

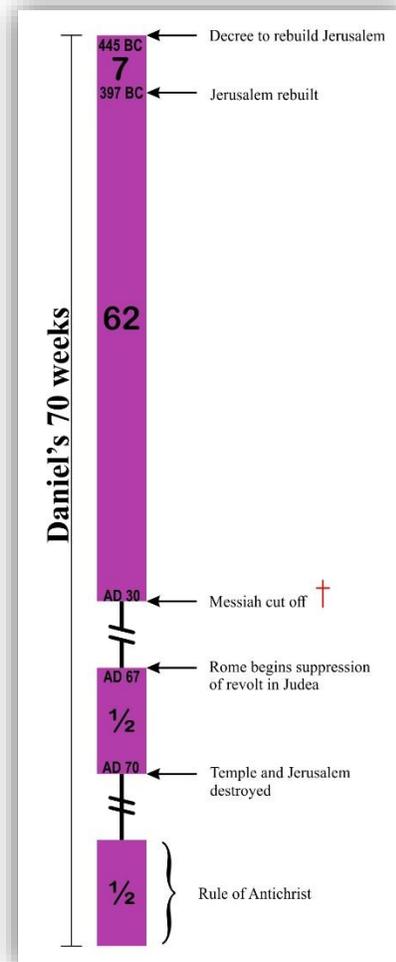
## The Time of the Antichrist

As we begin to examine the time of Antichrist's rule as given in the Revelation, it includes a look into the seven trumpets that are blown to signal plagues that God will bring against the world, and the time when seven vials of God's wrath (*thumos*) will be poured out upon the earth. Five of the trumpets are sounded before the rapture, and the last two coincide with the last two vials of God's wrath that will be emptied onto the earth after the saints have been removed. Let's begin with a brief review of what we have considered so far regarding the Antichrist and his rule over the earth before we enter into the specifics of these plagues and the expression of God's wrath.



We have learned that when the Antichrist arrives on the world stage, he will be heralded as the savior of the world. For the Jew, he will be the long awaited Messiah, and, for the Muslim, their highly-anticipated Mahdi. He will assume his role with benevolence, yet very quickly his anti-God sentiments will become evident (after all, he is empowered by the devil – Revelation 13:2): he will blaspheme the Lord, His heavenly home, all who are living in heaven, and he will set out to destroy the Lord's children who are still on the earth (Revelation 13:6-7). Even though he will make light of heavenly things, his focus will be on what is taking place here on earth, and he will quickly set out to remove everyone who might stand in his way. However, as he sets out to establish his authority over “all kindreds [family groups], and tongues [language groups], and nations [people, generally],” he may not be aware that his rule has been limited to 42 months, or 3½ years (Revelation 13:5,7).<sup>1</sup>

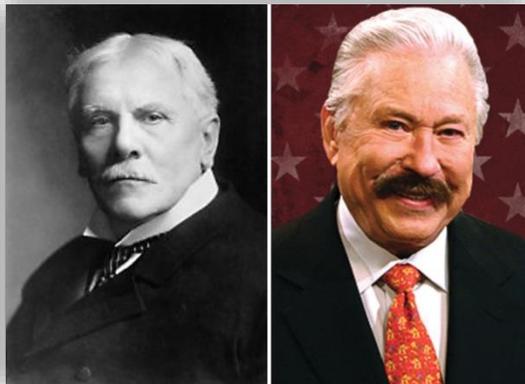
There are several different understandings regarding the time of tribulation, which is generally identified as being the time of the Antichrist's rule, but the most popular view is that it will be a time of trouble that will last for seven years. Daniel was given a time-line from which this is taken: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness ... from the going forth



<sup>1</sup> Strong's Online.

of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks ... after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off ... the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary ... And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease ...” (Daniel 9:24-27). Daniel is told that *seventy weeks* (or 490 years) have been decreed by the Lord for the Jews and Jerusalem, and, at the end of this time period, the problem of sin will have been dealt with and a time of *everlasting righteousness* will be brought about. After 69 weeks (or 483 years) the Messiah has come, and His work on earth is ended; Jesus came to *make an end of sins*, and, through His death and resurrection, He forever broke the power of the devil, and established the New Covenant, through which *everlasting righteousness* is now possible. All of this leaves a period of 7 years (1 week), which has become a matter for much debate.

Dispensationalism, which, in simple terms, requires that Scripture be divided according to how God has dealt with mankind during various periods of time, has done much to muddy the waters regarding this final *week*. Probably the most notorious characteristic of any dispensational interpretation of Scripture is that it draws a hard line of distinction between the “Church” and Israel. By the “Church” they mean those who have become saints of God through the Gospel as preached by the Apostles of Jesus; these are called “New Testament” saints, and, within dispensational thinking, they must never be confused with the “Old Testament” saints.



Cyrus I. Schofield

Hal Lindsey

Consequently, within their thinking, Daniel’s seventy weeks are viewed as belonging uniquely to national Israel, and the “Church” can have absolutely no part in any of it! Moreover, they consider the “Church Age” (our present dispensation) to be a result of God turning away from His people Israel because they rejected their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ; however, they also say that the final *week* of Daniel will be a time when God turns back to Israel for their judgment and restoration. Being popularized by some key individuals (like C.I. Scofield, Hal

Lindsey, etc.) this has become the primary interpretation of end-time events within the Evangelical community, to the extent that it is accepted with little or no Biblical evaluation.

Unfortunately for those who have been persuaded to accept this thinking, there is no Biblical support for a *dispensational* interpretation of Scripture, and, by permitting such a rigid grid to mold their understanding of God’s Word, they are actually accepting a skewed view of what God has given to us. Paul’s careful explanation to the Ephesians about how the Lord Jesus broke down the barrier that separated the Jews and the Gentiles, becomes virtually meaningless under such a theology (Ephesians 2:11-22). Within their thinking, this only means that both Jews and Gentiles can enter salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ during the “Church Age,” but, very clearly, the Old Covenant is still in full force (although on hold, because there is still one *week*

when God will deal with Israel as a nation), and the Old Covenant will come into play during the unfolding of these troublesome seven years.

It is dispensational thinking that has pushed the full seven years into the future, and requires this to be a time when God will deal exclusively with Israel once again. However, the instruction that Daniel received was that seventy weeks have been established for *thy people* and for *thy holy city*; the focus is two-fold: the first is upon the Jews as a people, and the second relates specifically to the city of Jerusalem. The first 69 weeks were completed when the promised Messiah was *cut off*, which was when Jesus died for the sins of the world and rose again, thereby **forever** breaking the power of sin and making *everlasting righteousness* a reality through the New Covenant in His blood. Jeremiah prophesied that there was coming a time when Jehovah would establish a New Covenant with Israel, when “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). As Jesus met with His disciples at what is called the Last Supper, in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy He said, “This cup is the new testament [New Covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). The writer of Hebrews explained Jeremiah’s prophecy this way: “In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old [obsolete]” (Hebrews 8:13).<sup>2</sup> The Mosaic covenant, as described by Jeremiah, has been rendered obsolete in favor of the New Covenant; when the Lord has declared something to be obsolete, then we must be very sure that we do not try to infuse it with life. In other words, it is clear that the last *week* of Daniel will **not** mean a return to the Mosaic traditions because God has accounted them ended at the cross of Christ!

