

Revelation's Blessings

Version 3



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Be assured, I will not respond unless asked to do so.

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Harold D. Thomas

Introduction

Revelation's Blessings is an expository (explanatory, informational, descriptive) writing on the Book of Revelation by Harold D. Thomas – a Christian with a compelling desire to (1) expound upon each chapter and verse, (2) make it easy to understand, and (3) make it available to all for free. Please forward this document (or the website address www.UniqueBibleStudies.com) to anyone that may benefit from reading the content.

This writing will be continually updated. Therefore, note the version number located directly under the title on the first page. To insure you have the latest version you may verify or download it from the website. In addition, a listing of each version with corresponding updates is provided at the end of the document.

I have used two different color fonts to facilitate reading of Revelation and supportive scripture.

1. Each sequential verse in Revelation is in the following text and color.

3Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

2. Supporting scripture is in the following text and color.

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” John 17:24-26

I highly recommend you read in small segments (i.e. one page, one section, or one chapter at a time). Some of the content may be “chewed” on for an extended time to enjoy all of “flavor” and “spiritual nutrients” of scripture. To facilitate “digestion” you will find that I sometimes incorrectly use dashes (–) and ellipses (...). My intent is to visually segment important points – and hopefully cause a visual pause in reading...reflection...and deeper understanding.

Revelation uses metaphors (comparison between two unlike things), symbolic language, dreams, visions, mysteries, and symbolisms. As such, there are some scriptures in Revelation that have varying interpretations – which can be sources of potential disagreement between believers. For this reason – when possible – varying interpretations are presented on topics when scripture is not specific. It is my desire to neither take an absolute position nor argue on any particular subject...other than God’s unmerited grace extended to all thru the sacrificial death of His Son and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We will never have full and complete understanding of all things until we are with Jesus. Until then, there are many things in life that require our faith and trust in God. But isn’t that what He wants from us anyway?

The term “revelation” may be defined as a disclosure of that which was previously hidden or unknown.

John, the author of Revelation is also known as John the Apostle and is the author of the Gospel of John, the first, second, and third epistles of John, as well as the book of Revelation.

Revelation is a vision of Jesus Christ and the future of Jesus Christ. Compared to the four Gospels – where Jesus is described with humility and with a lowly nature – Revelation reveals Jesus as He truly is; the ruler of the kings of the earth, the bridegroom and the head of the church, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the High Priest, and King and Judge.

Revelation is also prophetic in that it tells of future events...because as events unfold it will be a warning for those that do not believe...and as a comforter for those that do.

Chapter 1	Reveals Jesus Christ in his glorious glorified form (as we shall see Him).
Chapters 2 & 3	Jesus as He relates to His church.
Chapters 4 & 5	The Revelation of Jesus Christ as He receives the glory, honor, dominion and powers that He purchased thru his death on Calvary for the redemption of the world.
Chapters 6-18	Reveals Jesus Christ in His great judgment that He will bring upon the world for the sin and unrighteousness of man.
Chapters 19-22	Reveals the future of Jesus in His kingdom reigning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords forever and ever.

Chapter 1

¹The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ²who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

God gave it to Him (Jesus) to disclose and make known to His bond servants (us) what will occur in the last days. He (Jesus) sent an angel to communicate and show John what will happen in the future...and to reveal the glory of Jesus Christ (as we shall see Him). His glory is reflected in His love expressed for us in His prayer to the Father prior to His arrest and crucifixion.

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” John 17:24-26

Those that read aloud and those that hear and take to heart what is written in the Book of Revelation will be blessed if they take to heart: to embrace the words within our soul (mind, emotions and will) to cause transformation and preparation for what’s about to occur.

⁴John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. ⁷“Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”

John prays that the one and only source of peace comes from the grace (forgiveness of our sins) from the One who is, was and will forever be...God. The "seven spirits of God" are mentioned in Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; and 5:6. Revelation 1:4 mentions that the seven spirits are before God's throne. Revelation 3:1 indicates that Jesus Christ "holds" the seven spirits of God. Revelation 4:5 links the seven spirits of God with seven burning lamps that are before God's throne. Revelation 5:6 identifies the seven spirits with the "seven horns and seven eyes" of the Lamb and states: “which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” There are varying interpretations of the seven spirits of God:

- One view is that the seven spirits of God refer to seven angelic beings.
- Another view is based upon Isaiah 11:2 in that the seven spirits of God represent the divine attributes of the Holy Spirit; which include: (1) Spirit of the LORD, (2) Spirit of wisdom, (3) Spirit of understanding, (4) Spirit of counsel, (5) Spirit of power, (6) Spirit of knowledge, (7) Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

Verse 5, 6 and 7...John uses concise words that speak volumes of Jesus Christ:

- Faithful witness: Jesus Christ exemplified and testified of God.

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. John 14:8-11:

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Colossians 1:15

- Firstborn from the dead...the first to come to life after death.

...the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles. Acts 26:23

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. Colossians 1:18

- Ruler of the kings of the earth

...For there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Romans 13:1

The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. John 3:35

He is the head over every power and authority. Colossians 2:10

- Him who loves us

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed. I Peter 2:24

- Has freed us from our sins by His blood

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. Leviticus 17:11

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1st Peter 1:18-19

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1st John 1:5-9

- Made us to be a kingdom of priests to serve His God and Father

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1st Peter 2:4-5

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1st Peter 2:9

- To Him be glory and power forever and ever

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. Revelation 4:11

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Galatians 1:3-5

- Will return

Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Matthew 24:30

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going. John 14:1-4

- Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him

The following is based upon rationalized speculation / logical deduction. It is my belief that these words reveal that all persons (every eye) will witness the return of Jesus...including all that are alive on earth and all of those that have died (fallen asleep) – even those who pierced Him. Jesus gave us insight into life after death – and the ability to see – in the following scripture: Luke 16:19-31

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the

rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead. Luke 16:19-31

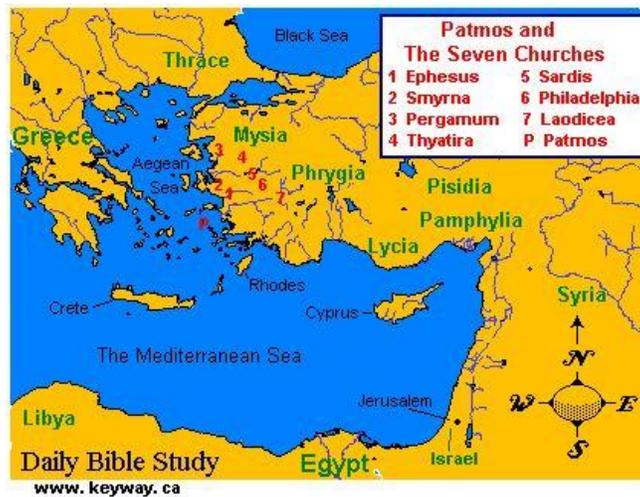
- All peoples on earth will mourn because of Him

Those who are alive on earth when Jesus Christ returns will know of their eternal fate – for they were warned. They will know that it is too late to be saved because they made a decision to reject Jesus Christ. They will know that their names are not written in the Book of Life. They will know that they will die a second death in the lake of fire...and they will mourn.

⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

⁹I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

John was exiled (banished) to the island of Patmos – a remote and small desert island in the Aegean Sea by Roman authorities because of his testimony (preaching) of Jesus Christ. During worship John heard a voice instructing him to write what he sees and send it to seven congregations of Christians.



¹²I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

When John turned around he first saw seven golden lampstands which symbolize seven churches (Revelation 1:20). As he continued to look more closely he saw Jesus Christ standing among the lampstands wearing humble, yet worthy raiment of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His white hair – white as snow – represents absolute purity and ageless wisdom. His eyes – like a blazing fire – are able to illuminate and reveal the innermost reality of who we are – for when He looks at us we are only able to bow on our knees, ask for forgiveness, and worship Him who died for us.

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” Isaiah 1:18

¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

The loving assurances of Jesus comprise our eternal hope. He is the first, He is the last, and He is the only one that overcame death, is alive, and now holds the keys (has power over) death and Hades.

Hades and the lake of fire

The term of Hell is commonly used to refer to both Hades and the lake of fire. However, Hades and the lake of fire are different. Hades is a temporary place of torment, and will be thrown into the eternal Lake of Fire (along with death) after the final Great White Throne Judgment.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-14)

The first death is physical....those thrown into the lake of fire will experience a second and eternal death of their soul and spirit.

Jesus Christ provided us with a glimpse of Hades when He told the story of The Rich Man and Lazarus.

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ Luke 16:19-26

¹⁹“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Jesus instructed John to document what he has seen, the things which are (chapters 2 & 3 regarding the seven churches), and the things that will occur in the future (the remaining chapters in Revelation).

It is clear the seven lampstands represent the seven churches. However, there are different interpretations as to the representations of the seven stars. Some believe they are angelic beings that are messengers and/or guardian angels assigned to each church. Some believe the stars are leaders in each church. Whether angelic or human, these stars are in the right hand of Jesus – which represents power, authority, and overseeing of each body of believers. Note that I did not say the word control...for each person and each group of believers has the ability and freedom to make individual and collective decisions.

Chapter 2

All of us can relate our personal lives to one or more of the seven churches. As you read the next two chapters it's important to be sensitive and open to the words spoken to each church...especially if the words pierce your heart and reveal reality and truth in your life...including the depth of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Each one of us has a need for a closer intimate walk...and has room to grow in spiritual maturity...until we're with Him in Paradise.

To the Church in Ephesus

¹“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ²I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. ⁴Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. ⁵Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. ⁶But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

The Church in Ephesus seemed to be doing everything correctly. However, like many, we sometimes get lost in the day-to-day activities and forget, abandon, and sometimes even reject the most important point...the love we first had towards the One that saved us. Christ asked the Church in Ephesus to “get out of the weeds, stand back and look at the forest” and see how far they have fallen from what's most important. They are forgiven, however, they need to remember, and hold onto, and rest upon God's love and grace in everything they (we) do...for the Glory of Him...who alone is worthy.

Practices of the Nicolaitans

The Nicolaitans practiced unrestrained indulgence in flesh and sin because they believed that an intellectual understanding (and acceptance) in God's unmerited grace (through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ) was sufficient for salvation. They taught that fulfilling the desires of the flesh was permitted and had no effect upon the soul. This belief of the Nicolaitans is in contrast to the Pharisees – who also had an intellectual understanding of God but attempted to constrain the flesh by following the Law – and whom Jesus denounced as hypocrites and who had corrupted the truth of God with the doctrines of men. Two opposite extremes created by man...one belief based upon unrestrained flesh which leads to destruction...and the other based upon the law which leads to a hard heart...and both miss the mark.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of

yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. Romans 6:1-2, 11-14

Life is about loving God...who first loved us. As we grow in our awareness of God's perfect love towards us...the desires of our flesh transition into a desire to please Him...and a desire to overcome our sinful nature. We cannot allow our flesh to reign...and we cannot control it with behavioral laws. It can only be controlled from within...by the Spirit of God...and a willingness to listen and obey. This willingness originates from (and is sustained by) a deep desire to be free from the bondage, and pain, and shame from sin – which separates us from God...who gives us life...and peace...a new perspective...and what's remarkable...an understanding, forgiveness, and love towards those that are still under the bondage (and spiritual death) of sin.

To the Church in Smyrna

⁸“To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. ⁹I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

¹¹Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Second Timothy 3:12 says, *"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* Persecution for some Christians may be in the form of rejection by “friends” or loved ones. Others may become the object of deceptive accusations. While some may experience more severe persecution – such as societal ostracization...or even worse...martyrdom...which occurred to the early church, and will occur again during the Tribulation.

Because of their faith – while their flesh may die – they will not experience a second death in the lake of fire. This gift...eternal life...cannot be purchased or earned...because it has already been purchased and earned by Jesus Christ...the only one that was, is, and forever will be...worthy. This eternal gift is far more valuable than any earthly possession...and is given freely to everyone who believes.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:1-9

To the Church in Pergamum

¹²“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. ¹³I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

What’s interesting, Jesus declares Satan has his throne in Pergamum – which at that time was a city of power and Roman authority. The city had three temples dedicated to the worship of the Roman emperor, another for the goddess Athena, and the Altar of Zeus – the king of the Greek gods. Many scholars believe the Altar of Zeus altar is the “Throne of Satan” mentioned in the book of Revelation. In addition, the people of Pergamum worshipped a myriad of Greek and Roman gods.

As the church in Pergamum grew, it is believed by some that the pagan priests complained to Roman authorities that the prayers of Antipas were driving away spirits and hindering the worship of their gods. The Roman governor ordered Antipas to perform a pagan ritual and declare a Roman emperor as god....but Antipas refused...resulting in his execution on the Altar of Zeus.

One of Satan’s tactics used throughout time is to provide a conceptual means of justification – for those that are living in darkness – to murder someone for their faith in God...and for their faith in Jesus Christ. Justification is based upon the creation and promotion of a lie as a “perceived truth”... thereby providing a foundational reason to believe in, and support, and even execute the fatal consequences for someone that does not follow a religious and/or government edict. For example, consider the tactic deployed by Satan via the Sanhedrin (Israel’s high court) to accuse, convict and crucify Jesus of a crime he did not commit. Old Testament examples include Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; three Hebrews who were thrown into a blazing furnace because they would not bow and worship the image created by King Nebuchadnezzar. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, then James, later Paul and Peter. Thousands upon thousands of Christians perished before the rule of Constantine and during the Reformation. In recent time Hitler murdered six million Jews – all because of a lie. During the last days the faithful will be killed – some beheaded – for not accepting the mark and not worshiping the beast. And like in times past, the reason and justification for their death will be based upon a conceptual lie...from the source of lies.

But be assured...those that die for their faith during the last days will be recognized and rewarded.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Revelation 20:4

¹⁴Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. ¹⁵Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Another tactic deployed by Satan is to dilute the Christian Church with useless pagan rituals and false teachings that lead persons away from the Truth. The Church in Pergamum was infiltrated with persons that held to the teachings of Balaam, and the teachings of the Nicolaitans (described earlier). Balaam was a pagan prophet who was hired by Balak (the king of Moab) to weaken the strength and faith of the Israelites coming out of Egypt by providing an opportunity for them to engage in sexual immorality with Moabite women...who invited the men to attend the sacrifices to their gods, partake in the sacrificial meals, and bow down before their gods...who became an object of God's anger and wrath. (See Numbers 25:1-2)

They have left the straightway and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness. (2 Peter 2:15)

¹⁷Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

God provided life sustaining manna to the Israelites for a period of 40 years when they were in the wilderness. The hidden manna is (1) in direct contrast to the consumption of food offered to idols, and (2) a source of spiritual sustaining food for our soul.

There are various interpretations as to the meaning of the white stone based upon how white stones were used in ancient times. For example, white stones were used by jurors as they cast their votes, white for acquittal and black for condemned. White stones were also used as an admission ticket to events. And, victorious gladiators were given white stones exempting them from the obligation of risking their life again. Each of these ancient uses of white stones correlates to "not guilty," entry into eternal life, and the exemption from a second death.

A new name – likely based upon our spiritual and heavenly identity – known only by God and the one that receives it – provides wondrous insight into the nature of God and His relationship with each of us.

To the Church in Thyatira

¹⁸"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. ¹⁹I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

²⁰Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²²So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. ²³I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Some believe Jezebel is the woman's actual name. Others believe Jezebel is a symbolic title for the Old Testament Jezebel who led Israel into Baal worship and sorcery (1 Kings 16:31-34; 21:25-26; 2 Kings 9:22). Regardless, this person – who is part of the church – is tolerated for sinning, leading many astray,

and she is not willing to repent. God has given her time to change her ways...but she is not willing. As such, God warns that He will directly intervene and punish the woman, her children, and all that join in her sin. This punishment – directed towards all that are associated with her – will be a sign that God is aware of our thoughts and intentions.

²⁴Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, 'I will not impose any other burden on you, ²⁵except to hold on to what you have until I come.'

²⁶To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—²⁷that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸I will also give that one the morning star. ²⁹Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

It is the opinion of this writer that verse 26 and 27 is a prophetic reference to the thousand-year period after the Tribulation. See "The Millennium Kingdom of Jesus Christ" (page 113) for more information.

The Morning Star

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." Revelation 22:16

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 2 Peter 1:19

Jesus Christ allegorically spoke of darkness and light...comparing our physical perspective to a spiritual perspective. From our physical perspective, when we walk around in complete darkness we can stumble and even fall down because we are unable to see. Whereas, when light exists we're able to recognize that which is around us. However, from a spiritual perspective, light and darkness have different meanings... but a similar outcome. Those that are in darkness are under the power of Satan (and sin), are not able to spiritually see as they "stumble" around and "fall" as they try to make sense of life. Meanwhile, they attempt to fulfill the void in their flesh via any means that seems to work. After many attempts, some come to the conclusion that all things on earth are vain...and fleeting...and worthless...and they know there's more to life than what they're experiencing in darkness...and they begin to seek God. And as the light from the Morning Star transitions the darkness of night into dawn...this is when spiritual darkness begins to dissipate as the Light (Jesus Christ) illuminates Truth (Himself).

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

"I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." Acts 26:17-18

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have

nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Ephesians 5:8-14

Chapter 3

To the Church in Sardis

¹“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ²Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. ³Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

God hates hypocrisy in the church. The words used by Jesus to the church in Sardis are similar to the scathing rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:27-28. *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*

Hypocrisy is a common justification as to why many do not attend church. However, no church will ever be completely free from hypocrites...because we are all living in a fleshly body that has a sinful and self-centered nature. Plus, all faithful are at different stages of growth in Christ – from “infancy” to “maturity.” What’s more, a body of believers may be compared to an individual person. For example: Where is their heart? What is their focus? What are their priorities? Is Jesus Christ the center of everything? Or is it a group of persons (like an individual) that may have begun on the right path but have lost their way – similar to the Church in Sardis? Jesus provides a simple means of recovery for the Church in Sardis (and to us personally): remember your salvation, hold onto it closely in your heart and mind, and repent (to confess with sincere regret or remorse to God)...and stop doing that which resulted in your separation from God.

Isn't it wonderful...that even though we sometimes get lost...led astray...wind up in a place where we shouldn't be...that there is hope in the saving grace and love of God through Jesus Christ?

⁴Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. ⁶Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the Church in Philadelphia

⁷“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ⁸I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. ¹⁰Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

Holding a key represents power, control and authority. Jesus said in Revelation 1:18: *“I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.* What’s more, Jesus also has the Key of David which means (1) He has control over David’s domain (i.e. Israel), and (2) represents He is the fulfillment of the promise God made to David and Israel that the Messiah would come from the lineage of David and the tribe of Judah. Jesus reinforces His position of power, control and authority by citing directly from Isaiah 22:22: *I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.*

His sacrificial death on the cross – for the sins of the world – opened the door to God, and eternal life. This open door placed before the Church in Philadelphia means that they are granted access...and are able to enter. In addition, this open door cannot be shut by those in Philadelphia that were persecuting the faithful – who were serving as instruments of Satan.

All persons throughout time – while they are living – or after they have died...will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

The deeds of those that persecute Christians will be revealed. For those that persecuted the Church in Philadelphia...Jesus Christ will make them fall before the redeemed and acknowledge that they were wrong, and that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords loved this faithful group that kept His word, did not deny His name, and patiently endured through hardships.

¹¹I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹²The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. ¹³Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the Church in Laodicea

¹⁴“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. ¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Many of those who are wealthy, or are not concerned with sustenance, or are not going through a “valley” of troubles in life...have a perception that they do not need God. This is due to our sinful nature and propensity to seek God only when we encounter difficulties in life...and not when things are “good enough.” For those that perceive that they do not need God...nor do they need to depend upon God...are unaware...and are unable to see their dismal spiritual condition.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

Gold refined in the fire is a process by which each believer goes through challenges and difficulties in life...holding onto their faith...trusting in the promises of God...leaning upon Him...sometimes for every breath...and patiently enduring...until the fire removes parts of who we are...and we become more like Him.

¹⁹Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. ²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

Opening the door represents our willingness to let Jesus “in” and granting Him access to the “hidden” and “protected” areas of our inner being – which is the key pivotal step in life...and rebirth (being born again). If Jesus is knocking on the door to your heart...let go...and to reach out to Him...who has the power to grant you eternal life. Opening the door begins with a simple prayer...spoken directly to God...with words similar to this: "Heavenly Father, I am sorry for my sins and deserve the consequences. However, I believe and trust that you...Jesus...took the punishment for what I have done by dying on the cross and shedding your blood for me. I invite you into my life...and into my heart... as my Lord...and I ask you to change me from within...amen."



This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God. John 3:19-21

21To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The following table provides a summary of the message to the seven churches.

Church	Jesus	What's Pleasing	What's Wrong	Guidance	Consequence	Eternal Reward
Ephesus	From Him Who holds the seven stars in His right hand, Who goes about among the seven churches	Industry, activities, laborious toil and trouble, patient endurance, no tolerance for wicked persons. Enduring patiently, not fainted or grown weary	Left the love you had at first.	Remember from the heights you have fallen. Repent and do the works you did in the past. Change your mind and repent.	Removed lampstand.	To him who overcomes they will eat of the fruit of the tree of life – which is in the paradise of God.
Smyrna	From the First and the Last, Who died and came to life again.	Experienced affliction, distress, trouble, poverty. Abused, reviled and slandered by Satan. However, they are rich!		Fear nothing. Be loyal and faithful unto death		Crown of life. He who overcomes shall not be injured by the second death.
Pergamum	From Him Who has and wields the sharp two-edged sword.	Clinging to and holding fast His name and faith.	Some are clinging to the teaching of Balaam (eating of food sacrificed to idols and sexual vice). Some are clinging to false teachings.	Repent	I will come to you quickly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.	He who overcomes will eat of the manna that is hidden, and will receive a white stone with a new name engraved on the stone – which no one understands except he who receives it.
Thyatira	From the Son of God, Who has eyes that flash like a flame of fire, and Whose feet glow like bright and burnished and white-hot bronze.	Your love, faith, service and patient endurance. And recent works are more numerous and greater than the first ones.	Tolerate the woman Jezebel – who is teaching and leading astray into sexual vice and eating of food sacrificed to idols.	Turn away their minds from this conduct and repent. Those that do not hold Jezebel's teaching – who have not explored and known the depths of Satan – will not have other burdens. Hold fast.	Those who commit adultery with her will be will have pressing distress and affliction. Those that follow her will be struck dead.	He who overcomes will receive authority and power over the nations and will receive the Morning Star.
Sardis	Him Who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.	There are a few persons who have not soiled their clothes and walk with Me in white – and are worthy and deserving.	You are not alive but are dead. Nothing that has been done meets the requirements of God or are perfect in His sight.	Rouse yourselves, keep awake, strengthen and invigorate what remains. Remember the lessons you heard, lay them to heart, obey and repent.	Come upon you like a thief at an hour you will not know.	He who conquers will be clad in white garments and his name will not be erased from the Book of Life. I will acknowledge him and will confess his name openly before My Father and before His angels.
Philadelphia	The Holy One, The True One, He Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shall shut, Who shuts and no one shall open.	You have kept My Word and guarded My message and guarded and have not renounced or denied My name. Patient endurance. Held fast the lesson of My patience with expectant endurance.		Hold fast to what you have so that no one may rob you and deprive you of your crown. Will be kept safe from the hour of testing.		Will be made a pillar in the sanctuary of My God; he shall never be put out of it or go out of it. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem which descends from My God out of heaven, and My own new name.
Laodicea	The Amen, trusty and faithful and true Witness, the Origin and Beginning and Author of God's creation.		Neither hot nor cold. You believe you are rich, prospered and grown wealthy and have no need. You do not realize you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.	Purchase from Me gold refined and tested by fire –and salve to put on your eyes – so that you can see and be truly wealthy	I will spew thee out of My mouth. To those I love I reveal their faults, convict, convince, reprove (scold) and chasten (punish).	To him who overcomes will sit beside Me on My throne.

Chapter 4:

Jesus instructed John in Revelation 1:19 to write what you have seen, the things which are (the seven churches in chapters 2 & 3), and the things which shall be. The remaining chapters in Revelation (4-22) reveals what shall be in the future...and begins by providing us with a vision of God's throne.

The Throne in Heaven

¹And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

Jesus Christ tells John to come up here...to Heaven...to be shown what will occur in the future. It's important to note that only Jesus can provide access to the Father. *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6*

²At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

The power of the Holy Spirit immediately overcame John – which reflects the fact that (1) John was not able to “come up here” on his own, (2) it reinforces our dependence upon the Holy Spirit while on this earth and in this physical body, and (3) John had to transform into the Spirit because no flesh shall enter Heaven. Also note how the Trinity is revealed in the voice of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the One seated on the throne (God).

³And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

Jasper	Sardius	emerald
		

John's description is similar to Ezekiel's vision of Heaven: *And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne in appearance like a sapphire stone, and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with the appearance of a Man. From what had the appearance of His waist upward, I saw a lustre as it were glowing metal with the appearance of fire enclosed round about within it; and from the appearance of His waist downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness [of a halo] round about Him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face and I heard a voice of One speaking. Ezekiel 1: 26-28 (Amplified)*

⁴Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

There are different interpretations of the 24 elders; including angels, the raptured church, and 12 represent Israel and 12 Gentile. Others believe they represent a pre-tribulation raptured church, and the Amplified Bible refers to them as the heavenly Sanhedrin.

The Talmud (book of Jewish law) identifies two classes of rabbinical courts called Sanhedrin, a Great Sanhedrin and a Lesser Sanhedrin. Each city could have its own lesser Sanhedrin of 23 judges, but there could be only one Great Sanhedrin of 71, which among other roles acted as the Supreme Court, taking appeals from cases decided by lesser courts. The numbers of judges were predicated on eliminating the possibility of a tie and the last to cast their vote was the head of the court.

Questions that may arise are:

- If the elders are a heavenly Sanhedrin (i.e. judicial):
 - Why 24? (Is Jesus the 25th and tie-breaker?)
 - How would “cases” be elevated and presented?
- Did the elders exist before Adam?
- Or, were they faithful persons (on earth) that were instruments of God throughout the ages? Which seems logical – due to:
 - Arrayed in white clothing – which represents purity and righteousness
 - There are crowns of gold upon their heads – which are given as a reward – and are laid at the feet of Him who deserves the glory.
- We will most likely not know who, how, why, and when... until we meet them.

It is this writer’s belief that God has a hierarchy of power and responsibilities in Heaven – which may be represented by (or delegated to) the 24 elders, angelic beings, and so forth. Insight into the possible role, responsibilities and authority of the elders in Heaven may be derived from the biblical definition of responsibilities of elders in the church, which include:

- *Acts 20:28-30: Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*
- *I Peter 5:1-4: To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*
- *Hebrews 13:17: Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.*
- *Titus 1:5-9: The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-*

tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

- *Also see: 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17; Acts 15:6, 22; Acts 16:4; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12*

⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

Whenever I see lightening flash across the sky...its brilliant light...followed by a reverberating and deep thunderous sound...that sometimes reaches to the marrow of my bones...I always respond with awe at the power of God's creation. "Peals of thunder" means loud, prolonged and usually reverberating. What's more, the thunder that John hears is possibly the voice of God.

- Psalm 18:13: *"The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded."*
- See Revelation 8:5, 10:3-4, 11:19, 16:18
- Job 37:4-5: *"After that comes the sound of his roar; he thunders with his majestic voice. When his voice resounds, he holds nothing back. God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding."*
- Psalm 18:13: *"The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded."*
- John 12:27-29: *"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him."*

In front of the throne seven lamps of fire (torches) burned, which are the Seven Spirits of God: The "seven spirits of God" are mentioned in Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; and 5:6.

- Revelation 1:4 mentions that the seven spirits are before God's throne.
- Revelation 3:1 indicates that Jesus Christ "holds" the seven spirits of God.
- Revelation 4:5 links the seven spirits of God with seven burning torches that are before God's throne.
- Revelation 5:6 identifies the seven spirits with the "seven eyes" of the Lamb and states that they are "sent out into all the earth."
- There are varying interpretations of the seven spirits of God.
 - One is that the seven spirits of God are symbolic of the Holy Spirit.
 - The second view is that the seven spirits of God refer to seven angelic beings.
 - A third possibility is based on Isaiah 11:2, which could possibly explain the seven spirits of God:
 - (1) Spirit of the LORD
 - (2) Spirit of wisdom
 - (3) Spirit of understanding
 - (4) Spirit of counsel
 - (5) Spirit of power
 - (6) Spirit of knowledge
 - (7) Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

⁶Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

- The Sea of glass is also described in Revelation 15:2-3: *“And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb.”*
- The four living creatures are also described in Ezekiel chapter 1 (recommend reading)

⁷The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

- The four living creatures:
 - Around, center and each side of the throne (front, back and each side?)
 - Full of eyes in front and behind:
 - Able to see front and back, and/or
 - Future and past, and/or
 - All seeing
- The four living creatures stand for everything that is noblest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest in nature.
 - The lion is the king of beasts, the noblest of them all.
 - The ox is supreme among cattle and the strongest of beasts.
 - Man is supreme and wisest among all creatures.
 - The eagle is supreme and swiftest among birds

⁸Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

- The four living creatures are likely a type of angel, i.e. Seraphim / seraphs (one = seraph, two or more = seraphs / seraphim), which are also described in Isaiah 6:1-3: *“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

⁹Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ¹¹“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

- All creation glorifies (or will glorify) the creator. Those that die and are destined for the second death will bow and acknowledge Jesus Christ is Lord at the Great White Throne Judgment, to the glory of God the Father...before they are cast into the lake of fire. Those that die and have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb...will also bow and acknowledge Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father...and will lay down any rewards and crowns they have received before the One Who is truly responsible for their salvation and good works – for no one is worthy to be in the presence of God...no, not one.
- It's all about the promised Messiah, the Anointed King...*“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* *Philippians 2:6-11*

I am blessed when I receive comments about this work and/or questions.

