

REVELATION STUDY GUIDE

John's Vision Concerning the Events of the Last Days

by JOHN DAVID CLARK, SR. July, 1992

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"

The isle of Patmos is mentioned only once in the entire Bible, but the remarkable event which took place there has made "Patmos" a name familiar to every student of the Scriptures. Exiled to Patmos Island by unknown Roman officials because of his faith, John, the beloved disciple of Christ Jesus, resolutely communed in prayer with the One who died for him and for the whole world. And it was here, forbidden the privileges of societal life, that John was taken up into heaven and given the most compelling and explicit vision of Christ and of the end of the world ever given. *"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not. I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, and was dead. And, behold, I am alive for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."*

These are the things John saw.

"And he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, 'Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.'"

INTRODUCTION

For many years now, some ministers have sounded the warning that the Lord Jesus could return to catch away the faithful "at any moment", and that every prophecy of events which should precede his coming has been fulfilled. I do not want to seem frivolous, but to hear them speak, one would almost have to think that Jesus missed his cue! Obviously, if those who teach that doctrine were truly sent from God, then Jesus would have returned by this time. And the only reasonable answer to their empty promise of an immediate return of Jesus is that, despite their denials, there are prophecies yet unfulfilled. Ironically, one indication that the return of Jesus is not imminent is the many who claim that it is. Jesus said the first sign of the beginning of the end is that many deceivers would come in his name, saying "the time is at hand" (Lk.21:8).

I certainly agree that we should always be prepared to meet Christ in peace, and I also know that if the Father chose to do so, He could send His Son this very moment. But I choose to believe that He knew from the beginning when the Rapture of the Church would occur and that His Son's words concerning the end-time are to be trusted. "Are you ready for Jesus to come?", may be a good question to ask. However, the more appropriate question is, "Are you ready for Jesus not to come yet?", because that is the reality of the situation. It is not time for Jesus to catch away the faithful; consequently, the real issue is, are we ready to do the work that remains to be done? Are we prepared to endure what this world and the Church will suffer before the coming of the Lord? That is the real issue. This babble about Jesus coming at any moment does nothing but accomplish Satan's purpose to make the Church look foolish.

How long can we, as ministers of God's grace, expect to have an influence upon men's souls if our preaching is so obviously proved to be false? How many years can the "any second" return of Jesus be proclaimed before the world begins to consider our preaching of eternal judgment to be as empty a promise as that one has been? If, throughout this century, the many who have preached the any-minute return of Jesus had been silent on the matter, then now, when the earliest signs of the end-time are actually beginning to appear and the warning should earnestly be given, this warning would have the powerful effect it should have. What a revival, what a stirring of men's hearts could be effected now, had Satan's ministers not preceded this end-time message with vain promises of an "any moment" appearance of Jesus! The Church should only now be proclaiming that we have entered into the "Beginning of Sorrows" which marks the beginning of the end of earth's history! As it is, to proclaim now that the end is nearing will alarm hardly a soul and may be taken as merely another voice proclaiming an already disproved theory.

Nevertheless, we are not discouraged. God has from the beginning planned these things so as to conceal the truth from the proud. The sheep will hear the voice of the Shepherd when he speaks, knowing that all who came before are thieves and robbers. There is something about the Spirit's voice which appeals to the sincere children of God as can no other. To the heart truly set on the things of God, the voice of the Shepherd is as easily distinguished from that of a hireling as is day from night. It is to the sheep that the Voice speaks.

Jesus will not come tonight, or tomorrow, next week or next year. His return is still years away, probably more than ten, and possibly many more than that. The Church must suffer through great tribulation not once, but twice before the coming of the Lord for his obedient children, as a careful reading of Revelation will show.

We begin our study of the book of Revelation by commenting on Jesus' messages to the seven pastors of seven churches in Asia. Then, we will survey the order of the end-time events which John describes. I do not hesitate to confess ignorance of some of the details concerning John's prophetic visions. What I am giving here is a simple Order of Events into which those details will fit. I am fully persuaded that this working model is correct; nevertheless, I know that only God is infallible, and I am open to comments or questions any Reader may have which will enlighten me on any particular point. Indeed, I ask for such correspondence.

May God help us be prepared to stand in the final, white-throne judgment, being washed from every stain of sin by the blood of His Son Jesus, the Savior of the world. To him belongs all honor, and the praise of every tongue, to the glory of God the Father.

PART ONE

Jesus' Messages to the Angels of the Seven Churches in Asia Revelation 1-3

THE MESSAGES TO THE PASTORS IN ASIA

When Paul, as an aged man, wrote to Timothy, "*All they which are in Asia be turned away from me*" (2Tim.1:15), he meant that all the churches in Asia had forsaken the gospel which Paul preached to the Gentiles (Gal.2:7-8). All seven of the churches in Revelation 1-3 are in Asia. They are the survivors of a great apostasy from Paul's gospel which occurred before his death (cp. Gal.1:6-7). These faithful remnants may not even have been considered to be legitimate churches by the multitudes who went astray. They may even have been looked upon as small bands of misguided religionists still clinging to quaint, unenlightened notions about Jesus.

In the beginning of this great apostasy, the error which carried most of the churches away from the truth was the persuasion that the Church should observe the ceremonies and rituals of the Law of Moses (e.g. Gal.4:21). In time, the backslidden Church invented its own versions of those carnal ceremonies, such as water baptisms, ceremonial communion, ceremonial clothing, holy water rites, and so forth. This backslidden Church eventually proclaimed itself "the Catholic [i.e., universal] Church", denying the validity of anyone's relationship with Christ outside its membership role (thus was laid the foundation for John's spiritual city of Babylon in Revelation 17). By this larger group of Christians who had forsaken the right way, the faithful Church was at first merely dismissed as heretical. Eventually, however, saints were tortured and executed at the order of the Popes, and the apostate "Catholic Church" committed spiritual fornication with worldly political powers, even becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine. Equally as tragic, and as Paul warned would happen if the Gentile Church partook of them, symbolic ceremonies and rituals slowly deadened the spiritual life and power in this "Catholic Church", and the result is what we can see for ourselves today.

But Jesus is not confused. The claims of vain men meant nothing to him while he walked here among us; much less is he impressed with us now. God recognizes no church as legitimate but His. Nor does He recognize a man to be a pastor unless He Himself has given him the position. When Jesus sent his messages to the "angels", or pastors, of these seven churches, he sent them to those who were pastors in God's sight over groups who were churches in God's sight. Moreover, because it changes the perception of the messages themselves to do so, it is essential to note that THESE MESSAGES ARE NOT MESSAGES TO THE CHURCHES. They are messages to the pastors of the seven churches in Asia, pastors struggling to minister to a dwindling number of faithful in an increasingly hostile environment.

Finally, as we reverentially approach these divinely inspired messages for ministers, we must expose as myth the notion that the seven churches represent "seven ages" in Church history. They do not. In fact, the seven churches represent nothing. They were actual churches which existed in John's time, with real problems which needed to be addressed, and with real pastors who needed Jesus' encouragement and direction. The benefit which was intended for us is missed, if, instead of heeding the counsel which Jesus gave those men, we attempt to make them mere figures of speech, symbols of an imagined, symbolic, prophetic message. The prophecy of things to come begins in Chapter 6, after Jesus has dealt with the problems then existent in the Church. Therefore, when reading Jesus' messages to these pastors, we should see nothing in those messages except what is there, for in reading prophecy into those messages the point is altogether missed.

1. To the Pastor at Ephesus

We know that some in the church at Ephesus had fallen victim to the strange doctrine that Jesus had already returned (2Tim.2:16-18). Paul had sent Timothy there to salvage what he could of that church (1Tim.1:3-4). At one time, there had been great love for Paul among the saints in Ephesus, but he had warned them even then that, after his departure, some among them would turn from the faith, "*speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves*" (Acts 20:29-38). What we have here is Jesus' message for those who did not follow after those false apostles, but stood faithful to the truth when it became unpopular in Ephesus to do so. The messenger to whom Jesus is speaking may have been Timothy himself.

Typically, when one first comes to Christ, he sees everyone in the Church as better than he. He has no difficulty holding every saint in high regard. He is willing to receive instruction from any member of the body. In time, however, he cannot help but notice faults among the saints, even, at times, wickedness. The real struggle for such a convert, which is to say the real struggle for all who come to Christ, is to overcome self-righteousness and to maintain that first high regard, that first love for every saint, even in the face of moral failures. Every believer must learn to discern the body, not only who is his pastor or who are teachers sent from God, but also who are the foolish and unfaithful? And in the process, he must also learn that every sanctified soul, regardless of his present spiritual condition, is precious. No prudent believer sees himself as better than any fallen brother, for he understands that the only difference between a backslidden believer and a faithful one is the mercy of God. When, by the loving grace of God, we are allowed to grow to the point of being able to see another's fault, that grace is given as a sacred trust. We are, by seeing fault, being implicitly asked by God to help another's faith. Such knowledge should never be used to the other's hurt.

"The least in the kingdom of God", according to Jesus, are those teachers in the Church who both walk contrary to God's truth and teach others to do the same (Mt.5:19). Yet, according to Jesus, our true feelings toward God are revealed by our attitude and conduct toward these "least" ones (Mt.25:40). We love God no more than we love His most errant child. This was the lesson which Jesus would teach this pastor in Ephesus. While no pastor should ever allow false teachers to ply their evil trade in the Church, those misguided believers must still be shown the love of God because, until the end, there is still hope for the wayward in Christ.