Daniel is then told that the *prince*, who would destroy Jerusalem, would first *confirm the*



Titus, the *prince* of Daniel 9:26

*covenant*; notice the word *confirm*. When the Roman commander, Titus (the *prince* identified by Daniel), came against Jerusalem, he did so with the full intent of preserving the city, the temple, and the daily sacrifices (because the Jews had rejected Jesus as being their Messiah, they still continued with their temple sacrifices).<sup>3</sup> It was common practice for the Romans to require the people whom they conquered to offer sacrifices to the Romans gods, and then they would permit them to continue with their own religious practices. Since most peoples were polytheistic, it proved to be of little difficulty for them to include Rome’s gods with their own. However, the Jews, being monotheistic, proved to be a difficulty in this area; yet the Romans demonstrated that they were a tolerant people with a desire for a peaceful kingdom, and they graciously accommodated Judaism as an accepted religion within their kingdom, and did not require the Jews

<sup>2</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>3</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book VI, Chapter 2.1; translated by William Whiston.

to acknowledge the gods of Rome. Even as the commander, Vespasian, was dispatched to Judea to squelch the revolt, it was done with the understanding that Judaism was an accepted religion, and so the sacred sites and practices of the Jews were to be honored and preserved. Within this framework, Titus (who took command after his father, Vespasian) *confirmed* the covenant that the Jews were already living under; his intent was that the Jews could continue as they were, except that the influence of the troublesome zealots was to be removed. This was in keeping with Rome's recognition of Judaism, and it remained the intention of the Roman commanders for the full seven years that it took them to suppress the zealots.<sup>4</sup> When Gabriel told Daniel of what lay ahead, the covenant spoken of was not one that was newly formed; rather, he spoke of a *confirmation* of an existing covenant or agreement, which, in this case, would be Rome's recognition of Judaism, and their affirmation that the Jews could continue their religious practices. This covenant was not made between the Jews and the *prince* (Titus) who came against them, but, rather, the *prince* simply sought to **uphold** the right of the Jews to practice the Old Mosaic Covenant, since it was an accepted religion within Rome. Josephus, the Jewish historian, quotes Titus: "I appeal to the gods of my own country ... that I do not force you to defile this your sanctuary; and if you will but change the place whereon you will fight, no Roman shall either come near your sanctuary, or offer any affront to it; nay, I will endeavor to preserve you your holy house, whether you will or not."<sup>5</sup> However, the zealots not only refused to surrender, but they also prevented anyone else within Jerusalem from going over to the Romans. It was because of the zealots' stubborn refusal to surrender to Titus that Jerusalem and the temple were both destroyed just as it was foretold to Daniel (Daniel 9:26), and in fulfillment of Jesus' words: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies [the Roman troops under Titus fulfilled this prophecy], then know that the desolation [destruction] thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20).<sup>6</sup>

The Jewish revolt against Rome began in AD 66 during the reign of Emperor Nero, and it ended with the death of the last of the zealots at Masada in April of AD 73. From the moment that Rome's troops entered Judea to squelch the rebellion, they sought to do so within the terms of their acceptance and recognition of Judaism as a religion; they affirmed the Jews' right to practice their faith according to their traditions. However, due solely to the stubborn refusal of the zealots to surrender, within 3½ years the city of Jerusalem and its temple were completely destroyed; Daniel wrote that in **the half of a period of seven** (*midst of the week*) the *prince* would *cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease* (Daniel 9:27).<sup>7</sup> Titus fulfilled Daniel's prophecy!

Therefore, of the final *week* of which Daniel wrote, there only remains a final 3½-year period (the final half of a period of seven) that will complete the full seventy weeks that were prophesied concerning Daniel's *people* and Jerusalem. This final 3½ years is identified in the Revelation as the time of the Antichrist: "and power [authority] was given unto him [the Antichrist] to continue forty *and* two months [3½ years]" (Revelation 13:5).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Jewish%E2%80%93Roman\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Jewish%E2%80%93Roman_War)

<sup>5</sup> Josephus, Chapter 2.4.

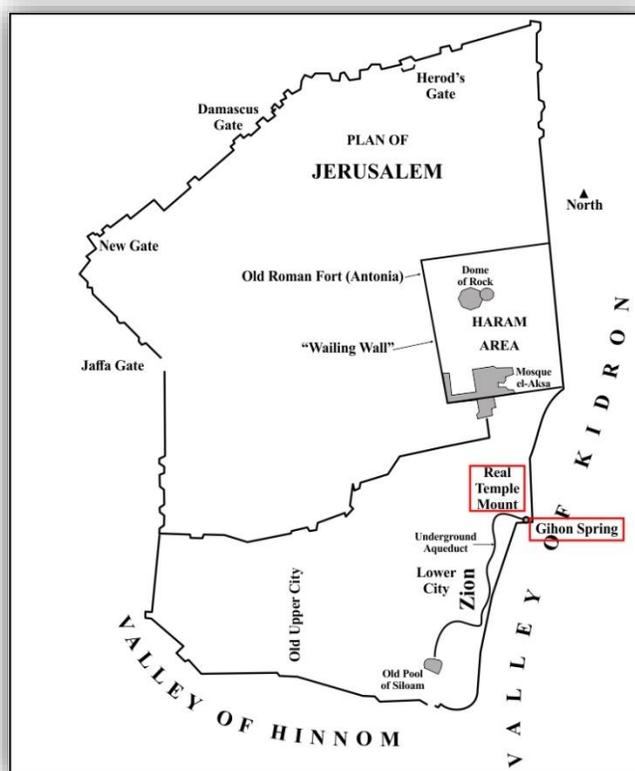
<sup>6</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, Driver, Briggs Lexicon, *Bibleworks 8*.

<sup>8</sup> Strong's Online.

If, as I suspect, the Antichrist will be a Muslim, the question is: how will a Muslim gain the allegiance of the Jews? Despite the religious ecumenism that rears its head within both Judaism and Islam, there is still too much hostility between these two groups to follow one leader. The Jews today are living in great anticipation of their Messiah, and one of the foremost concerns coming out of this is for their third temple. When the Muslim Mahdi (their messiah, our Antichrist) comes onto the scene, he will come as the great benefactor of the world, a savior figure for all of mankind, and will draw people together. Even with all of his persuasiveness and charisma, and even appealing to the common ancestry of Abraham (for both the Jew and the Arab), Antichrist will still have the problem of how to erect the third temple for the Jews without destroying the third most holy site of the Muslims, the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque – the area known as the Temple Mount. Or will he?

In the writings of Aristeas of Egypt, a second century BC writer,<sup>9</sup> we are told that “there is an inexhaustible supply of water, because an abundant natural spring gushes up from within the temple area. ... There are many openings for water at the base of the altar [of the temple] which are invisible to all except to those who are engaged in the ministration, so that all the blood of the sacrifices which is collected in great quantities is washed away in the twinkling of an eye.”<sup>10</sup> This is a first-hand description of the temple area written at a time when the temple and its sacrifices were still being carried out in accordance with the Jewish faith and practices. The identifying observation is that of the *abundant natural spring* that provided water for the temple. As David established his reign over Israel, we are told that he “took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David” (2 Samuel 5:7); this identifies Zion as being the city of David, and the only source of water for it came from the Gihon Spring (see map<sup>11</sup>).<sup>12</sup> From this historical description of the temple, it is evident that the temple must have been in close proximity to the only abundant source of water in the area – the Gihon Spring; this, in turn, places it well away from the arid Temple Mount area (as it is known today).