Be assured, I will not respond unless asked to do so.

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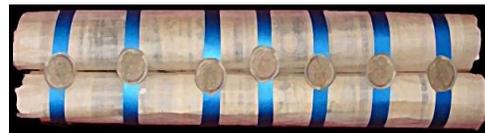
Harold D. Thomas

Chapter 5:

The Scroll and the Lamb

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

John saw a scroll lying on the open hand of God. The scroll has writing on both sides (inside and outside) and was closed because it was sealed with seven seals. The seals secure the scroll from being read. Each seal, once broken, will cause progressively worse events to occur on earth. Each event is described in Chapter 6.



The contents and purpose of the scroll are not explained in the Bible. As such, the following is based upon deductive reasoning and rationalized speculation.

- The scroll is from God – the One that:
 - Is holding the scroll in His right hand
 - Sitting on the throne
- God’s word:
 - In the beginning...spoke all things (heavens and earth) into existence
 - In the end... will cause the events that will occur during the last days and what will occur thereafter.
- This is the scroll referenced in Daniel 12:4: *“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”*
- Read Isaiah 28 and 29 with emphasis on Isaiah 29:11-24
- God will create a new heaven and a new earth. *Revelation 21:1-8: Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”

A mighty angel (one that possesses great and impressive power or strength) is making the proclamation in a loud voice (to reach all that may hear). This is not a question because the mighty angel knows the answer. It is an introductory announcement and declaration to all of creation that there is only one (Jesus Christ) who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll.

³But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

None of the 24 elders, none of the living creatures, none of the angels, no one living, and no one that had died (i.e. all of creation throughout time) was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll.

⁴I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

John begins to weep because the promise to see the future may now be denied. His sadness maybe a Holy Spirit induced expression of grief, sorrow, heartache and despair. There have been times – when praying about spiritual matters about myself or others – I have experienced very deep and indescribable feelings (in the core of my being) that were physically expressed as wailing and tears. It is similar to (but not the same as) the experience of losing a loved one.

⁵Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

- Lion: Is the "king of the beasts," has no predators and is a symbol of bravery
- Tribe of Judah:
 - The Tribe of Judah (in Hebrew means "Praise") was founded by Judah, (the great grandson of Abraham).
 - From this tribe came the great kings David and Solomon. Jesus is a lineal descendant of David and the tribe of Judah.
 - Together with the Tribe of Benjamin and elements of the Tribe of Levi, the descendants of Judah eventually formed the southern Kingdom of Judah in the ancient land of Israel. The Judahites were not among the "lost" ten tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel when it fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E. Instead, the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon about 586, but were eventually able to return and rebuild their nation. In time, the tribe of Judah became identified with the entire Hebrew nation and gave its name to the people known today as the Jews.
 - *Genesis 49:9-10: You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.*

⁶Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

There is a stark contrast between the strength of the angel, the elder's reference to Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah – and that no one throughout time and all of creation – is worthy – except for a meek,

lowly and unpretentiousness Lamb...God's Lamb...God's Son...that was slain as a sacrifice for all that believe.

- As a foretelling of God's plan of redemption, a test for Abraham, and a testimony to the world...in Genesis 22, God commands Abraham to offer his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice. On the way to the altar, Isaac asks his dad *"Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"* In response, Abraham prophesied *"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."*
- The Passover Lamb: Exodus 12:21-23: *"Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.'"*
 - Note how the instruction of "put some of the blood on the top and both sides of the doorframe – correlates to the cross upon which Jesus Christ shed his blood.
 - Note how those with the blood on their doorframes were protected from the destroyer and death. When the Day of the Lord comes, those that have covered themselves in the blood of the lamb by accepting Christ will be kept safe.
- Lamb of God: John the Baptist (upon seeing Jesus for the first time) declared: *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*
- *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. Isaiah 53:7*
- *The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth. Acts 8:32*
- Lamb without blemish or defect: *1 Peter 18-21: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."*

Seven horns and seven eyes:

- The number seven:
 - In the Hebrew, seven is from a root word meaning to be complete or full.
 - The number seven has also been referred to as perfection and "God's number."
 - The #7 and patterns of sevens are in scripture more than any other number.
 - See: <http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/7.html>
- Seven horns: "Horns" are used in the bible to represent strength, power, authority and omnipotent nature of the lamb (Psalm 18: 2; Jer. 48:25; Zech. 1:18; beasts with horns in Daniel 7; Daniel 8:24).
- Seven eyes connote the all-seeing omniscient nature of the Lamb
- Seven Spirits of God: See notes for Chapter 1:4

The Lamb (meek, lowly and unpretentiousness) that looked as if it had been slain (defeated / killed) contrasts with the strength, power and authority represented by His seven horns and all-seeing eyes. But yet, does this not describe the life of Jesus while He was with us on earth?

⁷He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11:

⁸And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

Note the similar form of worship as the 4 living creatures and 24 elders fell down before:

- God – Who sits on the throne
- Jesus – Who is worthy to take the scroll from the hand of God

Each was holding a harp:

- Worship in heaven and worship on earth is accompanied by music.
- The harp was:
 - Invented by Jubal (Gen. 4:21).
 - Used as an accompaniment to songs of cheerfulness as well as of praise to God (See Gen. 31:27; 1 Sam. 16:23; 2 Chr. 20:28; Ps. 33:2 and 137:2; Rev 14:2-3 and 15:2-3)
- Today's guitar is similar to the harp.
- Note that they are holding golden bowls full of incense – which are the prayers of God's people. This provides insight as to the possible means by which our prayers are heard.



⁹And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

¹¹Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

¹²In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” ¹⁴The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

All in heaven sing a new song of praise to the Lamb, Who alone is worthy:

- To take the scroll and open the seals because He provided a means for all persons (every tribe and tongue and people and nation) to be:
 - Redeemed to God by His blood
 - Free from the bondage of sin and the prince of this earth
 - Kings and priests to God and to reign on the new earth
- To receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing
 - These are the attributes / rewards sought by Satan and man
 - All will seek...but only one is worthy...and all of creation agrees

John is able to number the angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was 10,000 x 10,000 (100,000,000) and thousands of thousands (or much more than 100 million).

Jesus Christ is the new song and the new covenant.

- *“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Jeremiah 31: 31-34*
- *In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Luke 22:20:*

Jesus Christ is the new covenant. To gain a more appreciable understanding of what Jesus Christ did for us by pouring out his blood for us on the cross at Calvary...it is important to understand the old covenant...or the Mosaic Covenant God gave to Moses and the Israelites (which is the next section). In addition, (as a preparatory reading for chapter 6) the Mosaic Covenant is followed by:

- The purpose of the Tabernacle and Temple
- An overview of the Tribulation
- An introduction to the beast
- The significance of the mark of the beast
- An overview of the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls

Mosaic Covenant

Covenant: A solemn agreement to do or not do something specified.

- Noah covenant: God promises to all living creatures to never again destroy all life on earth by a flood – sign of the covenant is the rainbow (Genesis 9:12-17)
- Abraham covenant: (Genesis 12-17)
 - To make Abraham a great nation and the father of many nations
 - Bless them who bless him and curse those who curse him
 - All persons would be blessed through Abraham
 - To give Abraham's descendants all the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates.
 - Sign of the covenant is circumcision
- David covenant (2 Samuel 7)
 - Establishes King David and his descendants as the kings of Israel.
 - David's son (Solomon) shall build the temple instead of David.
 - The throne of Solomon will remain – although his sins justify chastisement.
 - Signs of the covenant are the ordinances of heaven and earth (Jeremiah 33:19-26)
- Moses covenant (Exodus 19-24):
 - God gave Moses:
 - Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)
 - Religious law that detailed sacrifices and ceremonies required for forgiveness of sin
 - Civil law that governed the nation of Israel
 - God promised Israel:
 - If obedient, God will bless; if disobedient, God will punish (Deuteronomy 28)
 - To make the Israelites his treasured possession among all people (Exodus 19:5)
 - A kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6)
 - To do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. (Exodus 34:10)
 - The Sabbath is the sign of the covenant (Exodus 31:12-17)

Since Adam...we all live in an earthly body that is flawed with a sinful nature...as Paul declares:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. Romans 7:15-20

The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:7-8

God provided the Israelites with prescribed procedures in forgiveness of sin – from the blood of sacrificed animals and from various offerings – performed within the Tabernacle and court. However, as we will find, God has a greater and more perfect tabernacle planned for man that is not made with human hands.

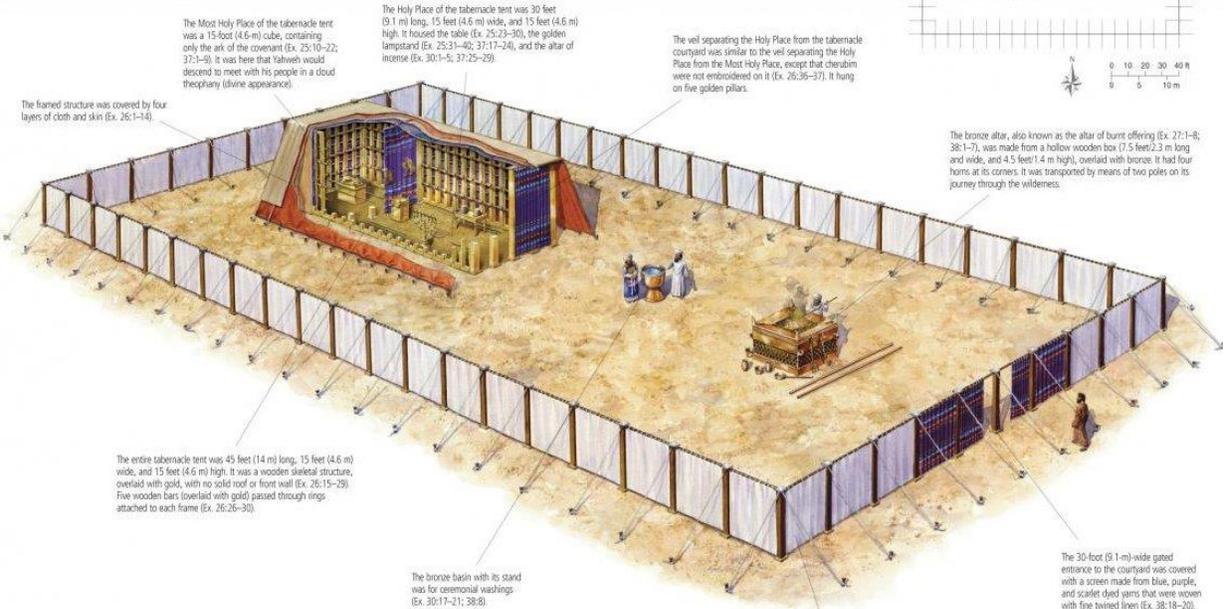
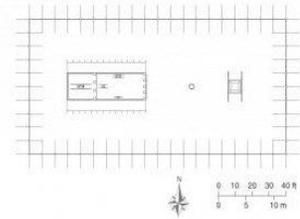
The Tabernacle (Tent of Meeting)

- Is an earthly representation of God’s dwelling in heaven (Hebrews 8:5)
- It is an earthly sanctuary for God – in Whom God may dwell among the Israelites (Exodus 25:8)
- God provided specific instructions for its design and furnishings (Exodus 25:9 thru 30:38)

THE TABERNACLE AND COURT

The tabernacle was a portable temple—a “tent of meeting”—within a movable courtyard (Exodus 25:31; 35–40). It was constructed after the pattern that Yahweh revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, and was assembled in the desert as Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. For an enlargement of the tent itself, see p. 186. The tabernacle courtyard was 150 feet (46 m) long and 75 feet (23 m) wide, totaling 11,250 square feet (1,045 square meters).

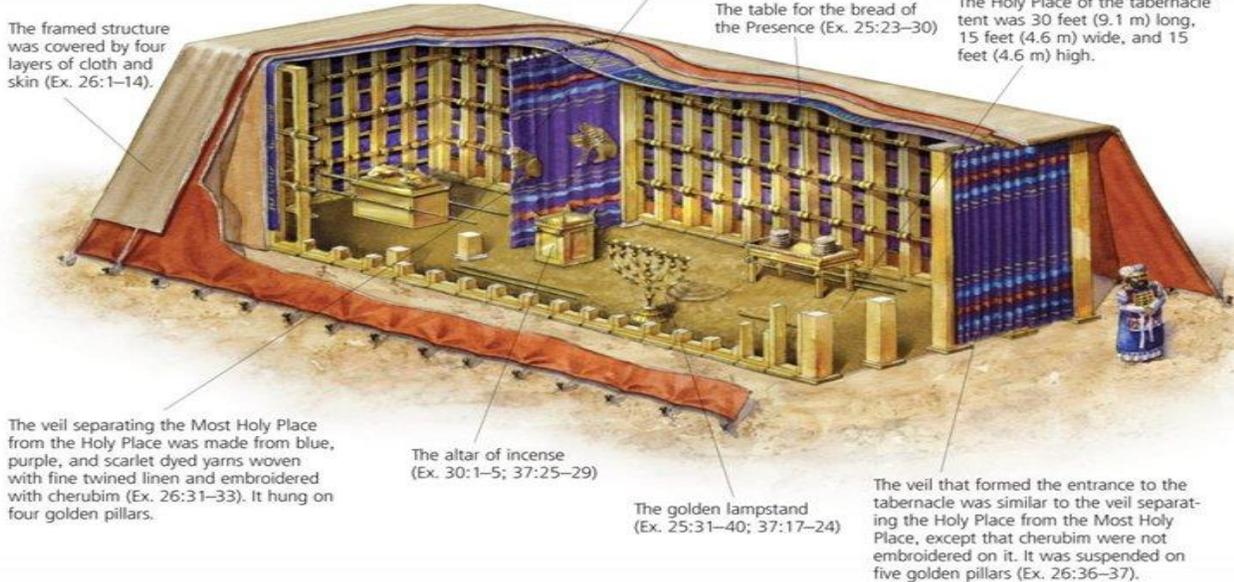
Tabernacle and Court Architectural Plan



THE TABERNACLE TENT

The entire tent was 45 feet (13.7 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It was a wooden skeletal structure, overlaid with gold, with no solid roof or front wall (Ex. 26:15–29). Five wooden bars (overlaid with gold) passed through rings attached to each frame (Ex. 26:26–30).

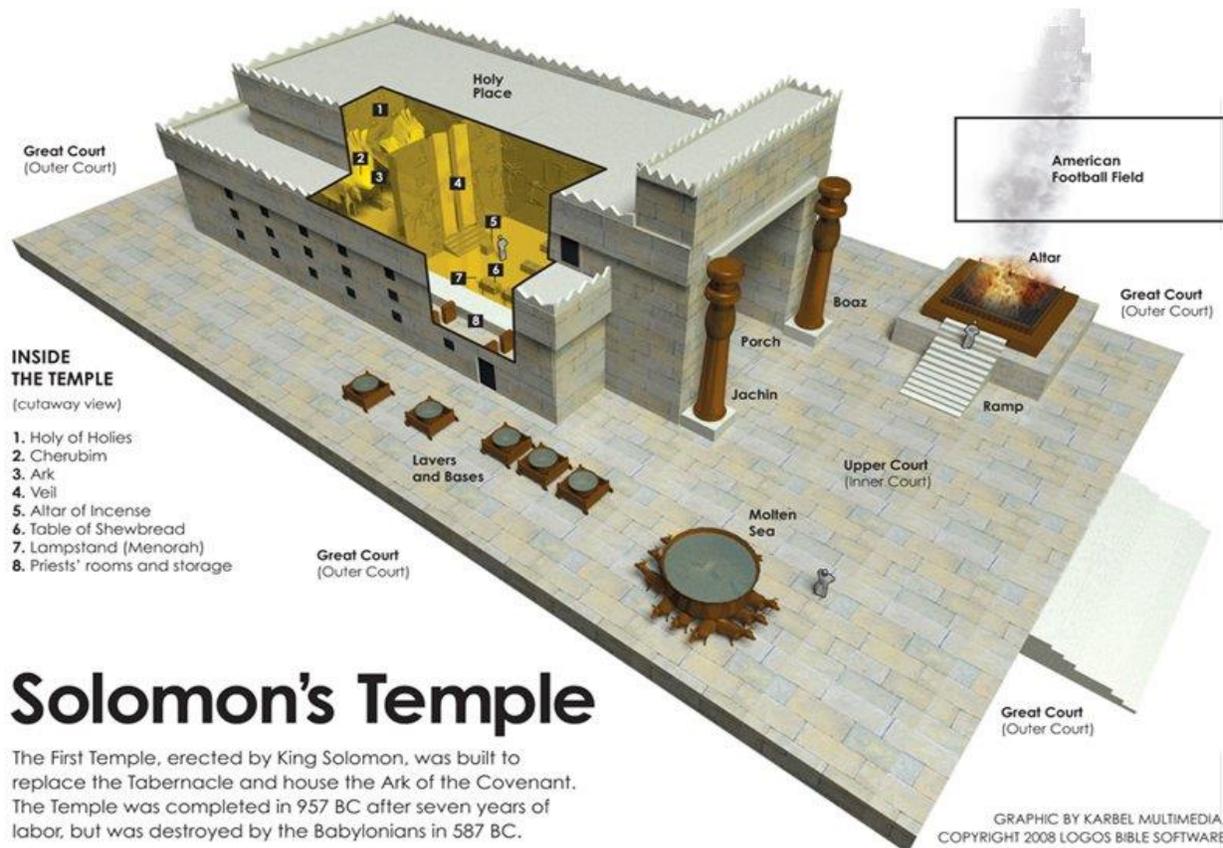
The Most Holy Place was a 15-foot (4.6-m) cube, containing only the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10–22; 37:1–9). It was here that Yahweh would descend to meet with his people in a cloud theophany (divine appearance). The high priest could enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (see note on Heb. 9:7).



The Temple

King David desired to build a temple as a permanent place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and made plans to build it. But God did not allow him to build it because he was a warrior and had shed blood. (Read 1 Chronicles 28)

King David's son, King Solomon, built the temple 480 years after the Israelites came out of Egypt. (Read 1 Kings 6-9 for more information)



Solomon's Temple

The First Temple, erected by King Solomon, was built to replace the Tabernacle and house the Ark of the Covenant. The Temple was completed in 957 BC after seven years of labor, but was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.

- Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.
- A second Temple was rebuilt in 518 BC during the reign of Darius (King of Persia)
- Jesus Christ prophesied the temple's second destruction (Matthew 24:1-3, Mark 13:2, Luke 21:6).
"Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Matthew 24: 1-3
- The second temple was destroyed in 70AD and has not been rebuilt; nor has sacrifices and offerings occurred at this site for more than 1,940 years.

It's important to realize that the tabernacle and temple sacrifices were more than a ritual; they were God's means of reaching out to the Israelites by providing a means for the atonement for sin – and fellowship with God. However, the Israelites failed to fully understand and embrace the real meaning and purpose. To be effectual, sacrifices require a sincere sorrow and willingness to repent and change

the ‘inner man.’ Sacrifice without real repentance was (and is) repugnant to God – exemplified by God speaking through the prophet Isaiah:

“The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?” says the Lord. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood! Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. “Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 1:11-20

God fulfills his promises. To free the Israelites from bondage and slavery in Egypt by the Pharaoh, God performed multiple miracles. Once freed, God continued to perform miracles and provided for their needs for 40 years – but yet they preferred to not believe and sinned – even with continual miraculous affirmations of God’s existence. The following is a list of miracles performed by God.

While under bondage and slavery in Egypt by Pharaoh	
Aaron’s Staff Becomes a Snake	Exodus 7: 8-13
The Plague of Blood	Exodus 7:14-24
The Plague of Frogs	Exodus 8:1-15
The Plague of Gnats	Exodus 8:16-19
The Plague of Flies	Exodus 8:20-23
The Plague on Livestock	Exodus 9:1-7
The Plague of Boils	Exodus 9:8-12
The Plague of Hail	Exodus 9:13-35
The Plague of Locusts	Exodus 10:1-20
The Plague of Darkness	Exodus 10:21-29
The Plague on the Firstborn	Exodus 11, 12:1-30
The Exodus	Exodus 12:31
Pillar of cloud provides protection as the Israelites flee	Exodus 14:19-20
God divides the waters for escape	Exodus 14:21-25
God eliminates those that bound and enslaved the Israelites	Exodus 14:26-28
After God freed the Israelites from bondage and slavery	
God speaks from the mountain at Sinai	Exodus 19:9-19
Miriam's rebellion and leprosy	Numbers 12:1-15
God demonstrates His anger against rebellion	Numbers 16
The budding of Aaron's staff	Num 17:1-11
The bronze snake on a pole	Numbers 21:4-9
The crossing of the Jordan	Joshua 3

Pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night	Exodus 13: 17-22
The cloud protected the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptians	Exodus 14:19-20
Parting of the Red Sea and decimation of Pharaoh's army	Exodus 14:21-31
Made bitter waters drinkable	Exodus 15:22-25
Manna from heaven	Exodus 16
Quails	Numbers 11:4-33
Water from a rock (twice)	Exodus 17: 1-7 Numbers 20:1-13
Defeat of the Amalekites	Exodus 17:8-16
Summary of God's Miracles	Nehemiah 9:1-31

The Israelites (like all of mankind) did not desire God – they did not seek God – they never understood God – and failed to grow into a relationship with the One that was seeking them. What's more, Jesus also performed miracles – as an affirmation of His deity – yet (as prophesized) He was also rejected. And the consequences of the Mosaic Covenant were also fulfilled (to this day).

We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 2 Corinthians 3:13-16:

For a greater understanding of God's love for (and frustration with) the Israelites read Matthew 23.

Parable of the Landowner:

"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Matthew 21: 33-43:

Temple Curtain Torn:

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Matthew 27:45-51

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! Hebrews 9:11-14

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

What's more, Jesus Christ is the new covenant that puts God's law in our minds and writes them on our hearts.

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Jeremiah 31:31-34

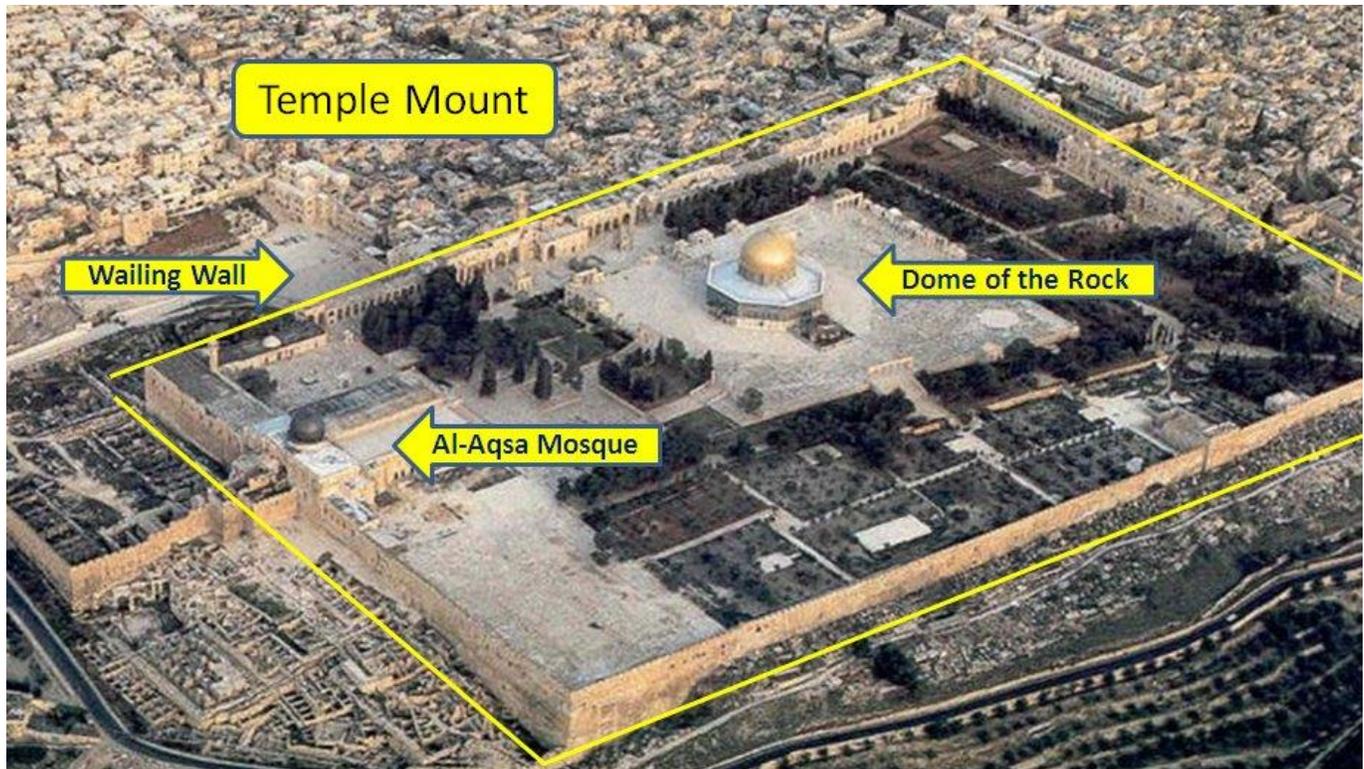
Question: How does the new covenant put God's laws in the minds and writes on the hearts?

It is by God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ that we are worthy of being declared righteous and void of sin (past, present and future). The more we get to know God's grace – the more we realize how deep our sinful nature is – the more we realize God's love is deeper. It is by His continual forgiveness and acceptance of who and what we are – combined with the guilt, shame and "internal pain" of sin – we begin to change our behavior to please the One that loves us. Simply stated...it "hurts" deep on the inside when we sin...when we know God loves us and forgives us for what we do. Eventually we learn that the pain of sin is too much to bear when compared to the peace, joy and indescribable internal "warmth" of his embracing love. (Read Romans 8:1-17)

God desires communion, communication, and fellowship with Him. He wants our heart, our desire, our inner self seeking and yearning for His pleasure and presence. It was not about the law...it was not about the Tabernacle...it was not about sacrificing animals...it's about our desire to love Him who first loved us.

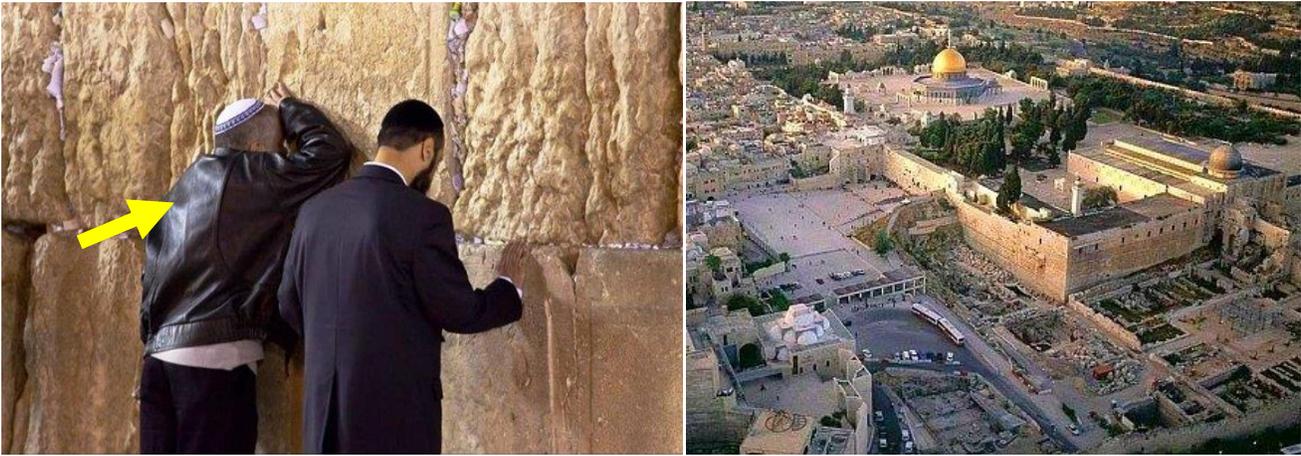
Temple Mount Today

The Temple Mount (where the temple once stood) is considered holy by Jewish people. No other holy site, no synagogue or house of study – or even the Western Wall – is comparable to the sanctity of the Temple Mount. However, The Dome of the Rock (a Muslim shrine) was built on the Temple Mount in 691 AD (after the second Jewish Temple was destroyed). A Muslim mosque, Al-Aqsa, was also built on the Temple Mount in 705 AD. Since this time the Temple Mount has been managed by the Muslim community of Jerusalem. During the 1967 Six-Day War Israel captured the Temple Mount together with all of East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan. Soon thereafter, the Israeli government gave control of the site back to the Muslim community of Jerusalem.



Since this time non-Muslims have been permitted limited access during certain hours and on certain days in the week. In addition, Israeli government has specific restrictions that forbid Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount and carrying any form of religious artifact or anything with Hebrew letters. Israeli police bar a Jew from praying "in any overt manner whatsoever on the Temple Mount, even if he is just moving his lips in prayer." As such, the religious and historical meaning of the Temple Mount has been a point of contention between Israelites and Muslims – both claiming rights of ownership and worship.