The pastor here at Ephesus was both faithful and hard-working. He also knew the truth, had suffered for it, and was able to try those who claimed to be sent from God. Those who were perverting the Church's faith irritated him. In fact, he hated their doctrine and deeds, as Jesus did. Jesus commended him for all these things, yet sternly warned him that this church would be taken from him (Rev.1:20; 2:5) unless he recovered the "first love" which he had somehow lost. So exasperated had he become at the perversion of the faith of the church in Ephesus by the doctrine and arrogance of those who claimed to be ministers of Christ, that he had lost his first love. His original love of brethren who had gone astray, the false apostles, the "wolves" whom Paul prophesied

would come, had to be restored. Otherwise, if God ever forgave and cleansed them, the pastor would be in such bitterness that he would not be able to minister to them. The man of God must never lose his love for those whom he knows are wrong.

2. To the Pastor at Smyrna

The pastor here at Smyrna was a poor man, and had suffered greatly, but had continued to labor in the faith against those who claimed to belong to God, but did not. Those who teach that genuine faith always brings earthly wealth should note that Jesus found no fault with this very poor man. Earthly possessions, or the lack thereof, are absolutely irrelevant to a person's spiritual depth or cleanness. To judge a man's spiritual condition by his earthly circumstance is utter folly. Jesus told this very good man that, despite his earthly poverty, he was rich in heavenly treasure.

This faithful pastor dearly loved his church, and Jesus warned him that his faith was about to be tried by having to see some of them cast into prison by Satan. By falsely claiming to be sent from God, certain ones in Smyrna had unknowingly become, in Jesus' words, "the synagogue of Satan", and in the approaching persecution of the faithful saints in Smyrna, such false teachers would play a large part. By claiming a divine revelation and ordination not actually received from God, foolish men become more like Satan than they know, fit for nothing but to be used as simple, expendable pawns in a warfare about which they are entirely ignorant.

The fact that Satan was personally involved in the persecution of this church is a testimony to the effectiveness of this pastor's ministry, for it indicates that the depth of their faith and love in Christ was sufficient to deal with it. Jesus simply encouraged this good shepherd to "be faithful unto death". This pastor and the pastor of Philadelphia were the only two of these seven who were not told, either implicitly or explicitly, to repent.

3. To the Pastor at Pergamos

Though living in an extremely difficult circumstance, the pastor in Pergamos had been faithful, even when threatened with death. Given the task of pastoring a church in the city where "Satan's seat is", he upheld the standard of truth, except in a few cases which Jesus mentions. Jesus warned this pastor that if he did not reprove some church members there who were teaching false doctrine, he (Jesus) would fight against them himself. Jesus thus appeals to the pastor's love for these people, and reproves him for allowing them to continue in error. This man had failed to understand that loving people does not exclude reprovng them for sinning; rather, it demands it. Apparently, in Pergamos there was an attitude of tolerance of various religious opinions. It is good for societies and governments of the world to be that way, for in doing so they inadvertently tolerate the truth, but Jesus demands purity and unity of faith and worship in the churches and holds the pastor personally responsible for maintaining those divine standards.

There is a minute but telling difference between Jesus' message to this pastor and the message to the pastor in Ephesus concerning the mysterious heretics called, "Nicolaitans". That revealing distinction is the absence of the word, "also". The pastor at Ephesus hated the way of the Nicolaitans, and Jesus said he "also" hated it. But here at Pergamos, Jesus informed the pastor that he (Jesus) hated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, as if it might be a new thought to the man. Sometimes we have to be reminded that, though the world needs to be tolerant because it doesn't know what is right and true, the Church is to be perfectly intolerant of every unclean thing among its members. As Paul once told the Corinthians, it is none of our business to judge them on the outside of the Church, but we must have judgment among ourselves (1Cor.5:9-13; 11:31). This pastor apparently had fallen victim to trying to measure up to the world's idea of fairness and had forgotten the judgment of God. Tolerating various religious beliefs is beneficial to worldly governments, for in doing so they tolerate the way of God's holiness even if they do not know what it is. But to tolerate heresy within the Church is no virtue for a pastor. It is sin. The pressure of Satan on this church was the pressure to appear good as the world perceives it rather than to be good in God's sight.

4. To the Pastor at Thyatira

This pastor had fallen victim to the same worldly pressure which the pastor in Pergamos faced, but there was a great, and tragic, difference. The situation in Pergamos, described above, was such that Jesus warned what he would do to certain in the church if the pastor failed to warn them. Here in Thyatira, the pastor had allowed evil to continue for so long that Jesus gave no warning. He bluntly pronounced judgment.

The pastor at Thyatira was himself charitable, faithful, and labored more now in Christ than he had ever done. However, he had displeased Christ in that he had tolerated a certain false teaching for so long that now it had taken root. Jesus was greatly displeased. The pastor had not reprovved these errant believers, and the time God had given them to repent had passed. The pastor had been overly accommodating and evil had taken some of God's children away from the faith and into sin. He could do nothing about the situation now. Jesus mercifully took the matter into his own hands.

After his initial comments to this pastor, Jesus spoke no more to him. He spoke only to the church as a whole, encouraging them to hold on to what they had until he came. Because Jesus bypasses this indulgent pastor to speak to the church, this is the only one of all seven messages which would come close to being what they all are so often called: messages to the seven churches.

5. To the Pastor at Sardis

This pastor was one of two, the other being in Laodicea, whose spiritual condition was so poor that he was in danger of having his name blotted out of the book of life. He had a reputation for being spiritually alive, but he was dead to the things of God. He was not perfect. He was in a fearful position. Jesus bluntly warned him to repent and to remember how he used to be when he first received mercy from God.

The pastor's condition notwithstanding, there were a few in Sardis who had kept themselves from sin. Despite their pastor's failure to do his job and watch for their souls, they were in a condition to be saved. Not only had they overcome worldliness, they had overcome their unfaithful pastor by not following him in his ungodliness, and God was pleased.

6. To the Pastor at Philadelphia

This man was under a great deal of pressure to compromise the gospel, and was persecuted by those who claimed to belong to God. Still, he had been faithful and diligent. He did not have much spiritual strength, but as reward for his faithful perseverance in the faith, Jesus promised both to keep him from the very hard trial which was coming on the whole earth and to force his adversaries to acknowledge God's love for him. Jesus loved this man and encouraged him to be faithful, lest someone deceive him and steal the crown of life which awaited him. It is revealing of God's way of judging men that the only two pastors not reproved by Jesus were the two men who were impoverished and, here, spiritually weak.

7. To the Pastor at Laodicea

This man was probably in the most miserable spiritual condition of all the seven pastors. He was displeasing God, but he claimed to be spiritually well and prosperous. Clearly, his judgment of himself was based upon his earthly wealth, health, and the approval of men. He had too much of God in his life, though, really to enjoy the world, and he had too much of the world in his life to really enjoy God. Jesus would rather he be one way or the other. Jesus said he was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." It was, however, because Jesus loved him that he warned him bluntly that he was in grave danger of losing his soul. He needed to get in touch with God again.

Throughout these seven messages, it is instructive to notice how Jesus does not confuse love with indulgence. When a pastor loves a church too much to reprove wrong when it appears, he is loving the church with a cowardly, destructive love that is not of God. In response to this pastor's pathetic spiritual condition, and as a good example for us all, Jesus both reproved this man and expressed his sincere love for him. Then, Jesus offered to the entire church here in Laodicea a personal communion with God, if they would only open their hearts to him, as certain of the church in Sardis had done. Here, too, Jesus shows that individuals can walk uprightly in fellowship with God, even if their pastor has wandered out of the way of righteousness.

SUMMARY

Contrary to the way matters are often judged on earth, none of these seven pastors were judged by Christ on the basis of their educational qualifications or achievements, the size of their meeting places, the number of people in their congregations, or the amount of money they collected for the Lord's work. Success is measured differently in heaven from the way it is commonly measured on earth. These pastors were judged by Jesus solely on the basis of how faithfully they had transmitted the will and word of God to the Church and how faithfully they themselves had obeyed God. A man's worth is rightly measured by his value to the spiritual well-being of those about him. It is a pastor's particular privilege and duty to be to the saints of God a steadfast source of spiritual strength and joy. If he is not, he is a failure. If he is such a source, he has fulfilled his commission to be a "shadow of a great rock in a weary land".

PART TWO

The Seven Seals

Revelation 4:1 - 8:5

THE SEVEN SEALS

In Revelation, Chapters Four and Five, John was carried in a vision into heaven and saw majestic scenes of indescribable splendor. He beheld the Father sitting on the throne of His glory, out of which proceeded lightnings and thunder and voices, and over which was stretched a brilliant, emerald-colored rainbow. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four "elders", sitting on royal seats. The amazing six-winged creatures, full of eyes all around, stood closest to God, in complete surrender to the divine power crying, "**Holy! Holy! Holy!**" day and night endlessly. The seven spirits of God burned as lamps in their stations before the throne, and nearby, a sea of glass like crystal glimmered in matchless beauty before the Almighty. As John looked on in stunned silence, hundreds of millions of angels suddenly appeared, fervently praising God, and when they did, the six-winged creatures and the twenty-four elders fell on their faces "**and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.**"

John's being caught up in spirit to heaven does not, as some teach, represent the Rapture of the Church. John doesn't represent anything. He is simply John, being caught up into heaven to receive a revelation concerning things to come. Many have sought to make this remarkable event itself symbolic of the Rapture, but only because they are under the strain of hoping the Church will go through no tribulation. The Church, however, will go through a time of "great tribulation"; in fact, it will suffer through such a time of great trial at least twice before the appearing of our Lord Jesus.

