingdoms.

Interrelationships Among the Beasts.

We should briefly discuss the relationship among the beast from the sea, the beast from the abyss, and the Prostitute’s mount, which is also said to arise from the abyss. We will then move on to a more detailed treatment of the similarities and differences of the various beasts.

We have previously discussed the relationship between the beast from the sea and the Prostitute’s mount: the beast is the Antichrist and the Prostitute’s mount is both his Last Days empire and the anti-God empires across time. But what is the relationship

⁵² Revelation 17:3.

between the beast from the sea, whom we and practically everyone else calls the Antichrist, and the beast from the abyss who kills the two witnesses? It is almost certain that they are the same. First, the way the beast from the abyss is introduced in chapter 11 strongly implies that the reader either knows, or will know, who he is. If he is not to be equated to the beast from the sea, it is difficult to say where he otherwise appears in Revelation. He cannot be the Prostitute's mount because that represents an empire or empires and not an individual. We can equate the two beasts by observing that *abussos* in Greek means "bottomless deep" and is often used to mean the sea in scripture. We will return to the meaning of abyss shortly.

There are other similarities worth discussing among the beasts of Revelation. The beast from the sea and the mount of the Prostitute both have seven heads and ten horns,⁵³ and both have blasphemous names written on them. True, the beast from the sea has a blasphemous name on each head, while the Prostitute's mount is covered with them, but the former most likely presents a detail of the latter description.

The beast from the sea has ten crowns on the ten horns while the Prostitute's beast has ten horns which are ten kings,⁵⁴ but kings may be presumed to have crowns. This shows they are closely related but, as we discussed earlier, it is best to take the first as referring to a man and the second to symbolize (at least in part) his empire. This latter point would imply that the false religion of the last days (the Prostitute) originally controls the Antichrist's empire.

Now consider the relationship of the Antichrist and the dragon. Like the Antichrist, the dragon has seven heads and ten horns,⁵⁵ but this time the seven heads have the crowns. The seven heads of the Prostitute's beast are also kings,⁵⁶ and, as mentioned previously, presumably have crowns. In this way and in its color (fiery red) the dragon resembles the beast that represents the Antichrist and all anti-God empires.

Since there are no direct contradictions in the descriptions of the dragon, the witnesses' killer, the beast from the sea, and the scarlet beast ridden by the Prostitute, the differences could perhaps be explained by taking each description to be incomplete. Imagine a beast with the following properties:

⁵³ Revelation 13:1 and 17:3.

⁵⁴ Revelation 17:12.

⁵⁵ Revelation 12:3.

⁵⁶ Revelation 17:10.

Property	Monster Showing Property
Bright red.	Dragon, Scarlet Beast
From the Abyss.	Witnesses' killer, Scarlet Beast, the Beast from the Sea
10 crowned horns,	Dragon (horns), Scarlet Beast and Beast from Sea (horns, crowns each representing a king or kingdom).
Kills God's people	Beast from the Abyss, Beast from the Sea. ⁵⁷
7 crowned heads,	Dragon (heads, crowns), Beast from Sea (heads) each representing a king or kingdom.
Blasphemous names	Beast from Sea (on heads), Scarlet Beast (all over, in particular on his seven heads).

Each description would therefore be part of the complete one and all the beasts would look the same. This approach, however, is at least partially in error. Some things that appear different aren't while others that appear identical are not. The first is the easiest to clear up. It largely hinges on whether the abyss and the sea are the same thing. The first beast of chapter 13 came up from the sea, while the beast who killed the two witnesses and the scarlet beast came from the abyss. The Greek word *abussos* simply means "without bottom", or "bottomless". It is used in three different senses in scripture. In the Septuagint translation of Genesis 1:2 it is used to translate the Hebrew "tehom" which the NIV translates as "the deep". The same Hebrew word in Psalm 148:7 means the ocean. In Psalm 71 it means either the depths of the earth or the abode of the dead (or both). Perhaps some additional support for equating the abyss with the ocean comes from Job 26:5. The NIV says, "The dead are in deep anguish, those beneath the waters and all that live in them."

The second meaning of abyss, and the primary one in the NT, is the abode of demons. It appears in that sense six times in Revelation (seven if the beast of Revelation 11 is not the Antichrist) and once in Luke 8:31. Its final usage in scripture comes from Romans 10:7, where it refers to the realm of the dead (though NIV translates it "the deep").

⁵⁷ It is almost certain that the beast from the sea and the beast from the abyss are the same entity. The scarlet beast that is ridden by the Prostitute resembles the other two so closely that it makes it possible that the Antichrist originally "carries" the Prostitute.

It is likely John had both the ocean deep and the abode of demons in mind when he speaks of the origin of the Antichrist. It therefore seems logical to equate the beast from the sea and the beast from the abyss and call them both the Antichrist.

Now for things that appear to be the same but are not. Most important of these is the relationship between the Dragon and the Antichrist. Their physical features can be equated but they differ in several other important ways. The Antichrist comes up from the abyss or the sea. It is true that Satan spends the Millennium in the abyss,⁵⁸ and that the abyss is an abode of demons,⁵⁹ but Heaven is Satan's origin,⁶⁰ not the abyss. Heaven is also where the Dragon first appears.⁶¹

Further evidence that Satan and the Antichrist are similar but not identical is that both are thrown into the Lake of Fire, but at different times. The Antichrist (and the False Prophet) are thrown there at the beginning of the Millennium,⁶² while Satan doesn't join them until after the Millennium.⁶³ In addition, we are told the Dragon gives authority to the Antichrist,⁶⁴ which both links and distinguishes them.

⁵⁸ Revelation 20:3.

⁵⁹ Luke 8:31 and Revelation 9:1-3.

⁶⁰ Ezekiel 28:14.

⁶¹ Revelation 12:3.

⁶² Revelation 19:20.

⁶³ Revelation 20:10.

⁶⁴ Revelation 13:4.

Appendix 3 Endnote

ⁱ The word used here is πόρνης (porné) which is defined as prostitute or harlot and metaphorically means idolatrous community. There are various translations of this: NIV uses the great prostitute, NKJV has the great harlot, KJV translates to the great whore. These all have the same meaning, but perhaps with different perceptions and connotations to our modern ear. Using the word “Whore” is more of a pejorative and assaults some sensibilities. Certainly, the Whore of Babylon is very familiar, widely used and an accurate and appropriate description. Here we will use the NIV’s translation, mainly to keep the commentary in sync with the text used.

Appendix 4: The Day of the Lord and the Wrath of God

The Day of the Lord is mentioned twenty-four times in the Bible, entirely in the prophets and the New Testament. It always refers to a period of God's judgment on mankind. That judgment may be an historic event, such as the invasion of Israel by Babylon,⁶⁵ an indeterminate period of judgment on the world,⁶⁶ or a future time when God's judgment will fall upon all nations.⁶⁷ By far the most common meaning is the last one, the most intense part of the Last Days. Two important things to be determined about the Day of the Lord are when within the last days it occurs and what it comprises.

In this study, we will discover that the Day of the Lord covers the period from the Sixth Seal through the Seventh Trumpet and spans the time from the great persecutions by the Antichrist (the Great Tribulation) until Christ returns. We will show that in scripture the Wrath of God and the Day of the Lord are equivalent, with the same signs announcing them, accompanying them, and concluding them.

The most important sign preceding the Day of the Lord is the darkening of the sun and the moon.

The book of Joel is a single long prophecy concerning the Day of the Lord.⁶⁸ He tells us the important sign which precedes the Day:

(Joel 2) {31} The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

This verse, quoted by Peter at Pentecost,⁶⁹ places the darkening of the sun and the moon *before* the onset of the Day of the Lord. In Hebrew and Greek the word translated "before" has unambiguous meaning. Likewise, there is no reason to believe that "great and dreadful"⁷⁰ is anything other than a modifier on "Day of the Lord", possibly meant to distinguish the ultimate Day of the Lord from its types in Israelite history. According to this scripture, this darkening must precede the Day of the Lord.

Christ himself mentions the darkening of sun and moon in the Olivet Discourse.

⁶⁵ Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3.

⁶⁶ Amos 5:18, 5:20, Obadiah 1:15.

⁶⁷ Isaiah 13:6, 13:9, Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31, 3:14, Zephaniah 1:7, 1:14, Zechariah 14:1, Malachi 4:5, Acts 2:20, 1 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Corinthians 1:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 2 Peter 3:10.

⁶⁸ Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31, and 3:14. The five references are placed throughout the book, showing the book to be a single prophecy of the events surrounding the Day of the Lord.

⁶⁹ Acts 2:20. The Septuagint form of Joel 2:31 and the Textus Receptus form of Acts 2:20 are essentially identical.

⁷⁰ "manifest" in Greek.

(Matthew 24) {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.

The first half of this quotes the passage from Joel, while the second paraphrases an important passage from Isaiah. The latter is given here in full:

(Isaiah 34) {4} All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.

A few verses later Isaiah gives the context:

(Isaiah 34) {8} For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause.

This likely refers to the Day of the Lord.

Revelation gives more details while covering essentially the same ground:

(Revelation 6) {12} 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, {13} and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. {14} The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

It is therefore best to assume that Christ in the Olivet Discourse, Isaiah, and John at the sixth seal of Revelation all speak of the same period, and that that period comes “immediately after the distress of those days”. Eight verses earlier in the Olivet Discourse, Christ calls this distress the “great distress”, the greatest the world will ever see. The King James translates *θλῖσις* as “tribulation”.⁷¹ This is the Great Tribulation which follows the revealing of the Antichrist.

We have therefore firmly placed the Day of the Lord in the events of the end times. First come the persecutions of the Antichrist, then the darkening of sun and moon, and then the Day of the Lord.

⁷¹ Matthew 24:21.

Now we need to determine what events occur within the time known as the Day of the Lord. The first important passage for understanding the Day of the Lord comes from Isaiah:

(Isaiah 13) {6} Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. {7} Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. {8} Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. {9} See, the day of the LORD is coming --a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger-- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. {10} The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. {11} I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. {12} I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. {13} Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.⁷²

There are several important conclusions we can draw from this passage:

First, the purpose of the Day of the Lord is to “punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins, ... put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and ... humble the pride of the ruthless.” In it, God “will destroy the sinners within” the land.

Second, various signs will accompany the Day of the Lord. These include terror among men; the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars; and the shaking of both heavens and earth.

Third, the Day of the Lord will be a time of God’s wrath and fierce anger. The words used in the Septuagint in verse 13 for wrath (orge) and anger (thumos) are the same ones used in Revelation for the Wrath of God.

Isaiah has another passage with relevance here:

(Isaiah 2) {10} Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty! {11} The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the

⁷² Isaiah 13:6-13.

pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. {12} The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled), ... {16} for every trading ship and every stately vessel. {17} The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, ... {19} Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. ... {21} They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.

The term “that day” often refers to a period of God’s judgment, though not always to the judgment associated with the last days.⁷³ Here it seems certain that the prophecy is for the end times, and that “that day” is the Day of the Lord. This passage points to a day that the Lord has “in store for all the proud and lofty” wherein the “arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low”.

That day is “for all the proud and lofty,” and not aimed at Christians. We are not appointed to suffer wrath,⁷⁴ but that passage alone states nothing about whether the Church shall be on earth during the time known as the Wrath of God. In concert with this passage from Isaiah, however, Christians not being appointed to suffer wrath may just mean that it is not aimed at them.

The passage below strongly parallels the previous passage where the Day of the Lord will “put an end to the arrogance of the haughty”.⁷⁵ Note also the close similarity between verse 21 and Revelation 6:15-17, the sixth seal:

(Revelation 6) {15} 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. {16} They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of

⁷³ See for example Isaiah 4:2, 11:11, 24:21, and Ezekiel 38:10 where “that day” prophecies are probably (or certainly) messianic, and Isaiah 22:25, Jeremiah 4:9, 49:26, and Haggai 2:23 where they are not. Likewise, the Day of the Lord does not always refer to the end times. Ezekiel 13:5, for example, seems to refer to events of the prophet’s lifetime, as does Ezekiel 30:3 (see 30:10).

⁷⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

⁷⁵ Haggai 2:6-7 provides further evidence that refers to events surrounding the return of Christ. That passage says that God will “shake the heavens and the earth, the sea, and the dry land” and that then “the desired of all nations” will come. The “desired of all nations” is generally taken to refer to the Messiah.

the Lamb! {17} For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

These passages, with their prophecy of the proud fleeing to hide from God in caves and crags, refer to the events announced by the sixth seal in Revelation. It is also possible that the reference to trading ships in verse 16 of the Isaiah quote refers to the same events as Revelation 18:19 where Babylon's trading ships are brought low.

Joel speaks of a time when Jerusalem will be restored to its glory, presumably under the control of the Jews. This has happened twice in history, at the end of the Babylonian captivity and in 1967 when Israel recaptured the city during the Six Day War. It will happen once more when the Antichrist is driven from power. Only after that final time will:

(Joel 3) {20} Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations.

Zechariah speaks of the same invasion and the same judgment. Verse 10 is almost universally taken by Christians to occur when Christ returns.

(Zechariah 12) {3} 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. ... {9} On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. {10} "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. {11} On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo."⁷⁶

The events described concern a great invasion of Israel which brings judgment both on the Jews and on the invading nations. The Last Days invasion starts at Armageddon and ends with the return of Christ.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat is traditionally identified with the Kidron valley outside Jerusalem. This fits with the descriptions of the final battle in Zechariah and elsewhere. It seems that though the enemies of Israel gather at Armageddon, the real fighting is

⁷⁶ Both Hadad and Rimmon are mentioned several times in the Bible, but only here together. Since the final invasion of Israel starts at Armageddon and ends before the gates of Jerusalem, it is perhaps appropriate that the mourning of Israel be mentioned in both areas.

around Jerusalem. Since Christ, on his return, sets foot first on the Mount of Olives (both Acts⁷⁷ and Zechariah⁷⁸ affirm this), this supports the fighting being around Jerusalem.

Therefore, from Joel and Matthew, we place the Great Tribulation of the end times before the darkening of the sun and the moon, and the Day of the Lord after them. Since the sun and the moon are darkened in close association with the Day of the Lord,⁷⁹ we presume they occur in quick succession.

The final battle being near Jerusalem is shown in Joel as well:

{Joel 3} {11} Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, O LORD! {12} 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. {13} 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! {14} Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. {15} The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. {16} 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.

This seems to say the darkening of the sun and the moon accompanies the Lord roaring from Zion. The word “near” in verse 14 means “approaches” or “at hand”. This order, and the rapid sequence of it, is identical to Matthew 24:29-30. Matthew also adds that this *follows* the great tribulation of the end times. In Revelation, the sickle, the harvest, and the trampling of the grapes of wrath are all about this time also.

There are many things to notice about this passage. 1) there are two sets of warriors being assembled: those of men and those of God. 2) “Is near” translates the Hebrew word **קָרַב** which always means something that is approaching or is close by. It does not refer to things which have already happened. Therefore, these events occur in the immediate setting of the Day of the Lord. 3) The judgment on the armies which accompanies the coming of the Lord is called a harvest gathered by sickle and a trampling of grapes. This is identical to the images immediately preceding the seven

⁷⁷ Acts 1:11.

⁷⁸ Zechariah 14:4.

⁷⁹ Isaiah 13:9-10.

bowls of God's wrath.⁸⁰ 4) The sun and the moon will be darkened and then the Lord will come forth, accompanied by the shaking of earth and sky.