The Western Wall (or Wailing Wall) is located at the western side of the Temple Mount – which is a remnant of the ancient wall that surrounded the Temple.



The Western Wall been a site for Jewish prayer and pilgrimage for centuries; the earliest source mentioning Jewish attachment to the site dates back to the 4th century. Today, more than a million written prayers on slips of paper are placed into the crevices of the Wall each year.

The Jewish nation is praying with fervent desire to rebuild the Temple so that they can resume sacrifices and offerings. As of 2014, it has been 1,944 years since the temple was destroyed. And during the last days the beast will make promises to the nation of Israel which will allow them to rebuild the temple and resume sacrifices and offerings. However, this is a deception and lie from Satan himself – in whom no truth exists. (John 8:44)

Additional information sources:

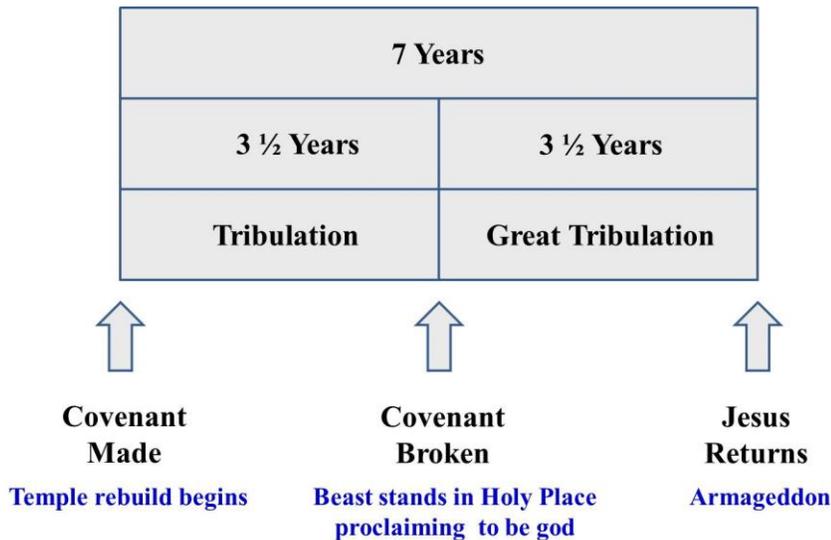
- Tabernacle & sacrifices: http://www.jesuswalk.com/moses/7_tabernacle.htm
- Yom Kippur: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur
- Temple:
 - <http://bibleencyclopedia.com/temple.htm>
 - <http://www.templemount.org/solomon.html>
 - http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/The_Temple.html
 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem
- Western Wall: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Wall

Four Key Topics in Revelation

There are four important and intertwined topics that should be understood before you read chapter 6. These four topics are the Tribulation, the beast, the mark of the beast, and God's wrath on the earth (seals, trumpets and bowls). The Tribulation is a time span of 7 years during the last days. The beast is Satan incarnate (in the flesh). The beast's mark will be the final dividing line between the saved and non-saved. And the seals, trumpets and bowls progressively destroy the earth and those that reject God by accepting the beast's mark and worshiping the beast.

The Tribulation

“And he shall enter into a strong and firm covenant with the many for one week [seven years]. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and offering to cease [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and upon the wing or pinnacle of abominations [shall come] one who makes desolate, until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator.” Daniel 9:27 (Amplified)



God’s word defines a specific and significant event that will begin a 7-year period that encompasses the last days. This event (the Tribulation) will begin when a covenant (agreement, promise, pledge) is made between the beast and the Jewish nation that will allow the resumption of sacrifices and offerings – which mandates the rebuilding of the Temple. This covenant is extremely significant. It is an indicator and a sign of the beginning of the Tribulation and fulfillment of prophecy. In addition, the beast’s covenant will initiate the rebuilding of the Temple for sacrifices and offerings – which may

likely take approximately 3 ½ years to complete. 3 ½ years after the covenant is made, the beast (the abomination that causes desolation) will break the covenant, desecrate (damage, defile) the temple and will stand in the holy place proclaiming to be god. This second half of the Tribulation (called the great tribulation) will be a time of great distress that will transcend all of time (past and future). At the end of the Tribulation Jesus will return with power and glory to pour out his full wrath upon the desolator.

The word tribulation is defined as distress, suffering, hardship and pain. But the severity of living during this seven-year period will progressively exceed these descriptive terms – and will be a period of time unlike any that has ever existed – nor will it occur again. Throughout time Satan’s full power has been restricted. His chains will be released during the Tribulation which will enable him to completely unleash his anger, hatred and revenge in seeking to cause desolation upon all inhabitants of the world. Meanwhile, he will make preparations to execute his greatest deceptive lie of all time – to stand in the holy place (the rebuilt Temple), proclaiming himself to be God and mandate all must accept his mark and worship him.

Jesus Christ informed His disciples of the last days: *“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.” Matthew 24:15-21 (NIV)*

Satan’s long-awaited and vain attempt at seeking glory is what he has always wanted, what caused his forced departure from Heaven, and will commence the great tribulation. However, during his short-lived attempt, God’s wrath will be poured out upon the earth, and upon those that accept the mark and worship the beast.

The Beast

“In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power. The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.” Daniel 8:23-26

Daniel prophesied the beast (the abomination that causes desolation) as a fierce-looking (violent, brutal, vicious) master of intrigue (trickery, scheming, maneuvering) that will rise to power (king). His strength is not his own and will come from Satan – with the intent of destroying God’s holy people and in obtaining his desire for deity which caused him to be cast out of heaven. Dishonesty (lies) and deception will grow – not only in what the beast conveys to the world, but also in Satan’s perception of himself.

When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes.

“They” are the Jewish nation that will be deceived by the beast’s covenant in resuming sacrifices and offerings. Think for a moment how long has it been since the Jewish nation has felt secure (safe, protected, sheltered)? Consider the number of enemies the Jewish nation has today – on all sides – full of hatred and disdain and with a desire to destroy. What’s more, it is possible the Jewish nation will consider the beast as the long-awaited messiah. Under the “protection” of the powerful beast the Jewish nation will finally “feel” secure from attacks from other countries. In addition, they will assume ownership and control of the Temple Mount and begin rebuilding the Temple so that they can resume sacrifices and offerings. Once the temple is rebuilt, the beast will attack the saints and will stand in the Temple proclaiming to be god and demanding all to worship him. Yet, he and all those accept his mark and worship him will be destroyed, not by human hands but by the hands of the Prince of princes (Jesus Christ).

“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.” Revelation 13:5-7

“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” II Thessalonians 2:9-10

The above scripture states that the beast will be given world-wide authority for 42 months (3 ½ years during the great tribulation), will blaspheme (curse or swear against), and will attack the saints. In addition, the beast will deceive those who will die a second death. It will be the first time that Satan will be able to completely use his power, control and influence upon the Earth.

The beast (also referred to as the Antichrist) is actually a man in whom Satan will dwell. This Satan-inspired leader will rise to dominate the world in the last days for the ultimate purpose of glorifying Satan.

The beast will enter into power as a result of many events. These events include, but are not limited to:

Events	Scripture
Satan (referred to in the Bible as the dragon) will give the beast his power, his throne and great authority.	Revelation 13:2
The beast will make a covenant with the Jews for seven years.	Daniel 9:27
The beast will break the covenant after 3½ years have passed.	Daniel 9:27
The beast will then reveal his true identity and will exert his authority, his will and his power over the next 3½ years as the "abomination that causes desolation."	Revelation 13:5 Daniel 9:27 Daniel 12:11 Revelation 11:2
The beast will desecrate the Jewish sanctuary in Jerusalem.	Daniel 11:31 Revelation 11:2
The beast will stop the daily offerings to God in the sanctuary.	Daniel 9:27 Daniel 11:31 Daniel 12:11
The beast will set himself up in the sanctuary.	Matthew 24:15 Daniel 9:27 Daniel 11:31 Daniel 12:11 Mark 13:14
The beast will receive a fatal wound to the head, but the fatal wound will heal.	Revelation 13:3 Revelation 13:12
The world will be astonished with the healing and will follow the beast.	Revelation 13:3
The world will worship Satan because he gave authority to the beast.	Revelation 13:4
The world will also worship the beast because they believe that no comparisons exist that can defeat the beast.	Revelation 13:4 & 8
The beast will speak highly of himself and will discredit and slander God and those in heaven.	Revelation 13:5-6 II Thessalonians 2:4
The beast will have power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.	Revelation 13:7

Revelation 13:11 states that a second beast (also called the false prophet in Revelation 19:20) will then come into the picture and will cause the following to occur:

Events	Scripture
He will have the same authority as the beast.	Revelation 13:12 Revelation 13:14
He will make the world worship the beast.	Revelation 13:12
He will perform great miracles and signs.	Revelation 13:13 Revelation 19:20 Mark 13:22 II Thessalonians 2:9
He will cause fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of all.	Revelation 13:13
He will deceive the world.	Revelation 13:14 Revelation 19:20
He will create a statue in honor of the beast because the beast was wounded and yet lived.	Revelation 13:14
He will give breath to the statue so that it can speak.	Revelation 13:15
He will cause all that refuse to worship the statue to be killed.	Revelation 13:15 Revelation 20:4
He will compel all to receive a mark.	Revelation 13:16
He will not allow anyone to buy or sell unless they receive the mark on their right hand or forehead.	Revelation 13:17

Note that there are three evil beings who will rule over all nations during the last days of the Tribulation. Satan, the beast and the second beast (false prophet) will combine to form an unholy trinity in direct opposition to the Holy Trinity of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Satan will give to the:

- Beast charisma charm, magnetism and political power.
- False prophet the power to perform miracles and power to enforce edicts.

Jesus was asked on numerous occasions to produce a sign or a miracle to prove that He was who He claimed to be. But Jesus replied that it is an evil and adulterous generation that seeks and demands a sign. (Matthew 12:39 & 16:4, Luke 11:29) The false prophet will give them the signs they are looking for, and the beast will not be whom he portrays, nor will he do what he promises.

The false prophet will proclaim an edict mandating the beast's mark (on the right hand or forehead) is required to buy and sell. People living during this period will have two options:

1. Be saved by obeying God's commandments, remaining faithful to Jesus and by refusing to accept the mark of the beast
2. Perish with the beast by accepting the mark.

The Mark of the Beast

“Also he compels all (alike), both small and great, both the rich and the poor, both free and slave, to be marked with an inscription (stamped) on their right hands or on their foreheads. So that no one will have the power to buy or sell unless he bears the stamp (mark, inscription), (that is) the name of the beast or the number of his name.” Revelation 13:16-17 (Amplified)

When you contemplate Revelation 13:16-17, you begin to realize that only a "hint" of what is to come is revealed. In other words, by comparing it to a puzzle, only certain major pieces are shown. When you meditate on the scripture, you may begin to visualize the other pieces of the puzzle. As an example, if no one will have the power to buy or sell unless he bears the mark of the beast, then it also means that there will be a means to enforce compliance. In order for compliance, there must be something that will enable verification and approval of those that have the mark whenever and wherever buying and selling occurs.

In addition, because "he compels all," rather than "forces all," reveals that you will have the choice of accepting the mark of the beast or not. If you decide to accept the mark it will be easier for you to buy and sell in the marketplace. But remember, this decision means that you have also accepted a mark that is the name of the beast or the number of his name. Based upon what follows in the Book of Revelation, the consequences of accepting the mark in the long term are far worse than not accepting the mark.

“A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.’” Revelation 14:9-11

Our lives will be completely and forever changed if we did not accept the mark of the beast. In order to survive we would have to spend almost our entire time seeking ways to obtain food, clothing and shelter by trading for goods and services. The "pressures" that we experience in our lives today would not even begin to compare with the survivalist existence we would experience.

It becomes easier to understand why it should not be difficult to compel both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to accept the mark of the beast.

Why does the false prophet compel all to accept the mark and what is its relevance?

In Genesis 4:15, God put a mark on Cain so that no one would kill him. In Exodus 12:7, God directed Moses to tell all in Israel to mark the sides and tops of the door frames of their houses with blood from a sacrificial lamb. That evening, those who did not have the mark on their door frames lost their first born. Paul states in II Corinthians 1:22 that God places His seal of ownership on us and puts His Spirit within our hearts as a guarantee of what is to come. Revelation 7:1-8 reveals that God will put a seal on the

foreheads of His servants, from the 12 tribes of Israel, in order to save them from destruction in the last days.

Throughout the Bible God has placed a mark on His own. God's mark symbolizes safety and deliverance from the final judgment. The mark of the beast symbolizes eternal damnation. Those who accept the mark of the beast will show their allegiance to Satan, their willingness to follow the mandates he sets forth, and their rebellion toward God. Refusing the mark will require a personal decision to place one's total trust and faith in God, in His Word and in His promises.

The mark also represents the final dividing line or "wedge." It will no longer be possible to:

- Delay a personal decision for Christ.
- Be "lukewarm" or "straddle the fence" (claim Christianity and live a worldly life).
- Hide a faith in Christ and not confess Him before man.

The mark of the beast and all of the personal sacrifices it represents will dissolve any false "fronts" that we may be hiding behind. Who or what we truly believe in will be revealed!

Christians will increasingly seek the power, wisdom and direction of God's Holy Spirit. At the same time they will also discard any denominational differences as they join together for security and support. Christians will also aggressively warn others of the true nature of the beast and his mark. All who oppose or resist the mark will be hated by all (including those that turn away from the faith).

The mark will be the final dividing line between the saved and non-saved. It is also a separation of the wheat from the chaff (Matthew 3:12 & Luke 3:17). Everyone will have to make a choice between accepting the mark or not and will understand the consequences of both decisions. This understanding will occur because:

1. *The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14*
2. *In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Acts 2:17*
3. God will send and give power to two witnesses who will prophesy and provide testimony of God for 1,260 days (42 months or 3 ½ years). Revelation 11:3-12
4. The saints will evangelize and warn anyone that will listen.

The graphic on the next page depicts the decision variables and consequences for each person living at this time.



Decision Scale

Eternal death	Eternal life
Will not be a martyr	May be a martyr
Continue to trust self	Will have to trust GOD
May keep possessions	May lose possessions
Access to the marketplace	No access to the marketplace
Life will be easier for short period	Life will be difficult for short period

Accept Mark

Reject Mark

**Mark
of the
Beast**

As all of the above events transpire, some believers in Jesus Christ will die for their faith. The level of hatred will rise to a point where it will be socially justifiable to kill someone for their beliefs. It is important to remember that no matter what happens Satan will be unable to spiritually harm those who put their trust and faith in God.

“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Revelation 20:4

The Bible reassures us that although terrifying end days are coming, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End will prevail forever.

“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.” Rev. 19:19-21

Jesus spoke to our hearts.
The beast will speak to our flesh

Jesus spoke of peace for the saints.
The beast will proclaim war against the saints

Jesus sought to eliminate idolatrous worship in the temple.
The beast will destroy the rebuilt temple

Jesus came to save the lost.
The beast will seek to destroy the saved.

Jesus spoke truth.
The beast will deceive

Jesus pointed the way toward Heaven.
The beast will point the way to hell

Jesus glorified God.
The beast will glorify Satan

The Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets and Seven Bowls

Jesus Christ warned of a period of great distress during the Tribulation – unequaled from the beginning of the world and never to be equaled again. (Matthew 24:21) The Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets and Seven Bowls provide insight into the calamitous events that will occur during the last days.

The opening of the seven seals is followed by seven trumpets, which is followed by seven bowls. The seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet introduces the seven bowls. Each judgment is progressively worse as each seal is opened, each trumpet sounds and as each bowl is poured.

The Seven Seals:

Seal 1: Introduces the Antichrist

Seal 2: Warfare

Seal 3: Famine

Seal 4: Plague, more famine and more warfare

Seal 5: Believers in Jesus Christ will be killed

Seal 6: Defines a massive global earthquake

Seal 7: Describes a short time of silence before the seven trumpets are sounded

The Seven Trumpets

Trumpet 1: 1/3 of earth, trees and all grass to be burned

Trumpet 2: 1/3 of the ocean, sea life and ships to be destroyed

Trumpet 3: 1/3 of all fresh water to be destroyed.

Trumpet 4: 1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars to no longer shine

Trumpet 5: Agony and misery for all that accept the mark

Trumpet 6: Death of 1/3 mankind

Trumpet 7: God takes control

The Seven Bowls (Vials)

Bowl 1: Causes festering sores on all that accepted the mark

Bowl 2: Changes the ocean into blood

Bowl 3: Changes all drinkable water into blood

Bowl 4: Causes people to be seared by the sun

Bowl 5: Judgment is poured out on the throne of the beast

Bowl 6: The Euphrates River is dried up

Bowl 7: Armageddon

Personal note: My objective is to provide you with a greater understanding of the cataclysmic events that will occur during the last days. The Apostle John used descriptive terms to define what he saw based upon his frame of reference and knowledge at that time. As such, (today) there are different interpretations of the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls – each with supporting biblical references and logical conclusions. And, until we have perfect Divine knowledge (after we leave our imperfect bodies and reside with Him in Paradise) many interpretations require varying degrees of rationalized speculation. In addition, it is difficult to directly correlate a specific timeframe for each of the seven seals, trumpets and bowls during the seven-year tribulation. However, it is possible to conclude approximate or relative timeframes.

Besides, the most important thing in life is: Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Your answer may determine whether or not you will experience what follows.

Chapter 6

1st Seal

¹“I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!” ²I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.”

Once the first seal was opened, one of the four living creatures that surround the throne of God authoritatively speaks with a thunderous voice and a single word “come.” And before John appears a white horse – with a rider that is holding a bow. The rider (the beast) is given a crown and he rides off as a conqueror bent on conquest.

The color of white (the color of the horse) is commonly associated with “good.” To an unsuspecting world the beast will initially represent himself as a global “savior” (i.e. the Messiah, false Christ or anti-Christ). But he is nothing more than the great deceiver and desolator.

Although the bow is symbolic of a weapon, note he is not given an arrow. The beast will not initially position himself as a threat to other nations – but yet he must be perceived as one that has strength, power and control – which is represented by the crown. Note that it was given to him by the one sitting on the throne and the Lamb.

- This is when the chains that have bound Satan are loosed.
- It is most likely the first seal is opened prior to the beginning of the Great Tribulation.
- It is also possible for the first seal to be opened prior to the beast’s covenant to resume sacrifices and offerings (i.e. prior to the Tribulation).

The Beast's Rise to Power

Consider the difference between the opening of the first seal and Revelation 13:5-7:

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

This means there will be a significant transition of authority (power and control) that will occur between the opening of the first seal and the fulfillment of Revelation 13: 5-7. All continents, all nations, all countries, and all persons will be subject to the beast's authority – which is a monumental and radical departure from what we know today. What's more, there must be something that would cause countries to:

1. Be willing to yield their power and control to the beast, and/or
2. Lose their power and control to the beast

Without specific biblical reference it is difficult and dangerous to predict how this will occur. This is especially true when you consider the beast will have control that will far exceed any possessed by past leaders. However, one means that may provide insight is by reflecting upon the past and present in order to visualize what may occur in the future.

For example, by considering how past leaders entered into positions of power may provide insight into how the beast may enter into his authority (and the fulfillment of prophesy). Past means to obtain power include democracy, military action, coup d'état, and civil rebellion. The beast may use one or more of these means to obtain authority.

- Democracy (leader is voted into power): It is possible the beast may enter into power via an election by a specific country or group of aligned countries. However, (if this occurs) the beast will likely be resisted by non-aligned and/or non-democratic countries because existing leaders will not want to give up their power and control.
- Military action (one country attacks and defeats another country): Initially, this is unlikely. If the beast initially attempts to use military power he will encounter opposition and possible declarations of war from resistant nations. In the beginning the beast needs consensus between nations and must not be viewed as a threat. He must be viewed as one that creates hope in the minds of the masses, as one that has an answer, as one that can defeat problems, and as one that "rides in on a white horse." However, as his authority is increased the beast will proportionally use military power to expand his control, destroy and desolate.
- Coup d'état (a "subordinate" seizes control over the country's existing political structure via a military action). While this is an unlikely means for the beast to initially obtain power, these actions may occur in countries that are unwilling to comply with the beast.
- Civil rebellion (individuals join together and protest, revolt, create an upheaval, and fight against those in power until they leave or are removed). As long as life is "good enough" existing political structures can maintain power and authority. However, as the severity of problems increase and life becomes more difficult, each country leader is faced with increased pressure and protests from the country's inhabitants to eliminate the problems. If the problems cannot be solved the existing political structure will eventually fragment and collapse as the populace seeks and establishes a new

leader. This scenario – on a regional and/or global scale – would assist the beast’s entrance into authority.

As stated earlier, for the beast to have “authority over every tribe, people, language and nation” requires a far-reaching and all-encompassing change to the existing global balance of power. For this to occur requires more than political or military strength. It will require a “foundational catalyst” that will:

- Reach all corners of the world.
- Easily transcends political barriers.
- Impact everyone – small and great, rich and the poor, free and slave.
- Result in increased discord and civil strife.
- Greatly intensify global instabilities (political, economic and social)
- Cause existing political structures to lose power.
- Create a desire for a global solution to a global problem.

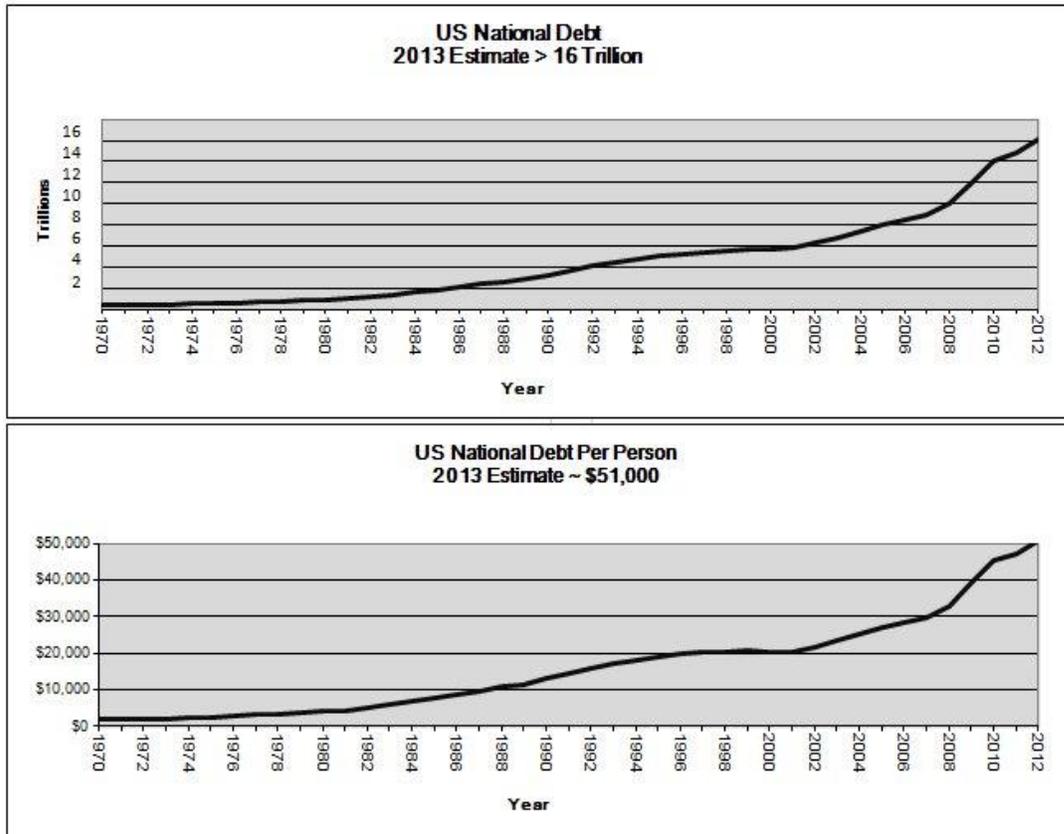
One potential catalyst that can fulfill each of the above requirements is debt (national, local and personal). Debt is not restricted by geographic boundaries and easily transcends political barriers. Everyone is impacted by debt – we all feel its affects today. As debt restricts the “life blood” of economies (free-flowing cash) it can increase discord and civil strife; and intensify political, economic and social instabilities causing existing political structures to lose power and control. And debt can cause a deep and systemic global economic depression – resulting in a global desire for a global recovery.

Debt may be compared to a cancer that begins on a “cellular level” – but will ravage, overcome and eventually kill the “host” if not keep under control. Individuals, families, businesses, local governments, state governments, our national government, countries and nations are presently experiencing the symptoms of this killer. God is aware of man’s nature and of the dire consequences of debt. For example, to keep debt under control, He made a provision for the Israelites in Deuteronomy 15:1-2: "At the end of every seven-year period you shall have a relaxation of debts, which shall be observed as follows. Every creditor shall relax his claim on what he has loaned his neighbor; he must not press his neighbor, his kinsman, because a relaxation in honor of the LORD has been proclaimed."

Systemic Global Economic Depression

Consider America's present financial situation. For too long we (government, businesses and individuals) have been increasing debt to subsidize unsustainable economic growth and excessive personal lifestyles. Each has been pushed to their limits – resulting in an inability to effectively withstand an economic downturn – which is evidenced by our present economic uncertainties. America’s federal financial deficit is the amount our government must borrow each year because it spends more than it takes in. On a personal level, the federal financial deficit compares to how much you would have to borrow each month if the amount of your bills exceeds your paycheck. This may be fine for a short period of time. However, it would be disastrous if your paycheck continues to be lower than your bills. You may continue to borrow additional amounts each month to make up the difference – but over an extended period of time you would eventually wind up bankrupt.

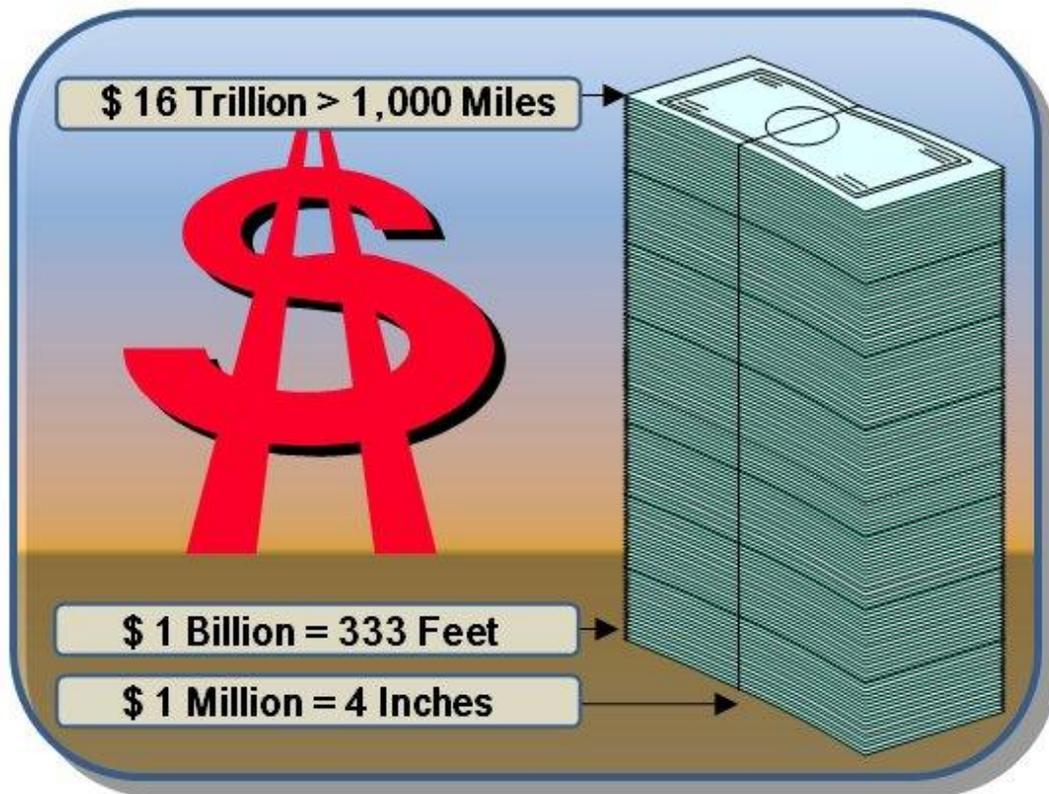
Unfortunately, the above scenario correlates to our government. The US financial deficit is the annual difference between the amount of dollars our government takes in and the amount it pays out. The US national debt is the cumulative total amount of money borrowed to pay for this year's financial deficit and all past year's deficits (i.e. total amount owed). In 1932 the US national debt was \$22 billion. In 1970 it rose to \$400 billion. In 1982 it broke the 1 trillion dollar threshold. In 2008 the US national debt skyrocketed to more than 10 trillion. In 2011 the national debt continued to climb and has exceeded 14.7 trillion, or more than \$47,000 for every man, woman and child in America. In 2013 it is expected to exceed 16 trillion.



Sources:

- http://www.treasurydirect.gov/govt/reports/pd/histdebt/histdebt_histo5.htm
- <http://www.census.gov/popest/estimates.php>

The magnitude of our debt crisis becomes clearer when you can visualize its size. If you take a million dollars in tightly wrapped \$1,000 bills and place them on top of one another, they would create a stack 4 inches high. A similar stack of a billion dollars would stand about 333 feet high. A trillion dollars would stand nearly 63 miles high. And 16 trillion dollars would stand more than 1,000 miles high.