Revelation contains many symbols, but John's being caught up into heaven is not one of them. The Rapture of the Church occurs when Jesus comes on a white cloud in Revelation 14. It does not symbolically occur here, in Chapter Four. There are other such fables concerning end-time events, among them being the famed "seven years of tribulation", which exists nowhere but in our own imaginations. There are many more than seven years of trouble coming upon both the world and the Church. With the help of the Lord, we hope to avoid trusting such unsubstantiated ideas.

When John was caught up to heaven, he saw such glorious scenes as can scarcely be imagined, but amid all that splendor his attention was at last drawn to a book which he saw in the hand of God. An exceptionally strong angel cried with a loud voice, "**Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?**" And when no man in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, was found who was worthy to open the book, John was crushed with sorrow, and wept. One of the twenty-four elders encouraged him, saying, "**Weep not. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.**" Then John saw Him whom he had loved on earth standing in the midst of the heavenly assembly.

Jesus makes his appearance in John's vision in the form of a Lamb which had been slain, but John knew who he was. The slaughtered Lamb approached the throne of the Father and took the book from His omnipotent hand. The elders then fell at the Lamb's feet, casting down their crowns before him. Suddenly, the shouts of praise to the Lamb from hundreds of millions of angels

filled the heavens. It is here, when the Lamb begins to open the Seven Seals, the book which was forbidden to all but Christ Jesus, that the revelation of the sequence of end-time events begins to unfold.

SEAL NO. 1: A White Horse (6:2)

When Jesus opened the First Seal, John saw one riding a White Horse, having a bow, and a crown was given to him. He went forth, conquering and to conquer. This does not represent any military conquest. That occurs during the time of the Red Horse, which comes next. This is spiritual warfare. Riding on a white horse is like Jesus (Rev.19:11). This rider is a spirit of deceit, inspiring men to claim to be sent from God when they are not (Mt.24:3-6; 2Pet.2:1-2). We know that, in order to make warfare against the Church, Satan has carefully altered his plan of attack to appear as "an angel of light" (2Cor.11:14), and that he inspires unordained ministers to proclaim with a passion unordained gospels in the name of Jesus (2Cor.11:13,15). This spirit on a White Horse indicates that as this age nears its conclusion, Satan will multiply his efforts to inspire unordained men to preach and that he will succeed in deceiving men concerning the things of Christ.

One evening, a few days before he died, as Jesus sat on the mount of Olives, some of his closest disciples came and privately asked him what would be the sign of the end of the world, and of his return to earth. The scene is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. There, with Peter, James, John, and Andrew, the Lord of heaven and earth quietly described the epochal events which would precede his return to earth and the end of the world. He began his prophetic discourse by saying, "**Many shall come in my name...and shall deceive many.**"

In the last hundred years, "Christian" sects have multiplied in unprecedented numbers (and most of them proclaiming that Jesus could return at any moment). No age has seen what we are experiencing now, in regard to the multiplicity of "Christian faiths". At present, we may have as many as a thousand "Christian" sects, somber testimony to the success of this White Horse's cunning and cruel campaign against the fellowship of the saints. And we see by this that we have passed this first sign of the beginning of the end. This unclean spirit of false religion has in great measure accomplished its evil purpose. So numerous and contradictory are the "Christian" doctrines now being offered to men that even many children of God can't believe that anyone really knows the singular truth of the gospel, nor that seeking God will really accomplish much in the way of knowing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the "one faith" of the kingdom of God.

The difficulty we have in discerning Satan's works is that we entertain wrong ideas about God, about good and evil. There is much that looks good to men that is evil, and vice versa. Solomon observed that "**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death**" (Prov.14:12). To that, an elder in the faith, Brother Joseph Murray, adds, "*There is a way that seemeth wrong unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of life.*" Both sayings are true.

To discern right from wrong is something that no newly converted or ill-instructed child of God can do (Heb.5:11-14). One of Satan's greatest fears is that the Church will pursue the knowledge of God and learn that what he is, is what we, as carnal men, like. He is handsome, intelligent, charming, and courteous. But he doesn't love the things of the Spirit of God. If he were your neighbor, you'd like him. He would feed your pet while you're out of town. He is hard-working and well organized. But his heart is far from submission to the will of God. For just one of many examples of how closely he resembles what is holy, one need only compare the precious stones which cover him (Ezek.28:13) with the precious stones which adorned the breastplate of Israel's High Priest (Ex. 28:17-20). In the Church's warfare, we are not dealing with an enemy that is compulsive or indolent. We are, in fact, wrestling against an enemy who knows God far better than do most of God's own children. Our divisions and confused doctrines, inspired by the unclean spirit on a White Horse, testify to that truth as well as any scripture could.

SEAL NO. 2: A Red Horse (6:4)

As a natural result of the splintering of the Church into ever more numerous sects, the saving influence of the Church on the world is diminished. A divided, confused Church loses respect among men. When the Church's preserving influence is lost, its ability to be the "salt of the earth" is lost. As a result, moral corruption and strife increase. It is not surprising, then, that when this next Seal was opened, John saw a Red Horse turned loose upon the earth, carrying a spirit which had authority to take peace from earth. There will be an explosion of contempt for authority. Men will hate and kill one another. Sitting on the Mount of Olives, Jesus said, "**Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars**" (Mt.24:6).

We are living in the time of this Red Horse, but we have not gone beyond it. Such widespread rebellion and angry discontent has never been seen on earth as is now routine. I believe that at this moment, in 1992, we are well into the effect of this troublesome spirit on the earth. How much more widespread the conflicts will grow only God can tell, but I believe that conditions can become much worse. Jesus himself added to his description of this time of strife by saying further, "**Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom**" (Mt.24:7a).

SEAL NO. 3: A Black Horse (6:5-6)

The spirit upon this horse carried a pair of balances in his hand, and there was said unto him, "**A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and see that you do not hurt the oil and the wine.**" A "measure" was a dry measure equivalent to a quart. It was a day's ration for an ordinary man, and a "penny" was an ordinary working man's daily wage (Mt.20:2). This mysterious phrase in Revelation 6:6 refers to some sort of international economic reorganization, a rationing system or redistribution of wealth. In Jesus' order of events, in Matthew 24, I can find no reference to this, but one thing is certain: it is a landmark event which has to do with world-wide commerce. Inasmuch as this event is next in the order of prophetic events, we who are living now will probably live to see it. Since oil and wine are so often associated with the Church, the commandment, "**Do not hurt the oil and the wine**" may indicate that the Church's needs will be supplied during this extraordinary restructuring of the world's monetary system. But exactly how this Third Seal prophecy will be fulfilled only God, and time, will tell.

SEAL NO. 4: A Pale Horse (6:8)

With the opening of the Fourth Seal, the spirit of Death appeared on a Pale Horse, with a spirit called Hell following him. These two spirits were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with natural disasters, disease, and war. In perfect agreement with this, Jesus said to his disciples gathered around him on the Mount of Olives, *"There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places"* (Mt.24:7b). With the onslaught of incurable disease, incessant strife among nations, and environmental disasters seemingly inevitable, the death of one or two billion people as a result is no longer unimaginable. We have already seen that some tyrants are willing to poison the earth when their hold on power is threatened; so, man-made ecological disasters may well play a part in the death of so many people. As tragic as these events are, however, Jesus clearly states that *"the end is not yet."* On the contrary, he gives us this sobering assessment: *"All these are the beginning of sorrows."*

SEAL NO. 5: (6:9)

When the Lamb opened this Seal, souls of martyrs in heaven cried out to God for vengeance, but they were told that others must die for the name of Jesus as they had done. It is during the days of this Seal that this second group of martyrs attain that noble title, during a great persecution of the Church which occurs here.

In Matthew 24:9-22, Jesus described these events in these words, *"They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you. And ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended [surrender their faith], and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.... For then shall be GREAT TRIBULATION, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. But for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."* Note that the Church is still here, suffering these things. The Church is not yet "caught up to meet the Lord".

Paul says the antichrist shall be revealed and a great number of believers will abandon the faith BEFORE the return of Jesus, and he exhorted the saints not to be disturbed by those who taught that Jesus would return before that time (2Thess.2:1-9). Here in Revelation also, the Rapture comes only after the great "falling away", as Jesus plainly taught in Matthew 13:40-43. After this time of great persecution against those who remain steadfast in holiness, John saw in his vision so vast a multitude of martyred saints in heaven that he could not count them (Rev.7:9-14). Indeed, this will be a very bloody time, called "great tribulation" not only by Jesus (Mt.24:21), but also by the heavenly elder who spoke with John (Rev.7:14). It is a tribulation, one should notice, which will precede the Rapture of the faithful by a number of years. The Rapture is still years away.

An exciting aspect of this time is that the true gospel will at long last be preached again. When Jesus said, "This gospel" shall be preached, he knew that his prophecy would not be fulfilled by missionaries sent by a particular denomination, proclaiming that sects' brand of the gospel. They do not carry "this gospel" of the kingdom who carry any other than the singular doctrine of God, accompanied with the power of the Holy Ghost. This time of the Fifth Seal will witness both the greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God and the greatest slaughter of the faithful ever experienced by the Church.

Finally, we note that, as with the Seals already opened, the events of this Seal understandably follow as a result of the preceding one. Such widespread suffering and loss of life as occurs in the Fourth Seal could very well spark an earnest repentance and seeking of God among the nations, a great revival of faith and obedience to Christ Jesus, and a subsequent persecution of those who do submit to the truth of the gospel.