<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter\\_of\\_Aristeas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_of_Aristeas)

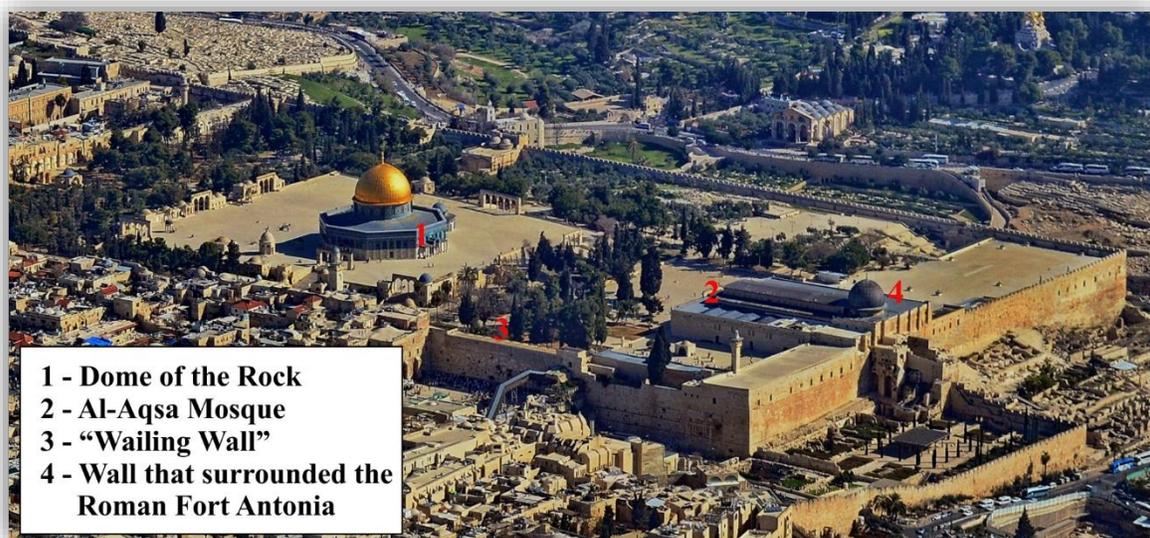
<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/aristeas.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from: <http://becomingone.org/templemount.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/biblical-water-systems-in-jerusalem>

Furthermore, Josephus tells us that “the temple was a fortress that guarded the city [of David], as was the tower of Antonia a guard to the temple; and in that tower were the guards of those three.”<sup>13</sup> He explained further that the southeast tower of the Fortress (or, tower) of Antonia afforded a clear view of the whole temple area, and at the northwest corner were passages down to the cloisters, or walkways, that surrounded the temple.<sup>14</sup> The Roman fortress provided the armies of Rome with the ability to monitor Jewish activity around the temple and in the city of David, and, if necessary, it also provided them with quick access to the lower areas to attend to any problems. From the fairly detailed description that Josephus gives of this area, it is evident that the Roman fortress was above the temple, which, in turn, was higher than the old city of David. We are also told that the fortress had palatial magnificence and conveniences, as well as broad open areas for camps of soldiers – this was much more than simply the cramped quarters of the soldiers’ barracks.<sup>15</sup>

In effect, a strong case can be made that today’s Temple Mount was, in fact, the location of



the Roman Fortress of Antonia, and not the site for the first and second temples of the Jews. The crowning affirmation of this comes from Jesus; when His disciples drew His attention to the magnificent temple buildings, He said, “See ye not all these [a demonstrative pronoun identifying the temple buildings specifically] things? verily I say unto you, There shall not [a combined, emphatic negative; certainly not!\*] be left here one stone upon another, that shall not [\*] be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2).<sup>16</sup> Jesus states unequivocally that the temple, and all of its related buildings, will be completely destroyed; there will be no evidence left of their existence. The Western Wall (or Wailing Wall) in Jerusalem is considered by most to be a part of the second Temple expansion that was carried out by Herod the Great;<sup>17</sup> it is considered to be “the only remnant of the holy

<sup>13</sup> Josephus, Book 5, Chapter 5.8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>17</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western\\_Wall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Wall)

edifice that stood on the Temple Mount.”<sup>18</sup> What Jesus declared concerning the second temple (and all of its related structures) seems to have been forgotten, as the masses call the remnants of a Roman fortress *holy*, and offer their prayers at its site.

However, there is a slowly growing number who are prepared to acknowledge that the Temple Mount and the Western Wall have been misidentified, and who promote a location to the south as the temple site, which permits the historical and Biblical evidence to coincide. If this movement grows sufficiently, perhaps the Antichrist will use this argument to construct the third temple without having to disturb the Islamic holy sites. The former chief rabbi of Haifa is quoted as saying that the “Temple will be built when the Arabs beg us to build it.”<sup>19</sup> Discovering the correct temple location could cause the Arabs to beg the Jews to build their third temple, thereby bringing peace to a hotbed of contention. Perhaps it will be the Antichrist who will *beg* the Jews to construct their third temple.

It will be during this final 3½ years of Daniel’s 70 weeks that many of the events of Revelation will take place. The two witnesses for the Lord will come proclaiming His truth (Revelation 11:3), and, with the opening of the first seal, the Antichrist will be welcomed onto the world stage (Revelation 6:2). Even though the prophetic words of these two witnesses will last for the same length of time as the Antichrist’s rule (1,260 days or 42 months or 3½ years), they do not overlap completely; that is to say, there is actually evidence to support their testimony beginning before the Antichrist enters onto the world scene (the opening of the first seal).

Let’s look again at Daniel’s prophecy: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy” (Daniel 9:24). Daniel is told that *seventy weeks* are *determined*, which means to divide; therefore, these seventy weeks have been specifically marked off for *thy people* and *thy holy city* (Jerusalem).<sup>20</sup> As we’ve just noted, there is yet a future 3½ years remaining from the 70 weeks, or 490 years, that were identified to Daniel. However, we must be careful at this point to be sure that we correctly apply to this final *half-week* all that we understand about what the Lord accomplished at Calvary.

We are all aware of Jesus’ words as He began His ministry: “Think not [you should not suppose] that I am come to destroy [*kataluo* – do away with] the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy [*kataluo*], but to fulfil” (Matthew 5:17).<sup>21</sup> The Mosaic Law abounds with symbolism that points to the One Who was to come, and the writings of the prophets are filled with references to the coming Messiah. Therefore, we understand from this that Jesus fulfilled everything within the Mosaic Law that foreshadowed His coming, His sacrifice, and His ascension to the Father; the Law was not simply abandoned, but was ended because it had been completed. The Mosaic Law was instituted for the purpose of making Israel a *kingdom of priests* and a *holy*

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<sup>18</sup> <http://jerusalemstone.theisraelboutique.com/what-is-the-jerusalem-wailing-wall.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/91026/construction-temple-mount-preparing-third-temple/#s7z1Y0WdVhaEfGkf.97>

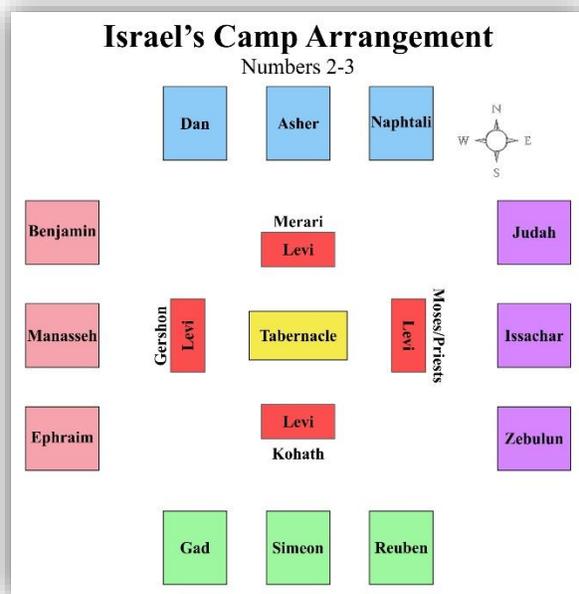
<sup>20</sup> BDB.