Our government (and other countries) are continuing to increase their debt (via additional borrowing) to subsidize and stimulate their economies. Add to this scenario the variable of confidence and fear. As we worry about our jobs and long-term security we “hunker down” by reducing our spending, thereby making the situation worse.

National Debt as a Percentage of GDP

A key measure of a country’s economic instability is the comparison of debt as a percentage of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). GDP is the total market value of all goods and services produced within the country in a given period. GDP may be compared to your total annual income. If your total annual income is \$40,000 per year and your debt consists of a credit card with a \$10,000 balance – your debt to GDP percentage is 25% ($\$10,000/\$40,000$). It is important to note that your total annual income of \$40,000 must be used to pay for day-to-day expenses such as food, clothing, shelter, insurance, gasoline, etc. – and what’s left (if any) is used to pay the credit card debt. This scenario defines many nations today. However, for many nations the debt to GDP percentage is much worse.

Country	Debt to GDP % (IMF)
Japan	229%
Greece	161%
Italy	120%
Ireland	104%
United States	103%
Germany	82%
Canada	85%
France	86%
Israel	74%
United Kingdom	82%

Sources:

http://www.economist.com/content/global_debt_clock

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_sovereign_states_by_public_debt

Now consider what your situation would be like if your debt to income ratio was equal to 75%. Given the prior scenario, with an annual income of \$40,000 your debt would equate to \$30,000. How would you expect to pay this debt when you are still required to meet all other financial obligations (rent, utilities, food, etc.)? Meanwhile the debt continues to

increase over time because of interest (i.e. \$1,200 in the next 12 months @ 4% non-compounded interest). This scenario is faced by the nations in the above table (which have a higher debt ratio than 75%). Some are struggling just to make interest payments.

180 Country Debt to GDP% Average = 49%

Economic Interdependence

Throughout history nations were separated by diverse economies and political ideologies. However, these obstacles have greatly diminished during the past few years as our world has moved toward economic interdependence, and a world less separated by economic and political barriers. For example:

- Reflect upon the “recent” dramatic changes that have occurred in communist countries. Those who can remember the “cold war” would have never imagined McDonald's restaurants in Russia and the amount of trade America now has with China.
- Consider the origin of the products that you use every day. You will find a significant percentage of those items were either entirely made or the components therein came from countries other than America.
- Today, when a country “sneezes” other countries get sick.

Inept Country Leaders

All countries that have a significant debt to GDP ratio are struggling just to stop the rate of debt increase. For example, for America to pay down its debt means we will need to stop subsidizing programs that drive employment. As employment declines tax dollars also decline – which means America has less revenue to pay down debt, and the downward cycle continues. If America continues to increase debt to stimulate the economy (i.e. the present plan), at some point America will no longer be able to pay its bills, the value of the dollar will decline and we will enter into spiraling inflation (or possibly hyperinflation – which is a likely scenario given our present direction).

America's government is presently experiencing great difficulties in trying to figure out what to do. Our president and our legislative body cannot agree on how to stop the hemorrhaging. What's more, this scenario is occurring in other countries as well. As each country continues to decline, economic interdependence will cause others to head into a similar downward spiral. As each country's economy declines, the populace of each country will experience fear, hunger, and misery, and will begin to revolt against their government to fix the problem.

Civic Unrest

- In 2012, Aon Risk Solutions issued its latest political risk map, which gauges the level of risk for international business in more than 200 countries. Aon said "37 countries were downgraded in the Aon 2012 Terrorism & Political Violence Map, largely due to civil unrest." "For the first time since the map's inception, we have recorded significant negative ratings in Western Europe that reflect civil disorder in economies traditionally seen as stable. With further austerity measures still to be imposed and the euro zone crisis only in remission, economic and social degradation are likely to be important drivers of future unrest.

Source: <http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/international/2012/04/25/244738.htm>

- As austerity measures and spending cuts took hold throughout 2012, civil unrest, riots, strikes and student protests were witnessed across large parts of Europe. The UK, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain were all regraded from low to medium risk. Dramatic political change in the Arab world continued to cause aftershocks in that region and beyond. Authoritarian governments in Africa and Asia took measures to protect themselves from similar challenges as civil unrest, property damage and localized protests continued in the Middle East and North Africa.

Source: <http://www.cirmagazine.com/cir/aon-2012-pol-risk-map.php>

Global Instability

As the consequences of debt continue to rise – global instability will increase. Analogous to a spinning top, stability occurs when it spins fast (i.e. a strong global economy). As it slows down (i.e. the present direction of the world's economy) it becomes less stable, begins to wobble and moves about in unpredictable patterns. As the spinning of the top continues to slow down it becomes increasingly susceptible to anything that may bump it (i.e. calamitous event) – resulting in additional instability and unpredictability until it eventually falls over.

In summary, there will be a significant transition in authority, power and control from discrete countries to a despotic dictator bent on desolation. This transition of authority may occur due to a systemic depression, inept rulers, civil unrest, and eventually...war.

2nd Seal

³“When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” ⁴Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.”

The red horse will provide the beast with power to remove peace from the earth. Note that the reference to earth means global. Not just one part of the globe, but the entire earth. Note that peace is on earth prior to the second seal. However, once the second seal is opened the beast will be given the power to take peace from the earth and cause war.

The color of the red horse symbolizes the blood that will be shed as people kill one another – in war (represented by the large sword). What's more, the large sword represents significant strength and power. It may also represent a weapon (i.e. nuclear and/or biologic). Peace will not occur again until after the return of Jesus Christ.

3rd Seal

⁵“When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pounds of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!””

The black horse has a rider holding a pair of scales in his hand – used to weigh food. Black represents mourning and evil. The pair of scales represents famine (due to scarcity and inflation) and the oil and wine represents an increased separation between rich and poor – all of which are consequences of war and severe economic stress.

4th Seal

⁷“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” ⁸I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.”

The pale horse represents death (pale is the color of one who died) and one fourth of the earth's population is killed.

The United States Census Bureau and the United Nations Population Fund estimates the world population exceeds 7 billion. In 2020 the estimated world population will increase to approximately 8 billion. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population

Given the present and estimated population growth, the amount of death that will occur by war, famine, plague and wild beasts will equate to or exceed 2 billion persons.

5th Seal

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

The fifth seal reveals an unknown quantity of martyrs – standing firm in the word of God and maintaining their testimony (by placing their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, preaching the gospel, and warning anyone that would listen of pending judgment) – were under the altar. In addition, there will be more that will be slain – and will continue – until the “full” (unknown quantity) are slain.

These are they that will be hated by all nations because of their testimony and will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death.

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:9-14

These are they that did not worship the beast or its image and had not received the mark – and reigned with Christ.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Revelation 20:4

Social Changes

In addition to political and economic changes, social changes will occur by deteriorating to a point where the masses will approve killing of someone for their faith and testimony. Today, it is common to hear of executions of persons (in foreign lands) because they do not adhere to religious laws. In the last days “the full number” will be slain because they will hold onto God’s word and will testify of Jesus Christ.

If America is “intact” during this period of the great tribulation...some questions that arise are: “How can Americans kill someone for their faith and testimony? How could our country degrade to this base level of brutality?”

The answer to this question may be illuminated by considering our recent changes in America's social norms.

Social change is more easily introduced and accepted if it occurs gradually. As individuals and as a nation we have moved away from God in small and consistent "steps." The changes that have occurred over time are so minute that it is difficult to realize how far we have moved from God. Only by comparing where we are today to where we were just a few years ago can we truly see what has been going on.

One way of visualizing the changes that have occurred in our nation is to consider the spiraling decline in television program content. Television has mirrored the current attitudes and opinions of our society and has been instrumental in directing our values and beliefs as well.

During the early 1960s a backlash occurred the first time an exposed back-side of an infant was shown during a television commercial. It raised so much negative response that the incident received a significant amount of press. The issue here is not the incident itself, but rather, the social norms and moral values of our society during that period.

During the late '60s and early '70s we began to see and hear of free love and open relationships on television. We also witnessed behavior on television programs that was slightly beyond the socially accepted limits of our society. Although it may have conflicted with our beliefs, we watched anyway. Once considered socially acceptable, additional social boundaries were then crossed.

During the '80s, '90s and '00s, our moral values and even our perceptions of reality were diluted even more by programs that continued to push the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior farther and farther away from the will of God.

Now consider where we are today. When you look at old television programs they seem "corny" when compared to today's program content. However, this trend will continue as today's content will also become "old-fashioned" when compared against future social norms portrayed in the media.

Not only is it easier to implement change within a society if it is introduced in small portions, it is also easier to increase the degree of change with each new generation of children. Consider for a moment how our children view the aforementioned behavior in today's media. They have nothing to compare it against. And unless instructed to the contrary, this is all considered normal and acceptable.

Suppression of Expression

During the past few years we have witnessed a social trend that supports suppression of expressing personal beliefs that are considered offensive or controversial. Political correctness has imposed limits on acceptable language and terms used in public discussion (i.e. via television, radio, newspapers, and so forth). Anyone that has spoken outside these constantly-constricting limits have been verbally attacked and ostracized. While some of the comments made by public personalities warranted a response in

order to enlighten, the punishments mandated by opposing views included public apologies and immediate firings. These “public events” have had an impact on the personal level. On one side, persons are less likely to express their faith for fear of reprisal. On the other side, persons with opposing views are more likely to repress someone for their beliefs.

This suppressive trend is exemplified by the continued increase of negative characterizations of the “religious right” and “evangelical” within the media. Christians are portrayed as trying to force their “perception of reality” or “values” on others.

When you consider the progressive decline within our society – combined with the growing antagonism towards anyone voicing their personal religious beliefs – you can envision what it will be like for the saints that will stand in the face of a fiery storm of verbal abuse, ostracization and much worse as they attempt to warn others to not accept the mark of the beast.

6th Seal

¹²“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?””

This great earthquake may cause (or be caused by) a massive volcanic eruption. The sun would turn black during the day due to enormous ash plumes and the moon will turn red at night due to airborne particulates (such as iron oxide dust) carried aloft in the atmosphere. Meanwhile, stars (large airborne volcanic particulates – some red hot) would fall from the sky to the earth (as figs drop from a tree). Pictures of atmospheric conditions due to volcanic events (such as Mount Saint Helen’s) may be described as a scroll being rolled up. An example of this phenomenon may be found at:

<http://www.cjbyron.com/photos/StHelens3.jpg>

All that has been said, all that has been warned and all that has been written will be fulfilled! The kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, both slave and free, and everyone else will know these cataclysmic events are a judgment from God. They had heard and rejected the warning from those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They know it’s too late and will attempt to hide from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Chapter 7

Verse 1-8: 144,000 Sealed

¹After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. ²Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ³“Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” ⁴Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

- This is an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seal. There will also be an interlude between the blowing of the sixth and seventh trumpet. There is no interlude between the sixth and seventh bowl.
- Four angels were holding back the four winds of earth (North, South, East and West)
 - This provides insight into God’s influence in weather patterns.
 - The holding back of the winds may cause the airborne particulates from the 6th seal to remain for an extended period of time – thereby making it worse.
- God placed His seal on the foreheads of His servants – numbering 144,000, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - God’s seal on the forehead (in contrast to the beast’s mark) will mark them for eternal life in heaven (read Revelation 14:1-5)
 - The tribes listed are not identical to those given land in Joshua. Manasseh is Joseph’s son. The tribe of Dan is not included in Revelation and no explanation is given why. However, there are two interesting points to consider:
 - The Tribe of Dan worshiped idols (Judges 18: 29-31, I Kings 12: 26-29).
 - One of the 12 Disciples betrayed Jesus (Judas)

Genesis 29	Revelation 7:5-8
Judah	Judah
Reuben	Reuben
Gad	Gad
Asher	Asher
Naphtali	Naphtali
Simeon	Simeon
Issachar	Issachar
Benjamin	Benjamin
Zebulon	Zebulon
Joseph	Joseph Manasseh (son of Joseph)
Levi	Levi
Dan	

The Great Multitude in White Robes

⁹After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

- Great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language - that no one could count:
- In Revelation 5:11, John was able to describe the number of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was 10,000 x 10,000 (100,000,000) and thousands of thousands (or much more than 100 million).
- However, John is not able to quantify the multitudes (which is much greater)
- The earth’s present population is 7 billion, and estimated to be 8 billion in 2020.
- Here are estimates of the number of the multitudes based upon a percentage that commit to Christ during the great tribulation:
 - 1.5% of the world’s population = 120 million persons
 - 10% of the world’s population = 800 million persons
 - 20% of the world’s population = 1.6 billion persons
 - 30% of the world’s population = 2.4 billion persons
- These are those that are saved by the grace of God and His Lamb of salvation.
- Note how they “stand” before the throne and before the Lamb – compared to the angels, elders and living creatures that were standing and fell down on their faces and worshiped God. “Standing” may represent “heirs” of God and “heirs” with Christ.
 - *Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:17*
 - *But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. Galatians 4:4-7*
 - *Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. Revelation 21:7*

The multitude came out of the great tribulation:

- Verse 14: These were on earth during the 2nd half of the tribulation.
- Verse 14: They maintained their faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, did not accept the mark nor worship the beast, and were washed clean by the blood of the Lamb.
- Verse 16: They experienced hunger and thirst (a global occurrence due to the past seals)
- Verse 16: They will not experience scorching heat from the sun (4th bowl)
- They also cried to God to remove them from their misery.
- There is no reference as to if / how they died (i.e. no reference to death from the 4th seal, martyrdom and/or rapture).

For this uncountable number (from every nation, tribe, people and language) to come out of the great tribulation – means that they were warned and were fully aware of Jesus Christ – including the consequences of worshiping the beast and accepting his mark. The multitude made a decision to place

their trust in God's saving grace through Jesus Christ – rather than follow the abomination that causes desolation.

God will provide spiritual strength to the multitudes during the great tribulation by preaching the gospel of the kingdom to all nations, pouring out His spirit on all people, and by the Two Witnesses.

- *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:14*
- *“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Acts 2: 17-21*

God will send and give power to two witnesses who will prophesy and provide testimony of God for 1,260 days (42 months or 3 ½ years). See “The Two Witnesses” (page 67) for more information.

Chapter 8

7th Seal

¹“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ²And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God’s people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. ⁴The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God’s people, went up before God from the angel’s hand. ⁵Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. ⁶Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.”

The seventh seal first describes silence in heaven for about a half hour. There is no specific description of what occurs during the silence. However, Psalm 46:10 may possibly define God's intent: “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” It is also possible that the silence is due to God's sadness in what is about to occur. The seals were only a “prelude” of devastation. The trumpets and bowls will result in annihilation.

Seven trumpets are given to seven angels. The prayers of all God's people are offered on the golden altar in front of God's throne.

The Seven Trumpets

1st Trumpet

⁷“The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.”

The first trumpet causes hail and fire mixed with blood that burns 1/3 of the earth, 1/3 of the trees and all green grass.

Consider what occurs to a meteor when it enters the atmosphere. It turns white hot causing a trail of fire (as atmospheric friction increases). Commonly known as “shooting stars,” most meteors burn up before striking ground. However, consider larger meteors (“hail”) capable of reaching ground. Plus, consider not a few, but possibly millions of meteorites – in a wide pattern hitting earth’s atmosphere for an extended period of time (as the earth spins) striking land, structures, forests, pastures, animals and humans – resulting in massive fires and bloodshed.

2nd Trumpet

⁸“The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, ⁹a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”

The second trumpet defines a huge fiery mountain is thrown into the sea destroying 1/3 of the oceans, sea life and ships.

Similar to a meteor, an enormous asteroid the size of a mountain will also be on fire due to friction as it travels thru earth’s atmosphere. Once it strikes water its enormous size and extreme heat will cause the surrounding ocean to instantly rise in temperature far beyond the boiling point as the water is lifted up into the atmosphere and spread great distances in all directions. The superheated water will immediately kill living creatures near the surface and will deplete dissolved oxygen in the water required to sustain ocean life. Once dissolved oxygen is depleted it can generate growth of naturally-occurring microscopic red algae (similar to the color of blood) that is toxic to fish. This phenomenon is commonly known as a red tide. Additional ocean life will perish due to breaks in the ocean food chain. Meanwhile, it will generate an enormous wave that will destroy ships hundreds of miles from the impact zone and will continue to destroy everything in its path as it strikes ports, harbors and moves onto land.

3rd Trumpet

¹⁰The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water – ¹¹the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.”

After the third trumpet is sounded a great star named Wormwood, blazing like a torch, falls from the sky and causes 1/3 of fresh water to become bitter and many will die from the bitter water.

Wormwood is a plant that has a bitter taste and is poisonous.

The world will be in complete chaos and disarray due to the previous trumpets and seals. All past means to limit aggression between nations – such as the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction – will be weak or non-existent.

Note the difference between the second trumpet mountain (all ablaze) and the third trumpet star that blazes (like a torch). The description of a torch falling from the sky may define a missile – possibly with multiple warheads – with each warhead aimed at geographically dispersed strategic targets. The content of each warhead may be biological – causing fresh water sources to become undrinkable and lethal. From a tactical perspective, the attacking nation may deploy a biological weapon as a “warning,” or to minimize destruction of infrastructure, or because they lack nuclear warhead technology.

It’s important to note 1/3 of fresh water is polluted – which may mean that only a specific geographic area of the world is affected and not global.

4th Trumpet

¹²“The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. ¹³As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: “Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!”

The fourth trumpet causes the 1/3 of the sun, moon and stars to turn dark and 1/3 of the day and night to be without light.

The fourth trumpet may define a nuclear retaliation or an escalation of war – possibly in the same geographic region affected by the previous trumpet. A nuclear attack on flammable targets (such as cities) would propel large amounts of airborne particulates (smoke and soot) into the earth’s atmosphere – thereby reducing / eliminating visible light from the sun, moon and stars.

These events are only a prelude to the devastation that will occur when the next three trumpets are sounded – proclaimed by the eagle’s warning: “Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth because of the trumpet blasts are about to be sounded by the other three angels!”

Chapter 9

5th Trumpet

¹“The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. ²When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. ³And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. ⁴They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. ⁶During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

⁷The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. ⁸Their hair was like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. ⁹They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. ¹⁰They had tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. ¹¹They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer). ¹²The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.”

The fifth trumpet (the first woe) causes torture, agony and suffering (but not death) for those that do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Prior to the 5th trumpet God will have placed His Seal on His servants – 144,000 in total – 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel – whom will not be harmed by locus stings. (Revelation 7:1-8).

The star is not a “star in the sky.” Note “he” opened the abyss. The star is symbolic of an angelic being that is given the keys to the abyss.

Important information on the Abyss (also referred to as the Bottomless Pit) includes:

- God holds the key to the Abyss. Therefore, who is commanded into the abyss and who/what is allowed to come out of the abyss are under divine control.
- Inhabitants of the abyss are restrained by some means that require a key to unlock.
- Inhabitants may be restrained by chains. (2nd Peter 2:4, Revelation 20:1-3)
- When opened, the abyss causes smoke to rise like smoke from a giant furnace (i.e. hot, burning).

- The king of the abyss is a fallen angel named Destroyer.
- The abyss is a place where demons fear. (Luke 8:26-36)

The sting of a scorpion is not deadly. However, it produces the following symptoms:

- Intense pain, muscle twitching and rapid breathing
- Body numbness, tingling sensations and weakness
- High blood pressure and increased heart rate

Once the abyss is opened smoke will rise that will darken the sun. Locusts will come out of the smoke with the following physical characteristics:

- They look like a horse prepared for battle
- Have:
 - Faces that resemble human faces
 - Hair like a woman's hair
 - Teeth like lion's teeth
 - Wings will make a sound of many thundering horses and chariots rushing into battle
 - Tails with stingers like scorpions
- Are wearing:
 - Something like crowns of gold
 - Breastplates of iron

In addition, the locusts will have the following capabilities:

- Intellectual ability to receive, obey and execute instructions
- Able to selectively identify persons that have and do not have the Seal of God on their foreheads
- Able to strike only those that do not have the Seal of God on their foreheads
- Its strike is like a sting of a scorpion
- It can strike (torment) for a total of five months
- Its strike does not kill

I believe the locusts are demonic spirits – released from the abyss to torment those that do not have the Seal of God on their foreheads. While the Seal of God may or may not be visible, it would be difficult for airborne helicopters, an attacking army, or a vast number of large pests to differentiate who it attacks. The delivery of this type of torment – while maintaining obedience to God's mandates – will require a clandestine (invisible), up close, personal, and an intelligent verification if a person has or does not have the Seal of God on their forehead.

Note that there is a correlation and similarity between those that receive God's seal in the last days and the protection God gave the Israelites from a deadly plague (the Lord's Passover). Exodus 12:5-13

The opening of the abyss and the description of the inhabitants that come forth provide us with insight into the dark nature and evil physical characteristics of demons. The function of these demons is to sting all that do not have the Seal of God on their forehead. Due to the spiritual and invisible realm of the demons, the sting will occur with no visual warning and may occur often. Their sting will cause symptoms similar to that of being stung by a scorpion. As the demons continue to sting additional

persons the symptoms will seem to spread like a virulent epidemic disease for a period of 5 months. Those that are stung will suffer and will seek death – but will not be allowed to die.

“And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.” Revelation 14:11

Meanwhile, those that have the Seal of God will not experience the painful symptoms and torment of being stung – and will be a living testament of God’s promises and his righteous judgment.

6th Trumpet

¹³“The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. ¹⁴It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” ¹⁵And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number.

¹⁷The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. ¹⁸A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. ¹⁹The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. ²⁰The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

The sixth trumpet (the second woe) releases 4 angels that have been bound and kept ready to kill a third of mankind. These are not heavenly angels – but rather, four fallen angels that were banished from Heaven with Satan and were bound at the Euphrates River for this specific day and purpose.

These four fallen angels command demonic mounted troops that number 200 million. The horses and riders will kill 1/3 of mankind by spreading three deadly plagues – described as fire, smoke and sulfur – which come from the mouths of the horses.

Consider all of the calamities that have occurred thus far as each seal is opened and as each trumpet is sounded. As each disastrous event unfolds it will remind each and every person of the prophetic warnings from the two witnesses and from the saints – yet they continue to harden their hearts and not repent.

Chapter 10

The Angel and the Little Scroll

We now come to an interlude between the blowing of the sixth and seventh trumpets. This is similar to an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals.

¹Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.

This is the second mighty (strong) angel John sees. (The first was described in Revelation 5:2.)

- A cloud is often associated with Divine visits
- The rainbow above his head:
 - May reference / have relevance to the rainbow that is around God's throne (Rev. 4:3).
 - Represents God's covenant to never again destroy all life on earth by a flood.
- His face reflects the Glory of God
- The legs like fiery pillars may represent God's judgment

²He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, ³and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. ⁴And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

- It is not clear if the little scroll is the same scroll with the seals.
- One may infer the planting of the feet – one on the sea and the other on water – may reference God's imminent and judgments.
- The seven thunders is God's voice responding to the shout of the angel.
- John was able to understand what God said and was instructed not to write it down.

⁵Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven.

⁶And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay!

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

- The raising of the angel's hand and the planting of his feet correlate to what God has created: the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in it.
- God provided prophecies of the end times to His servants that were difficult for them to understand (i.e. a "mystery"). These mysteries will be accomplished (and revealed/evident) when the seventh is about to sound his trumpet.

⁸Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." ⁹So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but 'in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'" ¹⁰I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my

stomach turned sour. ¹¹Then I was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.”

- God instructed John to eat of the scroll.
- When he done so it tasted sweet as honey but also turned his stomach sour.
- When you think about it...as we study the words in this study it is both sweet and sour. Sweet in that it reinforces God is in control; sour in that the last days will be a bitter experience.

Chapter 11

The Two Witnesses

¹I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. ²But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

The instruction to measure the temple of God reinforces the fact that the temple will exist during the last days. The Gentiles (non-Jews and most likely non-Christians) will trample in the court outside the temple and will tread the holy city for 42 months (3 ½ years).

- Trample: to walk on and/or behave in an insulting contemptuous way
- Tread: to step or put a foot on something, especially so as to crush or damage it; to repress or treat somebody or something harshly

³And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” ⁴They are “the two olive trees” and the two lampstands, and “they stand before the Lord of the earth.” ⁵If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. ⁶They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

⁷Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. ⁸Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. ¹⁰The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

¹¹But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. ¹²Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

¹³At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

During the Tribulation God will empower two witnesses that will prophesy for 3½ years – clothed in sackcloth. The garment is a symbol of humbleness and mourning (for those who do not change their ways and will perish with the beast). Their prophetic words will testify of atonement (pardoning of sin) through Jesus Christ, the need for repentance and the consequences of the beast and his mark. Due to the ever-increasing darkness some will attempt to harm the two witnesses. However, the two witnesses will have the ability to perform miracles and destroy their enemies – as proof of their divinely-spoken words and appointed purpose. Their prophetic words, actions and signs will save multitudes and strengthen the resolve of the saints to hold onto their faith and resist the beast and his mark.

However, the two witnesses will be killed by the beast once their time is completed. Their dead bodies will be viewed worldwide for 3½ days while those destined for eternal damnation will celebrate their death by sending gifts to one another.

Imagine for a moment what it will be like for the saints when the two witnesses are killed – visible to all – lying motionless – dead. The two sent by God – with truth and power – were killed by the very one they stood against – the beast. Take some time to mentally and emotionally place yourself in this specific time and circumstances. Experience the intense depth of fear and the questioning of faith as each saint looks upon and mourns the dead bodies of the witnesses and watches the celebratory response. Consider the hatred of those that are celebrating – the ones that have decided to worship the beast and accept his mark – the ones that possess hatred that flows from its source (Satan). Now that the two witnesses are dead – what will happen next?

But God breathed the breath of life into them and they became alive and they stood on their feet. Then a voice called them from heaven and they ascended while the world watched – which will provide everyone with an audible and visual sign that God reigns – despite the short-lived victory of the beast. All of the saint's fear and questioning of faith will melt away and as terror falls upon those that were celebrating their death – for they will have confirmation that the prophetic words spoken by the two witnesses were divinely-inspired and true.

Their resurrection from the dead, the voice from heaven and their ascension will significantly impact the beast's influence, authority and power and will require a similar display of power to recover.

The unholy trinity of Satan, the beast and the false prophet (the second beast) will also be allowed to display power through signs and wonders. It's important to note the Bible does not define direct confrontations between the false prophet and two witnesses (prior to their death) – i.e. a comparative display of powers similar to Moses and the Pharaoh's magicians in Exodus (chapters 7-11). From a timeline perspective the beast's wound, recovery and performance of signs may occur after the ascension of the witnesses – which will mimic their death and signs – and which will deceive the desolated because they prefer to believe the lie and delight in their wickedness.

“Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And it performed great

signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.” Revelation 13:11-15

“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

But unlike the two witnesses that will die and then ascend into heaven – the beast and the false prophet will be thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur – which is the second and final death.

“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.” Revelation 19:19-20

The Identity of the Two Witnesses

There is much speculation as to the identity of the two witnesses. Some believe it is Moses and Elijah and some believe it is Enoch and Elijah. Others have different interpretations. The reason is that the identities of the two witnesses are not specifically revealed in the Bible. But what is more important than knowing their identity – is to understand the importance of their appointed purpose. They will be witnesses for God during the Tribulation – which is a critical time for strengthening the faith of the saints. They will speak His truth (the two olive trees) and spread His light (the two lampstands) during a time when the polarization between the saved and the non-saved will be approaching its zenith. In addition, due to recent advancements in communication technology (satellite, TV, Internet, cell phone, etc.), the message of Jesus Christ will reach into every corner of the world as everyone watches miraculous signs and wonders.

I sincerely appreciate your comments and/or questions.

Be assured, I will not respond unless asked to do so.

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The Seventh Trumpet

¹⁵The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.” ¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. ¹⁸The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.” ¹⁹Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.

The seventh trumpet (the third and worst woe) is sounded. The power of the prince of this world (Satan) is removed. God takes complete control as prepares to wage war against those who destroy the earth (the beast and the nations that align with the beast). Thereafter, God will judge the dead – and will reward His servants, prophets and those who worship Him.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 provides a very concise overview of the past and the future. It provides a unique insight into God’s plan for the nation of Israel; describes Satan’s attempt to kill Jesus upon his birth; defines a final battle in heaven; reveals Satan’s banishment from heaven; prophesizes Satan’s unsuccessful attempt to kill a select group of Israelites as they flee to a God-protected area in the wilderness; and warns of Satan’s redirection of his anger towards remaining believers of Jesus Christ.

¹A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. ²She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

There are different interpretations of the woman, which include the Virgin Mary, the church and the nation of Israel.

- The Virgin Mary
 - This interpretation is based upon references to the woman:
 - Being pregnant and giving birth to a male child who will rule all nations with an iron scepter.
 - Her child (Jesus) was snatched up to God (resurrection) and His throne.
 - However, this interpretation of the woman being Mary seems to conflict with:
 - Revelation 12:6 in that how could Mary flee into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days – during the Great Tribulation.
 - The crown of 12 stars on her head (which represent the 12 Tribes of Israel). There are no scriptural references to Mary being given or wearing this crown.
- The Church
 - The church did not birth Christ; Christ birthed the Church.
 - The nation of Israel (i.e. the 12 stars / Tribes of Israel) “birthed” Jesus Christ.
- Israel. The interpretation of Israel as the woman is supported by:

- Birth of Christ (The Lion from the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David – Rev 5:5)
- Fleeing into the wilderness during the last days (verse Rev 12:6).
- 12 Tribes of Israel which are represented by the crown on her head.
- The clothing of the sun and the moon under her feet possibly reflects Israel’s status as God's chosen nation—one adorned and placed in an exalted position unlike any other.