SEAL NO. 6: (6:12-17)

John saw, when the Sixth Seal was opened, God's righteous response to the slaughter of so many saints. A great earthquake shook the earth, moving every mountain and island to a different location. The sun turned black, and the whole moon became like blood. The sky split, and terror struck the hearts of men. As an indication of the awareness of God's hand in these awesome events, which awareness the great revival will have caused, many men mistakenly feared that "judgment day" had come, and ran in terror to hide in the caves of the earth from the wrath of God (Rev.6:15-17). The true fear of God, however, is an abiding, comforting fear, neither triggered nor diminished by immediate circumstances. Men will recover from this temporary, carnal fear of God's wrath, to continue their normal course of ungodly living, without regard to the judgment of God. As soon as these temporary disturbances of the natural order subside, men will resume their customs, "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (Mt.24.37-39; Lk.17:24-30).

During this time of the Sixth Seal, four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth, hold the winds. There is no wind on earth until the 144,000 "servants of God" are sealed in their foreheads. Unless these 144,000 people are Jews who are converted to Christ during this time, I do not know who these are.

SEAL NO. 7: (8:1)

When the Seventh Seal was opened, the inhabitants of heaven, sensing the terrible anger of Almighty God, remained absolutely silent about half an hour. Trumpets were given to each of the seven angels who stand before God. Another angel offered a large amount of incense mingled with the prayers of the saints upon God's golden altar, and the smoke from this offering rose from the altar before God. Then, filling the censer with fire from the altar, the angel cast the fire to the earth, and there were lightning, thunder, noises, and an earthquake. After this, the seven angels prepared themselves to sound their trumpets.

As an indication of when the Rapture will occur, we may refer to Paul's warning that the translation of the saints will occur "at the last trump". Thankfully, we are not left in the dark as to how many trumpet blasts there will be. Taking Paul's words alone, we would be in the dark as to how many trumpet events we should expect, but with John's revelation came the good news that there were only seven trumpet events which would precede the Lord's appearing. By such uniting of the scriptures, guided by the Spirit of Truth, the Church will walk in the light and not be taken by surprise, as the world will be, at the coming of the Lord (1Thess.5:2-4).

"As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

PART THREE

The Seven Trumpets

Revelation 8:6 - 14:16

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

As with the Israelites in Egypt, when God's children suffered the earlier plagues with the heathen but were spared the latter ones, so it appears to be with these plagues. When the Seals were opened, events transpired which affected all men on earth, including the saints. Now, through the next seven plagues, the plagues are, at least in part, directed only at those without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the "seal of God" (Rev.9:4; Eph.1:13; Acts 1:4-5).

1ST TRUMPET (8:7)

When the first angel sounded, hail and fire, mingled with blood were cast upon the earth. One third of all trees and all green grass were burned up.

2ND TRUMPET (8:8-9)

At the Second Trumpet's sound, something like a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea. One third of the sea became blood. One third of all creatures living in the sea died, and one third of ships were destroyed.

3RD TRUMPET (8:10-11)

When the third angel sounded his Trumpet, a great, burning star fell from heaven, ruining one third of earth's fresh water supply. As a result, "many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter." The name of the flaming star is called "Wormwood".

4TH TRUMPET (8:12)

When the Fourth Trumpet sounded, a third part of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were stricken. A third part of both day and night were lost. This could refer to a shortening of an earth day by an increase of rotational speed, caused by earth's cataclysmic collision with the star, "Wormwood".

Earlier, the first four Seals were clearly set apart from the last three, as the Four Horses symbolized. Here, the first four Trumpets are set apart from the last three by an angel's cry: *"Woe, Woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the trumpets of the three angels which are yet to sound!"*

5TH TRUMPET (9:1-11)

When this angel sounded, a star fell from heaven, and to him (the star) was given the key of the "Bottomless Pit". This pit is not hell. It is a mysterious place designed by God as a holding place for evil creatures which are to be used, or reused, by God for destructive purposes. Satan himself is cast into this pit during the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, only to be released at the end to deceive the nations once more. When this angel opened the pit, smoke arose as the smoke from a great furnace, darkening the sun and the air. Out of the billowing smoke came locusts with scorpion-like power, but they were commanded to hurt nothing and no one - except men without the seal of God. They were not allowed to kill men, but merely torment them with excruciating pain for five months.

These locusts which John saw are exceptionally strange creatures. Ordinary locusts are short-horned grasshoppers. But these creatures were shaped like horses prepared for battle, with crowns like gold on their heads, faces like men, hair like women, lion-like teeth, breastplates of iron-like toughness, and exceedingly noisy wings. Their tails were like scorpions, with stings, and their ruler was the angel of the pit, whose name is "Destroyer".

"One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter."

6TH TRUMPET (9:13 - 11:14)

When the Sixth Trumpet was blown, a voice from the golden altar gave the command, *"Loose the four angels bound in the river Euphrates"*. They were loosed to bring about the destruction of one third of all men by an army of horsemen. The number of the army of horsemen was 200,000,000, but the horses are such as have never been seen on earth. They had breastplates of fire, and jacinth (reddish-orange precious stone also called hyacinth), and brimstone. The heads of the horses were as lions, and from their mouths went fire and smoke and brimstone. One third of humanity was killed by these three things. Their tails were like serpents, and their power was not only in their mouths but in their tails. Still, the survivors of this carnage continued to worship contrary to the will of God, and they refused to cease from murder, fornication, thievery, and sorceries.

Chapter Ten in Revelation can be confusing, because it is given to us here, but it describes the situation which will exist during the days of the Seventh Trumpet. Its being given here suggests that an effort will be made at this Sixth Trumpet time to warn the nations of the nearness of the end. We are told that a mighty angel descended from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow upon his head. His face shone as the sun, and his feet were as pillars of fire. In his hand was a little book, opened. He set his right foot upon the sea, and his left, upon the earth, and he cried with a lion-like voice. When he did so, Seven Thunders "uttered their voices", but John was forbidden to write what he heard them say. The mighty angel then lifted up his hand and swore by God that in the days when the seventh angel blows his Trumpet, time shall be no more. In those days, says the angel, when the seventh angel begins to sound the final Trumpet, the mystery of God shall be finished.

The mystery of God, said Paul to the Gentile Church, is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col.1:26-27). This mystery will be "finished" when the "fulness of the Gentiles" has come into the Church. That blessed door by which we Gentiles have for two millennia come to Christ will be forever shut by God. This searing of the nations' minds against the way of holiness is associated

with the Resurrection of the Just, at the final Trumpet, and with an awakening of the Jews to the truth of the gospel of Jesus (Rom.11:15,25).

John was told by a voice from heaven to approach the mighty angel, to take the little book from the angel's hand, and to "eat it up." The little book was sweet in John's mouth, but it turned his stomach bitter. Then the mighty angel said to John, ***"Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."***

Immediately after this, and without being told why, John was directed to measure the temple of God in heaven, the altar, and those who worship in the temple (Rev.11:1). John was forbidden, however, to measure the court of the temple, which is Jerusalem. The reason John was not allowed to measure the court, is that the court of the temple was ***"given unto the Gentiles. And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."*** This Gentile oppression of the Jews will be used by the Lord to soften their hearts toward the gospel of Christ Jesus. Many look for a temple of God to be built in Jerusalem before the Millennial Reign, but even if one is built, it will not be the temple of God, for God ***"dwelleth not in temples made with hands"***. The Church is the only temple of God on earth.

God courts the hearts of the Jews during these days of the Sixth Trumpet by sending His Two Witnesses to prophesy in Jerusalem for 1,260 days (this equals about three and a half years). These two mysterious men had power to stop the rain during the time of their prophesying (as Elijah did), and to turn water to blood and send plagues (as Moses did). These two men tormented the earth because of the plagues with which they chasten evil men. If any man attempts to harm these Two Witnesses, fire will come from their mouths and kill him, making these two holy men seem untouchable as they boldly speak to the Jews in Jerusalem of the things of God in Christ Jesus. The nations of the earth, however, abhor these two men because of the plagues with which they afflict the earth.

As to the identity of these Two Witnesses, there are only clues. An indication that these Two Witnesses are not Gentiles is that the Gentile Church has been given no authority physically to punish those who oppose the gospel (Jn.18:36), as these two prophets do. Indeed, the Church has been commanded to exercise no such authority (Mt.5:38-42). Civil authority belonged to the Old Testament children of God, not to the Church. These two men certainly do not "turn the other cheek". It would be sin for Gentile believers to punish men for unbelief, seeing that the Church has never been given authority to do so. Secondly, we know that no one can bear witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ without the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:8; 5:32; 1Cor.12:3), for receiving the Holy Ghost is the only way we have of experiencing his glory and, therefore, knowing that God has glorified Jesus to be "both Lord and Christ". Moses and Elijah, however, are two Old Covenant men who could preach from experience of Jesus' glory, even without the Holy Ghost, for they witnessed Jesus in a supernatural form before the Holy Ghost was even given (Lk.9:29-31). Therefore, as the only two Old Testament characters who could bear witness to Jesus' glory without receiving the Holy Ghost, they could be his witnesses before being given the Spirit of life (Rev.11:11) and are the most likely candidates to be the Two Witnesses here in Revelation Eleven.

After the Two Witnesses preach of Christ to the Jews for three and one half years, the man who is called "the Beast" is loosed from the "Bottomless Pit", and to the world's utter astonishment and joy, contends with and kills the Two Witnesses. Thus he endears himself to all unbelieving men. This "Beast" is not an animal; he is a man who is completely given over to the beastly nature of man. He makes himself appear as the savior and lover of all men by ridding the earth of the Two Witnesses. So happy are the nations that these two prophets are dead that they refuse to bury them, choosing rather to leave their bodies lying in the streets of Jerusalem for three days, as they celebrate and send gifts to one another. After three days, however, God raises them up, and calls them into heaven. Though all men tremble at the sight of their ascension, the Beast remains their hero. Immediately following their ascension to heaven, a tenth of Jerusalem is destroyed and 7,000 men die in a great earthquake that strikes. Those who survive this both fear God and give Him glory, seeing His hand in it.