A darkening of the sun and moon is part of the fourth⁸¹ and fifth⁸² trumpets and possibly the fifth plague.⁸³ The gathering of the armies and the darkening of the sun and the moon take place at the latest at the very beginning of the Day of the Lord. This is consistent with the order in Joel and Matthew.

Summary

The Day of the Lord is the primarily the day Christ returns and destroys the enemies of God. It also, somewhat more loosely, refers to the period of the fury of God, the seven plagues. It must follow the coming of Elijah. If his coming is mentioned in Revelation, it is that he is one of the two prophets killed by the Antichrist. The Day of the Lord must also follow the Great Tribulation and the darkening of the sun and the moon. There is nothing in Revelation earlier than the sixth seal which *must* happen as part of the Day of the Lord. Since the sixth seal⁸⁴ announces the Wrath of God and contains the necessary predecessor to the Day of the Lord, the best conclusion is that the events of the seventh seal⁸⁵ *are* the events of the Day of the Lord. They are also the events of the Wrath of God and hence the two are the same. Both periods end with the Antichrist's armies destroyed and him thrown into the lake of fire as Christ begins his Millennial reign.

⁸⁰ Revelation 14:15-20.

⁸¹ Revelation 8:12.

⁸² Revelation 9:2.

⁸³ Revelation 16:10 "the darkness to be felt".

⁸⁴ Revelation 6:12.

⁸⁵ Revelation 8.

Appendix 5: The Millennium

The Millennium is a prophesied period of a thousand years following on from the destruction of the Antichrist and his armies and leading to the Last Judgment, the destruction of the old heavens and earth, and the arrival of the new and eternal heavens and earth. It is a period of Christ's direct rule upon the earth following the Second Coming.

There are dozens of places where scripture prophesizes that there will be a future rule of a descendent of David which will be a period of lasting peace for Israel. Nearly all these scriptures have associated with them prophesies that are related to the last days and complete the fulfillment of the saving Christ with the ruling Christ. This section presents some of these scriptures, culminating in the most important one, that of Revelation 20. It then discusses different views of the Millennium, the scriptures supporting and contradicting each one, presents the position taken by the authors, and concludes with a discussion of the events that take place during the Millennium.

Isaiah 2:1-4. Following the Principles of Exegesis, the events in this scripture correlate to the last days:

(Isaiah 2) {1} This is the message that was revealed to Isaiah so"n of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem: {2} In the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. {3} And many peoples will come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {4} Then He will judge between the nations and arbitrate for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer take up the sword against nation, nor train anymore for war.

Isaiah 9:6-7 goes on to associate these events with what is probably the most famous prophecy in all the Bible:

(Isaiah 9){6} For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. {7} Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

This next scripture speaks of events associated with both Christ's first and second comings and associates him with the unending rule of a descendent of David.

Isaiah 11:1-11:

(Isaiah 11) {1} A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. {2} The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord— {3} 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; {4} 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. {5} Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. {6} 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. {7} The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. {8} The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. {9} As they will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. {10} In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious. {11} In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant 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 Mediterranean.

All of Isaiah chapter 11 has to do with the restoration of Israel, the battle against the Antichrist, the restoration of David's kingdom, and the Millennium. The order of events in this passage is somewhat out of order (not an unusual situation for Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ). The elements of the last days are here, however. Putting them in the order found in the rest of scripture we have:

1. The second restoration of Israel to its land (verse 11). This prophecy is already fulfilled, starting with the re-founding of Israel in 1948.
2. The destruction of the Antichrist and his armies (verse 4). This takes place at the battle of Jerusalem when Christ returns.

3. The Millennium (verse 9).
4. The new heavens and new earth (verses 6-8).

Isaiah is hardly the only prophet shown events associated with the rule of the house of David: Jeremiah has two nearly identical prophecies related to this. He says:

*(Jeremiah 23) {5} The days are coming," declares the LORD,
 "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
 a King who will reign wisely
 and do what is just and right in the land.
⁶In his days Judah will be saved
 and Israel will live in safety.
 This is the name by which he will be called:
 The LORD Our Righteous Savior.*

Again, in chapter 33 he says essentially the same thing:

*(Jeremiah 33) {15} In those days and at that time I will make a
 righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right
 in the land. {16} In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live
 in safety.
 This is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD Our Righteous
 Savior.'*

It is worth noting that "Jesus" means "God the Savior". The Old Testament prophecies of the coming rule of David's Son fall into two categories: either the rule will be eternal, or the length of the rule is unspecified. Nowhere does the Old Testament give a length of this reign, though many of the Old Testament prophecies are clearly associated with events such as the final battle at Jerusalem that we know from other scriptures are coupled with the events at the end of Daniel's Seventieth Week.

Daniel himself prophesizes what can only be the Millennium and the eternal reign of Christ. All of chapter seven of Daniel's book concerns the events of the last days. Of particular interest concerning the Millennium are verses 13 and 14:

*(Daniel 7) {13} In my vision in the night I continued to watch, and I saw One
 like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the
 Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. {14} And He was given
 dominion, glory, and kingship, that the people of every nation and
 language should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that
 will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

This prophecy, like many in the Bible, combine the reign of Christ on earth with his eternal rule.

There are, in addition, prophecies of Christ's sitting on David's throne in the New Testament. The meeting of the angel Gabriel with the Virgin Mary tells of Christ's coming rule:

(Luke 1) {29} Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. {30} But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. {31} You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. {32} He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, {33} and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.

The book of Revelation⁸⁶ is the only place that sets a limit to the length of the rule of Christ on earth, saying it will last for a thousand years. Revelation chapter 20 says:

(Revelation 20) {1} And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. {2} He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. {3} 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. {4} I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. {5} (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. {6} Blessed and holy are those who share 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. {7} When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison {8} and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

⁸⁶ The entirety of chapter 20 but especially 20:1-8.

Although this scripture covers a specific period of time and most of the other scriptures relating to the reign of the son of David speak of eternal rule, there is less difference than might be apparent at the start. The reason is that, according to Revelation 20, immediately after Christ's thousand-year reign on earth"

(Revelation 21) {1} And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

Since Christ continues to reign in the new earth, his rule is indeed eternal.

Views of the Millennium

There are three main views of the Millennium. They are called the "Amillennial", "Postmillennial", and "Premillennial" views. We will briefly explore each one in turn and end with the authors' interpretation of scripture on the topic. Before we begin, however, it should be stressed that like all other issues related to the last days (save the actual return of Christ for the Last Judgment), this is an 'open-handed' issue. No one's salvation or relationship with Christ depends on what they think about the Millennium. That said, as with all open-handed issues, it is still important to try to understand what scripture says and what its significance is.

The names "amillennial", "postmillennial", and "premillennial" apply to when, with respect to the millennium, Christ returns. We will look now at the three major interpretations of these prophecies.

The Amillennial Position

Though there are variations within the Amillennial position, it takes the least literal approach to scripture. It teaches that there is no special thousand-year period during which Christ or his saints will reign in person on earth. Instead, during all or the final part of the church age Christ will exercise spiritual influence on earth through the church. At the end of the church age, he will return for the Last Judgment and to establish his eternal kingdom in heaven.

Some of those holding this view object to the term "Amillennial" being applied to what they believe. The center of this objection is that they believe in an already-realized Millennium that is 1) spiritual but not physical, 2) ongoing through Christ's current reign in heaven, and 3) of no specific length. They make a great deal of the scriptures such as John 18:36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

Another such scripture is in Luke:

(Luke 17) {20} When asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God will not come with observable signs. {21} Nor will people say, 'Look, here it is,' or 'There it is.' For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst..."

Objections to the Amillennial Position

1. Jesus tells Pilate⁸⁷ "But now my kingdom is from another place." The word translated as "now" is "vũv". To quote Strong's Concordance, "vũv" means, "adv. (a) of time: 'just now, even now; just at hand, immediately', (b) of logical connection: 'now then', (c) in commands and appeals: 'at this instant'." In other words, Christ is saying to Pontius Pilate, "My kingdom is *currently* elsewhere." All interpretations of the Millennium agree that the current location of the kingdom of God and Christ is in heaven.
2. Using the verse from Luke to deny a literal Millennium shows a mistaken identification of the "Kingdom of God" and the Millennial kingdom of Christ. It is a confusion of the part for the whole. Certainly, the Kingdom of God includes the Millennial rule of Christ, but it also includes Christ's and the Holy Spirit's actions during the church age as well as the eternal reign of Christ in the new heavens and the new earth. That this is the case is clear from the verses following the quoted ones where Christ explains to his disciples what he just said to the Pharisees:

(Luke 17) {24} For just as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so will be the Son of Man in His day.

In other words, when Christ comes at the start of the Millennium, it will be very apparent, but for now, the Kingdom of God, already extant, is within those who follow Christ. This same confusion of the part for the whole applies to many other verses used by those who hold the Amillennial position.

3. The Amillennial interpretation selectively spiritualizes away Revelation. Why, for example, if what John says about a literal reign of Christ on earth is false, should we believe in, say, the last judgment? Or if the thousand years are metaphorical, why believe any of the numbers in Revelation? For there are many numbers used throughout Revelation and the book (and, indeed, all of scripture) makes considerable effort to show how they interrelate, indicating that they are meant to be taken literally. A good example is the length of the reign of the Antichrist. In various places the length of this is given as 1260 days, 42 months, and 3½

⁸⁷ John 18:36b..

years. If none of them is meant to be taken as a specific length of time, then why the efforts to equate them? And if they *are* meant to be taken literally, why them and not the thousand years from the same book by the same author?

The Amillennial position, like the similar Postmillennial position, seems to have no consistent way to determine which scriptures are to be taken literally and which metaphorically or symbolically. One of the Principles of Exegesis is that a scripture is to be taken literally unless it is clearly meant in some other sense. Thus, Christ is the Lamb of God but that doesn't mean he has fleece. Nothing in any of the scriptures concerning the rule of David's son gives any indication that anything other than a literal rule is meant. If, however, that rule is literal, then neither the Amillennial nor the Postmillennial interpretations can be supported.

4. The Amillennial position essentially spiritualizes away the prophecies concerning the Millennium and, generally, all prophecies concerning the last days. This reflects a tendency in the modern Church. It shows a lack of faith to spiritualize away unfulfilled prophecy while generally accepting the literal fulfillment of other prophecy. This spiritualization of all unfulfilled prophecy eliminates those surrounding Christ's return, his rule on the earth, and his judgment of the earth. As we have pointed out elsewhere, just because we stand at a particular point of time does not change how we should interpret prophecy. Though we certainly have more information on already-fulfilled prophecy compared to prophecy of events yet future, the principle of interpretation remains the same: prophecy concerning future events, when they are fulfilled, will be seen to have been fulfilled in a manner appropriate for both those who heard the original prophecy and those living at the time of fulfillment. Remember that Jesus says that all prophecy will be fulfilled.

The Postmillennial Position

Like the Amillennial position, the Postmillennial approach teaches that the thousand years of Revelation 20 are metaphorical, and that Christ will return to earth for the Last Judgment but not for a literal thousand-year reign. One major difference between the two is that the Postmillennial position teaches that mankind will gradually be perfected as the teachings of Christ spread. Both positions believe that all the prophecies concerning the return of Christ (including the destruction of the Antichrist) will be accomplished by Christ through his followers. The Postmillennial position was quite popular in the Nineteenth Century but its optimism of the perfectibility of mankind did not survive the slaughters and totalitarian ideologies of the Twentieth.

Among the verses used to support the postmillennial position are:

(John 12) {32} And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw everyone to Myself."

(Hebrews 10) {12} But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. {13} Since that time, He waits for His enemies to be made a footstool for His feet, {14} because by a single offering He has made perfect for all time those who are being sanctified. {15} The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First He says: {16} "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord. I will put My laws in their hearts and inscribe them on their minds." {17} Then He adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." {18} And where these have been forgiven, an offering for sin is no longer needed.

The Postmillennial position generally teaches that in Christ's redemptive work on the cross essentially all the requirements for the inauguration of his kingdom were put into place and that it was with the work of the church that it was to be realized. The scriptures supporting this position tend to be like the two examples here in that in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection the work of redemption was finished and the salvation of mankind inevitable.

Objections to the Postmillennial Position

Most of the objections to the Postmillennial position are similar to objections to the Amillennial position: it selectively takes scripture literally or metaphorically without a clear reason for choosing between the two. Where the Amillennial position tends to confuse the kingdom of God with the Millennium (as discussed above), the Postmillennial position confuses the once-forever work of salvation done by Christ on the cross with two things: first, with the spreading of that salvation to the world and second by assuming that therefore everything done by Christ has to do with that act of salvation. It will be agreed to by all orthodox Christians that Christ's sacrifice, if appropriated by men, is necessary and sufficient for their salvation, but to believe that that sacrifice subsumes the prophecies of Christ's rule on earth is to confuse the role of Christ in salvation with his role as David's son.

The Premillennial Position

Premillennialism (in the sense of a reign of David's son on earth over a physical kingdom) predates Christianity, tracing its roots to old testament prophets. As a

Christian position it owes its original prominence to Justin Martyr in the second century. From his day until the time of St. Augustine of Hippo (3rd - 4th century) it was the dominant position of the church. It regained popularity in the modern era starting with the dispensationalist writings of John Nelson Darby in the 19th century.

This position takes the scripture in Revelation 20 and the scriptures related to the reign of David's son literally. The premillennial position is also called "chiliasm" from the Greek word for 1000.⁸⁸

There will be after the rise and fall of the Antichrist a period of a thousand years when Christ (along with his followers) will reign on earth. This period will be for the Jews a fulfillment of the prophecies concerning David's son and for Christians a fulfillment of prophecies of Christ's return and their rule with him on earth. Following the Millennium, the earth and heavens will end and there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and the kingdom of God will be with men forever.

Objections to the Premillennial Position

Those who disagree with the premillennial position either take a general "metaphorical" view of prophecy (in which case they rarely cite scripture that contradicts the literalness of Revelation 20) or they support one of the other two main positions discussed above (in which case they cite the scripture discussed under those two positions). The authors do not know of any scriptures that state or imply that the events of the Millennium are metaphorical.

Minority Views of the Millennium

These are many and varied, including those who hold that not only the Millennium, but the Second Coming took place in or around 70 AD. Such positions are generally held by those who believe all prophecy, including prophecies of the last days, were short-term and all/or nearly all were fulfilled by the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Those wishing to explore these positions (which the authors believe arise from erroneous interpretations of scripture) are encouraged to read the writings of those who support them.

The Layout of the Millennium

⁸⁸ In the Appendix, when discussing the Beast kingdoms throughout history, we speak of the second-to-last kingdom, the one that will come "for a short while." There we said it was likely, but not certain, that Hitler's Reich was this short-lived Beast kingdom. Supporting this was Hitler's intentional millenarian reference to the Third Reich as "the Thousand Year Reich".

The authors believe that the prophecy of a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth is, like the rest of Revelation and, indeed, the rest of prophecy, meant to be taken literally. This section will place the Millennium in the context of the other important events of the last days.

The Millennium takes place following the end of Daniel's Seventieth Week and before the last judgment and the arrival of the new heavens and the new earth. It is, as mentioned above, the fulfillment of the prophecies of the reign of David's descendent and the Messiah on the earth and of the simultaneous reign of the saints. Although the direct prophecy of the Millennium is relatively short, scripture discusses several events that take place in and around that period. In this section we will outline those events.