The Woman

In Genesis 1:26-27 God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...”

For example, we all have a need for a spouse to love us. Conversely, we all have a need to express our love to our spouse – in a relationship that is foundationally based upon absolute trust...and a love that is unconditional and faithful.

Most, if not all of us (at some time in our lives) have been deeply hurt by a person in whom we loved. It may have been during your youth (i.e. our “first love”). Or, it may have occurred with a spouse. For whatever reason (a youthful change in interest, spousal infidelity, unfaithfulness, deceitfulness, etc.) we experienced an overwhelming and indescribable heartache that hurts the deepest part of our soul. Think for a moment in how you felt and how you responded to the pain.

We are made in the image of God...and His desire to love and be loved is the same...but yet different...in that God’s love is absolute, pure and not defiled by the flesh.

Israel (or Zion or Jerusalem) is represented as a woman in [Isaiah 54:1-6](#), [Jeremiah 3](#), [Ezekiel 16](#), and [Hosea 2](#). As you reference these passages (on-line or in your Bible) consider the following:

- God’s unfailing and forgiving love towards Israel.
- The names and terms that were used by God to define His relationship with Israel.
- How God expressed his love.
- His pain and His sorrow due to the infidelity, unfaithfulness and deceitfulness of the woman (Israel) that became a lover of someone else.
- His pain and His sorrow...He experienced on the cross...when we sin.

The bride of Jesus Christ will be cleansed of unrighteousness and purified by his blood; and will express unconditional and faithful love to Him...who alone is worthy.

³Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads.

Determining the representation of Satan’s seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns requires additional information and scripture. As such, this topic is discussed in the next chapter (Revelation 13) and in Revelation 17.

⁴Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.

Satan took 1/3 of the angels with him when he was cast out of Heaven. Satan (through Herod the King) gave orders to kill all boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under (Matthew 2).

⁵She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

Defines the birth and resurrection of Christ which is supported by:

- She (the nation is Israel)
- A male child was born who will rule all the nations
- Snatched up to God and to His throne

⁶The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

Verse 6 states the woman will flee to the wilderness and will be taken care of for 1,260 days. Verse 14 also states the woman will be out of the serpents reach for a time, times and half a time (42 months or 1,260 days).

- 1,260 equates to 42 months, 42 months equates to 3 ½ years
- Biblical scholars concur “a time, times, and a half a time” equate to a year, two years and a half year (or 3 ½ years).

⁷Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. ¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. ¹¹They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. ¹²Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”

A war occurred in heaven between Michael and his angels, and Satan and his angels...and it seems as if Michael is the initiator and aggressor in this battle. Satan and his angels fought back but lost:

- The battle
- AND...their place in heaven.
 - Provides insight into Satan’s access to God
 - From the place in heaven Satan:
 - Has access to God and the world.
 - Leads the whole world astray
 - Is able to accuse the brothers and sisters (the redeemed) before God day and night
- Satan and his angels were hurled to earth
- A loud voice in heaven proclaimed:
 - The salvation, power and kingdom of God, and authority of Jesus.
 - The accuser has been hurled to earth.
 - The accuser was defeated by:
 - The blood of the Lamb

- The word of their testimony
- Their disdain for their lives (flesh); and their decision that it is far better to die in God’s grace than succumb to sin, Satan’s mandates, and the associated eternal consequences (spiritual death).
- For those in heaven to rejoice for Satan no longer has access to God.
- Woe to those on earth.
 - Satan no longer has a place in heaven
 - He can no longer accuse the saints
 - He has been thrown down to earth
 - He is filled with fury and anger
 - He knows his time is short (to enact desolation)

There are various interpretations as to when the war that broke out in heaven occurred (or will occur), some include:

- During the mission of the seventy: *The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. (Luke 10:17-18)*
- After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Prior to the Great Tribulation

Note that verse 7 describes the war begins after verse 6 – which begins with the word “Then” – and which is after the woman flees to the wilderness to be taken care of for 1,260 days (3 ½ years). What’s more, the woman flees prior to the battle in heaven and prior to the banishment of Satan to earth. This means that they were pre-warned (by the two witnesses, by the redeemed, and by God’s word – i.e. Luke 21 20-22 and Matthew 24:15-21) and they obeyed.

God has provided the nation of Israel (and the world) with signs of when the time of desolation (or the Great Tribulation) is near, and when desolation is at hand. In addition, God provides instructions of what to do and where to go.

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. Luke 21: 20-22

“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.” Matthew 24:15-21

Desolation is near when armies begin to surround Jerusalem.

- This may occur during the latter days of the first half of the Tribulation.

- This is the time for all flee Jerusalem and not return.
- This is also the time to flee to the mountains.

Desolation is at hand when the beast stands in the holy place proclaiming to be God.

- For those that have not fled to the mountains there is no time to prepare or take possessions.
- They must leave immediately and with haste for there is not even time to pack clothing.
- This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation, God's punishment and fulfillment of all that has been written.

Note that God provides instruction to pray that the flight will not occur in winter or on the Sabbath. This reveals Israelites will have knowledge that they are witnessing the fulfillment of last day prophesy. Others will not and will hold onto their hope in the fulfillment of the beast's covenant of resuming sacrifices and offerings. One can imagine conversations between those that know the beast's covenant will be broken and those that do not. Rationalized responses from those with continued hope in the beast's covenant may include arguments such as:

- The Temple is almost complete.
- We will soon be able to offer sacrifices and offerings.
- Why would he desecrate and destroy the Temple?
- Look at all of the good he has done for our nation.
- There is no way he would stand in the Temple and declare himself to be God!

Now consider the prophetic statements of the two witnesses – including their death, the voice calling them to Heaven and their ascension – seen and heard by all. For those that are holding onto hope in the beast – they will not have an excuse – for God has provided them with undeniable proof!

¹³When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. ¹⁵Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. ¹⁶But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

Once Satan realizes he has lost his "place" in heaven and has been hurled to the earth, he will first target his hatred and anger towards Israel. But, God will provide a means for the Israelites to flee to a safe place He has prepared in the wilderness – where she (the woman/Israelites) will be provided for and protected for 3 ½ years. As the Israelites flee Satan will attempt to thwart their escape by spewing a torrential river of water. But, God will cause the earth to swallow the river (by an undefined means) so that they may reach the safe place. Satan's failure results in rage that is redirected towards those that are remaining (those that did not flee) that are keeping God's commands and holding onto their faith and testimony of Jesus.

Additional Points: Verse 12 states for those that dwell in heaven should rejoice; however, woe to all the earth because Satan lost his battle. Verse 12 combined with verse 17 reveals that there are additional believers on earth during the last 3 ½ years. Satan is absolutely furious and knows he has only a short amount of time (1,260 days – the Great Tribulation) to pour out his hatred and anger towards the saints.

Chapter 13

Chapter 12 concluded with the dragon’s prophetic inability to harm the protected Israelites; and the redirection of his anger towards those that are keeping God’s commands and are holding onto their testimony about Jesus. (Rev 12:17)

Chapter 13 provides insight into how Satan will wage war against the saints via two beasts. Although described as beasts, these are two persons that will be used by Satan to deceive the world and attack those that are obedient, and demonstrate their faith and trust in God. What’s more, this unholy trinity will control a final earthly kingdom (comprised of a group of 10 kings/countries) that will be bent on destruction and death. Understanding of Chapter 13 is greatly enhanced by referencing Daniel chapter 2 and 7 and other passages. As such, references to these scriptures will occur throughout this chapter.

It’s important to note that it’s possible to get confused with the different “beasts” described in Daniel 2 and 7, and in Revelation 13. As such, it is important to stay focused on the 1st beast (the anti-Christ), and 2nd beast (the false prophet) in Revelation 13. The other beasts correlate to kingdoms.

The Beast out of the Sea

¹The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. ²The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

The last verse in chapter 12 stated the dragon was enraged and went off to wage war against those who keep God’s commands and hold fast to their testimony about Jesus. We now see the dragon (Satan) in verse 1 standing on the shore of the sea as an instrument to wage war against the saints – referred to as a beast (the 1st beast) – begins to emerge from the sea. The table below provides a comparison between the dragon, the 1st beast, and a 2nd beast (that will come from the land - Rev 13:11).

	Name	Entrance	# Heads	# Horns	# Crowns
Dragon	Satan	Hurled to Earth	7	10	7 (on each head)
1st Beast	Anti-Christ	Sea	7 w/blasphemous names	10	10 (on each horn)
2nd Beast	False Prophet	Land	-	2	-

The 1st beast (the Anti-Christ) has 7 heads (each with a blasphemous name) and 10 horns (each with a crown). The 2nd best (the False Prophet – who will be described later) has 2 horns. The 7 heads and 10 horns represent the dragon and beast’s power and control over the two groups of kings (kingdoms). The 7 heads represent a group of 7 kingdoms that are against God – each with a blasphemous name. These 7 kingdoms comprise an entity that is held together by a false religion that is against God and His Son Jesus Christ. Blasphemous is described as profane, sacrilegious or expressing disrespect for God (which also defines Satan’s “core being”). The 10 horns are 10 different kingdoms that will give their power and authority to the beast. This group of 10 will destroy the group of 7 kingdoms (Revelation 17:16); and will wage war against the saints and the Lamb (Revelation 17:12-14).

Satan, the 1st beast and the 2nd beast represent an unholy trinity – compared to God, the Son and the Holy Spirit – in that Satan will empower and indwell within the beast. The second beast will mandate all to worship and honor the first beast.

The 1st beast that emerges from the sea resembled a leopard, but had feet like a bear and a mouth of a lion. Understanding the relevance of the references to a leopard, bear and lion becomes clearer when you reference the prophetic visions and interpretations in Daniel 2 and 7 (which should be read prior to continuing).



Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream & Daniel’s Interpretation (Daniel 2)		Daniel’s Dream (Daniel 7)	Interpretation of Daniels Dream (Daniel 7)	John’s Description (Rev 13)
Head of Gold	1 st Kingdom	Lion	The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth.	The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.
Chest & Arms Silver	2 nd Kingdom	Bear		
Belly & Thighs Bronze	3 rd Kingdom	Leopard		
Legs of Iron Feet are Iron and Clay	4 th Kingdom	Different from the other beasts with 10 horns	The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom.	It had ten horns with ten crowns on its horns.

Note the following regarding the statue in Daniel 2:

1. The four segments represent 4 kingdoms.
2. The statue represents time – from Nebuchadnezzar (the head) to the end-time days (the toes).
3. As you move down the statue:
 - a. The type of metal becomes inferior.

- b. Power and control of kings and kingdoms is progressively reduced.
 - c. Unification of kings and kingdoms becomes fragmented as you descend into the toes.
4. The 10 toes:
- a. Are made of iron and clay (which do not “hold” together well)
 - b. Correlate to the 10 horns in Daniel’s dream and John’s description.
 - c. Represent 10 kings (countries) that will be part of the 4th (and last) earthly kingdom.
 - d. Will be crushed and brought to an end by the Rock (Jesus) – Daniel 2:44-45

King Nebuchadnezzar reigned over the Babylonian Empire 605 BC to 562 BC. He conquered Judah and Jerusalem; sent the Jews into exile and destroyed the first (Solomon’s) temple.

Other than the kingdom of King Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon), the other three kings and kingdoms are not defined in the Bible. As such, there are different interpretations of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th earthly kingdoms; such as Medo-Persia, Grecian Empire and Rome. While there may be some value gained in knowing the identity of the 2nd and 3rd kingdoms, there is much more value in gaining insight into the characteristics of the 4th and last earthly kingdom.

Daniel 2:40-43: *Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.*

Daniel 7:23-24: *“He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom.*

Revelation 17:12-14: *“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”*

Daniel 2:40-43, Daniel 7:23-24, and Revelation 17:12-14 prophesies the last kingdom:

1. Is comprised of 10 kings (countries) that will be different from all kingdoms throughout time.
2. It will crush, break, devour, and trample down all other countries and the whole earth.
3. It will destroy the group of 7 kingdoms referred to in Revelation 17 as “the great prostitute.”
4. It will be divided and will not remain united. This may be due to the very nature, objective, and destructive results of this collective group; and/or may be due to opposing political; and/or religious views. Daniel 24:7 explains 3 of the 10 kings will be subdued (restrain, suppress, control, discipline) by the 2nd beast.

5. This group of 10 kings will be an instrument (a means) for the dragon, the 1st beast, and the 2nd beast to gain global power and wage war against God's holy people.

This last earthly kingdom of 10 will be controlled by the abomination that causes desolation. While it may seem impossible for any ruler to exceed the horrific atrocities of Hitler, Satan will be able to enact his anger and hatred toward all living persons during the last days. He will mark his own for eternal death – and for the remaining saints – he will wage war against them via a powerful and destructive kingdom that will not be defeated by earthly forces.

We now return to Revelation 13:3-4

³One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. ⁴People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?”

Revelation 17:8 provides additional insight into Revelation 13:3: *The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.*

One of the heads of the 1st beast will receive a fatal wound and will die (possibly by an attack/assassination attempt by miss-directed saints, or a nation that is not aligned with the 10). However, after some period of time the beast will “return from the grave” (the Abyss) and the fatal wound will “miraculously” be healed as the world is awestruck with wonder. This globally-viewed event will cause the whole world to worship the dragon (Satan) and the beast because no one can kill the beast. (An attempt was made and failed.)

⁵The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. ⁶It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. ⁷It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. ⁸All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

Note the scripture: “will come up of the Abyss.” This is an important “link” between Revelation 13:3 and Revelation 11:3-12. When the beast comes up from the Abyss is when he receives his authority (power and control). This is also when the beast will attack the two witnesses.

“And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” They are “the two olive trees” and the two lampstands, and “they stand before the Lord of the earth.” If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.”
Revelation 11:3-12

Note that the Two Witnesses were killed by the beast after he came up from the Abyss. And, once the beast came up from the Abyss he will receive authority for forty-two months or 3 ½ years (Revelation 13:5 below). This provides a timeline that conveys the Two Witnesses will exercise their power and authority during the first half of the Tribulation (1,260 days or 3 ½ years). As such, the beast’s covenant to resume sacrifices and offerings (agreement to rebuild the temple) – which will initiate the 7-year Tribulation “clock” – and will likely coincide with the entrance of the Two Witnesses.

Those that will gloat; those that will celebrate; those that will send gifts; those that will worship the beast and accept his mark; and those that will not have their name written in the Book of Life will need very strong visual events and signs to disengage and redirect their memories of the recovery and ascension of the two witnesses. This redirection (and delusional lie) will be accomplished by the visual events and signs performed by the 2nd beast. Rev 13:13-15

As stated earlier; the dragon, the beast and the false prophet are an unholy trinity. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is eternal life for all those that follow Him. The death and resurrection of the beast is eternal death for all those that follow him.

The degree of darkness will increase as the beast uses his global power and authority during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation (or The Great Tribulation). The voice of the beast will speak Satan’s absolute hatred towards God, will wage war against God’s holy people, and those who do not have their name written in the Lamb’s book of life will worship the beast. The world will be clearly divided between those that will die a second death and the remaining saints. In addition, there will be a great desire by the saints to fight against the ruling darkness.

9Whoever has ears, let them hear. 10“If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed.” This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people.

Three options are listed for God’s holy people that are living during this horrific period of time. They can go into captivity (worship the beast); fight against the beast (referenced by the sword); or be patient,

faithful, and place their trust in God. God's word is calling for His people to hold on for the end is near. Additional insight is provided by the 5th seal in Revelation 6:

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

The Beast out of the Earth (entrance of the 2nd beast / False Prophet)

¹¹Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. ¹²It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

The first beast came out of the sea. This second beast will come out of the earth and will be more destructive than the first. Although the second beast may have an innocent persona (i.e. two horns like a lamb), his spoken words will also come from Satan. He will exercise the Satan-given authority of the first beast. He will also perform signs and wonders that will deceive the masses and will create a means to enforce worship of the first beast (via death and the mark).

¹³And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. ¹⁴Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

Daniel 7:19-25 refers to the second beast as the “other horn”: *“Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.*

“He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.’”

Daniel 7 versus 19-27 states:

1. A new 11th horn (king) rises up among the 10 kings.
2. The saints will be under his authority, power and control for 3 ½ years.
3. This new king:
 - a. Is more imposing (synonyms: impressive, commanding, magnificent) than the others.
 - b. Has eyes (insightful, wise, etc.)
 - c. Speaks boastfully (synonyms: arrogantly, with conceit)
 - d. Will subdue 3 of the 10 kings.
 - e. Will speak against God, will add to the oppression of the saints and will attempt to change the set times and laws prescribed by God.
 - f. Is referred to as the false prophet:
 - Revelation 16:13: *Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.*
 - Revelation 19:20: *But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.*
 - Revelation 20:10: *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

The Mark

¹⁶It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, ¹⁷so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.

It (the 2nd beast from the earth/the false prophet) will globally compel all persons to accept an eternal inscription of the beast's name on their right hand or forehead. The great and small, rich and poor, free and slave will be compelled to accept the mark because it will be required to buy and sell. It will be eternal because it means all that accept the mark will die a second (spiritual death) in the lake of fire. The beast's name or number of his name will be written on their right hand or forehead as an indicator and testimony of their allegiance to and worship of the beast.

When you think about it, the mark is an absolutely diabolical, cruel, evil, and ingenious means to globally attack all of the saints, right where they live, in every corner of the world. Satan (via the 2nd beast/false prophet) will likely proclaim:

If you want to eat, pay your bills, keep your possessions, and survive...you must accept the mark. Otherwise, you will suffer because you will not be able to buy and sell or exchange money for goods and services. You will be ostracized from society. You will go hungry. You will lose your home, your possessions, and your way of life. You will be forced to forage and

beg for sustenance. You will live a life of misery because of your faith in keeping God's commands and holding onto your testimony about Jesus.

Mark Acceptance Motivation

Given our basic nature, why would anyone be willing to accept the mark in the first place? The mark represents a significant cost to personal privacy and freedom. While it is easy to assume that there will be a percentage of the global society that would be willing to follow anyone that performed signs and miracles...but what about the remaining masses? Are signs and miracles enough? Are consequences of non-compliance sufficient? Or is it possible there will be additional mitigating factors that will facilitate mark acceptance? For example, a deep and prolonged global economic crisis will cause everyone to experience a deep level of fear that can be best described as all-encompassing, mind-numbing and gut-wrenching. If this occurs, many will go hungry for the first time in their lives. Fear and hunger are fundamental motivators that have much more influence upon one's behavior than the "concepts" of privacy and freedom. If the mark is presented as a means (i.e. part of a "recovery plan") to get the world's economy going again, improving employment opportunities and will put food on the table – then any concerns with privacy and freedom will be overshadowed by the demands of fulfilling more basic needs. What's more, this speculative scenario supports disenfranchisement of (and the expression of anger towards) anyone that does not participate.

Non-Compliant Consequences and Mark Verification

If no one will have the power (or ability) to buy or sell unless they have the mark means the following two things will likely occur:

1. There will be consequences if you attempt to buy and sell without the mark (non-compliance).
Without consequences no one would be compelled to accept the mark.
2. There will be a means to verify if the buyer and seller have accepted the mark when a sale occurs (at the point of purchase).

Consequences for non-compliance may include confiscation of items sold/purchased, confiscation of assets, imprisonment, physical beatings, and even death.

Verification at the point of purchase may be accomplished by one or more of the following:

1. Visual (the marked seller will be required to visually determine if the buyer has the mark)
2. Digital (verification will occur via technology)
3. Combination of visual and digital

Visual Verification

Personally, I initially thought verification would occur strictly via technology. However, I am beginning to believe technology may be employed, but with either a shared role with visual verification, or strictly visual verification. My reasoning is based upon the perception that this period of time will be absolutely chaotic. The technological infrastructure and logistics required to implement a global technology-based verification system will be very, very difficult – especially for those parts of the world that do not have access to technology. And, the amount of time to implement a technology-based verification system may be as short as 3 ½ years – adding to the difficulty. What’s more, all of this will occur as the wrath of God is poured out via the seals, trumpets and bowls. As such, the mark may simply be a permanent identifier (such as a tattoo) on the hand or forehead. In this speculative scenario the ink would be applied to the area on the forehead or right hand. A hand-held device with preinstalled needles that form the “mark” may be placed against the skin and pressed with sufficient force to prick the skin’s top layer (the epidermis) and into the underlying layer of skin where the ink will permanently reside (the dermis). This can be quickly done on each person and would be much easier to deploy during the last days. In addition, point of purchase enforcement would be easy (without technology) via:

- Fear: Simply video the killing of people for non-compliance and show it to the world – including the killing of those that have the mark but:
- Supported someone without the mark and/or
- Knew of non-compliance and did not report it to authorities.
- Those that have accepted the mark: Receiving the mark is a statement of acceptance and indicator of beast worship. Many of those that accept the mark will become an instrument (vessel) of the source of all hatred – which will be directed towards the saints. As such, those that accept the mark will assist in verification and compliance. Imagine for a moment people standing in a grocery line that includes a person without the mark attempting to buy food. Those standing in line with the mark will be able to visually determine if this person has the mark or not by looking at their forehead or right hand. “What are you doing here? You do not have the mark and are not able to buy...GET OUT OF THIS LINE AND OUT OF THIS STORE...YOU “%#*\$#!!!”

Digital Verification

If the mark is based upon technology, the following provides an overview of possible scenarios and technologies that that may be deployed.

It is important to note that the following sections (Cashless Global Economy, Smart Cards, Biometric Identification Technology, Point-of-Purchase and/or Database Verification, and Detail Purchase Information) are based upon rationalized speculation and deductive reasoning...and do not have supporting biblical evidence.

Biometric Identification Technology

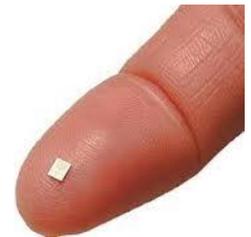
It is also believed accurate physical identification of the buyer will be a critical requirement to ensure mark compliance and control. Without a secure means of identification, anyone could forge or steal a required card or identification papers in order to buy or sell. All physical forms of identification are subject to fraud and theft. To reduce fraud and theft, retailers, banks and credit card companies have been testing biometric devices. Biometric devices are used to verify a person's identity by analyzing personal traits such as voice patterns, finger prints, veins in the eye, characteristics of blood vessels in the hand, and facial recognition. All of these physiological characteristics are very difficult to duplicate, forge or steal.

Challenges associated with implementing biometric technology at the point-of-purchase include cost and ease-of-use. Most biometric technologies such as voice pattern analyzers and retinal scanners are expensive and require trained specialists. However, fingerprint recognition is easy to implement and



use, is highly effective and inexpensive. Fingerprint readers are now included (or offered as an option) on laptop computers and computer keyboards – which replaces the need to enter a user name and password during sign on. “Digital thumbprints” may be stored on a smart card or in a central database.

Another form of identification that may be used is based upon a very small RFID (radio-frequency identification) microchip that is implanted under the skin. This type of technology is widely used today for a variety of purposes – from identifying animals to tracking merchandise. The microchip has the ability to store a significant amount of information of the “implantee.” Contents of the RFID microchip are read by a RFID reader when it is placed close to the microchip. RFID readers are relatively inexpensive and easy to use.



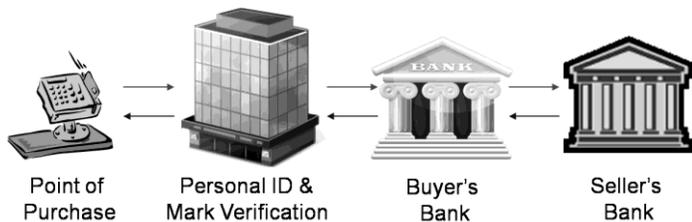
A new means of identification – facial recognition technology – has greatly improved during the past few years due to advancements in high-definition cameras and software. Facial recognition has been deployed in multiple environments, and is relatively inexpensive and easy to use.

Point-of-Purchase Verification

This scenario is based upon local digital verification. For example, it is possible for verification to occur via payment terminals at the point-of-purchase. When you pay for a transaction today you will likely swipe your credit card in a payment terminal and then select debit/credit, possibly sign your name, and so forth. The computer-based payment terminal has the processing and data storage capability to read biometric data from a smart card and then compare it against a fingerprint read or other biometric information captured during the transaction.



Database Verification



The buyer's personal identification data is captured at some time during the transaction at the point of purchase. This information is digitally transferred for verification to a database via the Internet or some other medium. If the mark has been accepted by the buyer and seller, the transaction amount is then transferred to the buyer's bank to verify if there are sufficient funds (debit) and/or the account is in good standing (credit). If the account is good the transaction is completed and notification of approval is returned to the point of purchase. If the mark has not been accepted by either the buyer or seller the transaction will not be approved. FYI...this type of transaction occurs today when you pay with a debit / credit card.

Detailed Purchase Information



Today, Universal Product Code (UPC) numbers are on virtually every product. It is now possible to identify if a family of four is consuming "excess" food (i.e. for five or six persons) which can raise a "red flag" that warrants further investigation to determine if the family is providing food to someone that has not accepted the mark.

The simple threat of this capability – including the severe consequences – could significantly deter sympathetic caregivers.

The Mark

¹⁸This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.

The number 666 has intrigued believers throughout the centuries. As such, there have been many attempts to decipher the number of the beast. For example, some have attempted to use a mathematical approach by assigning numeric values to the Greek alphabet and others to Roman Numerals (X = 10, V = 5, and so forth), then added the numeric sum total of leader's names to arrive at 666. Some have taken the English alphabet and assigned numeric values by adding 1 x 6 to the letter A, 2 x 6 to the letter B, 3 x 6 to the letter C, and so forth. These various methodologies have equated a 666 to the names of Nero, Hitler, the Pope, and Henry Kissinger and other terms.

All efforts thus far seem speculative. However, it seems logical the "wisdom" required to calculate the number of the beast may be given as the last day events approach. The accuracy of this wise calculation of the number of the beast will be validated as the prophesized activities and attributes of the beast come to fruition. In other words, the calculation – combined with fulfilled prophecy – will provide an additional validation of the beast's identity.

Reality Check

In summary, technology may or may not provide a means of verifying mark acceptance. Technology requires global implementation – including the poorest and remote areas of the world that presently do not have required technological infrastructure. However, it will be much easier to deploy and verify a visible indelible mark (such as a tattoo) on the forehead or right hand of those that accept and worship the beast – who will be allowed to buy and sell.

Besides, when you think about it...technology really does not matter...because technology will simply verify if you have or have not accepted the mark. What is critically important is whether or not you accept the mark. If you accept the mark you have received a visual indicator of your allegiance to, and worship of the beast; are lost forever, and will die a second (and eternal) spiritual death. If and how verification occurs does not matter because technology (or whatever means is employed) will not define how you will spend eternity. What's important is the mark and all that it represents. The mark is the final dividing line between God and Satan. Each person living at this time will be forced to make an eternal decision...and all will know of the consequences.

And one more point, it seems logical that the mark will be visible for all to see – as opposed to a chip under the skin or biometric. What's more, for some the mark will be a statement and even a proclamation that they have placed their trust and faith in the beast – which provides some explanation as to why someone would want the mark put on their forehead. If there is a choice, placement on the right hand will be more convenient and easier to hide; whereas, placement on the forehead will possibly convey (and may publically announce) the recipient's absolute allegiance to the beast and hatred towards those that do not accept the mark.

The Mark and the Yellow Star

During World War II the German government mandated Jews to wear identification badges (a yellow star) on the outside of their clothing. Jews who failed to wear the yellow star risked severe punishment. The yellow star served as a means to identify and isolate the Jews from the rest of the population. A propaganda campaign soon followed which labeled the Jews as evil and blamed them as the source of problems within the German society. Rights of citizenship were then revoked – followed by removal from jobs and confiscation of property and businesses. Jews were forced to live in segmented areas which alienated them from the rest of society.

In the last days those that do not have the mark will become increasingly alienated from those that have the mark. Those that are marked will hate and ridicule those that refuse the mark. The marked will also accuse the saints of being responsible for all that is wrong in the world. Assets (property) of the saints will be lost due to an inability to meet financial obligations and/or will be traded for sustenance.

It is imperative for the saints to fully understand and remember the following: The yellow star (was) and the mark of the beast will be Satan-driven identifiers of persons. The Jews were identified for physical death (body). Those that accept the mark will be identified for an eternal death (body and soul).

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather; be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10:28

Fear motivated the Jews to accept the yellow star. Fear will motivate persons to accept the mark. Those that fear God – who can destroy both body and soul – will understand the eternal price and will not accept the mark.

To all saints that are living at this time... you will experience intense degrees of fear that are beyond description and will consume your mind, body and spirit. As such, it is imperative for you to realize that all earthly-directed fear is in vain. What you will eat, how will you be protected from the elements and what may occur by not accepting the mark becomes meaningless when you close your “physical eyes” to what’s going on around you and open your “spiritual eyes” to God’s Word and God’s promises.

Remember...All that is occurring is fulfillment of prophesy.

Remember...The Lord reigns and is still on His throne.

Remember...The Lord is in control.

Remember...The beast and those that accept the mark will perish in hell.