"The Second Woe is past, and, behold, the Third Woe cometh quickly."

7TH TRUMPET (11:15 - 15:8)

"The Last Trump"

"And the seventh angel sounded. And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and a great earthquake, and great hail."

When this Seventh Trumpet has sounded, and as Jesus said would happen immediately before he came for his Church (Lk.21:25-28; Mt.24:30a; Joel 2:30), a great wonder appears in heaven (Mt.24:30a). In effect, God uses the sky as a sort of movie screen by which He Himself personally preaches to the earth with the sun, moon, and stars, about His Son. What He actually will do is present to the inhabitants of earth a history lesson. With miraculously produced scenes in the heavens, God will portray the major events in His Son's earthly life: birth in Israel, Satan's attempt (through King Herod) to murder the child, Jesus' ascension to the Father, the cleansing of heaven, and the warfare of the saints on earth against "the rulers of darkness".

The message which men behold in the sky is this: A woman [Israel] in the agonies of childbirth appears in the sky, clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars [the twelve tribes]. Another wonder then appears in heaven: A great red Dragon [the Devil] with seven heads adorned with seven crowns and ten horns. ("Dragon", in the Scriptures refers to any kind of untamable, dangerous beast: "Whale" in Gen.1:21; Ezek.32:2; and Job 7:12; "Serpent" in Ex.7:9-12; "Sea Monster" in

Lam.4:3). The Dragon stood before the woman, ready to eat the child when it was born, a reference to King Herod's futile attempt to find and to kill the baby Jesus.

Next, in this wonder which appears in the sky, the baby boy was born who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. The child was caught up to God and to His throne (the ascension of our Lord in Acts 1), and the woman was given two wings of an eagle, with which she fled to her prepared place of safety in the wilderness for 1,260 days. We aren't told what the two eagles' wings represent, nor where or what the wilderness is, nor yet when the 1,260 days [three and a half years] of hiding take place in Israel's history. What is certain is that Satan's wicked assault on Israel occurred sometime after the ascension of Jesus into heaven (Rev.12:13). This could refer to the unprecedented slaughter of the hapless Jews by Roman legions led by Titus, future Emperor of Rome, in 70 A.D. His savage destruction of Jerusalem was so complete that virtually no stone was left upon another.

Next to appear on God's heavenly screen was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the Dragon and his angels. They did not punch each other and throw grenades. This was spiritual warfare, the same warfare anyone faces when he dares to bear witness to the truth. The Devil attempted to overthrow the will of the angels to obey God with cunningly fabricated lies about God, and he succeeded in deceiving one third of them. When, after Jesus' ascension, the Devil and his angels were cast down to the earth, he was much more successful in his deceit than he was in heaven. In heaven, he deluded only one third of the angels. Here on earth, he "deceived the whole world". That is a 100% success rate. Thanks be to God that, when the Devil was cast out to the earth, God sent us the Holy Ghost that we might be able to overcome Satan's craft and might. Without the aid of the Spirit, we would be absolutely unable to discern and withstand the craftily spun lies of Satan.

Satan's being cast out of heaven occurred after Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9), when Jesus, by the power of the Spirit, reconciled heaven to the Father (Col.1:20; Heb.9:23). Heaven had to be cleansed to make it a fit place to offer the eternal sacrifice (Heb.9:23). This is the time when Satan was cast out of the kingdom of God (Jn.12:31; 16:11), for this is the time when earthly materials were made ineffectual in the pursuit of salvation. The feasts and holy days of Israel, circumcision, special garments for worship, and the sacrifices required by the Law, all were made perfect by being changed from natural to spiritual commandments. Ritualistic water cleansings, including John's baptism of water which introduced Christ to Israel, and every other ceremonial work of the Law which employed earthly material was nailed with Jesus to the cross (Eph.2:14-17). **"They that worship the Father must worship him in spirit and in truth", said Jesus, "For the Father seeketh such to worship him."** By purchasing with his sacrificial death the Holy Ghost baptism for men, the only baptism which now is efficacious for salvation, Jesus made that form of worship which God desires a living possibility for each of us.

Satan fell to earth "as lightning" (Lk.10:18) and, filled with rage at being rejected by God, he persecuted the woman, to whom was given two wings of an eagle, so that she could fly to her special place in the wilderness. The Serpent (another of the Devil's titles) then cast a flood out his mouth to try to drown the woman, but the earth helped her and opened its mouth to swallow the flood. Frustrated in his evil attempt to destroy Israel, the Dragon then went to war with the remnant of her seed: the Church. Thus ends the "movie" which God the Father, in great mercy and compassion, presents to the world, pleading for the last time for Gentile sinners to repent and believe the gospel before the door for the Gentiles is forever closed.

The ruler called "the Beast" began his ascent to power during the time of the Sixth Trumpet, not now during the Seventh Trumpet. Otherwise, he could not have been alive to kill God's Two Witnesses. However, his greatest work against the Church takes place during this time of the Seventh Trumpet, and so, John waits until now to give us most of the details concerning the Beast.

The Beast rose out of the sea (Rev.13:1). This means simply that the Beast is of man. We are plainly told that "great waters" represents **"peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues"** (Rev.17:15). We are also told that the Beast came from the Bottomless Pit, indicating that this consummately wicked ruler has previously lived on earth! Instead of being allowed to die and go to hell with the rest of the wicked, he is preserved in this strange Pit, to be used again by Satan to persecute the faithful saints and, later, Israel. Both Daniel in ancient Babylon and John here on the Isle of Patmos refer to this man as a king (Dan.7:17-25; Rev.17:10-11), a king that **"was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the Bottomless Pit"** (Rev.17:8). In other words, he is an evil king who has already lived on earth, but is not here now, yet shall return to reign again. Whoever he is, he was so effective as Satan's agent of hatred that Satan requested, and received from God, permission to use him again.

The Beast, like the Dragon, had seven heads and ten horns (12:3 and 13:1), and upon his seven heads names of blasphemy. The Devil's crowns are on his seven heads, and represent seven kings (Rev.17:10) who have been especially used by Satan to persecute the Jews and the Church. The Beast's crowns are on his ten horns, and the ten horns are ten kings especially controlled by the Beast (Rev.17:12). The Beast is further described figuratively as a leopard with bear's feet and a lion's mouth. This shows a relationship between the Beast and the three great world powers of human history which preceded him, for in Daniel 7, the three great kingdoms which precede the Beast's government are described as (1) a lion, (2) a bear, and (3) a leopard. The Beast, being described as a combination of all three of these, will "sum them up", so to speak, being their culmination in world history.

The Devil will give the Beast his power and his seat and great authority. Power over all the earth will be his alone (Dan.7:23). Someone, or some group, resenting the Beast's acquisition of all governmental authority, attempting an assassination, will deliver to the Beast a grievous, mortal wound. However, his mortal wound is miraculously healed, causing the world to marvel at him all the more. All whose names are not in the book of life will worship the Dragon and the Beast, saying to one another, **"Who is like unto the Beast? Who is able to make war with him?"** It is not surprising that all the world should do this. After all, who could make war with such a one as was able to slay God's Two Witnesses? A supernatural ability is also given to the Beast to speak great things (Dan.7:8,25). He brazenly and convincingly blasphemes God, His tabernacle, and all who dwell with Him in heaven. Nevertheless, he will be allowed to continue in power for three and a half years (Dan.7:25), making war with and overcoming the saints (Dan.7:21), and hating Israel with a passion.

The three reasons the Beast is so admired and trusted by the world are: (1) He seemingly returns from the dead. He has already reigned on earth as a king (Rev.17:8-11), and while he reigned he was so valuable to Satan as a persecutor of God's family that he has been preserved in the Bottomless Pit to be used again in Satan's final assault on the saints. During the time of the Sixth trumpet, he will be loosed from the Bottomless Pit, to return to this life and rule on earth again as the greatest enemy which either the Church or Israel has ever faced. (2) He alone is able to rescue the earth from the plagues and preaching of God's Two Witnesses. All others who attempted to do so were killed by those two prophets. (3) He receives an assassination wound from which it is impossible to survive, yet he miraculously recovers from it. He seems to the world to be virtually indestructible.

After the Beast ascends to power, another beast will arise out of the earth [the Church], having two horns like a lamb [like Jesus] and the voice [doctrine] like a Dragon [the devil]. In the presence of the Beast, he exercises the same power as the Beast, and causes the earth and those who live in it to worship the Beast whose deadly wound was healed, and commands that men should construct an image of the Beast. He has such miraculous power that he is able to give life to the image of the Beast, so that it speaks. The image itself, speaking by the power of the second beast, orders that all who will not worship him should be killed. This second beast, the False Prophet, shall also cause all men to receive a mark in their right hand or in their forehead, and makes it illegal for anyone to buy or sell unless he receives the mark, or name of the Beast, or number of his name. The number of the Beast is 666.

This second beast is a backslidden Spirit-filled minister. We know this, because no one in the Bible qualifies to be a "false prophet", as this man is called, without first being truly in the service of God. And the only men truly sent by God to the Church are Spirit-baptized men, and just a few of them. A false prophet is a true prophet who has "forsaken the right way" for earthly gain. This beast will be a man of great influence in the Church. He may tell true, thrilling stories of how God spared his life through the "Great Tribulation", and with the Church may have survived untouched the plague of the tormenting pain of the Fifth Trumpet locusts. But his unstable heart is lifted up in pride and quietly, profoundly turns from righteousness to covetousness.