From the end of the Seventieth week to the start of the Millennium. The reign of the Antichrist lasts three and a half years from his profaning the temple until his downfall during the wrath of God. This period of his rule is the second half of Daniel's Seventieth week. In chapter 12, Daniel gives two additional periods of time that, given the context, are related to the 1,260-day reign of the Antichrist and to the period immediately afterwards. An angel tells Daniel:

(Daniel 12) {11} From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. {12} Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

Since we know that the abomination that causes desolation is the unveiling of the Antichrist and the start of his reign, the first of these periods (the 1,290 days) must start at the same time (and with the same event) as the 1,260-day reign of the Antichrist. What the additional 30 days are and what happens during them is not stated in the passage in Daniel. It is possible that this is the period of the seven plagues in chapters 15 and 16 of Revelation. Since with the plagues God had begun his retribution against the Beast, it makes sense to not count that period as part of his reign. On the other hand, the plagues do not fit into the promises of Christ's rule on earth either, so it makes logical sense (though without direct scriptural support) to assign those 30 days to the seven last plagues. The period of the plagues is short ("If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened").⁸⁹

What are the additional 45 days to bring us to the total of 1,335 days mentioned by the angel? It is, of course, impossible to say with certainty, but one possible solution is that that is the period required to organize the armies of the Beast in the attempt to retake

⁸⁹ Matthew 24:22.

Jerusalem. That attempt fails with the return of Christ, the Rapture of the church, and the start of his millennial rule.

At the conclusion, therefore, of the 1,335 days (and the return of Christ), the Millennium begins.

Satan is bound for a thousand years. An angel who has the key to the Abyss seizes Satan at the start of the Millennium and binds him in the Abyss for a thousand years. This angel is Abaddon (he is named in Revelation 9:11). Satan there joins the demons that had possessed the Gadarene swine.⁹⁰ The Abyss is the origin of the “Beast from the Sea”, the Antichrist,⁹¹ and the locusts that plague those who do not have the seal of God.⁹²

Satan is bound there for the thousand years of the Millennium but will be released one last time at the end (see below).

The first resurrection and the reign of the saints. Immediately after seeing the binding of Satan, those who had been martyred for Christ are resurrected and placed upon thrones to co-rule with Christ.

(Revelation 20) {4} I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. {5} (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. {6} Blessed and holy are those who share 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.

Who are these that are resurrected? They clearly include those who did not take the mark of the beast or worship him and were martyred by him. At first look, it would appear that this scripture says that *only* these end-times martyrs that are meant, since the next verse says that the rest of the dead do not come to life until the end of the Millennium. But a careful reading (supported by other scripture) expands the class of people participating in the first resurrection. Verse 4 can be translated to read, “And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. And I also saw those who had not worshipped the

⁹⁰ Luke 8:31.

⁹¹ Revelation 11:7 and 13:1.

⁹² Revelation 9:1-11.

beast or its image and had not received its mark.” This reading would imply that it is Christian martyrs of all ages that are resurrected at this time.

Supporting this (and possibly expanding the set of people meant here) is what Paul says in 1 Cor 6:2: “Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world?”. From the context he is not just referring to martyrs. If Christians are to judge the world, when would it be other than at the time of the Millennium?

Further supporting the idea that those participating in the first resurrection are the blessed dead of all ages is 1 Peter 2:9a: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood”. This fits exactly with Revelation 20:6.

Probably the best interpretation of these passages is that John sees three intersecting groups of people. Together they are those who died in Christ (and, presumably, also including those who were transformed at the Rapture). The three groups are those on the thrones, the martyrs of all ages, and those martyred by the Beast.

Objections to this inclusion of all those who have died in Christ as ruling in the Millennium comes from the next section of this chapter where the dead are judged. This would imply that the people seen here are rewarded with their thrones before being judged. That objection would, however, seem to apply to anyone participating in the first resurrection. A careful reading of Revelation 20: 12-15, though, shows that there are two sets of books at the last judgment: the books of people’s acts and the book of life. Those who reign with Christ will still have their acts judged, but their position in the book of life is already secure.

Seven months of burying the dead from the battle at Jerusalem and an undisclosed period of finding and burying the remaining bones. Ezekiel, in chapter 39, discusses events relevant to this period. It speaks of a final battle and its aftermath. It, like so many end-times prophecies in the old Testament, is a mix of prophecies from different times. Despite the use of Gog in this passage (Gog also appears in Revelation after the Millennium), most of chapter 39 refers to events just before and during the beginning of the Millennium. The reason we know this is that the events take place on earth in the land of Israel and not in the new heavens or new earth. Another support of this interpretation comes from Ezekiel:

(Ezekiel 39) {17} Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: ‘Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood. {18} You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls--all of them fattened animals from Bashan. {19} At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are glutted and drink blood till you are

drunk. {20} At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every kind,' declares the Sovereign LORD.

This parallels Revelation:

(Revelation 19) {17} 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, {18} so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small”.

One of the principles of exegesis we presented is that if two scriptures appear to apply to the same event, they should be so applied unless there is a clear reason not to.

Because of the slaughter at the battle of Jerusalem, there will be corpses throughout the land that must be cleaned up. Ezekiel tells us that for seven months the Israelis will be burying the bodies of the slain and then for an unspecified period, cleaning up the bones (probably from the feasting birds discussed above scattering pieces of the dead:

(Ezekiel 39) {11} On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog. {12} For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. {13} All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD. {14} Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land and, in addition to them, others will bury those that remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search. ^{15} As they go through the land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog.

For seven months the bodies will be buried. Then, when most are cleared up and those who weren't found or were scattered have rotted, the bones will be sought and collected and buried with the others.

Notice that the burial place will be in the “valley of those who travel east toward the Sea”. The Sea is not the Mediterranean (that being west of Israel), but rather the Sea of Galilee. This indicates that the burial place will be in the north of Israel which is where the gathering prior to the last battle at Har Megiddo (Armageddon) will take place.

Seven years of destroying the weapons from the battle. According to Isaiah:

(Isaiah 39) {9} Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up--the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. {10} They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD.

For a period of seven years after the battle at Jerusalem⁹³ the Israelis will destroy the weapons from the battle. The question arises of how literal we should take the burning of the weapons for fuel. That is both difficult to do with tanks and troop carriers and, in the modern world, unnecessary. It should be remembered, however, that this is after a period of three and a half years of depredation by the Antichrist so it is unlikely Israel, though ultimately successful in its defense (because of the return of their Messiah), will be running a fully modern economy at that point. This seems particularly true since those who would not take the mark of the beast would not have been participating in much beyond a barter economy during the reign of the Beast. Whether by fire or not, the main point is that the weapons of war will be destroyed.

Events at the end of the Millennium: the release of Satan, the revolt of Gog and Magog, the second resurrection, the destruction of death and Hades, and the new heavens and the new earth. After the cleanup from the battle and its aftermath, Israel (and, indeed, the entire earth) will live in peace under the rule of Christ and his saints. Satan is bound and though there will doubtless still be sin, it will not get out of hand. At the end of the thousand years, however, Satan will be released and will manage to organize forces to, once again, attack Israel. This occurs, according to Revelation, immediately after the close of the Millennium. Their attack doesn't get very far:

(Revelation 20) {7} When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison {8} and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. {9} They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them. {10} And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The exact meaning of Gog and Magog is uncertain. In Genesis 10:2 Magog is listed as a son of Japheth, the son of Noah:

⁹³ It should be remembered that, as discussed in the commentary section, the "battle" for Jerusalem never really gets started. The Antichrist gathers his armies in the north of Israel, but before he can make much progress against the city itself, Christ returns.

The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshek and Tiras.

Tubal, Meshek, Gog and Magog appear together in Ezekiel:

(Ezekiel 38) {1} The word of the LORD came to me: {2} "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him {3} and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal...'"

This seems to mean that Gog is a person from the land of Magog, while Genesis indicates that Magog is itself the name of a person. One possible way to clarify all this is to assume that the Magog of Genesis 10 is the progenitor of the people of a region and thereafter that region is called the land of Magog. That would not be inconsistent with the text in Revelation.

One other thing should be stated about the text in Ezekiel 38. The word "chief", as in "chief prince of Meshech", is sometimes taken as a name, Rosh, rendering the text "Prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal." This continues into Ezekiel 39:

(Ezekiel 39) {1} Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.'

Whether or not these people and regions are also involved in the armies of the Antichrist, they are the Satan-inspired (and unsuccessful) aggressors at the end of the Millennium. This demonstrates that though Christ is physically present on earth and active in its affairs, the consequences of the Fall are still apparent: people still sin and are still capable of rebellion against God.

The remaining post-Millennium events will be discussed in the main text of the commentary on Revelation 20.

Who is alive during the Millennium? The population of the world will be quite mixed during the Millennium. First will be the resurrected blessed dead of all ages who will be in their resurrected bodies. Second will be the transformed believers who were still alive at Christ's return. They will be in their resurrected bodies as well.

Third will be Jews who, now having recognized their Messiah, will live in his kingdom in their actual flesh. This presumably is only the Jews who had not taken the mark. Fourth will be others who survived the rule of the Antichrist and did not take the mark of the Beast but who were not followers of Christ or converts to him at his return. That there are such people is made clear where Revelation makes careful distinction between those who have the seal of God and those who have not taken the mark of the Beast.

Though those who joined the armies of the Beast will be killed by Christ when he returns, the citizens of the countries that supported the Beast will not be. Zechariah tells:

(Zechariah 14) {16} 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.

It seems likely that those who took the mark will be thrown alive into the lake of fire along with the Antichrist and the False Prophet when Christ returns, though scripture only says that they are subject to God's wrath. It is also possible that they will be counted as among the armies of the Beast and hence killed at Christ's return, to be resurrected at the Last Judgment.

Appendix 6: The Rapture

Not long before his crucifixion, Christ promised his followers that he was going away to prepare a place for them, that he would return for them, and that thereafter they would never be separated from him. Christ's physical return to earth is believed in by the vast majority of Christians, but nearly every event connected with it is the subject of dispute. Of particular dispute is the timing of the Rapture, the removal of Christians from the earth and the associated resurrection of the dead in Christ of all ages.

The timing of the Rapture is perhaps the single subject in eschatology which is debated with the most rancor. The argument, particularly lately, has degenerated into personalities, with proponents of various schools often using *ad hominem* attacks instead of scripture to make their points. Evangelical Christians who would not think of questioning each other's intellectual honesty or literal interpretation of scripture over, say, predestination or the necessity of baptism, will lose all civility when debating Christ's return. Some of the most vicious personal attacks have come from experienced ministers and educators who should know better. Although the authors feel quite strongly about the positions we take, we will endeavor to back them up with scripture and leave personalities out of it. We ask that those who disagree with us, and with other honest, Bible-believing Christians, do the same.

The debate is not over whether Christ will come back. While there are honest Christians who do not believe in Christ's return to earth, the great majority of evangelicals and literalists of all persuasions affirm that Christ will return to earth to gather his people to be with him forever. It is the great hope of the Church.⁹⁴

Unfortunately, we lose sight of the Great Hope when we start debating the timing of that return and the events surrounding it. The problem is not that Christians believe the Bible to be unclear on the subject. Rather, each group believes the Bible is perfectly clear, supports their position, and that therefore those who support another view must not take the Bible seriously. From this comes the rancor. Christians must understand that while the issue is important, our salvation does not depend on properly understanding the timing of the Rapture. Not one soul will be saved or lost because of that person's beliefs concerning the details of Christ's return.

Nearly everyone⁹⁵ who holds to a literal interpretation of scripture believes the Rapture will take place in connection with Christ's return in glory at the end of the age. It may take place seven years previously, three and a half years previously, shortly before, or as an immediate part of that return, but it will take place near or at the time of the end of

⁹⁴ Titus 2:13.

⁹⁵ There are a few well known authors, who believe the Rapture will take place significantly before the beginning of Daniel's Seventieth Week.

this age. If it takes place at or before the beginning of the Seventieth Week, the vast majority of Christians will escape the terrible events of that period.⁹⁶ The later it takes place after the beginning, the more Christians will suffer and die as a result of the depredations of the Antichrist and False Prophet.

Those who believe the Rapture will take place before or at the beginning of the Seventieth Week believe that other positions deprive Christians of hope that Christ could return at any time and removes a goad toward right living that such imminency provides. On the other hand, those who believe Christ will remove his Church during the persecutions of the Antichrist or after they are completed believe that those who hold to an early Rapture offer a false hope and, if their position became the majority view, it would deprive the last generation of Christians of the chance to prepare for living through a time of unprecedented persecution. Without that preparation, souls might be lost not because they held an incorrect doctrinal position, but because holding that position leaves them unprepared to face the martyrdom of themselves or their families.

In discussing this subject, as in all the subjects covered in this book, we take the position that what a scripture says comes first and any theory of its meaning or relationship to other scriptures must follow from that. If one comes to scripture with a pre-formed theory on the Rapture, or the relationship of the Church and Israel, or any other subject, it will be possible to pick and choose verses that seem to support your theory. Such a person will get out of the Bible what he put into it and will end up no closer to the truth than when he started. When approaching a subject with which one is unfamiliar, it is better to put aside ideas picked up from popular works or the general culture and look at what the Bible says for itself. **We say again: scripture comes first, and only later any theories on its meaning.** We hope that, as we proceed, it will be clear why the authors hold their beliefs and from what scriptural base they have acquired them.

Events Surrounding the Return of Christ

There are a number of events surrounding the time of Christ's return. Among them are the following.

1. The Rapture of the Saints.⁹⁷ At the Rapture, living Christians will receive their resurrection bodies and the blessed dead will rise⁹⁸. The word "rapture" does not appear in scripture as a description of the removal of the saints from the earth. The word derives from 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where "caught up" is "rapiemur" in Latin, from "rapio" meaning "to seize". The English word "rapture" derives from the same Latin

⁹⁶ Excepting, of course, those who *become* Christians during this period.

⁹⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

⁹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:51ff.

root. Some Christians dispute the existence of this event, but the vast majority of Bible literalists accept its reality. The primary dispute about it is its timing.

2. Christ's return in glory.⁹⁹ This is nearly universally believed in by those who accept a literal Millennial reign by Christ on earth as being the prelude to that reign. Even most amillennialists and postmillennialists accept Christ's return in glory.

3. The Great White Throne Judgment.¹⁰⁰ This is otherwise known as the Last Judgment. That it will take place is not in much dispute. There is, however, heated argument concerning who the judge is (Christ or the Father), whether this is the same as the Sheep and the Goats Judgment, and whether it takes place before or after the Millennium.

4. The Sheep and the Goats Judgment.¹⁰¹ This is the same as the Last Judgment.

5. The Great Tribulation. A period of intense persecution directed against Christians and Jews which will precede Christ's return. This period is sometimes referred to as the "Great Tribulation", following Christ's usage in Matthew 24.¹⁰² Some believe this period is coterminous with Daniel's Seventieth Week, while other believe it is only a portion of that period.