Remember...Those that trust in God will live for eternity in paradise.

Remember...Our time on this earth compares to a grain of sand in an ocean of eternity.

Remember...God’s Word and His promises are infallible.

Remember...Nothing on this earth is worthy.

Remember...Do not accept the mark and do not worship the beast.

Remember...To fear God and not man nor the beast.

The desire, longing, anticipation and hope of the saints living during the Great Tribulation will be for the return of Jesus Christ – to end their misery and take them “home.” Some will attempt to deceive the saints by claiming to be Jesus Christ or having knowledge of Christ’s location – which is a deceptive and absolute lie – from the source of all lies.

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? 2nd Peter 3:3-4

“He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them. Luke 21: 8

“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Matthew 24:22-24

“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Matthew 24:26-27

Remember...Jesus Christ walked among us and performed signs, wonders and miracles almost 2,000 years ago. The second coming of the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) will occur (in the sky) as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west to destroy the beast, the false prophet and the armies that are gathered to defeat him. All statements or prophetic claims of the Messiah being amongst the people are absolutely false and from the god of this world (Satan).

Praise God in that this last kingdom will be defeated by Jesus Christ upon His 2nd return.

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. Revelation 19:19-21

Chapter 14

The dreadful and horrific visions of the last days now transition to the heavenly rewards for those that believe, trust and follow the Lamb. The Lamb – God’s Son – paid the purchase price for the 144,000 who will be the first fruits of many to come. Jesus said in John 14:6 “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

The Lamb and the 144,000

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

These are Israelites who:

- Were marked with the seal of God in Revelation 7:3-4: *“Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God. Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.”*
- Will realize:
- Jesus Christ was (and is) the Messiah
- Jesus Christ did not come in power and strength (as was expected by the Jewish nation approximately 2,000 years ago).
- Jesus Christ revealed the nature of God, His forgiveness and His love.
- Believing, trusting and following Jesus Christ transforms us to His likeness from within.
- Will be:
- Redeemed from the earth by the Lamb.
- The first fruits from the harvest of mankind.

Some religions have sought to claim the identity of the 144,000. But the scripture is very clear – these are from the 12 tribes of Israel – in whom God expressed his first love. And, when you think about it...it seems logical and appropriate for the very first fruits of God’s harvest to come from the nation of Israel. They will sing a song that only they can sing to God. No one in heaven – including angels, the four living creatures and the elders – will be able to sing this song. Close your eyes and visualize this glorious event. Hear their song of pure praise; a song that contains words that express everlasting thankfulness; a song that is sung with love that is indescribable; and a song God has longed for throughout eternity.

John’s glorious heavenly vision of the 144,000 now transitions back to earth where three angels make announcements to all living persons. Although Satan will fully execute his God-allowed powers during this time (via the beast), God will make sure that His word is proclaimed as chaos and darkness increases.

All will be informed and all will have full knowledge of the eternal consequences of fearing and worshipping beast and receiving his mark.

⁶Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. ⁷He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

Fear will exponentially increase across the globe as the following occurs:

- As each of the seals are opened, and each of the trumpets are sounded
- As the Two Witnesses perform miracles, prophesy, are killed by the beast, and ascend into heaven
- The beast:
 1. Receives a mortal wound and dies
 2. Is resurrected from the dead upon his ascension from the bottomless pit
 3. Kills the Two Witnesses. (Rev. 11:7)
 4. Destroys Babylon the Great; the mother of prostitutes and the abominations of the earth. (Revelation 17: 15-17)
 5. Demands worship and mark acceptance

Fear – an absolute mind-numbing, all consuming, gut-wrenching, and indescribable emotional experience that reaches to the deepest core of our inner being – will pervade the masses. Persons on earth will be living in a degree of unprecedented fear – including those that believe in and trust Jesus Christ and those that follow the beast. In a loud voice the first angel proclaims (and reminds) all to fear God; because His word and what has been prophesied by the Two Witnesses will be fulfilled as the final hour of judgment – by the One that created the universe – is at hand.

⁸A second angel followed and said, “‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,’ which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

The second angel announces the spiritual decline of Babylon the Great as she causes other nations to accept, participate in and consume her abominable sins. The fall of Babylon into the unrepentant depths of satanic control will reach a point far below redemption and into the realm of Godly retribution as she prostitutes herself and cohorts with and “rides the beast.”

So great is the sin of Babylon the Great – referred to as the mother of prostitutes and abominations of earth – she is specifically called out in the 7th and last bowl (Revelation 16:17), is exposed in Revelation chapters 17 and 18, and her destruction results in heavenly praise and worship (Revelation 19:1-4).

⁹A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, ¹⁰they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”

The first angel proclaims all to fear God because His judgment will soon cause everything to come to an end. The second angel announces the fall of Babylon. The third angel warns of the eternal consequences of worshiping the beast and accepting his mark.

Note the first and third global announcement will insure every person on earth - every nation, tribe, language and people - will understand their pending choice between God and Satan and will understand the eternal consequences. As such, these announcements raise many questions. For example:

1. What will be the timing of the announcements?

The announcements will most likely occur at the beginning of – or during – the 2nd half of the Tribulation, which is based upon the following:

- 1st announcement states: “...the hour of his judgment has come.”
- Jesus said in Matthew 24:14: And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- 2nd announcement: Babylon will fall during the 2nd half of the Tribulation (Rev 16 & 17).
- 3rd announcement warns of the consequences of beast worship and mark acceptance.
- One may rationally conclude they will occur prior, during, or after the introduction of the mark.

2. How will announcements be communicated?

While possible, personally, I do not believe we will hear the voices of the angels spoken “in the sky.” But rather, I believe we will likely hear the angel’s proclamation via the utilization of multiple means and in various media; such as television, Internet, print, person-to-person, missionaries, and so forth. The mark will result in a firestorm of global controversy. Once the identity of the beast is confirmed and the mark is introduced, the consequences of the beast and the mark will be zealously explained by those that know Jesus Christ; and will be dissected, analyzed, argued, criticized, mocked, and ridiculed by non-Christian pundits (“experts,” commentators) in all forms of media. Meanwhile, as a result, the gospel will be proclaimed and the warnings of beast worship and mark acceptance will be known by all.

3. If the announcements will reach everyone – all nations, all tribes, all languages and all people – how will it be possible to reach those that are in the remote corners of the world – including those that are separated by geographic and political boundaries?

Throughout time it has been impossible to instantly/effectively communicate to every nation, tribe, language and people in this manner. However, during the past years we have seen the global expansion of satellites and television



networks that reach across continents. And, with the explosive growth of the Internet – including inexpensive devices that provide access to the Internet – there’s now an additional means to proclaim the eternal gospel to every nation, tribe, language and people. However, there are approximately 7 billion people on earth and only 2.2 billion are online. On June 16, 2013 Google announced plans to launch thousands of Internet-

beaming antennas into the stratosphere aboard giant balloons with the goal of providing Internet service to the entire planet. The balloons carry a sheet of solar paneling for power, a package of antennas, computers, electronics, GPS devices and batteries that will allow them to deliver an Internet

connection of at least 3G cellular speeds. Each balloon has attitude control valves allowing it to be kept on station as it is guided by air streams. It is possible for this technological approach to facilitate communication, to all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave.

For more information Google "Google Balloons"

Also see: <http://www.designboom.com/technology/googles-project-loon-balloon-powered-internet/>

We now return to Revelation 14:12

¹²This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus. ¹³Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

Imagine for a moment the polarizing thought processes saints will experience day-by-day and minute-by-minute. All will be "pulled" in opposing directions.

- The spiritual side will desire to align with God by:
 - Realizing all that is occurring is fulfillment of prophesy.
 - Relying upon God's word and His promises
 - Seeking patience and faith
- The flesh will desire to align with Satan by considering:
 - The present conditions
 - Acceptance of the mark and worshiping the beast.
 - Rebelling and fighting against the beast's growing power and control (Satan's desire)

Although living at this time will be indescribably difficult for the saints, God calls for patient endurance – even when faced with the fulfilled prophesy that many will be slain because of their testimony (Revelation 6:9-11 and Matthew 24:9). God's call for patient endurance will be especially difficult for Israelites because of the approximate six million Jews that were murdered by Hitler – who went to their death without a fight. However, the aggressive position of "never again" will not align with God's call for patient endurance – stated twice in Revelation:

- 14:12: *This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.*
- 13:9-10: *Whoever has ears, let them hear. "If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed." This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.*

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11

Jesus Christ prophesied what would occur during the last days. Note His reference to standing firm until the end. *"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated*

by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.” Matthew 24:9-13

Stand firm in believing and trusting in the blood of Jesus that was shed as atonement for your sins.	Matt. 26:28, John 6:53, Romans 5; Col. 1:13-14, Heb. 9:12, 1 John 1:7, Rev. 1:5; Rev. 7:14
Stand firm in fearing God and not man.	Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 56:3-4, 115:11, 145:19-20; Proverbs 29:25; Matt. 10:28; Luke 1:50, 12:4-5; Rev. 19:5
Stand firm in giving God all glory.	Psalm 3:3, 79:9; Isaiah 40:5; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Isaiah 42:8; Rev. 14:7, 21:23
Stand firm in knowing the hour of His final judgment has come.	Romans 14:11; 2 Thess. 1:1-12; Romans 2:5-11 and Isaiah 45:23; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15
Stand firm in worshiping Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.	Genesis 1; Psalm 136:5; Isaiah 45; Deut. 10:12-22; Nehemiah 9:6; Acts 4:24-26, 14:15
Stand firm in knowing the wrath of God’s fury will be poured out on all who worships the beast and its image and receives its mark.	John 3:35-36; Romans 1:18-23 & 12:19 & Deut. 32:34-35; Rev. 14:10 & 16:1-2
Stand firm in knowing Jesus Christ will return.	Zech. 14:4; Matt. 24:27-31; Luke 21; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 1:7-8; Hebrews 1; Rev. 1:7-8, 19:11-21, 22:20)

Harvesting the Earth and Trampling the Winepress

The mark will be the great and final divider and will make the harvest of the earth ripe. It will clearly segment Christians from non-Christians, and will separate the weeds (and even the chaff) from the wheat.

¹⁴I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, “Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” ¹⁶So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

¹⁷Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.” ¹⁹The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. ²⁰They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

There are two angels with sharp sickles:

	1st Angel - Verses 14-16	2nd Angel - Verses 17-20
Identification	Some believe this is Jesus Christ, others believe it is an angel.	This is an angel.
“Another” angel’s proclamation	Reap for the harvest of the earth is ripe	Gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine.
Who is reaped	Those who will live for eternity	Those who will die a second death.

Note that the first angel will complete his harvest prior to when the second angel begins his harvest. The first angel will harvest those that keep His commands and remained faithful to Jesus Christ – and who will escape prior to the deliverance of God’s wrath. It is not clear how “reaping” occurs, nor is there a reference to the amount of time that occurs between the first and second angel’s harvest. But here is a very important point...the mark is a decisive, complete and final segmentation of those that obeyed God and remained faithful to Jesus Christ...and will be easy to identify because they will not have the beast’s mark.

The second angel will harvest those that will receive the great winepress of God’s wrath – those that accepted the mark and worshiped the beast. Many believe the great winepress of God’s wrath is a metaphor (representation) of what will occur during the final battle at Armageddon.

Jesus Christ used parables to reveal this time of harvest in Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43; 47-50:

The Parable of the Weeds

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ “An enemy did this,’ he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ “No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”



Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom

everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

The Parable of the Net

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

The Winepress

Jesus said (John 15:1) *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.”* The reference to the earth’s vine (Rev. 14:17) – and the clusters of grapes that were thrown into the great winepress of God’s wrath is the fruit created by the works of Satan (the Prince of the world), the beast and the false prophet.

The quantity of persons that will die during the execution of God’s wrath will be significant. Their blood will flow the distance of 1,600 stadia (approximately 184 miles) at a height of a horse’s bridle (approximately 4 feet).

““Therefore wait for me,” declares the Lord, “for the day I will stand up to testify. I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them—all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger.” Zephaniah 3:8

“Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their Wickedness!” Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” Joel 3:12-14

- They were warned by God’s word, the Two Witnesses, angels, and saints – but they would not listen.
- They were provided with truth, but they made a decision to harden their hearts and believe a lie.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 describes the heavenly worship of those harvested by the first angel's reaping (Rev. 14:15-16). It also introduces the final seven plagues – poured out from seven bowls of God's wrath in chapter 16. The seven plagues and seven bowls refer to the same judgments. Each judgment will cause a plague-like (outbreak, epidemic, pandemic) catastrophe upon the beast and his worshipers.

Seven Angels with Seven Plagues

¹I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. ²And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God ³and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb:

“Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. ⁴Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

John saw those that were harvested by the first angel (who did not worship the beast and his image, nor accept his mark) will sing a song of worship and praise to God. It is also song of vindication in that they were once faced with horrific circumstances – but yet they believed and trusted God. It is also a song that declares all nations – including small and great, rich and poor, free and slave – will acknowledge the one, only and true God; and will acknowledge Jesus Christ is Lord.

“By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’” All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.” Isaiah 45:23-24

“‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’” Romans 14:11

“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11

Verse 5 provides confirmation that the harvest by the first angel occurs prior to the pouring out of the seven bowls of plagues. The seven angels with the seven plagues were given the seven bowls after John saw the victorious singing in heaven. The only persons that will receive God's wrath are the wicked that rejected Him, His Son Jesus Christ, and worshiped the beast and accepted his mark.

⁵After this I looked, and I saw in heaven the temple—that is, the tabernacle of the covenant law—and it was opened. ⁶Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were

dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. ⁷Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. ⁸And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

It is interesting (and possibly insightful into the nature of God) in that no one could enter the temple during the execution of His wrath, and no reason is provided. Genesis 1:27 says we are made in God's image. As such, it may be possible to speculate why no one could enter the temple by considering how we would respond if placed in this situation. For example, consider our preference to be alone when we experience the heartache and sorrow of being rejected by someone we love – and the relationship comes to a final ending. Also reflect upon how Jesus wept over Jerusalem:

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." Luke 19:41-44

God does not delight in the death of the wicked. God desires that they would turn from their ways and seek to know Him. However, His word is unwavering, unconditional and absolute. When you think about it, it seems appropriate that the seven angels with the seven plagues – the ones that will deliver God's final and all-consuming wrath – come from the tabernacle of the covenant law. God's covenant (promise, pledge) of what will happen to those that do not turn from their wicked ways will be fulfilled.

Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?' Ezekiel 33:11

God is holy, loving, and just. His word and covenants are unchanging and everlasting. He does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) As such...it is this writer's perception that it may be possible God wants to be alone because of His grief as His promises are fulfilled.

Chapter 16

The Seven Bowls

All persons that placed their trust in Jesus Christ and did not worship the beast and accept his mark have been removed (harvested) from earth (Rev. 14:14). All that remain are the beast, the false prophet, and all those that worshiped the beast and accepted his mark – upon which the final wrath of God will be poured.

1st Bowl

¹“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go, pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth.” ²The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.”

The first bowl causes ugly, festering sores on those that accepted the mark and worshiped the beast. These sores are similar to the festering boils of the sixth plague in Egypt (Exodus 9:8-12). The term “festering sore” is defined as an increasing source of irritation that contains or discharges pus. While it’s an unpleasant description to read, you can be assured it will be much uglier to see, painful to experience, and a constant reminder of God’s judgment because they accepted the mark.

2nd Bowl

³“The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died.”

This judgment is similar to the first plague in Egypt (Exodus 7:20-24), and the second trumpet judgment. However, the second bowl will be far more destructive and possibly caused by a global red tide. Red tides occur regularly on a smaller “localized” scale. Some have been thick and viscous (like the blood of a dead person) because of the countless number of the tiny one-cell organisms (called dinoflagellates) that exponentially multiply in the water. Red tides kill fish because of the toxins produced by the dinoflagellates, and because they deplete oxygen in the water.



The graphic is from a red tide that occurred off the coast of Florida and Texas in March, 2013.

3rd Bowl

⁴“The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: “You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; ⁶for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.” ⁷And I heard the altar respond: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”” Rev 16:4-7

Note in the previous bowl the sea was turned into blood “like” (or with similar properties) of a dead person. The third bowl will cause rivers and springs (drinkable water) to become blood. This judgment of having to drink blood to survive is retribution for shedding of blood of the saints and the prophets.

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

4th Bowl

⁸“The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.”

The contents of the bowl will cause the intensity of the sun’s heat to increase to a point where it scorches the skin (superficial burn which results in pain or injury). This judgment of intense heat – when combined with the lack of drinkable water – will greatly magnify torment. And in the midst of their agony...they still cursed God and refused to repent.

“And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.” Revelation 14:11

5th Bowl

¹⁰“The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony ¹¹and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.”

The fifth has similarity to the darkness that could be felt in Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23). This is a darkness where no one can see anything or move about. The gnawing of their tongues is due to the pain caused

by the festering sores, scorched skin, and thirst from lack of drinking water. So they sit in pain, and in darkness, and in unrepentance cursing God.

6th Bowl

¹²“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. ¹³Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.” Rev 16:12-14

The sixth bowl causes the Euphrates River to dry up and prepare a way for the kings (nations) from the East. The drying of the river may provide justification (or an additional reason) for war, or a means to simplify movement of massive armies.

A willingness of one nation (or group of people) to attack someone else requires a reason, a justification, and a perception that killing the “enemy” is justified in order to rally the populace. Justification usually occurs because the “enemy” either negatively impacts their life, or there is a perceived (conceptual) threat to their wellbeing. The following examples provided America with justification to enter into war:

- The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (the final “straw” that broke the back of those that were against entering WWII)
- The “Domino Theory” (a concept that justified our involvement in Vietnam by stopping the spread of Communism)
- “Weapons of mass destruction” (a perceived threat that justified our involvement in the Gulf War)
- The attack on the Twin Towers in New York City, September 11, 2001

Impure spirits (demons) will influence the kings of the whole world (nations) to gather together for the final battle of Armageddon. These impure spirits will successfully convince the nations of the world that war is justified. The convincing rationale used by the demons will be based upon a tangible impact on their lives and/or based upon a conceptual threat. Whatever rationale is used to convince the masses, the real purpose of the impure spirits is to provide the beast – the abomination that causes desolation – with a futile means to attack the Lamb and to destroy all that believe the deceptive lie of the impure spirits. Ten kings (kingdoms/nations) will give their power and authority to the beast (to collectively increase their strength) to wage war against the One that has already won the battle.

“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.” Revelation 17:12-14

7th Bowl

¹⁷The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” ¹⁸Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. ¹⁹The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. ²¹From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”

The seventh and last bowl causes an earthquake unlike any that has ever occurred in that it will cause total global devastation. The earth will heave and tear causing islands and continents to move and change their geologic form. Every corner of the earth including all nations, all cities and all persons will be impacted by the devastation as hailstones weighing approximately 100 pounds fall from the sky and upon people.

They will know why and from whom...for they were warned. They will not accept the fact that they made a choice and are therefore responsible...and yet they curse God.

Note that after the fall of Babylon the Great had already occurred (Rev. 14:8), after all preceding six bowls have been poured out, and during the final seventh bowl judgment – God remembers Babylon the Great by giving her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. The next two chapters (17 and 18) looks “back in time” (prior to the 7th bowl) to provide us with insight as to the nature, characteristics and possible identity of Babylon the Great; who is also referred to in scripture as:

- The woman
- The great prostitute
- The mother of prostitutes
- The mother of abominations of earth
- A haunt for every impure spirit
- An adulterous corrupter of the earth who has sins piled up to heaven
- A great city that rules over the kings of the earth

In addition, chapter 17 describes Babylon in its mystery form: as a religious system and spirit of false worship. Chapter 18 describes Babylon as a political and commercial system embodied in a city.

There are varied interpretations as to the identity of Babylon. Each belief is supported by biblical references and/or logical arguments. These beliefs include (and are not limited to):

- The Roman Catholic Church
- A revived Roman empire that will emerge during the last days
- America
- Israel
- All the ungodly religious-political-social-economic systems that humans have created

There have been ongoing debates as to the identity of Babylon the Great described in Revelation. As such, this topic can become a point of contention between faithful believers that results in a loss of focus upon what is truly important: the Lamb that was sacrificed for our sins, our Redeemer, and our Lord, Jesus Christ. God's word will be fulfilled and the true identity of Babylon the Great will be revealed. Therefore, it is important to know and watch for the prophetic signs, indicators, and characteristics of the great prostitute as we enter into the last days.

Babylon sits on seven hills.	Rev: 17:9
Babylon is a great city that rules (has influence) over the kings of the earth	Jeremiah 51:13; Rev. 17:1-2, 15, 18; Rev. 18:3, 9
The city is a dwelling place for demons and impure spirits.	Rev 18:2
The city is guilty of committing excessive sins.	Rev 18:5
The city is responsible for the blood of God's prophets and those who bore testimony to Jesus.	Rev 17:6; 18:24
Babylon will conduct trade with the kings of the earth	Rev. 18:11-19
Kings, nations and persons committed adultery with her and shared in her luxury.	Rev 18:3, 9, 17
God's people will be called out of the city so that they will not share in her excessive sins and God's judgment.	Jeremiah 51:45; Rev 18:4-8
The beast hates Babylon and will destroy it	Rev. 17:15-17
The city will be punished by God	Rev 16: 19; 17:16-17; 18:4, 8, 21
Many will stand in terror as they witness her judgment.	Rev 18:9-19

Chapter 17

¹“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. ²With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.” ³Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵The name written on her forehead was a mystery:

BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH

Prostitution is defined as one who solicits and accepts payment for sex acts. Prostitution is also defined as one who sells their abilities, talents or name for an unworthy purpose.

Adultery is defined as a voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not his or her spouse. From a biblical perspective, spiritual adultery may be defined as being unfaithful to God by forsaking His love and embracing the world’s values and desires.

For one to be called an adulterer they must be married – which provides insight into the possibility that the woman may have been “married” to God in a loving and committed relationship – but turned away from God and seduced the world for earthly gain. What’s more, this (logical speculation) may explain God’s wrath towards the woman in that she prostituted herself with the kings of the earth causing many to become intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries (causing them to become oblivious to the truth).

An example of God’s wrath towards adulterous behavior was demonstrated by Jesus Christ when He overturned the moneychanger’s tables in the temple: *Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. “It is written, ”he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer, ’but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’” Matthew 21:12-13*

It is conceivable the beast will arise into prominence and power out of Babylon. As such, the beast and Babylon will initially have a symbiotic (cooperative, mutually beneficial) relationship. Satan (via the beast) will infiltrate, subvert and seduce the great prostitute because her heart is wicked and she prefers sin over truth. The two will grow in power as the woman “rides the beast” (Rev. 17:7). The woman – blinded by her sin and clothed in her earthly gain – will support and/or participate with the beast in the killing of the faithful that testify of Jesus Christ. However, the woman will be “kicked off” the beast and destroyed by the destructive and abominable power of the beast – which may possibly occur when the

beast no longer needs the woman. God will allow the beast's hatred of the woman to destroy her religious, political and economic power.

⁶I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. ⁷Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. ⁸The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

The woman is sitting on (riding) the beast. The beast she rides – with seven heads, ten horns and blasphemous names – is the same beast (in Rev. 13:3-8) that:

- Received a fatal wound but healed.
- Is worshiped.
- Was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and exercise its authority for forty-two months.
- Was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them.
- Was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.
- Is referred to as the abomination that causes desolation.

Verse 8 provides clues as to the possible death and resurrection of the beast – thereby astonishing those on earth who will experience an eternal second death in the lake of fire. The following interpretation is based upon rationalized speculation.

- **Saw:** Refers to the existence of the beast prior to a fatal wound
- **Once was, now is not:** Conveys there will be a period of time between the death and resurrection of the beast.
- **And yet will come up out of the Abyss:** Reveals the "resurrection" of the beast.
- **And go to its destruction:** The post-resurrection activities of the beast will lead to a final self-destructive conclusion.

⁹"This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

The beast (the Anti-Christ) is described in Revelation 13:1 as having seven heads and ten horns. These seven heads and ten horns represent the beast's power and control over two separate groups of kings. The seven heads represent seven hills/kings of Babylon. The ten horns comprise a war coalition of ten kings.

The seven heads represent Babylon: a group of seven hills/kings that are held together by a false religion that is against God and His Son Jesus Christ. Prior to the beast's obtainment of power as the eighth king of Babylon, five of the seven kings will fall, one will remain in power, and one will enter into a position of king for a short time and then will lose his position. This means one king and the beast will likely control

Babylon prior to her destruction. It is also possible the beast will control Babylon via the one remaining king (prior to her destruction by the beast and ten horns).

The ten horns are ten different kingdoms that:

- Comprise the statute's ten toes made of iron and clay in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2)
- Comprise the 4th beast in Daniel's vision (Daniel 7: 23-25)
- Will receive authority for one hour or 15 days (365 days in a year / 24 hours in a day)
- Will give their power and authority to the beast (Revelation 17:12, 17).
- Will hate Babylon (Revelation 17:16)
- Will first destroy Babylon (Revelation 17:16) in one hour or 15 days (Revelation 18:10)
- Will then wage war against the saints and the Lamb in the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 17:14)

¹²“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.

¹⁴They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

¹⁵Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. ¹⁶The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God's words are fulfilled. ¹⁸The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

Chapter 18

¹After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. ²With a mighty voice he shouted:

“‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!’ She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal. ³For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”

An imposing angel with great authority proclaims the past and present condition of Babylon. For one to fall... they must first be upright. At one time Babylon was not a dwelling for demons and a haunt for impure spirits, unclean birds, and unclean detestable animals.

This also provides insight into the possibility that Babylon was once committed to God, but she allowed Satan to subvert her heart as she prostituted her power and position in an adulterous worship of earthly gain and had economic intercourse with the kings of the earth. Meanwhile, Satan and his demons increasingly take up residence as her sins pile up towards heaven.

⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “‘Come out of her, my people,’ so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; ⁵for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.

John hears the voice of Jesus telling His faithful (i.e. “my people”) to “come out of her” (leave, escape) Babylon. The voice being from Jesus is supported by His reference to God in verse 5.

When you contemplate on this scripture it is possible to derive four different conclusions:

1. *Spiritual*: The faithful that are associated with Babylon must break free from the religious bonds and delusional lies propagated by the harlot.
2. *Physical*: The faithful that are physically in Babylon must escape because the city of the great prostitute will soon be destroyed.
3. *Communication*: For the faithful to hear that they need to “come out of her” means that this message will be communicated prior to her judgment. The faithful that will warn others against worshiping the beast and accepting his mark will also warn those that are blinded by the deceptive lies of the great prostitute and of her pending destruction. They will also speak of her true identity and her affiliation with the beast.
4. *Conflict*: Babylon will respond to the faithful’s warnings and accusations with inflamed anger and rage by those that reject the Truth, are under the control of Babylon’s deception and power, and are blinded beyond redemption. These will become instruments of the harlot, and will verbally and physically attack those that challenge her. This confrontation will escalate to a point where the woman and the beast will justify killing of those that testify of Jesus – as they become drunk with the blood of God’s holy people. As such, it becomes clear as to why the woman is referred to as the mother of prostitutes, the mother of abominations of the earth, and an adulterous corrupter of the earth.

The woman's sin (piled up to heaven) causes her to live in complete darkness – unable to see, incapable of recognizing her pending doom, and unwilling to change her boastful self-centered heart. Babylon has fallen...fallen from God's grace and forgiveness...to an unredeemable and detestable point that warrants God's wrath for He has remembered her crimes. Ten horns will receive authority as kings along with the beast for one hour. The ten kings will accomplish God's purpose (as a means to deliver His wrath) by giving their power and authority to the beast to destroy Babylon.

⁶Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Pour her a double portion from her own cup. ⁷Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.' ⁸Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.

Note there are two references to time regarding the destruction of Babylon. The first is in Revelation 18:8 (one day), the second is in Revelation 17:12, 18:10, 17, 19 (one hour). The following is based upon biblical research and rationalized speculation.

One day:

- Equates to one year.
- As a prelude to her complete destruction by fire, Babylon will experience (for one year) the same torment (plagues) she has been giving the saints: death, mourning and famine. This preparation for her final destruction will cause the strength of Babylon to greatly wane (i.e. unable to protect herself from an attack).
- The one year of torment will likely occur during the end of the Tribulation.

One hour:

- 15 days or less (365/24=15)
- This is when the beast and the ten horns will attack Babylon and consume her with fire.

"The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God's words are fulfilled. Revelation 17: 12-13, 16-17"

⁹"When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. ¹⁰Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry:

¹¹"Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour your doom has come!" ¹²The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore—¹³cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; ¹³cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and human beings sold as slaves.

¹⁴“They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’ ¹⁵The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn ¹⁶and cry out: “Woe! Woe to you, great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! ¹⁷In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!” “Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. ¹⁸When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’ ¹⁹They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out:

“Woe! Woe to you, great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!” ²⁰“Rejoice over her, you heavens! Rejoice, you people of God! Rejoice, apostles and prophets! For God has judged her with the judgment she imposed on you.”