Through the efforts of the Beast and the False Prophet, the Church (and, later, the nation of Israel) is put to the final, but fiercest test of faith. It is instructive concerning the cunning way the Beast will accomplish his goals to notice that, although the world loves him, actual worship of the Beast is not begun in earnest until the False Prophet, an apostate servant of the Lord, becomes part of his government. He is the one who twists the world's admiration of the Beast into a hideous mockery of the worship of God. And because of his apostasy, he is given by God to Satan and is possessed by powerful demon spirits. Only the very elect will not be taken in by his craft.

It is here, as the Rapture of a terribly persecuted and weary Church nears, John saw on Mount Zion the Lamb of God with 144,000 attendants. They are men who had not been "defiled with women", but were virgins. They all had the Father's name written on their foreheads. These 144,000 sang a new song before the throne, the four six-winged creatures, and the twenty-four elders. No man could learn that song but the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth. These may be the eunuchs referred to in Isaiah 56:3-5.

Next, John saw an angel flying in the midst of heaven with the gospel, crying, "***Fear God, and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment is come.***" Then, another flying angel announced the fall of the spiritual city of Babylon, and a third angel followed them both, saying with a loud voice, "***If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture...and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image....***"

"Here is the patience of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ."

Concerning these end-time tribulations, Daniel prophesied, "***And they that understand among the people shall instruct many. Yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.... And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end.... And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake....***"

"Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

PART FOUR

THE RAPTURE

Revelation 14:14-16

The Rapture

John saw a white cloud, and one like the Son of man (Jesus) sitting on it, with a golden crown, and a sharp sickle. An angel coming out of the temple said, "***Thrust in thy sickle, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.***" And the earth was reaped. This is the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture of the Church ends the time of the Seven Trumpets (1Cor.15:52). Remarkably, the Rapture itself is given very little attention in Revelation. It is mentioned, but then John goes on to other events. We do learn from John that the saints are taken by Jesus into heaven, where they stand on the sea of glass before the Father's throne, singing and glorifying God (Rev.15:2-4).

Of course, in other scriptures more is revealed concerning the Rapture. One point which should be made is that the resurrection which takes place here is the "First Resurrection". This First Resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous, to which Jesus referred as "the resurrection of life" (Jn.5:29). Paul told the church at Thessalonica that the resurrected saints will ascend to meet the Lord first, then the living saints will be caught up with them. "***We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the***

voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Another important event which occurs at the Rapture is that the saints who are caught up are given new, immortal bodies. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, Paul wrote, *"Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."* To the Philippian church, Paul mentioned this blessed hope by saying, *"For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body..."* (Phip.3:20-21).

Those in the Church who are not faithful to the will of God will be deceived by the False prophet to worship the Beast and will not be caught up to meet the Lord. They will be condemned and cast out of the kingdom of God, left here on earth to suffer through God's Seven Vials of Wrath with the rest of the wicked. Jesus' parable of the Ten Virgins, five foolish and five wise (Mt.25:1-13), warns the Church that eternal salvation will be given to the faithful, diligent saints, not to the unfaithful, slothful ones. According to this parable, fully half of those who belong to Christ are cast away, eternally lost in the end. Knowing this, Paul kept the commandments of God which he himself preached, fearing *"lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (1Cor.9: 27). No one, sinner or born-again believer, will be saved in the end who has been disobedient to the word of God! When this awesome truth is pondered, these sobering words of the Master echo more loudly in the corridors of the heart: The love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

It is unwise for us to claim to have salvation now, before we have endured to the end. No one is saved, in the perfect meaning of that word, until he has been given his glorified body of which Paul spoke. The present manner of many in the Church to profess to have already "gotten saved" is truly a premature confession. According to Paul, our salvation draws nearer every day (Rom.13:11), because the coming of the Lord draws nearer every day. And according to Peter, salvation is "the end of our faith", not the beginning of it (1Pet.1:9). Virtually every parable Jesus spoke was a warning that some in the kingdom would be prepared for his return and some in the kingdom would not. Then, rather than confessing be saved, it would be wiser for us to confess Christ until he comes, bringing our salvation with him.

From the time of the Rapture, at the end of the days of the Seventh Trumpet, the time for the Gentiles to receive mercy from God is forever ended, as the mighty angel in the tenth chapter of Revelation declared, and the time for the Jews to be restored to God in Christ begins in earnest. In two scriptures from Romans, Chapter 11, Paul associates the end of the Gentile era with God's turning again to the Jews (vv.15,25). And that is what we see develop during the horrible, bloody time of the Seven Vials of Wrath.

"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." (Mt.25)

PART FIVE

The Seven Vials: The Seven Last Plagues Revelation 15:1 - 16:21

THE SEVEN VIALS

After the Church is caught up to be with the Lord, John sees them in heaven standing before the throne of God on a sea of glass "mingled with fire" (Rev.15:2). There, employing the harps of God in their worship, they joyously sang *"the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb"* (Rev.15:3). As John observed this gloriously happy sight, the temple in heaven was opened, and seven angels came out of the temple, dressed in pure, white linen, and their breasts girded about with golden belts. One of the four six-winged creatures at God's throne gave to each of these seven angels a Vial filled with the wrath of God, which each angel in his turn was to pour out on this unsuspecting world.

The faithful saints being now safely in heaven, the Vials of God's Wrath are poured out. So vehement is the wrath of God during these plagues that *"no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."* As opposed to the earlier plagues, which for the Church's sake were tempered with mercy and only partially destroyed what they touched, these last seven plagues are "poured out without mixture" and bring about especially cruel destruction. Every nation on earth, with the possible exception of the Jews in Palestine, drinks from this bitter cup of God's fierce anger. *"In them"*, wrote John, *"is filled up the wrath of God"* (Rev.15:1).

Incidentally, the parts of creation affected by these Seven Vials are in nearly identical order with the parts of creation affected by the Seven Trumpets. The scriptures referring to the earlier plagues of the Seven Trumpets are given, for comparison purposes.

FIRST VIAL (16:2)

The first angel poured his Vial of the wrath of God on the earth, and a noisome and grievous sore fell on men which had the mark of the Beast and worshipped his image. Compare Rev. 8:7.

SECOND VIAL (16:3)

The second angel then poured out his Vial on the sea, and the entire sea became as the blood of a dead man, killing every living soul in the sea. Compare Rev. 8:8-9.

THIRD VIAL (16:4)

The Third Vial was poured out upon earth's fresh water sources, turning every river and fountain of water on earth into blood. Compare Rev. 8:10-11. The angel who had been given this power over the waters, to turn them to blood, glorified God, saying, *"Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."* In response, another voice from the altar said, *"Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."*

FOURTH VIAL (16:8)

The fourth angel's Vial was poured upon the sun, and men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God, refusing to repent. Compare Rev. 8:12. As the day for Israel's acknowledgment of Jesus Christ approaches, said the ancient prophet Isaiah, *"the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days"* (Isa.30:26).

FIFTH VIAL (16:10)

The fifth angel was commanded to pour out his Vial of God's wrath upon the seat of the Beast, the seat given to him by Satan. As a result, his kingdom was filled with darkness, and his subjects gnawed their tongues in agony. Compare Rev. 9:1-11. Still, they blasphemed God in heaven for their pains and their sores and refused to repent. Isaiah prophesied, *"...they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish. And they shall be driven to darkness"* (Isa.8:21-22).

SIXTH VIAL (16:12)

The Sixth Vial was poured out upon the Euphrates River, and it was dried up, to make way for the kings of the east. These kings from the east march across the dried river bed of the Euphrates westward, toward the land of Israel. Compare Rev. 9:13- 19.

At this time, three unclean spirits "like frogs" came out of the mouth of the Devil, the Beast, and the False Prophet. These spirits are miracle-working demons, going out to deceive the nations into gathering their armies together to war against Israel, and they succeed in their mission. Inspired by Satan's hatred of the descendants of Abraham (the Church being now safely out of his evil reach), the nations of earth organize their armies in unprecedented numbers to annihilate the Jewish nation. But it is only to fulfill the purposes of God, for it is actually He, we are told, who gathers them together "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty", into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, "Armageddon". The Jews mobilize their small military force, but must know that resistance to these mighty, wicked armies is virtually useless.

"Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

SEVENTH VIAL (16:17)

When the seventh angel poured out his Vial into the air, a great voice from God's throne in the temple cried, *"It is done."* There followed voices, thunder, lightning, and John saw the greatest earthquake in history shake the earth, dividing Jerusalem into three parts. Cities around the world collapsed. This earthquake which strikes during the days of this Seventh Vial will remove every island on earth and throw down every mountain. Moreover, John saw in his vision giant hailstones fall upon men, about a talent in weight (some estimates of a talent's weight reach well over 100 pounds). Nevertheless, with no grace from God to repent, men continued to blaspheme God because of the plague of hail.

When God turned all the fresh water on earth to blood (third Vial), the angel of the waters praised God for his perfect justice. By the time of this Seventh Trumpet, God, in that same perfect justice, will have so shaken this planet, that man, who instead of submitting to the healing love of God in Christ, stubbornly persists in his own carnal, beastly nature, will be forced to live like beasts of the field, his elegant buildings shaken down, his cities devastated, and all the mighty works of men's hands in utter ruins. Even the geography of continents will be rearranged. *"Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."*

Isaiah spoke of these last days with these words, *"Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare. For the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage. And the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass on that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth"* (Isa.24:17-21).