<sup>21</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

nation before the people of the world (Exodus 19:6). Many of the practices that were imposed upon the people served to test their commitment to the Lord: their dietary laws, the additional requirements for the keeping of the Sabbath, and the ritual cleansings that were required (particularly of the priests) all served to remind the people of the necessity to avoid that which was identified as *unclean*. However, beyond that, the system of sacrifices necessary for cleansing from sin and the priesthood itself all looked forward to the coming of the *Prophet*, to Whom the people were charged to give heed (Deuteronomy 18:15,18).

Within the Mosaic sacrificial system, once each year the high priest would enter that place behind the veil, where God said that He would dwell (the Holy of Holies), with shed blood in order to atone for his sins and the sins of the people – at that moment, through personal faith, the high priest and the people were reconciled with the Lord (Leviticus 16:29-34). As Jesus died on the cross, you will recall that “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Mark 15:38); that heavy curtain of separation that hung between the holy place and the Holy of Holies was torn from *the top to the bottom*, thereby signifying that it was the Lord Who had opened the way into His presence through the death of the Son of God. The high priest (a descendant of Aaron) would enter the Holiest with the blood of a bullock, which he would sprinkle upon the mercy seat (on top of the Ark of the Covenant) to make an atonement for his sins and the sins of his household (Leviticus 16:11-14); then, in similar fashion, he would take the blood of a goat and make an atonement for the sins of the people of Israel (Leviticus 16:15). The Hebrew word translated as *atonement* primarily means to cover, and so we understand that the sprinkled blood

of the sacrificed animals *covered* the sins of the high priest and the congregation of Israel; however, beyond that, the high priest was required to extend that *covering* to the Holy of Holies, the tabernacle itself, and the altar of incense that stood in front of the inner veil (Leviticus 16:16-19). If there is one thing that the required activities of the high priest make very evident, it is that the Lord God is absolutely holy. The blood, for the sinner, brought *atonement*, or reconciliation, with the Lord; for the Holiest, the tabernacle, and the altar, it brought cleansing – a renewal of their holy consecration to a holy God, “because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel” (Leviticus 16:16). The *tabernacle of the*



*congregation* (or tent of meeting) stood in the midst of the Israelite camp – all of the tribes surrounded the tabernacle in a prescribed manner (Numbers 2:3-31; 3:23-39). This was the *tent of meeting*, that place where the Lord God would meet and commune with Moses, and it stood in the middle of the unclean camp of Israel. Therefore, on the Day of Atonement (for the sins of the high priest and of all of the people), the Lord included the provision for a renewed sanctification of the *tent*, and, within that, for the altar of incense and the Holy of Holies – a very specific reminder of

God's holiness to a people who were prone to transgress His commands. How is this significant for us today?

You will recall from our earlier studies that the Holy of Holies, within the tabernacle, contained little other than the Ark of the Testimony (above which God said that He would dwell – Exodus 25:22), which, in turn, contained the tables of stone whereon God had written the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 10:2). When the Lord spoke through Jeremiah of a time when He would set His Laws upon the mind of an individual, and write them onto his heart (Hebrews 8:10), He was describing a new placement for His Ten Laws that would happen under the New Covenant. When we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (as our Sacrifice for sin), the Ten Laws of God are put into our minds, written onto our hearts, and the Holy Spirit from God comes to abide within us – our inner being is the Holy of Holies; we are the *temple* [*naos* – the dwelling place] of God (1 Corinthians 6:19).<sup>22</sup> Paul explained that our bodies are the temples of God, and we must, therefore, “glorify God in your body, and in your spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:20); truly, what is in the heart matters because out of it flows those things that, expressed through the body, will either glorify the Lord or will defile us before the Lord (Matthew 15:19-20). As the high priest was instructed to take the time to re-sanctify the tabernacle of the Lord, so Paul commands us to examine ourselves to determine that we are living without hypocrisy and that we are genuine in the light of God's Word (2 Corinthians 13:5); we must continually guard against uncleanness seeping into our lives.

The writer of Hebrews explains very carefully how the Lord Jesus completed the OT sacrifices and priesthood. Using the words of Jehovah through Jeremiah, he clarifies that with the installation of a New Covenant, the old would become obsolete (*old*) and disappear (Hebrews 8:13). The *old* covenant included the priesthood and the sacrifices, which we have just seen that Jesus fulfilled and brought to an end. Therefore, what God has rendered as being obsolete and has removed, do not let anyone seek to resurrect.<sup>23</sup> However, the general understanding among Evangelicals is that “once the Church is gone [in a pre-tribulation rapture], the Bible's focus shifts back to Israel for the final seven years of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy ... That's why a Temple and animal sacrifices [implying a priesthood as well] will be necessary again.”<sup>24</sup> The writer of Hebrews explains very carefully that the New Covenant, which is founded upon the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, has replaced the old; yet because of their dispensational view of the Scriptures (they say that we are presently in the “Church Age”) Evangelicals feel perfectly at ease teaching what is clearly a violation of Scripture. By subjectively imposing a controlled separation between dispensations, they rationalize away any discomfort that they might have felt about such a teaching, and, now that everyone is proclaiming the same thing, there is great assurance that they still hold the truth. Therefore, they confidently state that during the time of the tribulation to come (they say 7 years, I believe this to be only 3½ years), during the time when the Antichrist will rule, the temple sacrifices will once again be the order of the day. In other words, they are saying that even though Jesus came to fulfill (complete) the Mosaic Law, that will only apply during the time of the “Church Age,” and with the close of that *age*, everything will revert back to the Old Covenant –

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<sup>22</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>23</sup> This is a variation on “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:9).

<sup>24</sup> <https://gracethrufaith.com/ask-a-bible-teacher/tribulation-believers-and-temple-sacrifice/>

yes, the one that the writer of Hebrews declared to be obsolete and about to disappear! How do they get away with this apparent contradiction of Jesus' words? Within their dispensational musings they have included: "Dispensationalism makes a clear distinction between Israel and the Church."<sup>25</sup> There you have the crux of the problem; the Old Covenant has not been removed, it has simply been given a divine *pause* for the "Church Age" – when the present *age* is ended (with the rapture), without missing a beat, everyone is back under the Old Covenant.

Jesus said that He came to fulfill the Law; I believe that He did that very thing, and, through His shed blood, He instituted the New Covenant (Luke 22:20), which the writer of Hebrews tells us has replaced the Old (Hebrews 8:13). Yet the first mention of this New Covenant came to Jeremiah, a prophet to Judah during the time when they were taken into captivity; why would the Lord proclaim a New Covenant to a Jewish prophet if the fulfillment of that prophecy would basically exclude his own people? He wouldn't! Paul explained that "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:12); Paul was a Jew of the Jews (Philippians 3:4-7), yet he understood that salvation for Israel now comes only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation has **always** come by personal faith; Abraham believed God and he was considered

**Jesus said, "... other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [Israel]: them also I must bring ... and there shall be one [flock], and one shepherd."**

to be righteous – likewise, all who come to Christ in faith are *the children of Abraham*, not physically, but spiritually (Galatians 3:6-7). If those descendants of Israel *abide not still in unbelief*, then they, too, will be grafted into the Lord Jesus Christ (the Olive Tree) by faith, and *so* [after the full measure of the Gentiles is in] *all Israel shall be saved* (Romans 11:23-26); both OT and NT faithful believers are *in Christ*, and Jesus said that together they would make **one flock** under **one Shepherd** (John 10:16).