²¹Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: “With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. ²²The music of harpists and musicians, pipers and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No worker of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. ²³The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world’s important people. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. ²⁴In her was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”

The mighty angel prophetically demonstrates the violent and absolute destruction of Babylon. No longer will she be able to enjoy the fruits of her fornication, and all of the trappings of her opulence will vanish. But what’s interesting (and revealing) in verse 23 is the angel’s proclamation that the light of a lamp will no longer shine, and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will never be heard again in Babylon. The light of a lamp, bridegroom and bride are references to Jesus Christ (the light of the world and the bridegroom) and the bride (those that are redeemed by faith in Jesus Christ). As such, the angel’s statement supports the belief that Babylon at one time was once focused upon and sought after Jesus Christ. His voice and the voice of the bride were heard in her. In addition, when you consider the voice from Jesus saying “Come out of her, my people...” (Revelation 18:4) provides additional insight into what is meant by the “magic spell” of Babylon – i.e. proclaiming to know God and Jesus Christ – but her preference for and permission of sin caused her to spiral downward (and fall) as she:

1. Became a dwelling for demons, impure spirits, and unclean detestable persons.
2. Turned away from the Truth and prostituted herself in adulterous affairs.
3. Spread her false and delusional religion that leads nations astray from the Truth and into the darkness of sin and inability to see from the absence of Light.

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12) My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. (John 10:27-29)

Give thanks in that our Lord Jesus Christ knows and protects His sheep and calls them out of Babylon. Although some will be confused by the magic spell of the great prostitute...their eyes will be opened, and they will see the Truth, and they will follow Him as they run and escape from the spiritual bondage and annihilation of Babylon.

Chapter 19

¹After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

A great multitude in heaven will witness the final demise of the woman and will glorify God. Those that had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they maintained will see God’s promised wrath upon the great prostitute.

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

Revelation 6:9-11

Remember...God called for patient endurance twice in Revelation.

1. *“Whoever has ears, let them hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people.” Revelation 13:9-10*
2. *“This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.” Revelation: 14:1*

“Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.” Romans 12:19

“I will take revenge; I will pay them back. In due time their feet will slip. Their day of disaster will arrive, and their destiny will overtake them.” Deuteronomy 32:35

³And again they shouted: “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.” ⁴The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!”

The focus now transitions from the woman to the wedding of the Bridegroom (Jesus Christ) and the bride (the church). The entire history of man and all that has occurred throughout time has culminated to this point. The bride has made herself ready for the only One that is worthy.

⁵Then a voice came from the throne, saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both great and small!” ⁶Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. ⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.”

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

⁹Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

¹⁰At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus.”

The multitudes are those that sought after Truth. These are they that feared God and not man. These are they that yielded to the Holy Spirit. These are they that placed their faith and trust in the sacrificial death of the Bridegroom. These are they whose eyes were opened so that they could see. These are they that recognized the uselessness of vanity and of earthly possessions. These are they that transitioned their daily lives into activity that creates eternal results. These are they that realized that no word can describe the depth and breadth of God’s love. These are they that give God all glory – for He alone is worthy. These are they that are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. These are they that will have eternal joy and gladness for what He has done. These are they that were forgiven.

All that remain on earth – those that were warned – those that rejected the Truth – those that worshiped the beast – those that accepted the mark – and those that ridiculed and scorned and killed the faithful – will face the One they rejected.

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53

Jesus Christ was born into this world in a manner that was unexpected by the nation of Israel more than 2,000 years ago. They believed the Messiah – the Anointed King – would come as a warrior to redeem and free the Jews from the oppression of their enemies. But He came as a meek and lowly lamb with a much higher and eternal purpose – to give up His life as a sacrifice for our sins – as an expression of God’s love to all who believe. When He returns, He will come as the promised warrior with absolute power – the King of kings and Lord of lords will lead the armies of heaven into battle – and will destroy the oppressors by His spoken word – including the beast, the false prophet, and those that worshiped the beast and accepted his mark.

¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹²His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.

¹⁷And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, ¹⁸so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small.”

¹⁹Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. ²¹The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

In the beginning...God’s spoken word created the heavens and the universe (Genesis 1). In the end...Jesus Christ will defeat and capture the beast and the false prophet...and will kill the earthly kings, and their armies – by the power and majesty of His spoken word – coming out of His mouth as a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. The beast – the abomination that causes desolation – will be thrown (along with the false prophet) into the fiery lake of burning sulfur – which is the second death (Revelation 21:8) and where they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Revelation 20:10).

The final battle will culminate the end of the seven-year Tribulation. It will also usher in the transition to the fulfillment of prophesy for all that held onto the Truth, and all that survive the Tribulation – the thousand-year millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The Millennium Kingdom of Jesus Christ

The following is provided as a prelude to Chapter 20 – for the purpose of facilitating understanding.



The Millennium is a thousand-year period that will occur after the 7-year Tribulation. The Millennium is not heaven. However, it may be considered “heaven on earth” for the persons that live during this period of time. Once the thousand years have passed a new heaven and new earth will appear after the final Great White Throne Judgment occurs. The following provides an overview of the Millennium.

1. People will survive the Tribulation and enter into the Millennium. Matthew 24:22; Isaiah 24:6; Isaiah 65:8-10; Zechariah 14:16. In addition, they will still be in their sinful and mortal bodies and will have the freedom to make personal choices.
2. Satan will have zero influence upon earth until the end of the Millennium – when he will be set free for a short time to deceive. Revelation 20:1-3
3. The Millennium fulfills the promises God made to the nation of Israel.

He remembers His covenant forever...”to give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.” (Modern-day Canaan includes Israel, Lebanon, Palestinian territories, the western part of Jordan and southwestern Syria.)	Genesis 17:8; Psalm 105:8-11
God will bring the Jewish people back to the land He gave their forefathers.	Jeremiah 30:3; Isaiah 62:1
The wicked will no longer oppress the Jewish people, they will have a home of their own, and they will never fear harm again.	1 Chronicles 17:9; 2 Samuel 7:10; Zephaniah 3:15
God will destroy Israel’s enemies, will bring home and restore the remnant of Israel, and will dwell among them.	Zephaniah 3:8-20; Zechariah 8:1-23, 10:6-9; Ezekiel 36:10-11 & 22-28, 37:22-28, 39:25-29; Jeremiah 23:5-6, 32:36-44; Amos 9:11-15; Isaiah 60, 61, 62 & 65: 17-25

4. The earth will be physically and radically different from what we know today.

<p>The earth will be greatly changed during the Tribulation as a result of the outpouring God’s wrath. When the seventh bowl is poured out, a great global earthquake – one that has not occurred since man has been on earth – will cause the entire surface of the earth to change as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Lord will lay waste the earth and devastate it; He will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants ● Cities across the globe will fall ● Islands will disappear and mountains will flatten ● The earth will be violently shaken and will sway like a drunkard. ● The great city (Jerusalem) will divide into three parts 	<p>Isaiah 24 (all) Revelation 16:18-19</p>
<p>An earthquake will occur when Jesus touches His foot on the Mount of Olives to assume His throne causing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Mount of Olives to split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. ● Living waters will continually flow out from the city ● Half toward the eastern sea ● Half toward the western sea <p style="text-align: center;">Mount of Olives</p>  <p>The Mount of Olives is where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● David fled when he escaped Absalom (2 Sam 15:30) ● Jesus was before He began His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mat 21:1, Mark 11:1, Luke 19:29) ● Jesus and the disciples went after The Last Supper (Mark 14:26) ● Jesus spoke to the disciples (Matt 24, 25, Mark 13:3) ● Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:37-41) ● Jesus ascended (Acts 1:9-12) ● Jesus will return (Acts 1:11) 	<p>Zechariah 14:4, 8; Isaiah 44:3</p>

5. Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of His glory and then separate the sheep from the goats (non-Jews).

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. Matthew 25:31-32

The Sheep and Goat Judgment signifies a change from salvation by faith and God's unmerited grace, to salvation by faith and works had occurred. What's more, the Sheep and Goat Judgment is a promise of a reward to the faithful Gentiles that help the children of Israel during the Tribulation.

Gift of Unmerited Grace – End of an age, end of a dispensation

It is commonly believed that the rapture signifies the end of God's gift of unmerited grace (underserved, unearned) that is presently extended to all of mankind (Jews and Gentiles) by the sacrificial death of His son, Jesus Christ. The "age" of unmerited grace began the moment Jesus gave up His spirit and the curtain was torn in the temple (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45), and will end when the rapture occurs. Note the following:

- a. God's grace never ends.
- b. God's gift of unmerited grace in Jesus will end when Jesus harvests His faithful during the rapture. This belief is reinforced by the Sheep and Goat Judgment - which allows or disallows Gentile entrance into the Millennium based upon works / deeds (what they did or did not do).

The following scriptures define God's gift of unmerited grace in Jesus Christ.

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 3:2-6

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

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Salvation prior to the rapture is based upon (1) faith (*"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."* Hebrews 11:6), and (2) God's unmerited grace – and not works (i.e. your behavior or what you do). However, after the Rapture has occurred it will be possible for Gentiles that survived the Tribulation, did not accept the mark, and did not worship the beast to enter into the Millennium based upon (1) their faith, and (2) their works. Referred to as the Sheep Goat Judgment, Jesus Christ will allow or disallow Gentiles entrance into God's promise to the Jews (Millennium Kingdom) – based upon what they did or did not do to help the brethren of Christ (Jewish people) during the Tribulation. Additional points on the Millennium include:

- A. The Sheep Goat Judgment is for Gentiles that survive the Tribulation and is not the final Great White Throne Judgment – which occurs after the Millennium. Key reinforcement for this belief...people will live and die during the Millennium. Death will be thrown into the lake of fire (which means no one will ever die again) after the Great White Throne Judgment.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and

small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15

- B. The Sheep and Goat Judgment has been used by some to teach that salvation is based upon works. However, while it is important for Christians living during this present age of God's unmerited grace to perform these acts of love from a pure heart, works are not required for salvation. Once the age of grace has ended (i.e. after the rapture) works, deeds, and action will be required for the surviving Gentiles to enter into the Millennium.
- C. There are three "categories" of Tribulation survivors to consider as the Son of Man comes to sit on His throne and judge the nations:
- i. The first category are those that accepted the mark and worshiped the beast (Jews and Gentiles):
 - a. They will not be able to enter into the Millennium.
 - b. Their eternal fate was sealed when they accepted the mark and worshiped the beast.
A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name." Revelation 14:9-11
 - ii. The second category is comprised of Gentiles that placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, did not accept the mark, nor worshiped the beast – after the rapture occurred.
 - a. These are Gentiles that failed to place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and missed the opportunity to receive God's unmerited grace and were not raptured. These persons most likely were in spiritual "limbo" during the Tribulation – fearing the consequences of the beast and his mark...but not willing to let go and place their faith and trust in God. This condition is referred to as "lukewarm" – neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:16). However, once the rapture occurred...they realized their eternal mistake and understood what was required to escape a second death in the lake of fire.
 - b. These Gentiles are now "outside" of any obligation or promise from God.
 - c. They may or may not be allowed to enter into the Millennium based upon their works (deeds, actions, behavior).
 - iii. The third category are Jewish people that did not accept the mark and worship the beast:
 - a. Are God's favored, God's first love, and the object of God's desire to fulfill His promises via the Millennium reign of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Will not be subject to the Sheep and Goat judgment.
 - c. Will receive the inheritance and the kingdom prepared since the creation of the world.
 - d. Comprise the brothers and sisters referred to in the Sheep and Goat judgment.
 - e. Many (if not all) of these Jews will realize that Jesus Christ was and is the Messiah and will submit to Him as King and Lord during the Tribulation.

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down." "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" He replied: Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away." Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. "But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life. Luke 21: 5-11, 12-19

Therefore, based upon the aforementioned, the following will likely stand at the threshold of the Millennium: a remnant of Jewish people and Gentiles. The remnant of Jewish people will enter into God's promises. The remaining will be separated as sheep and goats based upon whether or not they helped or assisted the remnant of Jewish people during the Tribulation. The sheep will enter into the Millennium with the Jewish people. Their deeds were accounted to them as righteousness. However, the goats will enter into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

The Sheep and the Goats

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” Matthew 25: 31-46

Note that all persons from all nations will be gathered before Jesus Christ and separated based upon what they did or did not do for the children of Israel – who will be scattered because they heeded God’s warning and followed His explicit instructions of when to flee Jerusalem. Some will escape the city and some will flee to various parts of the globe as Jerusalem is taken over by the abomination that causes desolation. What’s more, some Jews will attempt to fight and will die, while others will be taken as prisoners.

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Luke 21:20-24

Note that God provides a means of protection for the Jewish people during the Tribulation by providing a reciprocal promise (via the sheep and goat judgment) – to those that were not raptured; to those that did not die during the Tribulation; to those that did not accept the mark and worship the beast; and to those that decided to place their faith in God and the return of Jesus Christ...that there will be a means to enter into the Millennium – by faith – but of utmost and eternal importance – by works that are extended to assist Jewish people during the Tribulation. Those that fed, those that provided drink, those that provided shelter, those that clothed, those that helped with infirmities, and those that visited the incarcerated will be allowed to enter into the Millennium (the fulfillment of God’s promises to the nation of Israel).

6. Jesus Christ – the Messiah and Anointed King – will reign from His throne over the earth and all of its inhabitants. Jesus Christ will:

Bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Himself.	Ephesians 1:10
Reign on David's throne	Jeremiah. 23:5-6; Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33
Rule with a rod of iron.	Psalm 2:9 Revelation 2:26-27 Revelation 12:5 Revelation 19:15
Execute justice and righteousness over the twelve tribes of Israel.	Jeremiah 23:5-6 Matthew 19:28 Daniel 7:13-14, 27 Isaiah 9:6-7 Isaiah 24:23 Zechariah 14:9; Micah 4:3
Judge the nations and settle disputes.	Isaiah 2:4
Provide before requested.	Isaiah 65:24

7. People will live long lives (much longer than today) and will greatly multiply. Isaiah 65:20; Rev. 20:8

8. Jesus Christ will employ a hierarchical structure of power and control. Ruling under Jesus will be the twelve Disciples, martyrs and saints.

The twelve disciples will judge the twelve tribes of Israel.	Isaiah 24:23 Matthew 19:28 Luke 22:29-30
Those who had been beheaded because of their faith and testimony about Jesus will come to life and reign with Jesus Christ for the thousand years.	Revelation 20:4
Saints will also have a position of authority and will rule with Jesus Christ.	Daniel 7:27; Luke 19:17-19; Rev 3:21; Rev 5:10

9. Global peace will occur

War and instruments of war (and associated fear) will no longer exist.	Zechariah 9:10 Isaiah 2:4; 9:7; Micah 4:3-4
Carnivorous animals will no longer hunt for meat. Animals will no longer hunt, hurt, nor destroy, and will eat vegetation.	Isaiah 65:25; Isaiah 11:6-9

10. Worship

Persons will be required to go to Jerusalem celebrate and participate in the Festival of Tabernacles. (The Feast of Tabernacles is a week-long fall festival commemorating the 40-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness in which Hebrews were commanded to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. After the destruction of the Second Temple and until the building of the third temple, the actual pilgrimage is no longer obligatory upon Jews, and no longer takes place on a national scale.)	Zechariah 14:16
If persons do not comply they will be punished by no rain. This also means persons living at this time can make choices and will understand consequences. This also reflects ruling “with a rod of iron” to overcome a sinful nature that continues to exist. However, rain will be less important or possibly not required for Jerusalem because of the living waters continually flowing out from the city: half towards the eastern sea and half towards the western sea.	Zechariah 14:17-19 Zechariah 14:4, 8; Isaiah 44:3
People will recognize and understand that all earthly possessions are from God (His provided provisions) and are holy unto God.	Zechariah 14:20-21
People will travel to Jerusalem to learn of God’s ways and to walk in His paths.	Isaiah 2:3

11. Daily life

People will raise families, build their own homes, plant their own food and enjoy the work of their hands. People will not create work for other’s use / consumption, and their labor will be fruitful.	Isaiah 65:21-23
Life expectancy will greatly increase. A person that dies at 100 years of age will be considered a youth.	Isaiah 65:20

12. Satan

Satan will not have any power or influence during the Millennium.	Revelation 20:1-5
When the thousand years has expired, for a short period of time Satan will be allowed to deceive the nations for a short period to gather together them together to battle. Those that join Satan will (1) be destroyed by God, and (2) thrown into the lake of fire.	Revelation 20:7-10

Chapter 20

¹And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ²He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

The Abyss (also referred to as the Bottomless Pit):

- God holds the key to the Abyss. Therefore, who is commanded into the abyss and who/what is allowed to come out of the abyss are under divine control.
- Inhabitants of the abyss are restrained by some means that require a key to unlock.
- When opened, the abyss causes smoke to rise like smoke from a giant furnace (i.e. hot, burning). (Revelation 9:2)
- The king of the abyss is a fallen angel named Destroyer. (Revelation 9:11)
- The abyss is a place where demons fear. (Luke 8:26-36)

Not only was Satan thrown into the Abyss – which may be considered a secure “prison” for demonic entities – Satan was also bound by a great chain...plus the Abyss was locked and sealed...for a period of 1,000 years (Millennium):

- One would think being bound by chains and have been thrown into the Abyss would be sufficient. But evidently not...because the Abyss was also locked...and sealed...which is interesting. This gives insight into the possibility that either Satan and/or other inhabitants (i.e. demonic entities) would have some sort of ability to carry out evil intentions...if it was not locked and sealed.
- Satan – nor demons – will not be able to influence / deceive both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave during the Millennium.
- For the first time since Adam – the world will be free of Satan – the prince of the world (John 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11).
- The god of this age will not be able to blind the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (II Corinthians 4:4).

⁴I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Imagine the horrific and gruesome event and global news broadcast of a faithful saints...praying, crying... hands may be bound behind their back, and likely kneeling over as they await their decapitation. Imagine the one standing next to...the one holding the instrument that will segment their head from their body. Imagine those that are standing by...yelling obscenities and demanding their execution...absolute hatred targeted at absolute innocence. Consider the pure darkness of Satan as he pours out his anger upon those that will soon be in Glory. Imagine the impact this visual will have on others as they watch...as the head falls and blood pours out. To some it will be appropriate punishment. To others it will magnify their resolution and steadfastness to hold onto their faith...no matter what the cost...because they are witnessing fulfillment of prophesy.

Jesus stood before those that hated Him...absolutely innocent...the one and only Son of God...yet He was mocked, convicted and sentenced to die in a manner much worse...hanging on a cross. So shall it be during this dark time when faithful will be beheaded for their testimony. These saints are called out and recognized for their supreme testimony, and their reward will be eternal life and a thousand-year reign with Jesus Christ during the Millennium.

⁵(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

First and Second Resurrection

The second sentence in verse #5 and verse #6 refers to verse #4 – those that were beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God – and who will share (with others) in the first resurrection. Those that share in the first resurrection:

- Are those that are blessed and holy
- Will not die a second death in the lake of fire
- Are those that believe in Jesus Christ (John 11:25; 1 Peter 1:3-5; John 3:16, 5:24, 6:47)

The rest of the dead (the first sentence in verse #5) – those that will participate in the second resurrection – will experience a second death in the lake of fire after:

- The thousand-year Millennium has passed.
- They pass through the Great White Throne Judgment.
- They find their name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The Resurrected Body

Resurrection is transformation of life after death (i.e. "come to life), and will occur to all persons – both righteous and wicked (Acts 24:15). Resurrected bodies are not comprised of our present fleshly body – which cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. But our present fleshly body - which houses our spirit and soul (mind, will and emotions) – is like a seed. When it is sown (dies) it releases that which is within (spirit and soul). However, some will be resurrected to eternal life in Glory, and others to eternal death in the lake of fire.

But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:35-54)

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling... 2 Corinthians 5:1-2

Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.’ Philipians 3:21

⁷When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Satan will be released for a short time after the thousand years have ended. He will use deception (which he first used in the Garden and throughout his existence on earth) to turn the hearts of the nations away from God. By devising a means that will generate hatred and rationale for collaboration, the nations will attack the nation of Israel. Those that believe the millennial reign of Jesus Christ was oppressive; those that want power and control over their lives; those that blame the Jewish nation for their “problems;” and those that believe the deceptive lies of Satan to go into battle – will be consumed by the wrath of God. It is at this time when the existence of Satan will come to a final end. He will eternally suffer indescribable pain and agony in the lake of fire – along with the beast and false prophet – followed by all of those whose names are not written in the Book of Life. This is the second death.

Gog and Magog

Gog and Magog are referenced in Ezekiel (chapters 38 & 39) and Revelation 20:8. While there is consensus that the battle of Gog and Magog defined in Revelation 20:8 will occur at the end of the Millennium, there are some that believe the battle of Gog and Magog defined in Ezekiel will occur before or during the Tribulation. However, others believe the battle of Gog and Magog defined in Ezekiel relates to the battle at the end of the Millennium only. Both beliefs are founded upon interpretations of scripture, and both beliefs provide valid arguments for their position.

It is imperative to reinforce that the key belief for all of mankind – that transcends all – is God’s unmerited grace and forgiveness of our sins – extended to all that believe in the sacrificial death of His son, Jesus Christ. There will be differences of opinion because we do not have complete and absolute information about the future. So we do our best to analyze the scriptures to gain insight into what will happen. And...when you consider our frailties...our sinful nature...and our inability to see as God sees...does it really matter what our opinion is? However, differences in opinion can be very good if it fosters discussion and exploration of God’s word in a collaborative spirit of love. And you know what...it’s OK to be wrong...as long as you’re on the “right side” of forgiveness.

11Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. 14Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Imagine for a moment what it will be like for each person that turned from the Truth, rejected Jesus Christ, and followed the beast...when they are before Him who is seated on the Great White Throne...to account for their lives. What they had done...what is written in the books...will provide indisputable evidence for their conviction and eternal punishment.

Those whose names are written in the Book of Life have bowed and confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord...and are already in Heaven. This is when each person that rejected Jesus Christ...will stand before Him...and will bow...and will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...to the Glory of God.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

To the saints that are living during the Tribulation... those that are persecuting you...they will eventually realize that they were absolutely and eternally wrong by trusting and worshiping the beast.

The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come. Revelation 17:8

Hades, the Lake of Fire, and Hell

Jesus Christ provided us with insight into Hades when He told the story of The Rich Man and Lazarus.

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ Luke 16:19-26

Hades is a temporary place where people are:

- Held in torment until the Great White Throne Judgment
- Experiencing heat and thirst from fire
- In agony

The Lake of fire is where death and Hades will be cast after the Great White Throne Judgment.

I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Revelation 1:18

Many persons use a generic term “Hell.” However, Hell does not adequately differentiate (nor define) Hades and the Lake of Fire.

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Chapter 21

A New Heaven and a New Earth

¹Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

The first heaven and the first earth served its purpose. From a physical perspective, the land and water provided mankind with sustenance throughout time. From a spiritual perspective, the earth provided a place to banish Satan and his demons. The wicked, death, hades, the abyss, Satan, the beast, the false prophet, and all demons have been destroyed...for eternity. What remains are the righteous – those that have been purchased with the blood of the Lamb – and their rewards.

The new heaven and new earth will be an indescribable experience and place where God will live among His loved ones...where the existence of each person will be in absolute worship, adoration, thankfulness, and praise of the One that first loved us...and saved us...from ourselves and eternal death. We will be embraced with His protective, peaceful and loving presence forever...for we are His bride.

“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”—the things God has prepared for those who love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. John 14: 1-3

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Those who are thirsty are those that realize there must be more to life. Those who are thirsty are those that seek truth in a world filled with darkness. Those who are thirsty are those that desire to be free from the bonds of sin. Jesus Christ freely gives the water of life that quenches the thirst of our soul. He illuminates our understanding with Truth. He provides power and reason to overcome sin. He is the only means to become victorious. He is the only path to receive the inheritance of God’s promises.

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

The remaining scripture in Chapter 21 and all of Chapter 22 does not require comments.

The New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb

⁹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. ¹⁶The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. ¹⁷The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. ¹⁸The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

²²I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The following website provides an excellent depiction of the New Jerusalem:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvNR5i4Keg8&src_vid=270TG23ZmKc&feature=iv&annotation_id=annotation_4125748935

Chapter 22

Eden Restored

¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

John and the Angel

⁶The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”

⁷“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.”

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. ⁹But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!”

¹⁰Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. ¹¹Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.”

Epilogue: Invitation and Warning

¹²“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

¹⁴“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

¹⁸I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. ¹⁹And if anyone takes words

away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

²¹The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

Signs of the Last Days

The signs of the last days are similar to what we see and experience when a storm is approaching. As clouds appear on the horizon an uneasy feeling begins to rise as ominous darkness approaches. Our senses confirm that a storm is imminent as we witness flashes of lightening, followed by the sound and feeling of reverberating thunder. Our thoughts soon transition to concern and safety as we determine what to do and where to go to avoid harm.

Many persons (Christians and non-Christians) are aware of an approaching “storm,” see and have a conceptual understanding of the “signs,” and are experiencing various degrees of deep gut-wrenching fear due to pending unknowns. However, due to our human nature it is much easier to live in denial (i.e. “sleepwalking”) than to take a good hard look at what’s going on in the world and prepare for the One that will come in the twinkling of an eye.

Before discussion of last day signs...it is imperative for you to first consider your heart...and your core motivational desire for seeking to know last day signs. As these signs occur everyone will respond with varying degrees of fear (both saved and non-saved). However, as the signs occur...will your faith be reinforced as you see the fulfillment of God’s Word...or will the signs cause you to realize your life is not right with God? If you know your life is not right with God...why wait? If you no longer want to live in darkness, are controlled by sin, and desire to have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior...you should receive God’s unmerited grace – NOW. Don’t wait until things are more difficult...or when it’s too late. Whatever reason, whatever means of justification, and whatever thoughts you have that are causing you to delay your decision...they are all based upon a lie!

The wonderful thing is that if you know your life is not right with God...if you are able to see the “distance” between where you are and where you should be...YOU ARE BLESSED...in that your understanding is not by your mind...it is the Holy Spirit who is revealing this to you...and Jesus is knocking on the door to your heart.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. Revelation 3:20

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” Matthew 7:24-27

Last Day Signs



The disciples asked Jesus about signs that would indicate the last days. His response is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 (which you should read first), and is summarized below.

False Messiahs and Prophets

As prophetic signs of the last days occur and as the beast is revealed...the faithful will become more vocal against the ever-increasing darkness. They will point to the fulfillment of end-time prophecy; warn against the beast, his mark, and the consequences; proclaim eternal salvation in Jesus Christ; and declare Jesus is coming soon. The gospel of Jesus Christ will be proclaimed to the world unlike any time in history.

However, as a means to increase delusion (and dilution of the saint's efforts)...during the last days many will portray themselves as Jesus Christ, declare they are the Messiah, warn that the end of time is near, and proclaim they are speaking what God has told them. Some will perform signs and wonders to enhance their deceptive illusion, and many will be deceived.

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 1 John 2:18

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 1 Timothy 4:1

Jesus warns us: *"Watch out that no one deceives you." "Do not follow them."* Jesus will return in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (which will occur *"...like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other."* *Matthew 24:23-24; Luke 17:23-24*

- Jesus Christ will not step foot upon this earth until after the Battle of Armageddon. (Read the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ beginning on page 113.)
- It is imperative that you know God’s word and test everything that is said against scripture. Read Zechariah 14:1-4 and Acts 1:1-11.

Those that belong to God...those that have been born of the spirit...are blessed with discernment in that they know His voice. *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. John 10:27*

Calamitous Events

There will be increased conflict between nations and kingdoms resulting in wars, rumors of wars, and famines. In addition, the number of earthquakes and pestilences (virulent / deadly diseases) will also increase. Some events may facilitate the severity of the other events (i.e. one promotes the other). For example, wars and earthquakes can increase the severity of famines and the spread of diseases – while famines and disease can instigate strife among nations.

Skeptics will point out that these types of events (wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, famines, earthquakes and pestilences) have occurred in the past. And yes, they are correct. However, note that Jesus used an allegory of birth pains to describe these events.

- The months preceding birth pains provides validations of pregnancy and future birth.
- Birth pains provide an indication birth is imminent.
- Birth pains start small with “relatively” longer durations of time between contractions.
- As time passes, birth pains build in intensity and with less duration between contractions (events/signs).
- Birth pains are indescribably painful.

Pestilences

You would think over time we would not encounter new diseases and/or advances in medical science would greatly reduce occurrences. However, we have “recently” discovered new and unknown diseases. For example, MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) is a new and deadly viral respiratory illness that was first reported in Saudi Arabia in 2012. Ebola hemorrhagic fever, discovered in 1976, is a severe and often fatal disease. HIV (AIDS) was discovered in the United States during the mid-to-late 1970’s. Within the US, the CDC estimates there are more than 1 million persons aged 13 years and older that are living with the HIV infection, and there are about 50,000 new HIV infections per year. Globally, there are more than 35 million people living with HIV. Additional viruses that have received recent attention in the news include Chikungunya, Dengue, and West Nile. (Source: <http://www.cdc.gov>)

Earthquakes

Since about 1900, there has been an average of 17 major earthquakes (rated 7.0 - 7.9) and one great earthquake (rated 8.0 or above) in any given year.

Source: http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/topics/increase_in_earthquakes.php

For the most part earthquakes have been statistically “constant” and have occurred in smaller less populated areas and in 2nd and 3rd world countries. However, God’s word states the number of earthquakes will increase as a sign of the last days. Imagine the overall global impact if multiple large cities and/or large regions in the US and abroad are leveled by catastrophic earthquakes. For example, Geologists studying the San Andreas Fault (which runs through Southern California) once believed a

major earthquake struck the area every 250-400 years. However, they have recently discovered major earthquakes occur every 47-129 years. The last 7.9 earthquake in Southern California occurred in 1857, or more than 157 years ago.