Concerning the timing of the Second Coming of the Lord to reign on earth for a thousand years, we know that in Daniel's prophecies (2:40-44; 7:7-10,17-27) as well in Revelation, the Beast is in power when the two great events of the Church occur: the Rapture and, later, the Second Coming of Jesus. Knowing that the Beast's reign is three and a half years gives us an indication of how long the saints remain in heaven after the Rapture before returning with Christ to reign. The Church is still on earth during the earlier part of the Beast's three-and-a-half-year reign, persecuted by the Beast and his False Prophet. So, the time the raptured saints spend in heaven with Jesus, which is the time of the Seven Vials, must be less than three and a half years and may be as short as a few months. God Himself called it "a little moment" in Isaiah's prophecy of the saints' Rapture into the safety of God's heavenly chambers: *"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee. Hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity"* (Isa.26:20-21).

An important accomplishment of the Beast at an unspecified point in his short reign is the destruction of "Christianity" by the Beast and his ten horns, or ten kings. In our time, God is pleading for all who have received His Holy Spirit to come out of every denomination and avoid the wrath which is to come upon all sects which call themselves after the name of His Son (Rev.18:4-8). Catholicism, protestantism, and all other divisive pretenders to the faith of Christ Jesus will be outlawed by the Beast, their property confiscated, and, in all likelihood, staunch adherents to denominationalism killed, but not to their eternal benefit. To die for the Pope or for a sect is not to die for the Word of God. Whether denominational Christianity is destroyed by the Beast before the Rapture or here, during the Last Seven Plagues, is unclear, but when it happens, the true family of God everywhere will rejoice at the destruction of this once-mighty "Great Babylon" of religion (Rev.17 and 18), with her own definitions of "church", salvation, and of God.

The major event, however, during the time of these Seven Last Plagues is that the world, as never before, is turned against the Jews. Adolf Hitler's "final solution" will pale in comparison to this concerted effort of the nations to annihilate the Jews. All nations will participate in this monumental assembly of armies. The world will be deceived into viewing the Jews as a burden to humanity (Zech.12:3) and will move as one to rid the earth forever of them. Here is a chronological order of the events which immediately precede the Second Coming of Jesus to this earth: Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet deceive the world into marching against Israel and besieging the nation (Rev.14:17-19; Zech.12:1-2).

When the nations attack, the Jews are no match for the Beast and his armies. With the False Prophet boldly promising to the armies victory from God, the armies of the Beast cut a bloody swath across Israel, killing two of every three Jews in the country and carrying others away as slaves. Smoke from a thousand fires and screams of the dying fill the air. Finally, the ultimate prize of Jerusalem is within their grasp, and the enemies of Israel fight their way into the city against only pathetically inadequate resistance, brutalizing the populace, murdering, raping, and plundering as they confidently approach the completion of their merciless mission (Zech.13:8 through 14:2). Mournful cries of utter desperation rise to heaven from an exhausted, terrified, and helpless Jewish people. (The chronology continues in Part Six.)

PART SIX

The Second Coming of Jesus And the thousand-Year Reign of Christ Revelation 19 - 20:10

"I saw the Beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war"

THE SECOND COMING AND THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

The end of the Seventh Vial saw the Beast and his armies on the verge of annihilating the Jewish people. The Jews, manifestly without the ability to resist the Beast, pour out fervent, pleading prayers to God for His help, and with destruction in sight, their pleas bear with them the urgency, humility, and fear with which none but the most desperate of men can pray. As blood flows in the streets of the beloved city, the cruelty of the wicked soldiers is matched only by the passion of the prayers of Abraham's despairing descendants.

At this point, the weeping Jews brush away their tears to view more clearly the sight which suddenly appears in the sky. It is a man, with eyes "as a flame of fire", riding down from heaven on a white horse, followed by an army of beautifully clothed warriors upon white horses (Rev.19:11-16; Zech.14:3). It is Jesus, followed by the saints (Jude 14), coming to fight for his beloved Israel. As Jesus approaches earth, the Beast and the kings with him defiantly rage against the Lord and marshal their armies for battle with Jesus and the saints (Rev.19:19), but an angel of God standing in the sun cries out an invitation to birds of prey and scavenging beasts of the field to come to the feast that God is about to make for them, a feast of the flesh and blood of earth's mighty men (Rev.19:17-18; Ezek.39:17-20): ***...thus saith the Lord God, "Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field. Assemble yourselves, and come. Gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, and ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God... So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward."***

Continuing his descent toward Jerusalem, Jesus lights upon the Mount of Olives and his power and wrath are so great that the mountain splits in half, making a great valley (Zech.14:4-5). Then, in righteous fury, and with nothing but his word, Jesus brutally slaughters all but a fraction of the armies of the Beast (Rev.19:21; Ezek.39:2). The slaughter is so great that blood flows like a river five feet deep for two hundred miles (Rev.14:20). Bodies and body parts are so widely strewn in the valleys and on the hills in Israel that a special task force has to be assembled to find and to bury them all, and even at that, seven months of continuous labor is required to complete the gruesome, smelly undertaking. "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years....They shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any of the forests, for they shall burn the weapons with fire. And they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God" (Ezek.39:9-10).

The Beast and the False Prophet are seized and are cast alive into the horrific Lake of Fire (Rev.19:20; Dan.7:11), there to ***"be tormented day and night for ever and ever."*** Satan, however, is thrown into the Bottomless Pit, reserved to be used a thousand years later to deceive the nations for the last time (Rev.20:1-3). Ezekiel 39:1-24 describes this battle at the coming of the Lord to rescue Israel and to begin his thousand-year reign on earth. ***"I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee. I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field, for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God."***

The Jews mourn in shame when they realize that Jesus is the one who has saved them (Zech.12:8-14). They repent before God in deep contrition for their unbelief and for the harm which their ancestors did to Jesus, their Friend. There is a nation-wide awakening to the truth of the gospel of Jesus, and, pleading with God for mercy, the Jews are washed from sin by the blood of the Lamb (Zech.13:1, 5-6) and restored to their long-lost intimate relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ***"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications. And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son...."***

It immediately becomes a crime in Israel punishable by death to practice any religion but the worship of God through Jesus Christ His Son (13:2-6). Jesus then organizes his kingdom on earth, with Jerusalem being the capital of the world (Zech.14:8-9; Dan.7:13-14; Isa.2:1-4; Mic.4:1-8). Both Isaiah and Micah spoke of the glory of this thousand-year reign of Christ on earth:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke strong nations afar off. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more...."

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares..."

So much damage has resulted from the reign of man, damage to the earth itself as well as to men, that the depth of peace which Jesus' reign will effect on this planet can scarcely be perceived. How it stretches our most colorful imaginations to picture scenes from this extraordinary era, such as these which Isaiah calls upon us to believe: The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed. Their young ones shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Isa.11:6-9).

Such joyous circumstances on this earth have not been experienced since Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of God in Eden. How good is God to offer it to us again, if we will but believe His word and walk in His ways! How rich is His mercy to all those who trust in Him! And how fierce is His wrath against all those who deny His power and His truth!

The faithful saints who were caught up alive and from the grave to meet Jesus in the air and returned with him to war with the Beast will be given, at his return, governmental responsibilities around the world according to the ability of each saint. With Christ, they will reign "with a rod of iron" over the ungodly nations which remain on the earth for one thousand years (Rev.20:4; Dan.7:26-27. Note also, Ps.149:4-9; 1Cor.6:2-3; Rev.2:26-27). Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, and John, who saw these things in a vision so long ago, with all the righteous who ever lived on earth, will in their appointed stations govern this world as it has always needed to be governed, in perfect justice and truth. So accustomed are we to money and clever people influencing the decisions of those in authority, we can scarcely imagine so blessed a condition as there shall be on earth. No lie will prevail. There will be no misunderstanding of the circumstances which saints must judge, for if a matter becomes too difficult, they will have Christ himself to whom they may appeal for guidance. And in all their judgments, the love and truth of God will guide them, for only those who walk in God's ways will be taken by Christ when he comes for his bride. Faithful Hur, who helped hold up Moses' failing arms, and Bezaleel who oversaw the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness, the unnamed young prophet who faithfully bore Elisha's message to Jehu, and the unnamed little girl who told mighty Naaman that he could be healed of leprosy by the God of Israel, Urijah and Zechariah, murdered for speaking the truth, and poor Lazarus of Luke 16, with Antipas the martyr of Jesus and millions of other men and women, little people in the sight of men, these will be the undisputed rulers of this earth, to the everlasting glory of their God.

Although there will be rejoicing among the saints during this thousand-year reign, among the nations there are occasional rebellions, especially when they are required to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles with the saints (Zech.14:16-21). This will not be the Old Testament version of the Feast of Tabernacles, when Israelites built huts, or booths, before the Lord to commemorate the forty years they travelled in tents through the wilderness (Lev.23:39-43). This will be a celebration of the Rapture, when the saints are liberated from their mortal "tents" and are *"clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"* (2Cor.5:2). In part, the envious nations of the earth will rebel because, they will have nothing to celebrate. They will still be bound to their mortal bodies. For them, death will still have the victory, and the grave will still have a sting.

And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain, there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and of all the nations that come not up.

At the end of the happy Millennial Reign of Christ, Satan is released from the Bottomless Pit to deceive the nations once more. As a result, the last conflict in eternity is staged. It will not be difficult for Satan to persuade the nations to rebel against the Ruler in Jerusalem who *"rules the nations with a rod of iron"*. We are told almost nothing about how Satan will accomplish this final deception or whom he will use. All we know is that the saints, gathered in Jerusalem before the Lord at that time, are surrounded by the armies of every unbelieving nation on earth, armies called by the ancient name, "Gog". But there is no consternation among the righteous. No alarm is sounded. Jesus does not even fight this battle, nor do the saints, for the Father reserves to Himself the privilege of final and absolute victory. The Father's exhortation to the Son to sit still (Heb.1:13) fits in no place better than this. Over 2,500 years ago, Ezekiel, the prophet in captivity, spoke of it, saying, *"In the latter years....Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm. Thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and thy bands, and many people with thee....And it shall come to pass, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face....And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood. And I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone."* Thus the Father ends all conflict forever. Ezekiel 38 describes this last battle at the end of the Millennial Reign.