The Timing of the Rapture

The great majority of bible literalists subscribe to one of four positions on the timing of the Rapture. In temporal order, these views are commonly called the Pretribulation, Midtribulation, Prewrath, and Posttribulation views. Before proceeding, we should clear up a problem in terminology that these names hinge on. It is common, though incorrect, to equate the "Great Tribulation"¹⁰³ which Christ discusses in the Olivet Discourse¹⁰⁴ with the entire seven year period of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Scripture does not support this equation. Christ, in describing the events of the end of the age places the period of unprecedented tribulation after the revealing of the Antichrist.¹⁰⁵ Daniel himself places that revealing at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week. So, though the entire period from the beginning of the Seventieth Week until the return of Christ will doubtless be a period of tribulation for Christians on the earth, calling that entire period the "Great Tribulation" is unsupported in scripture. Nevertheless, in the interest of using common terminology (and avoiding unnecessary pedantry) we will follow common usage in this discussion of the names of the four views.

⁹⁹ Matthew 24:30.

¹⁰⁰ Revelation 20:11.

¹⁰¹ Matthew 25:31ff.

¹⁰² Matthew 24:21.

¹⁰³ The NIV translates the Greek word "thlipsis" as distress, while the King James translates it tribulation.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 24:21.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 24:15.

Following common usage, therefore, the first two views will be called the Pretribulation and Midtribulation views, with the understanding that they place the Rapture, respectively, at or before the start of Daniel's Seventieth Week and at its midpoint.

The third position is called "Prewrath" by its (relatively small number of) adherents, though this brings up another imprecision in terminology. Proponents of all but the fourth (Posttribulation) viewpoints would say that they believe the Rapture takes place before the period of the wrath of God. Each viewpoint, however, defines that period differently, with it largely encompassing the period from the Rapture to the return of Christ for those who do not believe the two events are simultaneous. In this book, we define the period in the Last Days that is the Wrath of God as taking place subsequent to (and as a result of) the depredations of the Antichrist and as part of Christ's reconquest of the earth.

In what follows, it should be kept in mind that there are variations within each position and that the summary which follows makes no attempt to cover all such. The intent rather has been to summarize the doctrines usually associated with each position. Finally, it should be mentioned in passing that in addition to the four views discussed here, there are various minority opinions, including those which hold the Rapture is only for some of the Christians alive at the time and those which maintain there are several partial Raptures. These views, having neither many adherents nor clear support in scripture, will be ignored.

In each section below, we will summarize the position and offer some arguments in support of and opposition to the view. We will then go through the important scriptures relating to the Rapture and the Second Coming. Through them, we will present our own views and contrast them with the Pretribulation view. We choose to contrast with that position for two main reasons. First, through books such as Hal Lindsay's "Late Great Planet Earth", it is the view most familiar to the general public. Second, for various reasons discussed below, there are significant similarities between the Midtribulation and Pretribulation views on the one hand, and the Prewrath and Posttribulation positions on the other. Most of the scriptures cited and arguments given apply equally well to both members of either pair.

The Pretribulation or Pre-Seventieth Week Rapture Position

This view considers the entire Seventieth Week to be the wrath of God, although a wrath that increases in intensity as the period proceeds. The Rapture is secret, in that there are no signs to watch for preceding it, and hence Christ's command to watch is limited to a general observation of the signs of the times. The Rapture, though secret before it takes place, is certainly not secret afterwards. Because it takes place before the events surrounding the rise of the Antichrist, the disappearance of all Christians would

in itself cause world-wide disruption and chaos and might actually lead to the rise of the world government of the Antichrist. The primary view of this position is that the Rapture marks the beginning of the Seventieth Week and may be simultaneous with the Antichrist signing some sort of agreement with Israel, the event Daniel says begins the Seventieth Week.¹⁰⁶

Because the Rapture is at or near the beginning of the Seventieth Week, and Christ's return is at or near its end, the two events are separated in this view (as they are in all views except the Posttribulation position). Because there are no clear scriptures which establish two parts¹⁰⁷ to Christ's return separated by seven years,¹⁰⁸ those who hold this position tend to argue its truth from the following three concepts.

The Church and Israel are separate

One form or another of Dispensationalism (the belief that at different times in Man's history God has dealt with him in different ways) is held by most evangelical or fundamentalist Christians, and indeed by most Christians of whatever stripe. The exact relationship between Israel and the Church is a difficult question, the subject of many books in its own right. Pretribulationists generally insist that Israel and the Church are completely separate, meaning that the prophecies and promises given in the Old Testament for Israel now apply to the Church, the new people of God.

From their near-total separation of Israel and the Church grows the concept that, since the Church was not in existence during the first sixty-nine of Daniel's seventy weeks, it will not exist (on the earth) during the last week either. The Church must therefore have been removed from the earth prior to the start of the Seventieth Week. They cite as support the absence of "ekklyasia", meaning "assembly" but commonly translated "church", between Revelation 3:22 and Revelation 22:16. The word "church" does not appear, they say, because the Church is absent from the earth. This is a very shaky argument, primarily because John never uses "ekklyasia" to mean "the Church" as a whole, but only to refer to specific local assemblies, and because if the absence of the word means the Church is not on earth, it should also mean it isn't in heaven either, since about half of Revelation takes place in heaven.

In some variants of the Pretribulation school, dispensationalism is carried so far as to deny that the saints martyred during the persecutions of the Antichrist are part of the

¹⁰⁶ Daniel 9:27.

¹⁰⁷ One at a pre-Tribulation Rapture and one at the Second Coming.

¹⁰⁸ Or, for that matter, *any* length of time. There are a number of scriptures which are used in support of this view, but none of them unqualifiedly state that the Rapture and the Second Coming are two different events. If such scriptures existed, the entire debate on the timing of the Rapture would be moot.

Church or should be called “Christians” at all.¹⁰⁹ This view maintains they are yet another dispensation, despite having the same set of beliefs, the same revealed scripture, and the same Lord as believers of the current age.

We know there will be believers in Christ on earth during the Great Tribulation because Christ tells us so.¹¹⁰ They will be Christians (when Christ speaks of the Great Tribulation to his disciples, he refers to the believers of those days as “you”) and not some sort of separate dispensation. Christians and Jews are a separate dispensation because they have different levels of revealed truth (e.g. the Old Testament vs both Testaments). The believers of the Last Days, in contrast, do not have any more or less revealed truth than present-day Christians. Their salvation comes from faith in Christ, just as ours does. They are Christians and they will go through the horrors of the Great Tribulation or be martyred during it.

The concept of a third dispensation of believers in the Last Days seems to have been invented by those who support the Pretribulation perspective to get around the many verses that clearly show that Christians are present during the persecutions of the Antichrist. This is yet another way where belief in a Posttribulation Rapture is justified: it does not require creating a “third dispensation” out of whole cloth, unsupported by scripture. Christians will be on the earth in the Last Days for the same reason they are on the earth now – they are men and women brought by the Holy Spirit into fellowship with Christ and his Church. They, like believers of all ages, will be at risk of persecution and martyrdom, though their risk will be the greatest of any age.

Imminence

The second argument offered in favor of the Pretribulation position is the doctrine of imminence. This is the teaching that Christ can come back at any moment. This derives from such scriptures as “No man knows the day or the hour”, “thief in the night”, “at such an hour as you do not expect it, the Son of Man comes”, as well as various commands of Christ to “Watch”. According to the Pretribulation view, Christ’s return will occur suddenly, without any associated preceding signs (other than general signs of the approaching end of the age such as increase in immorality and apostasy).¹¹¹

Not Appointed unto Wrath

The third argument, shared with the Midtribulation and Prewrath views, is that the Church must be removed from the earth before the Wrath of God, since Christians are

¹⁰⁹ See the “Left Behind” series by Jenkins and Lahaye.

¹¹⁰ Matthew 24:9 and following.

¹¹¹ Matthew 24:10-14.

promised exemption from wrath.¹¹² They maintain that the “wrath” Christians are promised exemption from is not (or not only) God’s eternal wrath (i.e. damnation), but his judgment on a sinful earth. They also maintain that being protected through such a period is not the same thing as not being appointed to it.

Some who hold the Pretribulation position argue this all means that the Holy Spirit, indwelling the Church, must be removed from the earth before the Antichrist is revealed. If the Holy Spirit is gone and if the Holy Spirit exists on the earth only through the Church, then the Church must be removed first.

The Midtribulation or Mid-Week Position

In this relatively uncommon view, the Church is removed from the earth at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week. In general, this resembles the Pretribulation view, in that according to both views, things on the earth do not reach their worst until after the Church is removed, but it differs from it in not holding the Rapture to be imminent. This view also shares much in common with the Prewrath view, believing that the Church must be removed before the Wrath of God. Those who hold to a Midtribulation view believe that there is first a period of time which is Satan’s wrath (following his coming down to earth) and afterwards a period of time which is God’s wrath. According to Midtribulationists, the dividing point is the middle of the Seventieth week.

Supporting this assertion, it is maintained that although Daniel mentions one entire period of seven years, he splits it into two equal parts. Revelation, on the other hand, knows nothing of a period of seven years, although it mentions periods of three and one half years several times.¹¹³

The Midtribulation view is related to the Pretribulation in that the second half of the Seventieth Week will be, by all estimates, substantially worse than the first half primarily because it will be dominated by the trumpet and plague judgments of God’s wrath.

On the other hand, the Midtribulation view may be taken as pre-wrath in that it holds that the second half of the seventieth week is the period of the wrath of God. To some extent, the Midtribulation view, like the Pretribulation view, equates the “Tribulation Period” with the “Wrath of God”, though they assign different lengths to the period.

¹¹² 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

¹¹³ We discuss the many three and a half year periods in Revelation in the main text. We believe that all of them refer to the same period of time, the second half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. The Pretribulation view, on the other hand, generally teaches that some of the periods refer to the first half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week and some to the second half.

Prewrath

Although both the Pretribulation and Midtribulation positions hold that the Church is removed just prior to the commencement of the Wrath of God, the position which designates itself as Prewrath means something different by that wrath. Although the “wrath of God” is used for different things throughout the Bible, including God’s anger at Pharaoh and the eternal wrath he directs at the lost, the time period on earth designated “the Wrath of God” is quite precise. Revelation limits it to the period covered by the Seventh Seal,¹¹⁴ which includes the seven trumpet and the seven plague judgments. The Prewrath position believes that the Rapture will not take place until after the persecutions by the Antichrist during which millions of Christians will be martyred. This period is seen as the wrath of man or of Satan, rather than the wrath of God. It, like the Posttribulation view, does not have to explain where all the martyred come from (had all living Christians previously been removed at the Rapture).

Since most who hold to the Prewrath position believe the trumpet judgments are limited to the latter part of the second half of the Seventieth Week and that the plague or bowl judgments are shorter still in duration, there is not a great deal of separation in time between the commencement of God’s wrath upon the earth and Christ’s return.

Those who hold the Prewrath position use the scriptures that stipulate we are not appointed unto wrath to mean that the Rapture will remove the Church prior to the commencement of the Trumpet and Plague judgments. Supporting this is the only undisputed appearance of souls in heaven in Revelation, at the fifth seal.¹¹⁵ Since these are souls, and souls and bodies are clearly distinguished in Revelation,¹¹⁶ they have not yet received their glorified bodies, and therefore the Rapture has not yet taken place. Since the wrath is announced in the very next seal,¹¹⁷ and since Christians are exempt from God’s wrath, the Prewrath position sees the Rapture taking place at about the sixth seal.

PostWrath or Posttribulation Position

The authors of this book believe that scripture teaches that the Rapture and the Second Coming are part of the same event, and that that event takes place in concert with the

¹¹⁴ It is announced in the sixth seal as “is come”, but does not begin until the seventh seal. “is come” is in the ingressive aorist tense meaning something like “in the process of coming”.

¹¹⁵ Revelation 6:9.

¹¹⁶ Revelation 18:3. See also Revelation 20:4 where souls are seen which come to life, which appears to mean they receive their glorified bodies.

¹¹⁷ Revelation 7:16-17.

Battle of Armageddon, after the end of the Seventieth Week, at the conclusion of the Wrath of God. We prefer to call this approach the Postwrath position, although common usage calls it Posttribulation. We believe the entire Seventieth Week will be a time of testing or trial for all the earth and also that the period of the Wrath of God will be very difficult for Christians even though it is not aimed at them. Nonetheless, it is probably better to confine the term "Great Tribulation" to the persecutions of the Antichrist and to distinguish it from the "Wrath of God" which follows it and is retribution for it. There is quite likely a substantial overlap in the two periods, but the point of the name "Postwrath" is to establish that this position believes it is at the end of the entire period when Christ returns, not just when the Antichrist ceases his main persecutions because he loses control of his empire during the Wrath.

Difficulties with the Pretribulation Position

In this section we will concentrate on discussing the difficulties with the Pretribulation viewpoint of the Last Days. Both authors originally subscribed to that position, but subsequent study has convinced them that scripture does not support a Pretribulation Rapture and, indeed, that it strongly supports the Rapture taking place at the Second Coming, the coming of Christ in glory at the end of the Age. The discussions of this section mirror the reasons that convinced the authors that the Rapture takes place as part of Christ's return.

It is true, as Daniel makes clear, that the Seventieth Week is primarily centered on the Jewish people. It extends from the signing of an apparently favorable agreement or treaty through their betrayal and oppression, up to the appearing of their Messiah and their acceptance of him. Despite this, we know from Revelation (see the commentary portion of this book) that there will be Christians on the earth throughout this period and hundreds of millions of them will be martyred.

The Presence of the Church on Earth and the Removal of the Holy Spirit

The Pretribulation viewpoint argues that the Rapture must take place before any of the events of the Last Days, primarily because of what Paul says in 2 Thessalonians:

(2 Thessalonians 2) {7} For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. {8} 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.

These verses contain several obscure or unclear elements that make it unsuitable as the sole source of a doctrine. The meaning of some elements of the verses can, however, be

determined with certainty. “The lawless one” is the Antichrist, since he is the one that will be overthrown at Christ’s return. Less clear is what the “secret power of lawlessness” means, though since the Antichrist is the lawless one and since he is Satan’s puppet, it is very likely that the “secret power of lawlessness” refers to the not-always-obvious workings of Satan.

There are two parts of the verses, however, that are not clear and whose meaning scholars disagree on. The first is “the one who now holds” back the power of lawlessness. In Revelation 12:7-9 Michael the archangel leads the forces of God against Satan. Given that he is fighting Satan’s forces in heaven, it makes sense he may be doing the same thing on earth and be the one “holding back” the power of lawlessness. Michael, therefore, until the final expulsion of Satan and his angels from heaven is fighting a two-front war against him.

Equally possible is that the one doing the restraining is the Holy Spirit. He clearly is, after the Resurrection, God’s primary method of working on the earth, both as far as indwelling Christians and acting in the world. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the one doing the restraining is the Holy Spirit and that he will be removed from that restraining in the Last Days, after which the Antichrist will be revealed.

The restraining one cannot be the Church (though the Holy Spirit certainly works in and through the Church as well as in other ways). It is not clear how (other than as an agent of the Holy Spirit) the Church could restrain the appearance of the Antichrist. As an agent of the Holy Spirit the Church no doubt does help constrain lawlessness, but then the restrainer isn’t the Church but the Holy Spirit acting (at least in part) through it. An additional consideration, perhaps, is that the Church is never otherwise called “he” as the restrainer is here. Far more often the Church is seen as female.¹¹⁸

The authors believe that both St. Michael and the Holy Spirit are possible restrainers with perhaps a slight preference for St. Michael, given our knowledge of him as a warrior who confronts Satan and his minions (such as the Prince of Persia in Daniel 10) and his importance in fighting Satan in the Last Days just prior to the arrival of the Antichrist¹¹⁹.