Source: <http://geology.gsapubs.org/content/38/9/787.abstract?sid=2128c9d7-29ce-47fa-a6b3-e9e4a17e09b3>

With 37 million people now living in southern California, estimates of death and injuries from a major or great earthquake are in the multiple thousands and will cause billions of dollars in damage. See: <http://www.consrv.ca.gov/cgs/rghm/loss/pages/shakeout.aspx>

Earthquakes will also precede volcanic activity – including an eruption of Yellowstone’s super volcano – which has the potential of causing unprecedented damage to the region – and the world. A documentary video may be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YawfoULZdbw>

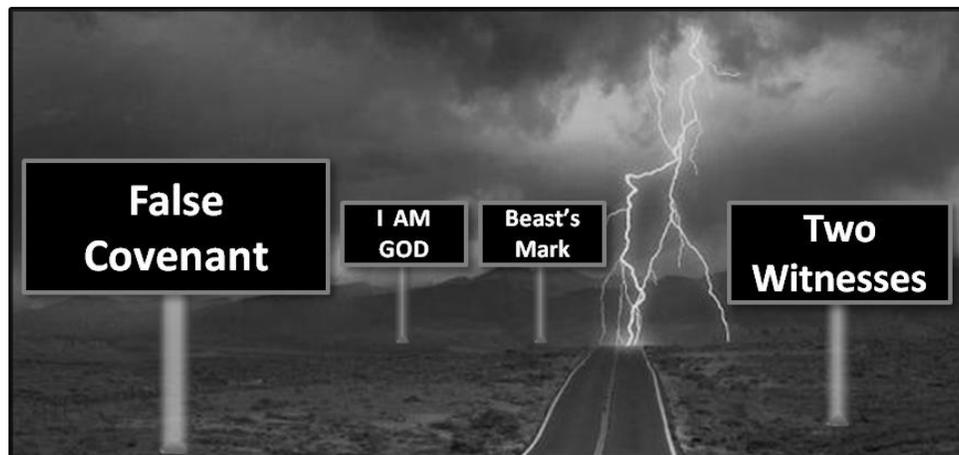
It is important to understand that my intent is not to sensationalize or create fear/panic...but rather to enlighten and educate...so that you can watch with knowledge.

Increased Wickedness

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. 2 Timothy 1-5

The description of behavior during the last days exemplifies the persona of Satan...is reflective of what is portrayed on today’s television...and describes today’s accepted cultural norms. For additional insight...simply compare today’s television content against programs 20 or 30 years ago.

Remember, these transitional events are only the beginning. Things will continue to get progressively (even logarithmically) worse...for “these are only the beginning of birth pains.” For these events will seem like a “walk in the park” when compared to the outpouring of God’s wrath that will follow the “birth” of the abomination that causes desolation (via the seals, trumpets and bowl judgments).



As time progresses four additional significant signs will occur: the false covenant, the Two Witnesses, the beast's declaration that he is God, and the mark of the beast. The false covenant marks the beginning of the 7-year Tribulation, and the beast's declaration that he is God marks the midpoint during the Tribulation (i.e. the Great Tribulation). What's more, when these four events occur it will be very difficult for anyone to refute prophecy is being fulfilled...and the end times are at hand. But many will reject the Truth and make a decision to believe a lie.

There will be a 3 ½ year span between the time the false covenant is made and when the beast declares he is God. Note in the picture above that when the beast declares he is God...the beast's mark is depicted as occurring at or near his declaration. However, it is possible for the beast's mark to be introduced earlier or later. The rationale for the graphic depiction is that all will be required to accept the mark and worship the beast in order to buy and sell...which seems likely he will demand worship once he declares he is God. In addition, the ministry of the Two Witnesses is depicted after the false covenant. However, the ministry of the Two Witnesses may occur earlier or later. Only time will tell.

Once the beast stands in the Temple declaring he is God...is when God begins to pour out his wrath upon the Earth during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.

The False Covenant

The beast will enter into a covenant agreement (agreement, contract, bond, oath) with the Nation of Israel and other nations that will allow the resumption of sacrifice and offerings – but will break the covenant after 3 ½ years (i.e. “false” covenant). This is the most important sign – and the one to earnestly look for – because the false covenant will start the 7-year Tribulation clock.

“And he shall enter into a strong and firm covenant with the many for one week [seven years]. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and offering to cease [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and upon the wing or pinnacle of abominations [shall come] one who makes desolate, until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator.” Daniel 9:27 (Amplified)

Satan (via the beast) will either present himself as one that cares about the plight of the Nation of Israel and understands their longing to resume sacrifices and offerings, and/or will present himself as one that is seeking peace in the Middle East. But in reality, his desire is to be God and worshiped as God (which is why he was cast out of heaven in the first place). Satan needs the Temple rebuilt because the Temple is the last place where God dwelt amongst the people...and is the most relevant place on earth for him to declare he is God. What's more, Satan has absolute hatred toward God and all of those who seek Him – and will do anything and everything possible to confuse and deceive as many as possible from the truth in Jesus. Jesus said (in John 8:44)...*“He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* As such, the beast's agreement with the many to resume sacrifices and offerings is a devious and deceptive lie to those that are still holding onto the old covenant.

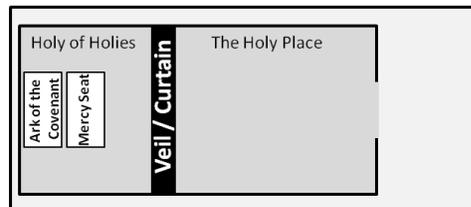
God does not want sacrifices and offerings...He wants our hearts. Before the death of Jesus Christ on the cross...God gave Jewish people a means (via sacrifice and offerings) to overcome the guilt, the shame, the pain, and the loss of a relationship with Him when sin occurred. Sacrifices and offerings were a means to recover from sin; regain the relationship with God; and realize that He is merciful, forgiving and loving. However, when Jesus Christ – the Son of God – died on the cross and shed His blood (as

God's perfect sacrificial Lamb – for Jews and Gentiles) – the blood of sacrificial animals and offerings were no longer sufficient to cover man's sins.

As a symbol of the God's new covenant and the ending of the old covenant, the Temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom upon the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45; Hebrews 10:19-20). See "The Torn Curtain" (page 34) for more information.

The Day of Atonement is:

- A day *"...to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord" (Lev 16:30)*. Read Leviticus 16.
- Also known as Yom Kippur and is the holiest day of the Jewish year.
- A time of changing behavior and seeking forgiveness for wrongs done against God and against other persons.
- The High Priest passed from the outer chamber to the Holy of Holies by going through the veil, where he called upon the name of God to offer blood sacrifice for the sins of the people.



This very simple graphic depicts the Temple's separation of the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies by the veil (or curtain). The Holy of Holies was reserved for the presence of God and could be entered into only once per year by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise Christ would

have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Hebrews 9:11-28

Christ's Sacrifice – Once and for All

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me, with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.'"

First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:1-25

Jesus Christ is "...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29, 36; Revelation 5:6, 8; 7:17

Jesus Christ said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

The Two Witnesses

God will send and give power to two witnesses who will prophesy and provide testimony of God for 1,260 days (42 months or 3 ½ years).

And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” They are “the two olive trees” and the two lampstands, and “they stand before the Lord of the earth.” If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon. Revelation 11:3-14

See “The Two Witnesses” (page 67) for more information.

I am God

The beast will declare that he is God from the Temple of God. This is when the second half of the 7-year Tribulation (i.e. the Great Tribulation) begins.

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. Revelation 13:5-7

Satan desires to stand in the temple (via the beast) to fulfill his heart’s dark and desolate desire. The beast wants to declare to the world that he is exalted above God...and he will finally get a divinely-allowed opportunity. His hatred will spew from his mouth as he speaks blasphemy (disrespect, profanity,

slander) towards God and Heaven, will wage war against God's holy people, and will assume global authority.

Any agreement to resume sacrifices and offerings with the Nation of Israel means Jewish persons will have full access to the Temple Mount (the location of the Temple when it was destroyed in 70 AD). However, for any agreement to occur in the future...one must first consider what has occurred in the past and what is occurring in the region today.

- A. The Waqf (a Jordanian-run Islamic trust which administers the Temple Mount) severely restricts Jewish persons from having access to the Temple Mount. See "Temple Mount Today" (page 36) for more information.
- B. There has been constant strife, turmoil, and polarization in the region since 1948 – the year the Nation of Israel was formed. Israel has been surrounded by enemies on every side, greatly outnumbered, and have endured repeated wars and attacks. Israel's enemies include nations that have historically been opponents in past wars (Egypt, Syria, Iran, Jordan, and Turkey), and recently-formed terrorist organizations committed to the destruction of Israel (PLO, Hamas, Fatah, and Hezbollah).

What's more, consider the multiple attempts to negotiate peace throughout the years:

- The Rogers Peace Plan and the Sadat Initiative (1970-1972)
- Madrid Peace Conference of 1991
- Oslo Peace Accords 1993
- The Hebron and Wye Agreements 1996–99
- Camp David Summit 2000
- Taba Summit 2001
- Beirut Summit 2002
- Road Map for Peace 2002
- Israeli–Palestinian Talks 2007 and 2009
- Direct Talks 2010 -2014

From 1970 until the present time equates to more than 44 years of attempts to negotiate a solution...without success. Meanwhile, anger and hatred in the region continues to escalate. But recently there's a new highly-volatile variable that is jeopardizing the stability in the region – and which can have global repercussions...power in the region is transitioning to Israel's enemies.

Washington Post, April 29, 2014: JERUSALEM — Nine months after it began, the Obama administration's marquee diplomatic effort to broker a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians ended Tuesday with neither a whimper nor much of a bang.

"Despite the international preoccupation with Israel and the Palestinians, Iran's quest for a nuclear weapons capability is advancing before our eyes," Netanyahu said. "If this materializes, it will have enormously negative consequences for peace in the Middle East and for the entire world."

The unattainable peace is due to a number of mutually-exclusive demands by all countries and terrorist organizations in the region. Now throw into the mix the recent increased potential of a nuclear attack...we now have a powder keg...and a lit match that can easily light the fuse.

Now stop and look at the present situation in the region from a spiritual and prophetic perspective. This is not man "beating his chest" while making demands and threats against one another. The unattainable peace and the ever-increasing tensions are due to unseen principalities and powers that are preparing the world for prophetic fulfillment...and for the final battle.

Given the fact that there is unattainable peace in the region and tensions are escalating...and given the fact that God's word states there will be a resumption of sacrifices and offerings...it will require either a great military power and/or unprecedented negotiation skills to broker a deal "...with the many." For the beast to ascend to his earthly position to mandate and/or negotiate what has been an impossible "agreement" between Israel and those that hate Israel...the world must first be prepared for his entrance. Changes must occur that will provide him with a means to enter onto the global stage so that he can lie, deceive, and lead the world into desolation.

Note: The Bible does not clearly state who the beast is and how he will enter into power. This "unknown" has (and is) causing many to watch and wonder. As such, the following content is based upon prayer, scripture, rationalized speculation, and deductive reasoning. My objective is to provide you with scenarios and events that may occur in the future...so that you can watch with understanding. A key indicator as to the beast's identity is that he will be involved in forging an agreement to resume sacrifices and offerings. However, there is a possibility that he will not be revealed (during this time) and "behind the scenes and amongst the powerful" as he manipulates the negotiation of the covenant. However, there will be no doubt as to his identity when he stands in the Temple proclaiming to be God.

The changes that may provide the beast with a means to enter onto the global stage include (and are not limited to) the following:

- Global conditions may greatly worsen to a point where existing political and power structures will weaken or fail. The reason...existing political entities (and enemies) are not willing to give up their power (and quench their hatred)...unless forced to do so...by either military strength and/or a populace that is "fed up" with their present living conditions and ineffectual leadership. These declining conditions will likely be facilitated by:
 - Wars and rumors of wars
 - Earthquakes, famines, and pestilences
 - Systemic global economic depression (financial meltdown)
- The masses will seek anyone that can stop the downward spiral.
- The beast will enter into prominence and be viewed by nations and kingdoms as one that has charm, charisma, an engaging personality, is wise, powerful, and perceived as one that has a vision and plan of how to "turn the course" of worsening problems.
- As his solutions are implemented, conditions will improve...and life on earth will return to some degree of "normalcy." Rationale for "improvements in life" are as follows:
 - If things do not improve...the masses will reject him and consider him similar to the ineffective leaders they presently have.
 - Daniel 8:23-26 reveals that "When they feel secure..." is when he will reveal his true identity...and will destroy many...and take his stand against Jesus Christ. In addition, "when they feel secure" means that insecurity existed prior to this time.

“In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power. The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.” Daniel 8:23-26

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

- Jesus provided us with insight as to the conditions prior to the beast’s transformation from one that represents hope...to desolator. Jesus Christ provided us with insight into the last days. Eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, buying, selling, planting and building...all convey “normal” living conditions.

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. “It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Luke 17:26-29; Matthew 24:26-29

- As life is improved some will likely view the beast as a “savior” – one that saved the world from catastrophe – thereby increasing his influence, power and control.

When the beast stands in the Temple – where he does not belong – is when God warns those in Judea to flee...because *“...there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.” Matthew 24:21; Mark 13:19*

This is the culmination of the birth pains and the beginning of the 2nd half of the Tribulation...when Satan is allowed to exercise his darkest desires...and when God will deliver His wrath.

Persecution and Execution of the Faithful

During the Tribulation darkness will turn to “black” as Satan is given the power to persecute and execute those that believe in Jesus Christ. The faithful will be “handed over” by relatives, friends, and those that have left their faith.

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. Matthew 24:12

Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. Mark 13:12

You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Luke 21:16

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. Matthew 24:10

How the beast will turn the hearts against those that believe in Jesus?

Christians know God's word and they will know the identity of the beast. The faithful will take a stand against the beast; will become increasingly vocal as he gains popularity, prominence and power; and will proclaim Jesus Christ to the world. *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10*

Meanwhile, the beast's persuasive influence will turn the minds and hearts of the desolated masses against Jesus Christ...and against all of those that believe and trust in Him. What's more, the beast will also provide a delusional lie that will justify the execution of the faithful.

But God...will provide the faithful with Holy Spirit inspired words that the accusers will not be able to repudiate (reject, deny, not accept).

Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Mark 13:11 and Luke 21:14-15

In the midst of this madness – during indescribable horrific times for the saints – as they wait for either execution or the second coming of Jesus Christ – scoffers will “throw salt” into the “wounds” of those that are holding onto God's promises: *“Those that stand firm to the end will be saved and will win life.” Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13; Luke 21: 17-19*

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. 2 Peter 3:3-4

The Mark

Acceptance of the beast's mark will be required to buy and sell.

“Also he compels all (alike), both small and great, both the rich and the poor, both free and slave, to be marked with an inscription (stamped) on their right hands or on their foreheads. So that no one will have the power to buy or sell unless he bears the stamp (mark, inscription), (that is) the name of the beast or the number of his name.” Revelation 13:16-17 (Amplified).

The mark is the final dividing line between the saved and non-saved. All living persons at this time will be forced to make a decision for Jesus Christ...or Satan...and a decision that will result in an eternity in Heaven or in the lake of fire. The mark is the “end of the line” and everyone must make a decision.

See “The Mark of the Beast” (page 42) for more information.

The Sign of Israel

The Nation of Israel will increasingly become the central focal point as we enter into the last days...as we witness the fulfillment of God's covenant with His chosen people.

Jesus prophesied the Temple would be destroyed – which was fulfilled in 70AD. The Roman army took over the territory, the Jewish people no longer had a homeland, and were soon scattered throughout the world.

Israel's Restoration

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. Deuteronomy 7:6-9

"In that day "I will restore David's fallen shelter—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the Lord, who will do these things.

"The days are coming, "declares the Lord, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.

"They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God. Amos 9:11-15

On May 14, 1948 the State of Israel was formed and those that were scattered would once again have authority in the land God gave Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All that remains is access to the Temple Mount, the rebuilding of the Temple, and resumption of sacrifices and offerings.

The Nation of Israel is referred to as the "fig tree" in scripture: Jeremiah 24:1-10; Hosea 9:10; Luke 13:6-9. Jesus also referred to Israel as a fig tree...as a sign of the last days.

He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Luke 21:29-33; Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31

It is believed by many that "this generation" does not refer to the generation that was alive when Jesus gave us the fig tree parable. But rather, "this generation" refers to the generation that was born when the fig tree sprouted its leaves...which (as of 2014) equates to persons that are now 66 years old.

Today's average life expectancy for an Israelite is just under 82 years. As such, we are on the very threshold of entering into the last days.

Source: <http://countryeconomy.com/demography/life-expectancy/israel>

It's very scary

Yes, it is very scary. But take a moment, stand back and look at the big picture. We are a generation that is able to witness the fulfillment of prophesy. God's Word is true, accurate, infallible and eternal. We can continue in fear – or we can place our trust and faith in the One that created the universe, the One that is still in control, and the One that knows the number of hairs on our head. (Luke 12:7)

God has given us another sign – the most important sign of all – a sign of love; a sign of forgiveness; and a sign of complete, eternal, and unmerited grace in His Son, Jesus Christ.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16

Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God. And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (Amplified)

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Harold D. Thomas

Eternal Salvation by God's Grace

God gave us the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5) as a benchmark; as a standard; as a means to reveal of our sin; but more important – He gave them to us because of His love for us (many fail to understand this). They are not a list of do's and don'ts. When you think about it...they are a list of logical, relevant and prudent behaviors that seem fairly easy to obey. However, all of us have broken one or more – all persons born of the flesh since Adam are guilty. Romans 3:23 states: *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Take a moment to reflect upon each one and consider if you have broken one or more commandments.

1. *“You shall have no other gods before me.*
2. *You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
3. *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*
4. *Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.*
5. *Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.*
6. *You shall not murder.*
7. *You shall not commit adultery.*
8. *You shall not steal.*
9. *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*
10. *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”*

“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” Romans 3:10-12

Consider all that God did and everything God provided for the nation of Israel – as a loving husband caring for His wife – yet Israel broke His covenant. Their hearts and minds failed to seek, know and love God – and preferred to worship the useless things on this earth. But, God promised a new covenant – one that would provide a means to reach our hearts and minds – and a means to forgive us for who we are.

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Jeremiah 31: 31-34

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

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:5-6

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them..." II Corinthians 5:18-19

Change from within begins when we embrace God's grace and forgiveness in the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus Christ – who paid the price for our sin. There is nothing we can do to improve our standing with God (i.e. become a better person) other than accept His free gift (by placing our faith and trust in what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us). We are saved by God's grace towards us and our faith towards Him. As the Holy Spirit reveals God's love and forgiveness – expressed through the sacrificial death of His Son – you will begin to change from the inside.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Romans 3:22-24

It is by God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ that we are worthy of being declared righteous and void of sin (past, present and future). The more you get to know God's grace – the more you will

realize how deep our sinful nature is – the more you will realize God's love is deeper. It is by His continual forgiveness and acceptance of who and what we are – we begin to change our behavior to please the One that loves us.

Jesus used parables as a means of illuminating reality in the mind of the listener. To the listener, parables can cut through the defenses caused by pride, guilt, confusion and other consequences of sin. By telling basic stories that the listener can relate to, Jesus was able to impart a deeper understanding of our relationship to God.

“...There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.” Luke 15:11-24

The Parable of the Lost Son, told by Jesus, exemplifies God's grace, His love, and the "pathway home" for all who seek Him.

We commonly refer to hunger and thirst in the realms of the physical. In other words, to be hungry or thirsty means that we want something to eat or drink. However, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, spoke of hunger and thirst in a realm beyond the physical, beyond our flesh and into the spiritual. Jesus spoke of a realm where hunger and thirst have different meanings and fulfillment, a realm that transcends anything that the world has to offer, and a realm where hunger and thirst are replaced with the fullness and satisfaction of righteousness.

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God's love is constant and waiting. He will search for us and give us opportunities to respond, but He will not force us to come to Him. Like the father in the parable, He waits patiently for us to come to our senses.

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You must first take into account and confess those areas (sins) in your life that are against God.

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It is important that you understand that you may confess your sins directly to God. The only mediator you need is Jesus Christ. An example of such a prayer is:

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As you confess your sins you must believe and have faith that Jesus Christ took the punishment for your past (and future) sins when He died on the cross almost 2,000 years ago.

You must then repent or turn away from your sin. Jesus preached repentance as soon as He began His ministry. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17). It involves a change in your heart from your sin toward God. Simply stated, there are four different aspects of repentance:

- A genuine sorrow toward God because of your sin
- An inward hatred toward the sin
- A realization of the depth of your sin and the magnitude of God's compassion and grace
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Finally, you must humbly surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. For every step that you make toward God, He will make 10 toward you. For every area in your life that you yield to God, He will keep his promise in that you may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33

Over time you will continue to grow and mature in Christ as you increasingly seek His guidance and direction in all that you do. You must also continue to pray (talk to God) and read His Word (the Bible) daily. In addition, seek fellowship and worship with other believers.

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:1-7

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:12-14

The Rapture

Although the term "rapture" is not in the Bible, it is commonly used to describe the event when the saints will be caught up in the heavens with Jesus at His second coming. There are numerous beliefs as to when the rapture will occur and numerous studies that support each belief. Different beliefs exist because the scripture does not state a specific date and/or time that the rapture will occur. In addition, it does not specify an event that will precede the rapture. And it is critical to remember that no future analysis of the scriptures will provide a date, time or event when Jesus will return.

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Matthew 24:42-44

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." I Corinthians 15:51-52

"According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words." I Thessalonians 4:15-18

Some persons believe the rapture will occur prior to the Tribulation. Some persons believe it will occur during the Tribulation. And others believe it will occur at the end of the Tribulation. Each belief exists because the scripture does not state a specific date and/or the time when the rapture will occur. However, there are three absolutes in the Bible regarding the rapture:

- 1. No man knows the hour "...not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Matthew 24:36*
- 2. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Matthew 24:44*
- 3. The raptured will be with the King of kings and Lord of lords as he defeats the beast in Armageddon. Revelation 17:14.*

There is a very good reason why the timing of the rapture is not clearly defined. Imagine for a moment (and be absolutely “truthful” to yourself) as to what you would do differently in your life if you knew the rapture would occur:

- Tomorrow.
 - What would you do in the few hours that remain?
 - Would you “drop everything” get on your knees and accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?
- Next year.
 - What would seek to change and/or accomplish during the months that remain?
 - Is it possible your would become more focused upon God as the months progressed and as the “time” became closer – culminating during the last few days or hours when you finally accept God’s forgiveness?
- 10 years from now.

Your personal reflection and response to each of the above scenarios provide an explanation as to why no one knows but God – who knows the heart of man. By not knowing when, we must place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ – and not upon a sequence of global events or a calendar.

Personally, I came to the conclusion that it is prudent to prepare for the worst, pray for the best and be continually ready for the one that will come in the twinkling of an eye.

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. Matthew 24:45-50

In the twinkling of an eye Jesus Christ will return to remove those redeemed by His blood. In the time it takes for your eyes to blink the fulfillment of God's promise will occur.

Look into the future for a moment and imagine what it will be like if you are not ready. One second you may be talking to your loved one and the next second they are gone.

They warned me...but I decided not to believe.

You then begin to experience the intense emotions of terror and grief as you look for other members in your family. But they are gone also. Once you have accepted the fact that they are gone, you then look back in time with remorse.

They prayed for me...but I rejected the truth.

Will I be able to overcome the difficult times ahead?

It's Time to Come Home

As we enter into the last days we will all witness global social degradation, political ineptitudes, economic decline, and a transitional change in global power and control. To those who know and are living for Jesus Christ, these changes are a sign and confirmation that all of God's promises will be fulfilled. To those who know and are not living for Jesus Christ, the changes represent a warning, a time for soul-searching and a time for personal decisions.

Jesus used parables as a means of illuminating reality in the mind of the listener. To the listener, parables can cut through the defenses caused by pride, guilt, confusion and other consequences of sin. By telling basic stories that the listener can relate to, Jesus was able to impart a deeper understanding of our relationship to God.

"...There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."
Luke 15:11-24

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hunger and thirst for more than what this world has to offer? As the son made the humble decision to return home, are you ready to let go of your pride and confess your mistakes to your heavenly father?

“Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.’ John 6:35

God's love is constant and waiting. He will search for us and give us opportunities to respond, but he will not force us to come to him. Like the father in the parable, he waits patiently for us to come to our senses. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears and listens to and heeds My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him, and he [will eat] with Me.” Revelation 3:20 (Amplified Bible)

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As you confess your sins you must believe and have faith that Jesus Christ took the punishment for your past (and future) sins when He died on the cross almost 2,000 years ago.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” II Corinthians 5:21

“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:22-24

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:8-10

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them...” II Corinthians 5:18-19

You must then repent or turn away from your sin. Jesus preached repentance as soon as He began His ministry. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17). It involves a change in your heart from your sin toward God. Simply stated, there are four different aspects of repentance:

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It is because of God's love, God's mercy and God's grace that He gave us:

- Forgiveness through His Son Jesus Christ.
- The freedom to decide whether or not to accept His forgiveness.

As time progresses, as the world digresses and as the light of day transitions into the darkness of the beast...a decision for Christ will be easier today than it will be tomorrow.

It is time to come home.

What to Do Next

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus Christ used a parable of two builders to convey the importance of hearing God's Word and changing our behavior. Each person is the builder of their own house and has the choice of which foundation to build upon. At one end of the spectrum is solid rock (Jesus Christ), the other is soft sand (the world). The rain, rising streams and wind represent difficult and perilous times. The person that builds their life upon Jesus Christ will be able to withstand day-to-day trials in life. But what is more important – they will be able to withstand the "stormier" days ahead. Those that build their house on sand will be overtaken and destroyed by the "torrential rains," "flooding waters" and "tornadic winds" of the last days.

Simon Peter defined progressive stages of a Christian life; starting with the foundation of faith, followed by goodness, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 2nd Peter 1:5-7

Each stage of Christian life with corresponding experience, behavior and transitional focus is summarized below.

Christian Stage	Christian Experience and Behavior	Focus Upon
Love	adoration, devotion, passion	Others
Brotherly Kindness	compassion, sympathy, benevolence, helpfulness	
Godliness	righteousness, goodness, piety	Self and Others
Patience	tolerant, mercy, composure, compassion	
Self-Control	discipline, restraint, strength of mind and will	
Knowledge	understanding, wisdom	Self
Goodness	integrity, honesty, morality	
Faith	belief, confidence, trust, reliance, assurance	

Each stage:

- Is similar to a rung on a ladder – where each rung provides a means to advance to the next level.
- Will cause you to experience a transformation of your thoughts, emotions, desires, and behavior.
- Illuminates and changes your perception of the world.
- Will bring you into a closer relationship with God.

Additional aspects of the different stages include:

- Progression of each stage is facilitated by:
 - Reading God's Word.
 - Attending church.
 - Prayer.
- You must begin by first stepping upon the foundation of faith (your belief, confidence, trust, reliance and assurance in God's Word, God's promises and salvation through Jesus Christ). Thereafter, each progressive stage:
 - Broadens and deepens your Christian experience as you read, understand, and internalize God's Word.
 - Will enhance the renewing of your mind.
 - Strengthens the previous stage. For example, as you grow in knowledge, your goodness and faith also grows.
 - May be correlated to degrees of Christian maturity – from infancy to adulthood.
 - Will be manifested by changes in your perception of and behavior towards others.
- Initially, your focus must be upon you and your relationship with Jesus Christ as you move from faith to goodness; and from goodness to knowledge.
 - It is very easy to look at others during the early stages of your Christian walk and form judgments towards others.
 - Remember, NO ONE has the right to judge others. Only God has this right. Jesus used a visual image (literal and figurative) to make the point about our impulse to judge others while ignoring our own faults.
 - *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Matthew 7:1-5*
- As you continue to progress from knowledge to self-control; and from self-control to patience; and from patience to godliness your focus will transition from yourself to others – based upon an understanding and awareness of your relationship with God and what He has done for you through Jesus Christ.
- The highest stages complete the transition of your of focus from yourself to others – which is expressed in God's love through you. A Christian at this stage will:
 - Fully understand that "God loves me and has forgiven me for all that I am and all that I have done."
 - Will see the world in a new light via the realization that we are all:
 - Sinners ("for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23).

- Broken, lost and vainly seeking fulfillment in life.
 - Desire to exhibit brotherly kindness and love towards others so that they may also discover the truth.
 - Spiritually find a deep and compelling reason to forgive others – exemplified by the words of Jesus Christ as He was dying on the cross – “ Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”
-
- If you “fall off the ladder” due to sin you will experience painful feelings of separation from God, guilt and shame.
 - Once you realize that God still loves you – expressed through Jesus who has paid the price for your sinful nature – you have (in effect) stepped back onto the first rung of the ladder (faith) to continue your climb.
 - It is also important to realize that God is not pushing you up the ladder. But rather, He is calling you by His love.

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” 1 John 4:7-8

My Prayer

As the days continue to get darker it is my prayer your path is illuminated by God’s Word, your fear is overcome with the peace of His promises, and your life eternal with Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

Harold D. Thomas

Versions

The following table lists each version, release date, and description of changes.

Version #	Date	Description
Version 1	3/23/2014	First version
Version 2	4/2/2014	Modified fonts for consistency. No content changes.
Version 3	6/11/2014	Inserted section "Signs of the Last Days" (page 130)