So what do we do with that last half-week of Daniel's seventy weeks that were marked off concerning his *people* and his *city*? Daniel is told that six things will take place during this time, as it pertains to Israel and Jerusalem: 1) *finish the transgression* – to complete the punishment for sin; 2) *make an end of sins* – a final covering for sin; 3) *make reconciliation for iniquity* – to make atonement for sin; 4) *bring in everlasting righteousness* – an eternal righteousness that was different from that acquired through the Mosaic sacrificial system; 5) *seal up the vision and prophecy* – to confirm Daniel's vision and the Prophet (not *prophecy*; as spoken of by Moses [Deuteronomy 18:15]); 6) *anoint the most Holy* – to anoint the Holy of Holies. As we consider these matters carefully, we can see that they have all been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus, including His appearance in the heavenly Holy of Holies (at the throne of God) where He is described as the Lamb Who was slain (Hebrews 9:24; Revelation 5:6). Everything that we read about Daniel's vision has been fulfilled – yet the half-week remains.

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.wayoflife.org/database/study\\_bible\\_dispensationally.html](https://www.wayoflife.org/database/study_bible_dispensationally.html)

We must recognize that the Lord's children will not be raptured before the time of the Antichrist (as we have seen earlier in our study), and that the way to salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ will remain open to whosoever will turn to Him in faith during this time of great distress. It seems that the Lord will be very gracious to Israel and Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom of David. During much of the Antichrist's rule, the Lord will have two men proclaiming His truth with great signs; when they are finally killed for their testimony, they are said to be lying in Jerusalem (Revelation 11:8). It would seem that they will use Jerusalem as their base, and that their prophecy will be a vehement expression of the New Covenant Gospel – it could be nothing less, for the Lord will **not** revert back to the OT, Mosaic practices that have been ended in Christ. Therefore, this will be a period of 3½ years when the Jews (and the world) will hear a true explanation of the Scriptures, and what is necessary for salvation. If the Jews build their third temple and reinstitute their priesthood and the animal sacrifices, this will then serve to make the task of the Lord's two witnesses that much more difficult among the Jewish people. A third temple would instill within them a sense of readiness for their Messiah – yet they will still refuse to recognize that their Messiah has already come, and that they rejected Him.

### JESUS APPEARS TO JOHN



**1. And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: 2. And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, 3. And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. 4. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (Revelation 10)**

This chapter tells us of John's personal encounter with an *angel*, and it includes some additional information about the seventh trumpet (which will be considered later). John saw a *mighty angel* coming down from heaven; then John goes on to describe this *angel* for us: He was clothed with a *cloud*, He had a halo (*rainbow*) that was like unto that which is around the throne of God (Revelation 4:3), His face was as bright as the *sun*, and His feet were as *pillars of fire*. When Jesus was taken into heaven, He wore a cloud (Acts 1:9), and when He returns to harvest His faithful followers, He will come in the clouds (Matthew 24:30). When John first turned to see Who spoke to him, he saw Jesus, and His *countenance* (His face) was *as the sun* (Revelation 1:16), and His feet were like unto *fine brass* that *burned in a furnace* (Revelation 1:15).<sup>26</sup> As we compare the Scriptures, we come to the obvious conclusion that this *mighty angel* is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He stands with His right foot upon the sea and His left upon the earth, and John sees in His hand a booklet (*bibliaridion*) opened. This is not the book (*biblion*) with the seven seals (Revelation 5:1); the word used here describes a book that is even smaller than that one.

<sup>26</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Jesus cries with a loud voice, and seven thunders speak, but John is counselled by a voice from heaven not to write what the thunders have said. This remains one of the mysteries of the Revelation: what are these *thunders*, and what did they say?



**<sup>5</sup> And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, <sup>6</sup> And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: <sup>7</sup> But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. (Revelation 10)**

This *angel* (the Lord Jesus Christ) lifts His hand toward heaven, and makes a declaration with an oath so as to emphasize its surety. When the Lord came to Abraham, we are told that “because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself” (Hebrews 6:13); it is customary for men to take an oath, or to make an affirmation, upon something that is deemed to be highly valued – in the west this has typically been the Bible, but other *sacred writings* are now becoming equally acceptable. However, because there is nothing/no one greater than Jehovah, His promises to Abraham were affirmed in His own name. Jesus, in this case, affirms His declaration by calling to witness the eternal God of heaven (John 1:1), and the Creator of all things (the Lord Himself – Colossians 1:16) – as with Abraham, Jesus calls upon His absolutely consistent nature to be the surety of what He is about to reveal to John. What is it that is given such surety?

The first phrase that John notes for us is: *there should be time no longer*. *Time*, as it is used here, is from the Greek word *chronos*, which is the word for time generally; here it speaks of a respite, or of a short delay.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the unfolding of the events described in the Revelation, once they have begun, will continue without a break. Nothing will hinder what is about to take place – that is what Jesus declares with great surety.

Jesus further affirms that when the sounding of the seventh trumpet should begin, *the mystery of God should be finished*. There are several identified mysteries in the Scriptures, but this one is specifically identified as being one that was spoken of by the *prophets*. We’ve already looked at the New Covenant that Jesus instituted as being a mystery of which the prophet Jeremiah wrote – but that found completion or fulfillment at the cross through the sacrifice of the Lord. Paul wrote of the mystery of the *ekklesia* (Ephesians 5:32), and of the Gospel with which he was entrusted (Ephesians 6:19), yet these are integral to the New Covenant, which found expression through both the OT prophets and the NT apostles (Ephesians 2:20; 3:1-7). However, this *mystery* that will find its fulfillment with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, was spoken of by the prophets – there must be a prophecy that has lost some of its luster in the light of the glorious message of the Gospel of the New Covenant. Isaiah spoke of the day when the wolf would dwell with the lamb, and a young child would lead both the lion and the calf – this is a time when there will be peace among animals and mankind (Isaiah 11:6). If we look further, we come across prophecies of a time when

<sup>27</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

swords would be remade into plow shares: “And he [Jehovah] shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Micah 4:3; see also Isaiah 2:4; Joel 3:10). This will be a time of world peace (Hosea 2:18; Zechariah 9:10), something that has never taken place since the time of Cain. Could this be the *mystery* that is about to be revealed? We’ll see more on this later.



**8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. 9. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. 11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. (Revelation 10)**

John now relates an experience that he had with the Lord Jesus (the *mighty angel*) during the time of the Revelation. He is told by a voice from heaven to go to the Angel and get the little book. He does so, and is told to eat the book, and that it would be sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his belly. We have a somewhat similar account in the OT.

When Ezekiel was commissioned by the Lord to take His message to the people of Israel, he was told: *open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee* (Ezekiel 2:8). When Ezekiel looks (Ezekiel 2:9-10), he sees a hand, and in the hand is a *roll of a book*; as it is spread out, Ezekiel sees that it is filled with writings of dirges (*lamentations*), moaning (*mourning*), and wailing (*woe*).<sup>28</sup> Ezekiel is then commanded to eat this *roll* that is filled with writings of peril, and, as he does so, he finds that it is *in my mouth as honey for sweetness* (Ezekiel 3:3). The Psalmist declared: “How sweet [smooth, pleasant] are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* [more] than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103).<sup>29</sup> The Word of the Lord, which the Psalmist declares to be sweeter than honey to his mouth, contains both words of promise and life for the obedient and of doom and ruin for the disobedient. The words of the roll that Ezekiel ate were of sorrow and woe, yet, as he ate them, they were as sweet as honey in his mouth. The Lord’s words of justice that are filled with woe for the unfaithful, for the faithful child of God even these are sweet, for his confidence rests in the Lord: “The fear [reverence] of the LORD *is* clean [pure], enduring for ever: the judgments [ordinances] of the LORD *are* true *and* [they have been] righteous altogether [together]... sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psalm 19:9-10).<sup>30</sup> “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1);

<sup>28</sup> BDB.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

this is the message of the Psalmist, and the experience of Ezekiel – to those who fear the Lord (abide in Christ) there is no condemnation, and all of the words of the Lord are as honey.