What is it that this individual is holding back? Verse 7 makes it clear that it is not the Antichrist himself but the “secret power of lawlessness”, that is, the working of Satan. The restraint is critically important (not until evil is fully grown and the birth pains of Matthew 24 are complete will the Antichrist come), but it is not completely effective either. Verse 7 makes it clear that evil is already working, it just has not reached full flower.

The next question is what does it mean that the restrainer is “taken out of the way”? The most logical conclusion is that he is told to stop restraining the full power of lawlessness, stops, and the Antichrist is revealed. Perhaps the most important thing to

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Revelation 19:7.

¹¹⁹ Revelation 12:7-10.

understand here is what the verse does *not* say: the restrainer is not taken out of the earth. He is just stopped from restraining.

Having presented what we believe can be determined about these verses, we will now look at how they relate to the Rapture. First, and most obviously, they relate because the Rapture, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:3, cannot take place until the “man of sin” is revealed. Thus, the Rapture can at the earliest take place with the removal of the restraint mentioned in verse 7 and the (possibly immediate) revelation of the Antichrist (verse 8). Christ himself¹²⁰ makes it clear that the revelation of the Antichrist is the earliest sure sign of the Last Days and, therefore, must precede the Rapture (which, after all, would be a spectacular sign) or take place at the same time as it.

As far as positions on the timing of the Rapture are concerned, these verses are most important to the Pretribulation viewpoint. That viewpoint makes the following argument: the earliest sign of the End Times that we can be sure of is the revealing of the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness. The man of lawlessness cannot be revealed until after the Holy Spirit is removed, and that since the Holy Spirit indwells believers,¹²¹ the removal of the Holy Spirit implies the removal of the Church. Since the revealing of the Antichrist is the earliest sign of the end and since it therefore must take place after the Rapture, there are no signs of the approaching Rapture and therefore it can take place at any moment.

The Pretribulation position therefore requires two things be true. First, the removal of the Church (i.e. the Rapture) causes (or allows) the appearance of the Antichrist and second that the Rapture is not a clear sign of the Last Days (since the first such sign is the revealing of the Antichrist). It logically follows, therefore, that one of two things is true. Either the removal of the Church and the revelation of the Antichrist are simultaneous (and therefore together a single sign) or the Rapture is not a part of the Last Days.

If the first of these is true, the Pretribulation viewpoint cannot stand because, as we have seen elsewhere, the revealing of the Antichrist is at the mid-point of the Seventieth Week. While this timing may support a Mid-Tribulation position, it certainly cannot support a Pretribulation one. Therefore, the Pretribulation position is constrained to the second possibility: The Rapture occurs some indefinite time prior to the start of the Last Days. In particular, placing it at the start of Daniel’s Seventieth Week is impossible since it would then be a clear sign that the Last Days are upon us, something Christ makes clear is not the case. In any event, there is no support elsewhere in scripture for the Rapture (and the resurrection of the blessed dead and the last trumpet¹²²) being separate from the Last Days.

¹²⁰ Matthew 24:15. Compare with Daniel 9:27.

¹²¹ e.g 1 Corinthians 3:16.

¹²² 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

Even if the timing issue is ignored, there are other serious problems with the Pretribulation position as it relates to these verses. First, 2 Thessalonians 2:7 doesn't say that the Holy Spirit is removed from the earth. It does not mention the Holy Spirit directly at all and does not speak of anything or anyone being removed from the earth. It merely says that he who restrains the appearing of the Antichrist is taken out of the way. Even if the Holy Spirit is doing the restraining, there is no indication here that he does so through the actions or presence of the Church. There certainly is no requirement that the Holy Spirit work only through the Church to restrain the power of lawlessness. He is, after all, God and both exists and acts independently of the Church.

A further objection to the "removal" of the Holy Spirit are the hundreds of millions of believers who will martyred by the Antichrist. Either they are members of the Church and not yet removed from the earth by the Rapture, or they are post-Rapture converts to Christ. One or other (or both) must be true, otherwise the "Innumerable Multitude" would not be around to be martyred. But it takes the action of the Holy Spirit to convert someone to Christ.¹²³ If the Seventieth Week saints are saved (as Revelation¹²⁴ makes clear), then they are saved by the Holy Spirit. If they are saved by the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit is active on the earth during the Seventieth Week and is therefore not removed from the earth but merely prevented from restraining the power of lawlessness.

The following sections discuss some of the consequences of the Pretribulation position and show how they are contradicted by history, by scripture, or by both.

Imminence

Imminence is the doctrine that the return of Christ can take place at any time. If we follow the logic of that doctrine, there cannot be any prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled but that must be prior to that return. Furthermore, there could never have been such unfulfilled prophecies from the time Christ first spoke of his return. According to the Pretribulation position, the Rapture is the first event of the period leading up to the Second Coming and it will take place "in the twinkling of an eye"¹²⁵ with no clear preceding signs, though there may be general ones such as the growth in apostasy. The thief in the night scriptures, which we discuss in their own Appendix, are taken as support for the unannounced coming of Christ, though (as we see there) these

¹²³ Ephesians 1:13, Titus 3:5. We probably also see the Holy Spirit at work sealing the 144000 in Revelation 7:3-8. Those who hold to the Pretribulation position and believe the Holy Spirit is removed from the earth need to explain how people are converted to Christ during the Seventieth Week if the Holy Spirit isn't working on earth.

¹²⁴ Revelation 7:9-17.

¹²⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:52.

scriptures mean we should be watching for the signs *lest* we be surprised. They do not mean we *will be* surprised.

It should be stated that it is possible to hold a Pretribulation Rapture viewpoint and not subscribe to the doctrine of Imminence. Imminence implies a Pretribulation viewpoint, but a Pretribulation viewpoint does not require the doctrine of Imminence. The fulfillment of intervening prophecies therefore does not preclude a Pretribulation Rapture. The reason we treat the doctrine of Imminence in such detail is that modern followers of the Pretribulation viewpoint stress Imminence very strongly. They stress Imminence precisely *because* were it true, a Pretribulation Rapture viewpoint would be a consequence. Several (erroneous) things follow from this supposition. First, since there clearly are prophecies concerning the events of the Last Days, the Rapture, to be secret, must occur before any other event associated with the Last Days. Since the persecutions of the Antichrist will be easily distinguishable as the “Great Tribulation” prophesied by Christ, the Rapture (if there are to be no specific preceding signs) must take place first (according to the Pretribulation view).

Clearly at some point (very late in the Last Days period) the last prophecy before Christ’s Return will be fulfilled and, we suppose, one could say that from then on Christ’s return is “imminent”. But that is not what those who hold the Pretribulation position mean by imminence. They mean that today (and at all times since Christ’s assumption into heaven), the Rapture/Christ’s return could happen at any time.

For Imminence to be true, there must be (by definition) no prophecies that were fulfilled between the time of Christ’s assumption into heaven and today and none that must be fulfilled prior to his Return. The doctrine of imminence would be refuted by a single such prophecy. But there are dozens of such prophecies. In the Olivet Discourse, the place where Christ speaks most plainly concerning his return, Christ gives his disciples a series of signs of things surrounding (and preceding) his return and then tells them, “When these things begin to take place, look up for your salvation is drawing near.”¹²⁶ Whether he refers here to his return or to the Rapture, it is clear that his followers (note the use of the word “your”) will be on the earth at that time and that they should look for signs that must happen first. Were the Rapture the next event on God’s calendar (as many supporters of the Pretribulation position say), then who is looking up and what are they looking for if believers have already been raptured? In other words, if there are no signs prior to the Rapture, then what does Christ mean when he tells us to look for signs?¹²⁷ That is but a single example. In what follows we will present a sampling of prophecies that had to take place (and many that still have to take place) between when Christ returned to heaven and his return to earth.

¹²⁶ Luke 21:28.

¹²⁷ e.g. Mark 13:37, Luke 21:28.

The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ.¹²⁸ Christ, of course, prophesied his own crucifixion and resurrection. These took place around 30-33 AD. Clearly, they had to take place before his return and before the Rapture.

The coming of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁹ Christ also spoke to his followers of the coming of the Comforter who would bring to mind all that he had taught. This took place following his ascent into heaven, sometime around 30-33 AD.

The death of Peter¹³⁰. Christ told Peter that when he was young he could go about as he pleased, while late in life he would be dragged where he didn't want to go and will "stretch out his hands". Verse 19 says that this was to indicate how Peter would die. Peter was crucified under Nero in approximately 64 AD. Since presumably Peter would be raptured if he were alive at the time, the Rapture could not take place during Peter's lifetime.

Destruction of the temple.¹³¹ Christ himself, in the Olivet Discourse, said that this will happen in the future, though he does not say when. The temple could, perhaps, be destroyed after the Rapture as part of the Antichrist's rule, but Daniel's prophecy says that the Antichrist desecrates the temple, not destroys it. The final destruction of the temple took place in 70 AD.

Exile of the Jews¹³². The Jews revolted against the Romans in 66 AD and the revolt was put down over the next seven years, with the destruction of the Temple taking place in 70. The last Jewish holdouts committed suicide in 73.

The fall of Rome.¹³³ In Revelation, John is told about the sequence of evil empires that had or would arise prior to the final empire of the Antichrist, which would be destroyed upon Christ's return. The prophecy said that one of the empires "is", meaning that it was then in existence and therefore clearly is Rome. It also spoke of a seventh empire yet future (see below) that must also come prior to the rise of the Antichrist. Rome fell in 476. Since the empires are "beast" empires because of the way they treat God's people, and since we know that includes killing Christians, the Rapture could not take place while Rome lasted.

The restoration of Israel.¹³⁴ If Israel was to be exiled and yet present in the Last Days (as Daniel's Seventy Weeks prophesy makes clear), it has to be restored. Many scriptures speak of Israel's final restoration, never again to be scattered. Israel was established as a

¹²⁸ Mark 9:31.

¹²⁹ John 14:26, Acts 1:8.

¹³⁰ John 21:18-19.

¹³¹ Matthew 24:2.

¹³² Daniel 9:26.

¹³³ Revelation 17:10.

¹³⁴ Isaiah 66:8.

modern state in 1948. If the existence of Israel is necessary during the Last Days and if the Last Days include the Rapture, the Rapture could not occur prior to the reestablishment of Israel.

The recapture of Jerusalem.¹³⁵ Not only does Israel have a role to play in the Last Days, but so does Jerusalem. It is clear from the descriptions in Revelation that Israel will control Jerusalem, lose it to the Antichrist, regain it, and have it besieged as parts of the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week. The recapture of Jerusalem took place during the Six Day War in 1967.

The seventh beast empire¹³⁶. Revelation speaks of seven evil empires that precede the final empire of the Antichrist. We discuss these in detail where they are mentioned in Revelation. The sixth of such empires was the Rome of John's day. After that is an empire that will come and remain a little while. No one knows for sure what this empire is, though it will certainly share with the others in being against the Jews. Some have speculated that the Third Reich is that seventh empire. It certainly was anti-Jewish and, suggestively, Hitler referred to it as the "Thousand Year Reich", an echo of the Millennium. Whatever it is, it must exist and fall prior to the start of the Last Days and hence (if the Rapture starts the Last Days) prior to the Rapture.

The rebuilding of the temple.¹³⁷ The temple was destroyed in 70. But Daniel tells us the Antichrist will take his place in the temple to desecrate it during the final week of his seventy. Since it doesn't currently exist, it must be restored prior to it being desecrated. Christ tells us this desecration is how we will know we are in the Last Days – the revealing of the Antichrist is a major sign for which we are to watch for prior to our salvation (see Olivet Discourse). The Antichrist cannot be revealed prior to the rebuilding of the temple and, since his followers are told to watch for that revealing (something that would be very hard to do were they not on earth), the Rapture cannot take place prior to the temple being rebuilt.

Jerusalem surrounded by armies¹³⁸. This has a near and a far fulfillment. The near fulfillment was the conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The far term will be its siege by the Antichrist. Christ tells his followers (clearly on earth) that when they see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, they are to flee. Had they been raptured; such a flight would be unnecessary. It is instructive to note that when the Romans besieged Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Christians fled the city before the final attack¹³⁹. They, clearly, did not subscribe to a Rapture taking place first.

¹³⁵ Luke 21:24.

¹³⁶ Revelation 17:10.

¹³⁷ Implied by Daniel 9:27.

¹³⁸ Luke 21:20.

¹³⁹ See, for example, Epiphanius, *On Weights and Measures* 15 and Eusebius, *Church History* 3, 5, 3.

This completes the summary of the main views of the Rapture. As a way of approaching our own position, we will first review the primary Bible verses concerning the Rapture. The cited verses are exemplary but by no means a complete listing.

Sample Verses related to the Last Days

It would be impractical to list here all the verses related to the Last Days and the events surrounding the return of Christ. This section contains selected verses that convey an important perspective on the Rapture and its timing. In many cases it helps establish a late timing for the Rapture by showing that God's people are participants in events during the Seventieth Week and that they therefore cannot have been raptured prior to that event. In many cases the verses are addressed to "you" or to "my people". For the Old Testament verses it is, of course, possible to apply the verses solely to the Jews who, since they only turn to Christ at his return, are not Raptured. When those verses, however, are compared to similar verses from the New Testament that clearly apply to Christians (but, generally, also to believing Jews), it becomes impossible to support the idea that they apply *only* to Jews. The application of the New Testament verses is in less dispute.

(Job 14) {12} so man lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep.

This must refer to the second resurrection, since the first resurrection is separated from the end of the heavens by a thousand years. It would, because the church is a mystery, make sense that Job does not see the church's resurrection, but instead sees the general resurrection. We also need to remember that the Old Testament did not give as complete an understanding concerning the state of the dead as the New Testament gives. It is therefore also possible that this verse means to say that man does not rise from the dead at all, though there are other verses in Job which contradict that position.

(Isaiah 26) {19} But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. {20} Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. {21} 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. {27:1} In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea.

This clearly speaks of events of the Last Days since it speaks of resurrection. It provides strong evidence we will still be here for the Wrath of God since it tells us to hide ourselves away. Notice that this prophecy is aimed at God's people in general and not at Israel specifically. It cannot therefore be argued that this means Jews will live on earth through God's Wrath while Christians will not, unless you are also prepared to argue that Christians are not God's people. God's people are told to hide until his Wrath has passed. This is, after all, exactly what happened at Passover. God's wrath came first and then his people went out.

How does this passage relate to Revelation? The Lord coming out of his dwelling and Christ coming out of his temple are likely equivalent. The sword of the Lord here, and the sword from Christ's mouth appear equivalent as well. The reason for God's wrath here and in Revelation is the murdering of his people upon the earth. Therefore, Leviathan is probably to be equated with the other beast from the sea, the Antichrist. There are a couple of other things that support that argument. First is timing. The only beasts destroyed by God as part of his Wrath are the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Second, the Antichrist and Leviathan have several things in common. In particular, they both come from the sea, they both have multiple heads, and they both will be destroyed directly by God as part of his wrath. Lastly, because of the Antichrist's close association with Satan, the description here of Leviathan as a serpent is perhaps further evidence that this creature is the Antichrist.

This verse from Isaiah is one of the clearest verses concerning the Last Days to be found in the Old Testament and it clearly teaches that God's people will be on earth (and in danger) during that Wrath.