PART SEVEN

The Final Judgment Revelation 20:11 - 22:21

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Immediately after the last battle at the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ, Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire, where the Beast and the False Prophet have been in torment since the beginning of the thousand years (Rev.20:10). After this, the "Second

Resurrection" takes place, the resurrection of all the wicked (Rev.20:11-15; Dan.7:9-10; 12:1-3). Sitting upon a white throne, Jesus judges the wicked and casts them also into the Lake of Fire, which is "the Second Death". This "Second Death" is a place of far more terror and torment than is hell. Hell is not eternal; it is nothing more than the present, temporary holding station for the wicked dead. The Lake of Fire is forever. Death and hell are themselves to be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Also at this time, Jesus judges the righteous, giving them their appointments of service to be fulfilled on the New Earth. Following the final judgment, this present earth and this present heaven are consumed by a great fire and are forever destroyed (Rev.21:1; Mt.24:35; 2Pet.3:7-14). Then God unveils the New Earth and the New Heaven which He has in store for those who love Him and keep His commandments.

John then sees the New Jerusalem descending from God out of Heaven upon the New Earth. This New Earth is the eternal dwelling place of the righteous, not heaven. The saints visited heaven for a short time during the Seven Last Plagues, but that is all the time the saints will ever spend there. Our place of eternal rest is the New Earth, where all tears and sorrow are at long last wiped away by the tender hand of the Father. The "last enemy", death, is finally destroyed. It is cast into the Lake of Fire, with hell and all other sources of pain and evil (Rev.21:1-4; 20:14). The New Jerusalem will be the capital city of the new planet, and most of the saints will live outside the city, in their appointed places on the New Earth. Gifts to the Father and the Son will be brought into the city from around the new world by happy saints (Rev.21:24-26). The city itself is constructed as a perfect cube, 1,500 miles high, 1,500 miles long and 1,500 miles wide (Rev.21:16). The last two chapters of Revelation contain descriptions of the New Jerusalem, a city of matchless splendor, along with exhortations for all who desire to enter that beautiful city to come to Jesus, freely to receive the remission of sins which he purchased for us with his own blood.

May God our holy Creator give to each of us the grace to take full advantage of the precious opportunity extended to all, to find refuge from the coming wrath of Almighty God in the mercy and love of Jesus His Son. To him who died for all belongs all praise and tribute, all devotion and esteem, to the eternal glory of his Father and ours, who is blessed forevermore.

"And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death...."

"And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates of the city. For without are dogs [homosexuals], sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"For I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book."

He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

"And behold, I live for evermore."

APPENDIX JERUSALEM

"The City of the Great King"
"Glorious Things are Spoken of Thee, O Thou City of God"

This is Jerusalem, as it probably appeared in the days of Jesus' earthly ministry. Viewing the beloved city, Jesus wept, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! How often I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."**

In Jerusalem reigned kings whose names are engraved in the sacred halls of righteousness, David and Josiah being chief among them all. And in Jerusalem reigned kings whose souls were as black as night, most notably, Manasseh, who for fifty-five years perverted the mind of the holy people until God swore that he would utterly destroy the nation.

Jerusalem was the center of all spiritual warfare. For every Isaiah there were a hundred Balaams. For every tear which trickled down the cheek of burdened Jeremiah, there were a thousand mocking glances from the false prophets who turned the people away from God's Law.

Against Jerusalem marched the greatest armies of the ancient world. The city was built, conquered, plundered, rebuilt, then conquered and plundered again, only again to be rebuilt. Canaanites, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Seleucids, Ptolemies, Romans, and others have all laid claims of various merit on Jerusalem, and others still do so, but it was promised to Abraham, the friend of God, and to his descendants through Isaac and Jacob.

Possession and repossession of Jerusalem is a cycle which has yet to see its end, for in the last days the holy city shall be conquered and plundered by the armies of the Beast who will come, only to be retaken - for the last time - by Jesus himself, who

will bring to Jerusalem the glory promised by God thousands of years ago - promises delivered to an skeptical populace by ostracized, holy men and women whose feet knew the streets of Jerusalem, and whose hearts knew to do the will of God.

General Order of End-Time Events From Revelation

Chapters 6-22

1. The Seven Seals.
2. The Seven Trumpets.
3. THE RAPTURE (The Resurrection of the Righteous).
4. The Seven Vials of Wrath.
5. THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS.
6. The Millennial Reign.
7. The Final Judgment (The Resurrection of the Unrighteous).

This is the order of end-time events as we find them in the book of Revelation. The following is a more detailed account of this same list:

Detailed Order of End-Time Events

Chapters 6-22

A. THE SEVEN SEALS.

1. The First Seal is opened.
 - a. White Horse.
 - b. A spirit of deception divides the church: unordained ministers.
2. The Second Seal is opened.
 - a. A Red Horse.
 - b. A spirit of strife and hatred is sent to trouble the whole world.
3. The Third Seal is opened.
 - a. A Black Horse.
 - b. A world-wide economic reorganization?
4. The Fourth Seal is opened.
 - a. A Pale Horse.
 - b. Through famine, disease, war, and beasts, 1/4 of all people die.
 - c. The Fifth Seal is opened: A time of great tribulation for the Church.
 - d. The Sixth Seal is opened: God plagues men with natural disasters.
 - e. The Seventh Seal is opened: More natural disasters, and seven angels are given Seven Trumpets.

5. THE SEVEN TRUMPETS.

1. The First Trumpet.
 - a. Hail and fire, mixed with blood, fall to earth.
 - b. One third of all trees and all grass is burned up.
2. The Second Trumpet.
 - a. Something like a burning mountain falls into the sea.
 - b. One third of the sea becomes blood, and one third of all sea creatures die.
3. The Third Trumpet.
 - a. A great, burning star falls.
 - b. One third of all fresh water is ruined, killing many men.
4. The Fourth Trumpet.
 - a. The sun, moon, and stars are struck.
 - b. One third of heavenly light is lost.
5. The Fifth Trumpet.
 - a. Strange, stinging locusts are loosed from the "Bottomless Pit".
 - b. Men are tormented for five months, unable to die.
6. The Sixth Trumpet.
 - a. An army of 200,000,000 slays one third of all people.
 - b. God's Two Witnesses prophesy in Jerusalem for three and a half years, vexing all nations with various plagues.
 - c. "The Beast" arises and becomes the world's hero by killing the Two Witnesses.
 - d. The Church is once again put through a great tribulation by the policies of the Beast and his "False Prophet".
7. The Seventh Trumpet.
 - a. A voice in heaven declares "It is done".
 - b. A wonder appears in the sky for the world to view, a wonder which proclaims the Lordship of Jesus. It is God's last call for Gentiles to turn to Christ. The catching away of the Church is at hand.

6. THE RAPTURE (THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS).

0. Jesus appears in the sky on a cloud.
1. Those who are dead in Christ are raised from the dead.
2. The living, faithful saints are then caught up into the air with those who have been raised to meet Christ.
3. Jesus takes the faithful to heaven, where they wait until the Seven Last Plagues are accomplished.
7. THE SEVEN VIALS OF WRATH (THE "SEVEN LAST PLAGUES").
0. The First Vial is poured out on earth.
 - a. A "noisome and grievous sore" comes upon men.
1. The Second Vial is poured out on the sea.
 - a. The entire sea becomes blood.
 - b. Every creature in the sea dies.
2. The Third Vial is poured out on the sources of fresh water.

All fresh water becomes blood.
3. The Fourth Vial is poured out on the sun.
 - a. The sun scorches men on earth.
 - b. In agony, men curse God.
4. The Fifth Vial is poured out on the seat of the Beast.
 - a. Darkness fills his kingdom.
 - b. Men gnaw their tongues for pain.
 - c. Men blaspheme God and do not repent of their evil deeds.
5. The Sixth Vial is poured out on the Euphrates River.
 - a. The Euphrates is dried up to make way for the kings of the east.
 - b. Three demons go out to deceive the world to attack Israel.
 - c. The armies of the earth gather at Armageddon.
6. The Seventh Vial is poured out into the air.
 - a. An earthquake, such as the earth has never experienced, strikes.
 - b. Every mountain and every island are moved.
 - c. The nations brutally attack Israel, killing two-thirds of the Jews in Palestine, and overrunning Jerusalem.
8. THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS.
0. Jesus rescues Israel from total annihilation.
 - a. The Beast and the False Prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire, and the Beast's army is butchered by Jesus.
 - b. The Devil is locked in the "Bottomless Pit" for a thousand years.
 - c. The Jews realize who Jesus is and repent.
 - d. The Jews are washed from their sins with the Holy Ghost.
9. THE MILLENNIAL REIGN
0. The saints of all ages reign for a thousand years with Jesus over the nations which remain on earth.
1. There are occasional rebellions, but Jesus rules with "a rod of iron".
2. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan is loosed from the Bottomless Pit.
 - a. He deceives the nations to attack Jesus and the saints at Jerusalem.
 - b. The Father rains fire and brimstone out of heaven on the nations.
10. THE FINAL JUDGMENT (RESURRECTION OF THE UNGODLY).
0. Satan joins the Beast and False Prophet in the Lake of Fire.
1. This earth and this heaven are destroyed.
2. All the remaining dead are raised for the judgment.
 - a. Jesus rewards the wicked with eternal torment.
 - b. Jesus rewards the righteous with a New Heaven and a New Earth, with a New Jerusalem as its capital city.

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