Ezekiel was called to speak the words of Jehovah to Israel – his calling was to his own people, to those who spoke his language (Ezekiel 3:5); nevertheless, the words of Jehovah that were sweet in his mouth, might not be so to his audience. “I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation ... impudent [stubborn] children and stiffhearted [hard of heart]. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear [give heed], or whether they will forbear [refuse to hear], (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them” (Ezekiel 2:3-5). The Lord goes on to tell Ezekiel that Israel will not take heed to his message, but that he must tell them anyway.

John, on the other hand, eats the booklet and finds it sweet to the taste but bitter to his stomach. Ezekiel was told by the Lord that the sweet words that he had been given, when proclaimed to a hard-hearted people, would not bring a sweet response – they would continue to live in rebellion against the Lord. This might well be the bitter sensation that John had from eating the booklet; even though he found the taste to be sweet, the response from others who hear the Lord’s words will be painful and unpleasant. This would seem to be affirmed by the Lord’s promise that John would yet prophesy (expound His truths) before *peoples* (people in general), *nations* (unbelievers), *tongues* (languages), and *kings*.<sup>31</sup> We mustn’t lose sight of the fact that John had been banished to Patmos by the Roman authorities *for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ* (Revelation 1:9) – he was already very familiar with the *tribulation* of identifying with the Lord.

So it is for every faithful child of God: the words of the Lord are pleasant and a delight, but, at the same time, we must recognize that they will not be accepted by everyone with whom we share them, and we must be prepared to pay whatever price may be associated with remaining faithful to Him. Jehovah made Ezekiel a watchman over the house of Israel – he was to sound the warning of impending danger, whether they listened or not. Likewise, John was promised to be a watchman who would proclaim the Lord’s truth before many people, even though experience had taught him that they would not heed his warnings. Therefore, we must also proclaim “thus saith the Lord,” whether they will hear or refuse is not for us to be concerned – we have been called to live in obedience to the Lord, for only then can we be assured of being welcomed into glory by Him (Matthew 24:13).



Watchtower



**1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2. But the**

<sup>31</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months. (Revelation 11)

John is now given a *reed like unto a rod*. A *reed* is the stalk from a tall plant that grows in marshy regions and is jointed much like bamboo; the reed that John is given is likened to a *rod*, which can be a walking stick, a shepherd's staff, or a sceptre.<sup>32</sup> There is no indication that this reed



Solomon's Temple showing the Inner Court and the wall that surrounded it.

is to be used to ascertain the physical dimensions of the temple (*naos*), which is only the holy place and the Holy of Holies.<sup>33</sup> *Measure (metreo)* can be applied to any kind of measurement, including an evaluation; therefore, since there is no evidence of physical measurement (the length of the reed is not given, nor do we find that John actually measures the temple), it would seem that John is to evaluate the *temple*, the *altar*, and the worshippers.<sup>34</sup> However, he is

instructed to *leave out* the *court which is without the temple* – he is not to *measure* this court. The Greek word translated as *without* seems to be in some dispute; there are two words in Greek that are very similar, one meaning *within (esothēn)*, and the other *without (exothēn)*.<sup>35</sup> The Stephanus Greek text shows the former (*esothēn*), which then renders this as the *inner court of the temple*; however, it seems that translators have used interpretive license to assume this to be an error in transcribing the texts, and, for their own ease, have taken it to refer to the *outer court*.<sup>36</sup> Although this might seem to simplify the application, it does not carry the true meaning of the text; there is an *inner court* that was a specifically defined area within Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:36); the *inner court* surrounded the temple proper (the holy place and Holy of Holies), and it was an area that was restricted to the priests (it was also called the *court of the priests* – 2 Chronicles 4:9). This area is truly the *inner court of the temple*, for its use was directly linked to the temple and the ministration by the priests. John is specifically told not to consider this inner court (*leave out*), for it has been given over to unbelievers (*Gentiles*); this area that is supposed to be restricted to properly sanctified priests will be occupied by those who are not.<sup>37</sup> The holy place and Holy of Holies is called the *temple of the God* (v.1), which shows that it has been constructed for Jehovah.<sup>38</sup> At the time that John wrote the Revelation, close to the end of the first century AD, both the temple and the city of Jerusalem had been completely destroyed by Titus, therefore, this cannot be referring to Herod's temple. Indication is that Israel will build their third temple, and, based upon the context of this passage, it would seem that it will be built before the Antichrist arrives on the

<sup>32</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>33</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>34</sup> Strong's Online; Liddell-Scott; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>35</sup> Strong's Online; Strong's actually shows both Greek words here.

<sup>36</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>37</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>38</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

scene – although not long before. However, even though it will be built for Jehovah, it is also clear that those whom Israel is now training to attend to the priestly duties in the inner court and the temple, are not of the faith of Abraham for they are called *Gentiles* (Romans 4:11).<sup>39</sup> While the Mosaic Law was in effect (up to the cross), *Gentiles* referred to those who were not a part of Israel (non-Jews), but under the New Covenant, the term so translated (from the Greek meaning *the peoples*) generally identifies those who are not *in Christ* – those who are not of the faith of Abraham.

John writes that for 3½ years Jerusalem will be trampled by these unbelievers; this indicates that, with the construction of the third temple, unbelieving Jews will fill the city as they are undoubtedly persuaded that their Messiah has come, and the Antichrist will use the city as a means of perpetuating his deception of the world. What takes place is a resumption of the Old Covenant practices by the Jews; however, we must not forget that this Covenant was, in reality, ended by Christ through His death and resurrection. The Jews are busily developing plans for their third temple, and are preparing all of the furnishings that they will need for it in order to re-establish their temple rituals – in essence, they are working to restore what they lost in 70 AD. Hidden within all of their religious activities is the glaring fact that they still refuse to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah; they eagerly anticipate the arrival of the Antichrist, whom they will be deceived into believing is their Messiah. As we noted in our study of the False Prophet, he will be able to convince the Jews that he is the long-awaited *Elijah*, the one who was prophesied to precede the Promised One (Malachi 4:5) – he will, thereby, open the Jewish minds to accept the Antichrist as the one who will restore their land and bring peace.