Psalm 74 also speaks of God crushing the heads (note the plural) of Leviathan:

(Psalm 74) {13} It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. {14} It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert.

The beast from the sea, of course, also had multiple heads. Leviathan is mentioned in five places in scripture. The first instance is a long and very difficult series of verses in Job where the best guess is that it is some kind of sea creature.¹⁴⁰ Twice, it just refers to a whale or other large sea creature.¹⁴¹ The remaining two instances, one referring to the past¹⁴², the other to the future,¹⁴³ indicate that Leviathan is some sort of enemy of God. The only other multiheaded enemy of God from the sea we know of is the Antichrist.

These verses from Isaiah 26 says that God's people will rise from the dead, but first those still alive must conceal themselves during God's wrath while he punishes the

¹⁴⁰ Job 3:8.

¹⁴¹ Job 41:1 and Psalm 104:26.

¹⁴² Psalm 74:14.

¹⁴³ Isaiah 27:1.

people of the earth for killing his people. God finishes his punishment with the killing of Leviathan as, in Revelation, he throws the Antichrist into the lake of fire. The order of events is consistent with what we know of the End Times, and the passage clearly indicates that God's people are to conceal themselves rather than be taken away during the period of God's wrath.

(Daniel 12) {1} 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. {2} Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

This is a composite of the first and second resurrections, perhaps again reflecting the mystery of the Church age.¹⁴⁴ Note that the resurrection of both the just and the unjust takes place *after* the time of great distress. Since we know that the resurrection of those who have died in Christ will take place *before* the Rapture,¹⁴⁵ this indicates that the events of Daniel's Seventieth Week precede the Rapture.¹⁴⁶

The book of life mentioned here is also mentioned in Revelation in connection with the second resurrection and the Great White Throne judgment at the conclusion of the Millennium. It therefore seems likely that the events from the beginning of the persecutions of the Antichrist through the White Throne judgment are in view here.¹⁴⁷

(Zechariah 14) {2} 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. {3} Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. {4} 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. {5} 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. {6} On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. {7} It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime--a day known to the

¹⁴⁴ Ephesian 3:9.

¹⁴⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

¹⁴⁶ 1 Thessalonians 4:15.

¹⁴⁷ The complete role of the archangel Michael in the Last Days is a matter of some conjecture. Michael fights Satan and hurls him to earth (which is why Satan is on earth as part of the persecutions of the Last Days). It is also likely that Michael is the archangel that descends with a shout when the dead in Christ rise and the living are transformed.

LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. {8} 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. {9} The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

These verses strongly parallel events in Revelation. The most important part of this verse for the Rapture is that people who presumably belong to the Lord will flee at the time Jerusalem is (once again) surrounded by armies. They are another indication that there will be people loyal to Christ in Jerusalem up to the very end and that some of them will survive. Perhaps it is they who give praise to God after the severe earthquake in Revelation chapter 11.¹⁴⁸

This verse is also parallel to Acts 1:11 which speaks of Christ's return to the Mount of Olives from which he ascended into heaven. The "he" referred to in Zechariah and called "the LORD" is Christ. His return sets in motion the defeat of the armies of the Antichrist at Jerusalem. Those armies here are called "all the nations".

This scripture is one of a set of scriptures that shows the events of the Last Days from the perspective of the Jews and that have parallel scriptures showing the same events from the perspective of the Christians. Both believing Jews and Christians are God's people.¹⁴⁹ Throughout Revelation both groups are mentioned, both are persecuted, and, eventually, both will be reconciled.

(Malachi 4) {1} "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. {2} But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. {3} Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty. {4} "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. {5} See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. {6} He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

In these, the concluding verses of the Old Testament, Malachi implies that believers will be shut up in some way (maybe in places of protection) on the "day that is coming" and

¹⁴⁸ Revelation 11:13.

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, Romans 11:29 where Paul makes it clear that the calling of the Jews to be God's people has not been and cannot be revoked. Others can be grafted in, but the Jews have never been supplanted.

when released will leap like calves released from the stall – that is, joyfully. This matches the Isaiah verse cited above about going into your rooms and waiting until his wrath passes by. God’s wrath passes by, according to Revelation, when he destroys the armies of the Antichrist at his Return.

Malachi 4:5 should be enough to disprove the Pretribulation view of Imminence, since it states that Elijah must come *before* the Day of the Lord. Since in most forms of the Pretribulation view, the Rapture starts the events of the Day of the Lord, and since Elijah (if he is one of the two witnesses) will be operating during the reign of the Antichrist, the Rapture cannot be imminent.

The argument that John the Baptist was “Elijah” has two problems. First, John the Baptist himself denies being Elijah.¹⁵⁰ That would end the question were it not for Christ saying that in some sense John *was* Elijah.¹⁵¹ While this has been the subject of discussion for 2000 years, the best way to see it is that Gabriel knew what he was talking about in Luke 1:17 when he said John came in the “spirit and power” of Elijah. He was not the literal Elijah. That return is yet future. Christ himself says that Elijah “does come and will restore all things”.¹⁵²

Malachi mentions both Moses and Elijah, stating to remember the law of Moses and that He will send Elijah. These are candidates for the two witnesses of Revelation 11. We discuss this in detail at that point in the commentary.

(Matthew 13) {24} Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. {25} But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. {26} When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. {27} 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?’ {28} ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ {29} ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. {30} 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 24) {36} 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.” {37} He answered, “The one

¹⁵⁰ John 1:21.

¹⁵¹ Matthew 17:12, 13.

¹⁵² Matthew 17:11.

who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. {38} 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, {39} and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. {40} As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. {41} 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. {42} They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. {43} Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father". He who has ears, let him hear.

Although it is always risky to read too much into a parable – they generally have a single lesson to teach – this one makes it clear that the tares are gathered and burned first. These verses are consistent with the previously-discussed verse in Malachi where the righteous will trample the ashes of the evil after being released – still alive! – from their shelters. Only after that will the righteous be gathered into God’s kingdom.

There are two times when those who work evil will be cast into the fire. First is after Armageddon when the Beast and the False Prophet are thrown alive into the Lake of Fire.¹⁵³ The second is at the Last Judgment after the Millennium when the Devil is thrown in,¹⁵⁴ then Death and Hades,¹⁵⁵ and then all whose names were not in the book of life.¹⁵⁶ Christ’s parable fits so well with both the end of this age (at the start of the Millennium) and with the end of the Millennium that it is difficult to say for certain to which it applies and it is possible that it is another prophecy with two fulfillments. At both times the kingdom of God is about to be manifest among men. In the first instance it is Christ’s millennial kingdom on earth, the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies made to Israel. In the second, it is the New Jerusalem and God making his dwelling among men.¹⁵⁷ In the first case, the pulling of the weeds is the capture of the Beast and False Prophet and the slaughter of Satan’s armies at Jerusalem after the gathering at Armageddon.¹⁵⁸ In the second it is the destruction of Satan’s last army by fire and his final capture and punishment in the Lake of Fire.¹⁵⁹ In the first case, the righteous are gathered into the millennial kingdom, the blessed dead are raised to life, Christian believers are Raptured, and newly-converted Israel physically brought into Christ’s kingdom. In the second, those judged righteous at the Last Judgment are united with God permanently in the New Jerusalem, and God’s eternal reign with man begins.

¹⁵³ Revelation 19:20.

¹⁵⁴ Revelation 20:10.

¹⁵⁵ Revelation 20:14.

¹⁵⁶ Revelation 20:15.

¹⁵⁷ Revelation 21:3.

¹⁵⁸ Revelation 19:20-21.

¹⁵⁹ Revelation 20:9-10.

Consider the earlier of the two periods to which Christ's parable may apply: when the "tares" are gathered and taken at Armageddon and Jerusalem. Following the order of the parable, this takes place *before* the righteous are brought into God's kingdom. But if we follow the order of the parable, it is clear that the Rapture – the gathering of believers to be with Christ – cannot take place until *after* Armageddon.

In the parable Christ makes a careful choice of words. He says that the weeds are gathered first "to be burned". He does *not* say "and are burned". Keeping this in mind, we can see that the order taught by this parable is that first the evil ones are gathered, then the good, then the weeds are burned. Finally, in God's kingdom, the righteous will shine like the sun. This shining makes sense since they will have their resurrection bodies. This parable, therefore, is completely consistent with the Posttribulation viewpoint and with the teachings of the later chapters of Revelation. It conflicts strongly with the Pretribulation and Midtribulation viewpoints.

Matthew 24) {1} Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings.{2} "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." {3} As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" {4} Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. {5} For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, ' and will deceive many. {6} 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. {7} Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. {8} All these are the beginning of birth pains.

{9} "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. {10} At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,{11} and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. {12} Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,{13} but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. {14} And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

{15} "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation', spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—{16} then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. {17} Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. {18} Let no one in the field go

back to get his cloak. {19} How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! {20} Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. {21} For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. {22} If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. {23} At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. {24} For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. {25} See, I have told you ahead of time.

{26} "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. {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..."

This is the Olivet Discourse. It and contains the most complete description of the Last Days given by Christ. It covers almost the same period of time as the book of Revelation.

Christ makes it clear what the first unquestioned sign of the End of the Age will be: the revealing of the Antichrist when he takes his stand in the temple. There will be many things leading up to this period ("wars and rumors of wars") but none of them will be a certain indication until the Antichrist is revealed. Thus, when Christ tells us to watch, one of the most important signs we are to watch for is the revealing of the man of lawlessness, the abomination of desolation, the Antichrist. Since the Antichrist comes first, he naturally must be looked for first.

As the last two verses here make clear, the gathering of the elect will take place when all the nations of the earth see the sign of Christ's return. There cannot, therefore, be a "secret return" for the elect that takes place prior to the Second Coming. This scripture rules it out explicitly. It is also consistent with the view that the resurrection of the blessed dead and the Rapture take place at essentially the same time. These two related

but separate events are possibly supported by the two sources of the gathering of the elect: from the four winds (those still alive) and from one end of the heavens to the other (the dead).¹⁶⁰ Because the two events are essentially simultaneous, we should probably not make much from the order here – the four winds and then the heavens for – two reasons. First, it isn't clear that two events really are being differentiated here. Second, this seems more like a list of what is happening rather than a temporal ordering. There are plenty of scriptures that give the ordering, as we shall see below. This verse does, however, make it clear that though the resurrection of the blessed dead precedes the Rapture (as we know from other scriptures), they are part of the same event.

(Matthew 24) {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. {41} Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

{42} "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. {43} 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. {44} So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him...."

This contains one of the "Thief in the Night" scriptures and makes it quite clear that the thief's appearing will only be a surprise if we do not keep watch. The Son of Man will indeed come at an hour when he is not expected, but not without preceding signs.

How to interpret "one will be taken and the other left"? Taken for what and left for what? This remains somewhat mysterious. If it parallels the wheat and the tares parable given above, the one taken is taken by Christ to be destroyed and the one left is to be gathered into his kingdom (which, during the Millennium, will be on earth).

This is one of the many places where events of the end times are compared with those which happened earlier in Israel's history. There is really nothing new under the sun. Since Israel's entire history is an acting out of mankind's relationship with God, so why shouldn't their history reflect events yet to come?

¹⁶⁰ It is, perhaps, instructive to note that even today, not all who are Christ's are necessarily confined to the earth. People have been in space off and on for years, so it is possible the gathering from "the heavens" includes living Christians who are raptured from space.

(John 14) {1} Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God ; trust also in me. {2} 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. {3} 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.

Note this does not say “I will take you to those mansions”, only to “be with me”. The New Jerusalem is the place Christ has been preparing for us, not some temporary place in the temporary heavens which will be destroyed at the end of the Millennium.

(Acts 1) {11} “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.” {12} Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.

When Christ returns to earth, he will return from the heavens to the Mount of Olives. Zechariah chapter 14 teaches the same thing. This scripture makes it clear that there will not be, as all but the Post-Wrath Rapture view teach, an intermediate return “to the skies” at the start of Daniel’s Seventieth Week (or any other time after that), followed by a protracted period of waiting before Christ sets foot on the Mount of Olives. Christ has one Second Coming, not two. As C. S. Lewis has said, “when the author walks onto the stage, the play is over”.¹⁶¹

Scripture makes it clear that he will not be alone: his “Holy Ones”, including angels, those recently raptured, and those recently resurrected, will be with him.¹⁶²

(1 Corinthians 15) {20} But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. {21} For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. {22} For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. {23} But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. {24} Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. {25} For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. {26} The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

This scripture is quite compact, but a few things can be drawn from it relevant to the Rapture. When Christ comes, those who belong to him will be with him. They therefore

¹⁶¹ Lewis, C. S, *Mere Christianity*, p. 65.

¹⁶² 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The Post-Wrath position has a single Second Coming where Christ returns, the resurrection of those in Christ and the Rapture occurs, and then Christ takes his stand on the Mount of Olives and the Millennium begins.

have to have been resurrected or transformed by that point. The Acts scripture above makes it clear there was no intermediate coming prior to when Christ returns, as promised, to the Mount of Olives. This will help us interpret the somewhat difficult scripture concerning the “first resurrection” given in Revelation chapter 20. Although we will discuss the first and second resurrection at that point, it is worth stating here that the first resurrection is what is in view here – the resurrection of the blessed dead of all ages, including not just those martyred by the Antichrist, but all who, prior to the start of the Millennium, have died in Christ. There will be a second resurrection at the end of the Millennium (and prior to the White Throne Judgment) which will include all who are not Christ’s as well as those who are his and die during the Millennium.

(1 Corinthians 15) {51} Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—{52} 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.

This is about the first resurrection and the Rapture and makes the order of events very clear. The last trumpet¹⁶³ will sound, then the dead in Christ will be raised, and then those who are alive will be transformed. That transformation will be effectively instantaneous.

This scripture alone makes it impossible to support the view that the Rapture takes place prior to the seventh trumpet, the last one mentioned specifically in Revelation. It is spurious to state that this is the “last trumpet” for the Church, but not for the world. At least some members of the Church are on earth during the reign of the Antichrist and are persecuted by him. We know Christians exist on earth during the Great Tribulation because Christ tells us they do.¹⁶⁴ The events happening on earth, while they are on earth, are clearly relevant to them, so the “last trumpet” for the Church must actually be “last”. Therefore, the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 must either be the same as the seventh trumpet of Revelation or must occur later. It cannot occur earlier and be the “last”, either for non-believers or for believers. This means that all views of the Rapture other than the Pre-Wrath and Post-Wrath viewpoints are inconsistent with these verses.

(1 Thessalonians 4) {13} Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. {14} We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. {15} According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming

¹⁶³ This can only be the “last” trumpet if it takes place after the Seventh Trumpet of Revelation. Since this scripture discusses the Rapture, it clearly puts the Rapture after the Seventh Trumpet. But as discussed in the main part of the commentary, the Seventh Trumpet includes events all the way up to the Return of Christ. Even if we say that the last trumpet and the Seventh Trumpet are the same thing, we can set the Rapture no earlier than the events of Revelation 11 which take place after the Antichrist has killed the two witnesses and the Seventieth Week is over.

¹⁶⁴ Matthew 24:22.

of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. {16} For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. {17} After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. {18} Therefore encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 5) {1} Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, {2} for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. {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. {4} But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ... {9} For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. {10} He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

This is the most famous reference to the Rapture. It gives a clear temporal order to the events surrounding the return of Christ: Christ returns with a command of the Archangel, the dead in Christ are raised, and the living followers of Christ transformed. Both sets will meet the Lord in the air, presumably on his way to the Mount of Olives. Since trumpets sound a battle cry and since Michael the Archangel will arise at this point,¹⁶⁵ this trumpet launches Christ's attack on the armies of the Beast who have attacked Jerusalem.

Note that verse 17 has Christ coming in the clouds. Only two things are therefore possible: there are two comings of Christ in the clouds (required by all but the Post-Wrath and possibly the Pre-Wrath rapture positions) or this one and the one in Matthew 24:30, which is seen by "all the tribes of earth", are the same event. It seems far more likely that they are the same event, particularly given the cry of command, the voice of the Archangel, and the blare of the trumpet.

We discuss the Thief in the Night scriptures in Appendix 7 but here, as everywhere else they appear, they mean that these events will catch those who are not watching unawares. Those who are watching will not be surprised, though they, too, will not know the day of Christ's return in advance.

(2 Thessalonians 1) {6} God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you {7} and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. {8} He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. {9} They will be punished with everlasting

¹⁶⁵ Daniel 12:2.

destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power {10} on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Scripture teaches that the punishment of those who do not belong to God is broken into several parts, including the capture and punishment of the Antichrist and the False Prophet,¹⁶⁶ the destruction of the armies at Jerusalem,¹⁶⁷ and the punishment of those at the White Throne Judgment¹⁶⁸ who are not Christ's.

Notice that Christ returns to comfort those who have been "troubled", including "us as well", meaning, presumably, Paul and other first-generation Christians. Because Christ is revealed in blazing fire, this is no secret meeting in the air but the actual Second Coming. That comforting will be as part of and as a consequence of Christ's Second Coming, as the verses here state.

(2 Thessalonians 2) {1} Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, {2} 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. {3} Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. {4} He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. {5} Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? {6} And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. {7} For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. {8} 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.

This addresses false teachings concerning Christ's return, the resurrection of the blessed dead, and the Rapture. Apparently, people were teaching that the resurrection had already taken place, which must have caused considerable confusion to those who thought either that there would be a Rapture first or that they took place at the same time. Paul responds with a scripture that destroys the doctrine of Imminence, saying the man of lawlessness (Antichrist) must be revealed first, before our gathering together to

¹⁶⁶ Revelatoin 19:20

¹⁶⁷ Revelatoin 19:21.

¹⁶⁸ Revelation 20:4-15.

Christ. Paul stipulates he is dealing with our gathering together to Christ (v. 1) and that both the rebellion and the revealing of the “man of lawlessness” must happen first (v.3). It is just as Christ said in Olivet Discourse:¹⁶⁹ the Antichrist being revealed is the first unambiguous sign of the end.

These verses appear to have been written expressly to counteract the false views that there was a Pretribulation Rapture and that the Thessalonians had missed it. Paul lays out two signs which must happen first (the rebellion and the revealing of the man of lawlessness). The second of these can be clearly placed in the timeframe of the Last Days. According to Daniel¹⁷⁰ the revealing of the Antichrist takes place in the middle of the Seventieth Week. These scriptures alone are sufficient to cast doubt on the doctrine of Imminence and the Pretribulation Rapture viewpoint.

(2 Timothy 2) {17} Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, {18} who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

This follows directly on the previous scripture and cites an example of the false teaching that the resurrection of the dead and (therefore) the Rapture had already taken place. Since the Antichrist has not been revealed, they cannot have taken place.

(Titus 2) {13} while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...

Paul calls the return of Christ the glorious appearing, which simply means his appearing in glory:

Some want to make this into two separate events, with the blessed hope being the Rapture and the glorious appearing being his return to judge the earth. Supporting this argument is the presence of a “kai”, the Greek word often translated “and” between the two phrases. However, for all that, “kai” can just as well mean “even”, introducing a phrase for clarification. That seems to be the better sense here. The “blessed hope” of Christians is the return of Christ. This is the same hope mentioned by Peter.¹⁷¹ Since other scriptures, including several we have just looked at, teach that the two take place at the same time, there is little need to distinguish them.

(1 Peter 1) {13b} Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Note “revealed”, not secretly appearing in the heavens. This verse shows that the hope of Christians comes with the revealing of Christ. Peter calls this our full hope, Paul our blessed hope. The revealing of Christ is when he comes in glory, so if our full hope is

¹⁶⁹ Matthew 24:15..

¹⁷⁰ Daniel 9:27. Cf Matthew 24:15.

¹⁷¹ 1 Peter 1:13b.

concentrated on that event, a Rapture that took place years earlier cannot be the “Blessed Hope” for which Christians are looking. If there were such a Rapture, we would again have the problem of believers with their Lord for seven (or more) years but still hoping for something else.

2 Peter 2:5-9

(2 Peter 2) {5} if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; {6} if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; {7} and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men {8} (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—{9} if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

These verses, using the example of Lot, are sometimes taken to show that Christians will be raptured prior to the Wrath of God. But there are several problems with that viewpoint. First, the rescuing of Lot and the destruction of Sodom took place on the same day, not years or even weeks apart. Second, though Lot was rescued from the destruction of Sodom, his troubles were hardly over.

The point of these verses is rather to show that God is in control and will save the righteous and punish the wicked. Little or nothing can be gleaned from them about the events of the Last Days beyond that.

(2 Peter 3) {10} 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.

What Peter describes concerning that day matches Revelation 16 where the “Thief in the Night” parable is also referred to also in the context of the very end of the age. Its use in those two places helps to show that the doctrine of Imminence, derived in part from the concept that a thief comes secretly and while you can prepare for his coming, you cannot predict it, cannot be derived from them. Neither Peter nor John shows any problem with applying the thief in the night passage to events which are obviously not secret or hidden and, in the case of John, have obvious precursors (including the revealing of the Antichrist and the murder of hundreds of millions of Christians).

If there is a specific event that the Thief in the Night scriptures apply to, it cannot be a Rapture that takes place at some time prior to Christ’s return, since both Peter here and John in Revelation chapter 16 make it clear that whatever is referred to isn’t secret, at least to those who are watching. The parallel scripture in Revelation 16 takes place long

after the revealing of the Antichrist, the deaths of hundreds of millions of Christians, and most of the bowl judgments. It is the return of Christ, the resurrection of the blessed dead, the transformation of living Christians, and, most particularly, the destruction of the Antichrist and his followers that will occur *to those not watching* as a thief in the night.

(Revelation 3) {10} 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.

This message to the church in Philadelphia is used by those supporting the Pretribulation position to say that the Church will be removed from the earth during the Seventieth Week or beforehand. This interpretation includes several assumptions about this verse. The first is the question of whether it pertains to the Last Days or to the persecutions of the time when John was writing Revelation. As we have seen, there are often near- and far-term fulfillments of scripture, and this seems to be one of them. There were persecutions throughout this period – John himself was imprisoned on Patmos, and though Christians did not spread to “the whole world”, they did spread to the entire Roman world. It is likely, however, that the principal application of this scripture is, as the Pretribulation positions holds, to the persecutions under the Antichrist. Evidence for that comes from the rest of the message to Philadelphia where Christ says, “I am coming soon”¹⁷² and speaks of the New Jerusalem.¹⁷³

We now come to the crux of this verse; the words translated as “keep you from” the hour of trial. The Pretribulation position takes this to mean that “keeping from” the trial means “removal from” the earth. To understand what is wrong with this interpretation we must look at what the Greek text says. The words for “keep from” are, in the Greek, τηρήσω ἔκ. Τηρήσω is from τηρέω which has the primary meaning of “to watch over” or “to guard”. ἔκ is a preposition meaning “from”. The latter has the connotation of leaving something with which one has had intimate contact, not simply avoiding something.

The combination of τηρέω and ἔκ occurs another place in John’s writing – in verse 17:15 of his gospel. “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you **protect** them **from** the evil one.” This verse makes it very clear that whatever the exact nuance of τηρήσω ἔκ is in Revelation, it does *not* mean taking the Church out of the world. In John’s gospel, Christ himself contrasts the protection God will render his people with removing them from its influence. We should take Revelation 3:10 in the same sense that we take John 17:15: the Church will be preserved from the influence of evil. Just as the Church today suffers the side effects of evil, though it ultimately cannot harm us, so the Church of the Last Days will be guarded through the persecutions of the Antichrist.

¹⁷² Verse 11.

¹⁷³ Verse 12.

Just as evil is done to Christians, so will Christians of the Last Days suffer persecution. But ultimately, when all is said and done, neither can harm us.

Two churches in the early chapters of Revelation are held faultless – Smyrna and Philadelphia. Smyrna is told it will go through persecutions and death but with the result being, ultimately, the crown of life. It seems reasonable – and consistent with the usage of the Greek – that the promise to Philadelphia is essentially the same.

(Revelation 6) {9} When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. {10} They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" {11} Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

The martyrs beneath the altar at the fifth seal only have their souls, not their bodies. They are obviously “dead in Christ” and since 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 makes it clear the dead in Christ will rise before the Rapture, the Rapture cannot yet have taken place. John sees the martyrs after the four horsemen, just before the beginning of the Great Tribulation, about halfway through the Seventieth Week. The Rapture, therefore, cannot have taken place before the time in view in this verse. Indeed, since the proximate reason for God’s Wrath is avenging the blood of the martyrs including those “fellow servants” killed during the Great Tribulation, then the Fury (the 30-day period) cannot start until the Great Tribulation – and its accompanying martyrdoms – is over and all who are to be killed have been killed.

There are two important lessons to draw here. First, the Great Tribulation is not part of the Wrath of God. It is, in fact, a major *cause* of the Wrath of God. Second, since the souls under the altar are told to wait until the martyrdoms of the Great Tribulation were completed, the Rapture (which involves their resurrection) cannot take place until at least the end of those martyrdoms.

(Revelation 13) {7} 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.

This passage is a parallel with Daniel 7:21-25 where the people referred to are God’s people. In Daniel’s context, they are the Jews. In the New Testament perspective, however, all of God’s people are included, Christians and Jews. The word used here for “saints” is the Greek “hagios”. When used alone in scripture, with three possible exceptions¹⁷⁴ it always refers to Christians. The first of these possible exceptions is in the unusual passage in Matthew about the resurrection of many saints at the time of

¹⁷⁴ Matthew 27:52, Colossians 1:12, Revelation 11:18

Christ's resurrection. There, it probably refers to Jewish believers, since there weren't a lot of dead Christians then to be resurrected. In Colossians, it certainly refers to Christians, but may also refer to Jewish believers. In Revelation 11:18, prophets, saints, and all who fear God are put together into one category. This is probably what is meant here also. That interpretation is consistent with the rest of Revelation where the Antichrist makes war against both Jewish believers and Christians.

(Revelation 20) {4} 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. {5} (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. {6} 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.

Notice here that the martyrs come to life just before the start of the Millennium. Since the martyrs under the altar are told to wait until this exact group of martyrs is complete, they come to life here. Since the resurrection of dead Christians must precede the Rapture, the Rapture cannot take place until this point in time.

Duplications Required by the Pretribulation Viewpoint

The Pretribulation viewpoint requires duplication of several things that scripture treats as single events. Among them are

- Two Second Comings (a secret Rapture and a later return in glory)
- Two last trumpets (Christ descending with the "last trump" for the Rapture and then later the seventh trumpet)
- Two wraths (Wrath of the Lamb/Day of Christ and Wrath of God/Day of the Lord)
- Two gatherings of the elect (the Rapture for Christians and the final ingathering at Christ's return for the Jews¹⁷⁵)
- Two "first resurrections" (one at the Rapture and one in Revelation 20)
- Two Last Judgments – one for those Raptured and one later for everyone.

Since there is no evidence in scripture for these many duplications, it seems best to dispense with them. Contrary to the Pretribulation position, scripture teaches a single period of God's Wrath, a single return of Christ, a single resurrection of the blessed, a

¹⁷⁵ Zechariah 12:10.

single translation of living believers, a single judgment of the dead, and a single last trumpet.

The martyrs are resurrected after the Fury of God, in chapter 20, and that resurrection is the “first resurrection”. Πρώτη, the word translated as “first” nearly always means first in time (84 of 99 uses in the New Testament). While it can mean first in importance, that meaning only occurs 9 times in the New Testament. Adding to that the temporal sequence given among resurrections (the next one taking place after the Millennium), the evidence for taking this as the first general resurrection in time seems overwhelming. If it is the first, then since we know that the Rapture takes place at the same time as or after the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the Rapture can take place no earlier in Revelation than here.

There remains the problem of whether this group includes the blessed dead of all ages. Taken in isolation, this seems to include only the martyrs of the Great Tribulation. The English has two “I saw” in it, but the Greek actually says, “And I saw thrones and those that sat upon them ... and the souls of those who were beheaded...”. John appears to see two groups, or one group (the martyrs of all ages or the blessed dead of all ages) with special mention of those who were martyred during the Great Tribulation.

Conclusion

The authors fully admit that the scriptures about the Rapture are not always clear as to timing. And that honest Christians can have disagreements. As we have stated before, no one’s salvation depends on their belief as to the timing of the Rapture. And the authors are hardly claiming perfection in Biblical interpretation. We do, however, believe that the Posttribulation position provides the closest match to scripture while requiring the fewest additional interpretations that go beyond the text of scripture. How we came to that position is presented above and in the main commentary along with the verses that led us to our position.

In this section we have concentrated on the Pretribulation viewpoint because it is, currently, probably the most common among evangelicals. As we have shown above (and discuss at appropriate times in the main text of the commentary), the later one proposes that the Rapture takes place, the fewer the scriptures that have to be interpreted away. And that seems a good place to be.

Appendix 7: The Thief in the Night

Directly or indirectly, there are more than thirty references in scripture to Christ's return being like a thief coming at an unknown time. Although the thief in the night scriptures are used to support the coming of Christ (or the Rapture) with no preceding events, this position cannot be sustained. Revelation 16:15, after the revealing of the Antichrist, his murdering of millions of believers, the seven trumpets, the pouring out of the bowls of God's Fury, and the beginning of the gathering of the armies of the Antichrist at Armageddon, we have (verse 15) "Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed". If, as is generally supposed, the thief in the night scriptures mean "at any time", applying that saying to the events of Revelation 16 would appear to be remarkably inappropriate. The return of Christ, the transformation of living believers, and the resurrection of dead believers will not be as a surprise. From the time when Revelation was written to the present day, there remained scriptures to be fulfilled before those events could happen. Until fairly recently the non-existence of Israel as an independent state was yet to be fulfilled and yet had to be fulfilled. In our day there remain unfulfilled scriptures. For example, both the rebuilding of the temple and reestablishment of its sacrifices must happen before the Antichrist can take his place in the temple and stop the sacrifices. The Antichrist himself must be revealed and all the events of the Seventieth week take place first. The thief in the night scriptures rather mean that Christ's return will be surprising to those not looking for it (we are told to watch lest it come upon us like a thief). 1 Thessalonians 5:4 states that his return will not be like a thief in the night for believers and they will not be surprised. Only non-believers will be saying "Peace and safety" at that point in history. And they will be deceived.

Appendix 8: Principles of Exegesis

The authors have applied a number of basic principles of scriptural interpretation in writing *Tapestry*. Since some of our conclusions may be controversial, we want to state explicitly the principles by which they were deduced. Once those principles are understood, many of our conclusions will be seen to follow from them.