Nevertheless, their Messiah has already come (the Lord Jesus Christ), and He established the New Covenant that forever ended the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:13). Therefore, when dispensational theologians declare that the millennium will be a restoration of the nation of Israel, that the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is only for national Israel, and that everyone going into the millennium will be saved, we must be careful to recognize the error of such thinking.<sup>40</sup> The greatest desecration that such a view imposes on the Scriptures is that it largely discredits the work that Christ accomplished at the cross – in fact, they deny that the Old Covenant was fulfilled and ended in Christ, and, because the present *Age of Grace* is parenthetical, that after the rapture, God will once again deal specifically with Israel, and the Old Covenant practices will be reinstated, but as a memorial only.<sup>41</sup> In their enthusiastic separation of Israel and *the Church*, they gloss over many things to which they need to give careful heed. One of these is that Jesus stated very clearly that He would be the Shepherd of only **one** flock (John 10:16) – not a flock of *Israel* and another one of *the Church*; this unmistakably draws Israel and *the Church* together as that one flock. Then again, we must recognize that the writer of Hebrews has explained the Lord's prophecy through Jeremiah: "In that he [Jehovah] saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old [obsolete; perfect tense – the *first* has been made obsolete, a completed action that will not be repeated, with an

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabid/173/nid/29809/Default.aspx>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.ourelement.org/about/what-we-believe/faqs/289-dispensationalism-covenant-theology-and-new-covenant-theology>

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

emphasis upon the enduring results<sup>42</sup>]. Now that which decayeth [is becoming obsolete; present tense] and waxeth [is growing] old *is* ready to vanish away [nigh unto disappearing]” (Hebrews 8:13).<sup>43</sup> At the time that Hebrews was written (estimated as being between 50-68 AD<sup>44</sup>), the temple was still standing in Jerusalem, and the unbelieving Jews were continuing the temple rituals even though they had been fulfilled in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Undoubtedly, the religious Jews would have tried to suppress the tearing of the temple veil from top to bottom, even as they tried to perpetuate the lie that the body of Jesus was stolen by His disciples (Matthew 28:12-15). However, what God has declared to be obsolete (the Old Covenant) will not be resurrected during the millennium; the New Covenant in Christ is for **all** people for **all** time – Jesus is the means of salvation for all people (OT and NT), and He is the sacrificial Lamb Who was in place **before** the world began (Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:26-27; Revelation 13:8).

What John describes is a temple and the city of Jerusalem that will be frequented (*tread under foot*) by those who do not belong to the Lord (*Gentiles*).<sup>45</sup> It is the *holy city*, but it is filled with those who are not holy. It is noteworthy that this trampling of Jerusalem will last for exactly the same length of time as the reign of the Antichrist – forty-two months (Revelation 13:5). However, throughout this time there will be a powerful witness to the truth of the Lord, and some, or all of it will take place in Jerusalem.

### **THE TWO WITNESSES INTRODUCED**



**<sup>3</sup> And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. <sup>4</sup> These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. <sup>5</sup> And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. <sup>6</sup> These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. (Revelation 11)**

There is much speculation about who these two witnesses might be, or if, in fact, they are merely metaphorical. However, reading what the Lord has given us regarding these two, unless they are accepted as being two human beings, much of what follows will only breed confusion. These two witnesses are not identified, but, since we are told that they will be killed, they must either come from the saints presently on the earth, or they are two from the past who have not died. Because they have the ability to kill everyone who would seek to harm them, it is clear that they are not from among the saints present on the earth at this time, for the faithful saints of the Lord will be dying under the rule of the Antichrist (Revelation 6:9-11; 13:7). “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27); this passage and logic dictate

<sup>42</sup> [https://ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/inter-tense.htm](https://ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/inter-tense.htm)

<sup>43</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.freebeginning.com/new\\_testament\\_dates/](http://www.freebeginning.com/new_testament_dates/)

<sup>45</sup> Liddell-Scott Lexicon.

that a man can only die once, but it also tells us that it is man's lot to die (Genesis 3:19). Within Scripture, we are told of two men, Enoch and Elijah, who have not yet died; they were taken alive by God into heaven (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11).

When Moses desired to see the glory of God, the Lord obliged him by showing him a small portion of his departing glory, but he was told, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). Enoch and Elijah were taken from this earth as men; what we are not told is that, when they were taken up, they would have also been changed. Here are two individuals who were *raptured* before they died; what we must understand is that they entered the presence of the Lord with glorified bodies – that is the only way that they could look upon Jehovah and live. These men are unique: they have glorified bodies **and** they have never died; the Lord has uniquely prepared them to fill the role of His prophets during the time of the Antichrist.

We are told that they will *prophesy* for 1,260 days, which is 3½ years or 42 months. However, it seems that they will be taken up to glory before the saints are raptured, and since the rapture takes place prior to the end of the Antichrist's reign, it is necessary for them to begin their prophecy before the opening of the first seal (the revelation of the Antichrist).

These two witnesses are called *two olive trees* and *two candlesticks (lampstands)* who are *standing* before God.<sup>46</sup> The olive tree was important to the ancient Jews primarily because of the oil that came from its fruit. It was pure olive oil that was used as fuel for the seven lamps of the tabernacle (Exodus 27:20), which were placed upon a lampstand within the Holy Place. The symbolism that is attached to these two witnesses is that they will bear and display the power of the Spirit of God, and, as glorified saints, this will be a strong testimony of the Lord's working through them. We are told that they are *standing (histemi)* before God.<sup>47</sup> When we have clothed ourselves in the full armor of God, we are commanded to *stand (histemi)*; Ephesians 6:11,13,14); the Greek word is the same in both cases, except that for the two witnesses, it appears in the perfect tense – an action that has been completed and does not need to be repeated.<sup>48</sup> This fits well with them being in their glorified bodies ever since their translation into God's presence; even though they are now on earth as testimonies to the Lord, they still *stand* before God. Their posture is defensive, not aggressive.

These two witnesses have been equipped with one defensive tool – fire. If anyone should desire (*will*) to do them harm, fire comes out of their mouths and destroys their enemy.<sup>49</sup> We are not told whether this is literal fire, or if, by speaking a word, they will be able to kill those who come against them; either way, the Antichrist and his forces will be unable to overcome these two witnesses. Additionally, they are given the authority (*power*) so that there should be no rainfall during the time of their prophecy, and they can turn water into blood and bring any plague (*all plagues* – this is singular in the Greek, not plural) upon the earth whenever they may desire.<sup>50</sup> As we consider how the Lord has equipped these two witnesses to defend themselves, and the weapons

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<sup>46</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>47</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

that they wield to gain the attention of the *whosoever* in the world, it is now time to leave them and look at the plagues, or calamities, that the Lord will bring during the time of the Antichrist's reign through the sounding of the seven trumpets. With the beginning of their prophecy the end-time events will unfold without any delay (Revelation 10:6).

### **PREPARATION FOR THE TRUMPET PLAGUES**



**2. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. 3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4. And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. 6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. (Revelation 8)**

John describes seven messengers (*angels*) who have stood (perfect tense) before God, and to them are given seven trumpets. They stand ready to do the Lord's bidding.

Another angel (*allos* – another of the same kind) comes and is made to stand at the altar of incense, and he is holding a censer. This *censer* is a bowl, or pan, that was used to carry live coals from the altar as needed. Within the Mosaic traditions, once each year the high priest would place live coals from the altar of incense into a censer, take a handful of incense, and go into the Holy of Holies where he would place the incense upon the live coals and, thereby, produce a cloud of fragrance that would cover the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:12-13). When the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down in worship of the Lamb Who was worthy to open the seals, they each held bowls (*vials*) of *odours* (*incense*), which are *the prayers of the saints* (Revelation 5:8).<sup>51</sup> To this angel, who is standing at the altar of incense, is given *much incense* so that he might present it for (*with*) the prayers of the saints upon the altar; by (*out of*) the hand of the angel, the prayers of the child of God (the incense), with the intercessory assistance of the Holy Spirit and the Son of God (Romans 8:26,34), ascend from the heavenly altar of incense in the presence of God as a sweet fragrance. The prayers of the saints are there in heaven as a sweet aroma to God; undoubtedly this includes the petition of the saints as revealed with the opening of the fifth seal, for what follows will be the answer to their request of the Lord (Revelation 6:9-10).