Principle 1: A passage should be interpreted literally unless it is clear from context that it has symbolic meaning.

Both the writers of scripture and the Holy Spirit meant scripture to have a common meaning and not to be interpreted according to standards that would change over time.¹⁷⁶ Approaching scripture with this in mind is a guard against temptations to “spiritualize” prophecy and reinterpret scripture to fit the fashions of a particular time.

Scriptural texts may be literal, figurative, parabolic, or symbolic. The great majority of scripture is meant to be interpreted literally, but there are clearly passages where the primary meaning is figurative. When Christ said he wanted to gather the inhabitants of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers her chicks,¹⁷⁷ he didn’t mean he wanted to sprout feathers. Common sense is usually sufficient to separate the literal from the figurative.

Many of Christ’s teachings, particularly concerning the end of the age, were parables. A difficult question in New Testament interpretation is how much information can be deduced from these parables. We are on safest ground when we draw information from them at the same level of detail as Christ did when he explained a parable to his followers. There generally is one main point to a parable and it is often best not to read too much into any one parable.

In symbolic language an object or image represents something else. This form of language is prevalent throughout Revelation. When, for example, the bride of Christ is given fine linen to wear,¹⁷⁸ we are told that fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints. The various beasts of Revelation, the “the lamb slain from the foundations of the world”,¹⁷⁹ the monsters with stings in their tails,¹⁸⁰ are all symbolic. Interpreting the symbols in Revelation is a major purpose of this book. It must always be kept in mind that though something is a symbol, what it is a symbol of is meant to be taken literally.

¹⁷⁶ 2 Peter 1:20-21.

¹⁷⁷ Luke 13:34.

¹⁷⁸ Revelation 19:8.

¹⁷⁹ Revelation 13:8

¹⁸⁰ Revelation 9:10

Principle 2: All as-yet unfulfilled prophecies will be fulfilled as literally as those relating to Christ's first coming.

The meaning and interpretation of prophecy are not functions of where we are in time. The God who makes "known the end from the beginning"¹⁸¹ has not lost the ability to do so. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given"¹⁸² was literally fulfilled at Christ's birth. The next verse, "He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom"¹⁸³ will be fulfilled just as literally at his return.

Principle 3: Much can be learned about a far-term prophecy from its near-term fulfillment.

Many prophecies have both near-term and far-term fulfillments, with the former often partial and the latter complete. Thus, Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled many of Daniel's prophecies concerning the Antichrist.¹⁸⁴ When the Antichrist comes, he will fulfill all of them. Similarly, the wrath of God which was poured out on Pharaoh¹⁸⁵ at the Exodus and on Babylon¹⁸⁶ when the Persians took it, will strike all the earth at the end of the age.¹⁸⁷ These parallels must be drawn with caution, however. Events at a near-term fulfillment can confirm and suggest details surrounding a far-term, but they may vary significantly from the far-term fulfillment in both historical context and in detail of fulfillment.¹⁸⁸

Principle 4: If two prophecies appear to refer to the same event, they should be taken to do so unless there are irreconcilable differences.

This is a hermeneutic version of Occam's Razor. Differences between two prophecies should not be taken as evidence that they concern different events unless those

¹⁸¹ Isaiah 46:10.

¹⁸² Isaiah 9:6.

¹⁸³ Isaiah 9:7.

¹⁸⁴ Daniel 11.

¹⁸⁵ Exodus 15:7, where Moses sings of the destruction of Pharaoh.

¹⁸⁶ Jeremiah 51:45.

¹⁸⁷ Zephaniah 3:8.

¹⁸⁸ Christ's prophecy of "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24), for example, appears to have both a near and a far-term fulfillment. Many evangelicals believe the "times of the Gentiles" began with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and that the recapture of Jerusalem in 1967 means the "times of the Gentiles" are either over or nearly so. This would be the "near fulfillment". It is likely the 3½ year period during the Seventieth Week (Revelation 11:12) when Gentiles control Jerusalem is a far-fulfillment of the same prophecy. If so, some details of the second trampling may be deduced from the first. Thus, the Antichrist's armies will probably surround Jerusalem in such a way that believers will have a chance to escape, as Christians did in the days of Titus. There, the parallel probably ends, since, for example, Titus destroyed the Temple, while the Antichrist will only desecrate it.

differences present us with a contradiction in a major point (*not* in a detail). In the same way, an historical event may be referred to in different ways and still be one event.

The use of the same words, the same phrases, the same images provide supporting evidence that two prophecies relate to the same event. The closer the match, the more certain we may be that the two are the same. For example, the many three-and-one half year periods in Daniel and Revelation should all be taken to be identical unless there is strong evidence to the contrary.

Principle 5: The best key to the meaning of a disputed word or phrase is how it is used elsewhere.

Because the meaning of a text can hinge on a single phrase, it is important to understand how that phrase is used both in the context at hand and elsewhere. The principle adopted by the authors is to expand the understanding of a phrase by comparing it with close parallels. The usefulness of these parallels lies within concentric circles. When determining the precise meaning of a phrase, the following provide support, in order of decreasing importance:

- a. Other use by the same author. This is particularly useful for John, who wrote five New Testament books, and Paul who wrote thirteen. Use within the same book is best of all.
- b. Use elsewhere in the same Testament.
- c. For New Testament words, their use in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, since both are in Greek and the NT writers were familiar with the Septuagint.
- d. Use of parallel words or phrases in the other Testament. One approach takes a NT Greek word, looks at the Hebrew words it translates in the Septuagint, and then investigates the use of those Hebrew words elsewhere in the OT.
- e. Use in contemporary, extrabiblical writings.
- f. Use in non-contemporary writings.

Principle 6: Each prophecy will be fulfilled, each promise of God kept, in a way that would be considered a fulfillment by those to whom it was originally given.

God does not play word games with his people. Thus, when Jeremiah¹⁸⁹ predicts the fall of Babylon, we may be certain he means the city on the Euphrates. There might be a

¹⁸⁹ e.g. Chapter 51.

second fulfillment hidden from both the prophet and his original hearers,¹⁹⁰ but the primary (and likely far-term) fulfillment of a prophecy must make sense to the original hearers. In the same manner, God's unconditional promises to Israel will be fulfilled to Israel, meaning to Jews. The Church might fulfill them as well, but if a promise is not kept to the people to whom it was given, then the promise has not been kept. God may fulfill his promises and prophecies in ways far beyond what the original hearers expected, but he will only do so in ways they would consider a fulfillment.

Nevertheless, there are some prophecies for which the prophet may not have expected a literal fulfillment. This is particularly true when the prophet substitutes the name of a former enemy of Israel for a current one. Thus John prophesies the fall of "Babylon" long after Babylon fell to the Persians.¹⁹¹ When John's "Babylon" falls, its fall will be in accordance with the prophecy, but what it is that falls might not be known until the time comes. Babylon on the Euphrates may rise to fall again, or Rome, the enemy in John's day, may be meant, or something else entirely. Thus, when Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Babylon, only a literal fall of the literal city would meet this principle. When John prophesied, there was no literal Babylon to fall, so the fulfillment *may* be the fall of some other city or political entity that has attributes of the literal Babylon.

Principle 7: The purpose of a symbol is to convey meaning, not obscure it.

God gave visions to his prophets so they could communicate to his people. He showed them spiritual, nonmaterial things in symbols that they could understand and that still preserved the truth. We have problems today because we have forgotten the meaning of the symbols. Fortunately, scripture often provides enough information to recover that lost understanding.

¹⁹⁰ Jeremiah's prophecy has such a second fulfillment which is seen by its close resemblance to the prophecies of Babylon's fall in Revelation 17 and 18.

¹⁹¹ Revelation 17 and 18.

Appendix 9: Introduction to Timeline

The final section of this first book presents a timeline which will be useful throughout the study of Revelation. It lays out the order and scope of the events throughout the Seventieth Week and the Millennium, putting them in proper context.

Mapping Revelation to a linear timeline is difficult for two reasons. First, the prophecies aren't presented by John in strict temporal order. Instead, he gives it in sections, with there generally being a viewpoint change between heaven and earth at the start of each section. Each such section describes an event and presents a perspective on that event. Since Revelation then jumps to another event and another perspective (which may not be clearly linked in time), the only sure way to understand the order of events chronologically is to study the entire book of Revelation for clues where events are said to precede or follow another or to be required for the another to take place. An example of such dependencies concerns the two witnesses of Chapter 11. They are linked temporally with the first Beast of Chapter 13 since he executes them at the end of their ministry. While both chapters have earthly perspectives, the intervening Chapter 12 discusses Satan and his plans for the people of God.

In general, each section starts before the previous one ends and then presents new events. These overlaps can be slight, or they can be extensive. The example of Chapters 11-13 is typical of the way the entire book is organized. It is essential to reconcile both the overlapping series of events and the changing viewpoints, first because that is the only way to have a complete view of the events of the end times but also because the same event is often seen from both an earthly and a heavenly perspective. The timeline we have created reconciles those overlaps, repetitions, and viewpoint changes, concentrating on the events on earth.

Summary of Events

It will perhaps be useful before diving into the Timeline itself to present the overall organization and ordering of events discussed in Revelation. A period of seven years contains most of the events of Revelation. This is the Seventieth Week of Daniel. It has no certain beginning, reflecting what Christ said about no one knowing the day or the hour.

Of those seven years, the first 3½ set the world stage for the revealing and acceptance of the Antichrist. There are no definite signs of its start to look for, so the earth will likely

be in this period for some time without many people realizing it. This is consistent with what Christ said about no one knowing the day or the hour.¹⁹²

The sign that tells Christians that the Seventieth Week has begun is the revealing of the Antichrist. This event is what Christ says we are to be on the lookout for. It takes place at the midpoint of the Seventieth Week and has several closely associated events linked to it. The Antichrist remains in power after his revealing for an additional 3½ years.

During the reign of the Antichrist and spanning the entire 3½ years following his revealing, two men prophesy against him in the streets of Jerusalem. These are the Two Witnesses and are, for those 3½ years, protected from the Antichrist by divinely given powers. Their death marks the end of the Seventieth Week.

At the start, during the first 3½ years, God's people will be increasingly persecuted and the political situation in the world be very unstable. Once the Antichrist is revealed, the persecution will become vastly worse during a period referred to as the Great Tribulation. This period is also covered by the seven trumpets of Revelation, discussed in Chapter 8 and 9, as well as the seven thunders (which are mysterious and not elaborated on in Revelation).

Starting at the same time as the Great Tribulation, which is its primary cause, is the period called the Wrath of God. It covers the 3½ years of the Great Tribulation and also a thirty-day period afterwards that ends with Christ's return. The extra thirty days of the Wrath of God (beyond the end of the Seventieth Week) is the time of the bowl or plague judgments. This is also called the Fury of God, a period of truly intense wrath. These judgments last for thirty days. They end with the return of Christ and the changing of living believers at the Rapture and the resurrection. The Millennium and its events immediately follow.

Detailed Description

The timeline starts with the signing of the covenant between the Antichrist and Israel at the start of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Though this covenant will no doubt be seen by some as the start of the Seventieth Week it is not a certain sign since agreements are signed all the time.

Accompanying the covenant and following from it are the four horsemen of the first four trumpets. The only other major event presented in the first half of the Seventieth Week is the sealing of 144,000 believers prior to the start of the Tribulation.

¹⁹² Matthew 24:36.

The midpoint of the Seventieth Week is the revealing of the Antichrist and the start of the Antichrist's 3½-year reign. Associated with this revealing, and occurring more or less immediately after it, are many events which are detailed in the timeline.

The timeline continues through reign of the Antichrist which constitutes the second half of the Seventieth Week, and beyond. It covers the preaching and death and resurrection of the two witnesses, the period of the Wrath of God, Armageddon, the final battle at Jerusalem, and the Millennium.

The timeline itself has three parts, the first is the horizontal timeline broken into discrete time periods mentioned in the Bible. The second is a series of specific events perpendicular to the timeline e.g., the birth of Christ. The third is a series of events that are parallel to the time that will occur over a protracted period of time e.g., The Great Tribulation.

The middle series breaks the period into multiple periods of time. These are the first 3½ years of the Seventieth Week, the last three and a half years of the Antichrist's rule (after his revealing and including the events of that period), the period of the seven last plagues, the set up for the final battle, and the Millennium and its aftermath.

The third series presents the events in the context of the seven seals, trumpets, and bowl judgments. It details the timing of the Rapture, the rebuilding of Israel and Jerusalem, and various events of the Millennium. It ends with Satan's final revolt and his punishment in the Lake of Fire and the descent of the New Jerusalem.

Complete Timeline

			Christ is born
	X Years		
<i>Beginning of seven year period</i>	3 1/2 Years	<p>The 1st seal - The white horse, The conqueror, Covenant of death</p> <p>The 2nd seal - The red horse, War</p> <p>The 3rd seal - The black horse, Famine</p> <p>The 4th seal - The pale horse, Death and Hades</p> <p>The 5th seal - The souls under the altar</p> <p>The 144,000 sealed</p>	Wars and rumors of wars
<i>The mid-point</i>		<p>Satan cast down; The mortal wound The Death of the 144,000 The trampling of Jerusalem 42 months; the two Witnesses 1260 days The woman flees for 1260 days The second beast; the abomination set up (mage); Antichrist is revealed Worship of the beast The mark of the beast The 6th seal - The introduction of the wrath of God The 7th seal, the wrath of God starts</p> <p>The 1st trumpet: 1/3 of the earth was burned up The 2nd trumpet: 1/3 of the sea was destroyed/contaminated The 3rd trumpet: 1/3 of the fresh was contaminated/destroyed The 4th trumpet: 1/3 of the light is gone The 5th trumpet: the 1st woe, the abyss is unlocked, people without the seal of God are tormented, death stops for 5 months The 6th trumpet: the 2nd woe, 1/3 of mankind is killed The 7 thunders - 1 The 7 thunders - 2 The 7 thunders - 3 The 7 thunders - 4 The 7 thunders - 5 The 7 thunders - 6 The 7 thunders - 7</p>	<p>Flee to the mountains</p> <p>The 1st angel proclaims the gospel</p> <p>The 2nd angel - fallen fallen is Babylon</p> <p>The 3rd angel - Judgment</p>
		<p>The death and resurrection of the two witnesses</p> <p>The 7th trumpet: the 3rd woe, The fury of God starts</p>	
<i>The end of seven years</i>	30 Days + 1,260 days = 1,290 days	<p>The 1st Plague: sores broke out On all who had the mark</p> <p>The 2nd Plague: The sea is turned to blood</p> <p>The 3rd Plague: The fresh waters became blood</p> <p>The 4th Plague: The sun scorch the people</p> <p>The 5th Plague: A darkness to be felt</p> <p>The 6th Plague: Start gathering for Armageddon</p> <p>The 7th Plague: It is done, The judgment of Babylon</p>	The seven plagues
	45 Days + 1,290 days = 1,335 days	<p>Rapture, Christ returns, The battle of Armageddon</p>	The gathering for Armageddon The 7 th Plague
The beginning of the millennium			
	1,000 Years	<p>The gathering of the dead The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p>	
The end of the millennium		<p>Satan is released, 2nd resurrection, Final judgment.</p>	
The beginning of eternity	Eternity	<p>New heaven, earth, and Jerusalem</p>	

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