After the prayers of the saints have ascended before God, the angel takes the censer, fills it with coals of fire from the altar, and throws them (*it*) toward (*into*) the earth.<sup>52</sup> With this action come sounds (*phone*), thunders (*bronte*), lightnings (*astrape*), and an earthquake (*seismos*);<sup>53</sup> these will come as a sign from heaven that God is becoming directly involved in the activities on the

<sup>51</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>52</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>53</sup> Strong's Online.

earth, and He will begin to frustrate the Antichrist's reign. When John was called into the presence of God, we are told that out of God's throne "proceeded lightnings (*astrape*) and thunderings (*bronte*) and voices (*phone*)" (Revelation 4:5);<sup>54</sup> God's presence is characterized by these three things. When He came down to Mt. Sinai to meet with Moses, it is noted that there were sounds (*thunders* – *phone*), lightnings (*astrape*), and that the mountain *quaked greatly* (Exodus 19:16,18).<sup>55</sup> The presence of God upon the mountain produced similar effects to what John noted in heaven (the quaking mountain is unique to the earth). When the final vial of the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth, "there were voices (*phone*), and thunders (*bronte*), and lightnings (*astrape*); and there was a great earthquake (*seismos*)" (Revelation 16:18).<sup>56</sup> The end of God's wrath being directed to the earth also signals the coming of the Lord Jesus to establish His reign on earth for 1000 years. Therefore, when the coals of fire from the altar of incense elicit sounds, lightnings, thunders, and an earthquake, it seems evident that the Lord's presence will be near at hand for what follows.

With this, the seven *angels*, who are holding seven trumpets, prepare themselves so that they may be ready to blow them. There is no indication as to whether these are seven heavenly angels, or if these come from among those who are in heaven with the Lord at this time; all that we know is that these seven are prepared to do the Lord's bidding – they are His *messengers*.

The events that are brought upon the earth by the sounding of the seven trumpets, are often called the *seven trumpet judgments*; however, they are specifically referred to as being *plagues*, not judgments (Revelation 9:20). They are sent as a warning to the inhabitants of the earth of what is yet to come. There are some similarities between these trumpet events and the plagues that God brought against Egypt before He led Israel out of slavery. When the Lord sought Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, He saw the *affliction* of His people; the Israelites were burdened and oppressed by their lords, the Egyptians (Exodus 3:7), and, likewise, the children of God will be troubled by the Antichrist (Revelation 13:7). The Lord told Moses, before he ever went back to Egypt, that Pharaoh would not willingly permit Israel to leave, and, as a result, He would afflict the Egyptians. As the Lord dealt with Pharaoh and Egypt through the plagues, He seemed to have a two-fold purpose: 1) they served as a warning to the Egyptians from the living God of the Israelites to fear Him, and 2) they were a sign to the Israelites that they needed to be alert, for the time of their rescue was nigh. Interestingly, the first two plagues that the Lord brought upon Egypt were replicated by Pharaoh's magicians, and the first three plagues also fell upon the Israelites – all of the rest were specifically upon the land of Egypt, and the Israelites were merely observers (Exodus 8:22; Deuteronomy 6:22). Let's keep this in mind as we proceed.

### **THE FIRST TRUMPET**

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<sup>54</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>55</sup> The two words noted are so translated in the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation of the OT; *thunders* appears in the Hebrew as *sounds*; for the *mount quaked*, the LXX misses the Hebrew entirely and says that the people were exceedingly amazed (*Bibleworks 8*).

<sup>56</sup> Strong's Online.



**7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. (Revelation 8)**

The first four trumpet blasts have several similarities, and I believe that they will be sounded in quick succession. It is clear from the announcement of an angel that the last three trumpets will herald something quite different from the first four. The trumpets are sounded in heaven, and we are not told whether they are heard on the earth or not.

We are told that the two witnesses will use fire to protect themselves against those who would seek to do them harm, but they also have the power to turn water into blood and to strike the earth with a plague whenever they will. *Plague* is undefined calamity; the Greek word *plege* (*play-gay*) means to strike a blow; in the parable of the good Samaritan, the man who fell among thieves was inflicted with blows (*wounded/plege* [Luke 10:30]).<sup>57</sup> This is a very specific application; however, when it is used more generally (as here), it means a calamity or heavy affliction.<sup>58</sup> The two witnesses have the authority (*power*) to bring every affliction (*all plagues*, these are both singular in the Greek) upon the earth.<sup>59</sup> We need to keep this in mind as we look on.

As the first trumpet is blown, a mixture of hail, fire, and blood falls upon the earth, and one-third of the trees and all of the grass is burned. The seventh plague against the Egyptians was one of hail and fire (Exodus 9:23), but here we have the additional ingredient identified as *blood*. When



“Blood rain” in Kerala, India (2001)

Joel wrote that the “sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood” (Joel 2:31), we understand this to mean that the moon will give the appearance of being blood – i.e., to look at, it will be red. Likewise, when we read that this hail and fire will be mixed with blood, we can know that it will be red, but not necessarily from literal blood. For many centuries there have been reports from all over the world of *blood rain* falling from the sky; an analysis of the water,

from such an event in Spain, showed that the rain carried with it a microalgae that gave it the red color, even though they’re most uncertain as to how it got there.<sup>60</sup> Whatever produces the *blood* that falls along with the hail and fire, will be the least of anyone’s concern; the third part of the trees of the earth will be burned, and all of the green grass. We are not told if these trees are in one location, or if this plague will be spread around the world; however, the focus is against plant life, but there will be a ripple effect that will have a much greater impact.

<sup>57</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>58</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>59</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.sciencealert.com/scientists-think-they-ve-found-a-partial-explanation-for-the-blood-rain-in-spain>

You will recall the rider of the black horse who is holding a balance in his hand (Revelation 6:5-6); you will also remember that this identified a time of great famine for the inhabitants of the earth. Losing one-third of the trees and all of the grass will be a sure way to heighten the scarcity of food around the world, and the prices will soar – a day’s wages for enough to feed one person for a day. The two witnesses, the rider of the black horse, and the sounding of the first trumpet will all work together to bring a time of great difficulty for the people of the earth.

Before we leave this first trumpet, we need to note that one of the *wonders* that the False Prophet will use to gain the allegiance of the world is his apparent ability to call fire down from heaven (Revelation 13:13). Even though this trumpet brings an affliction from the God of Heaven, there is a likelihood that the False Prophet will use this to his advantage, in the same way as the magicians of Egypt. This would diffuse the fire, hail and blood as coming from the Lord, and it would enhance his image in the eyes of the world.

Remember, too, that the Antichrist will set out to overcome the saints of the Lord (Revelation 13:7), and there will be little doubt that the problems of the earth will be laid at the feet of those who are not enthusiastically supportive of his agenda.

### **THE SECOND TRUMPET**



**8- And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9- And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8)**

As the second trumpet is sounded, John sees something like a great mountain, that is being burned with fire, thrown into the sea. Although this is not a whole mountain, it is said to be like a mountain – it will be a massive amount of burning material that will be cast into the sea. Since there is no indication that this comes from the heavens, this could very well be a massive volcanic eruption. Consider Mt. Tambora, located in Indonesia: on April 10, 1815, it erupted, blowing almost 36 cubic miles of rock and ash as high as 27 miles into the air, the sound of the explosion was heard 1,600 miles away, and “the whole mountain was turned into a flowing mass of ‘liquid fire’.”<sup>61</sup> When it settled out, the top one-third (about 4,700 feet) of the mountain was gone, an estimated 60-100,000 people died either directly or indirectly from the eruption, and the average global temperature dropped by about .5°C.<sup>62</sup> This eruption was rated as being 7 out of a possible 8 on the Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI); a VEI-8 eruption would unleash **ten times** the power of the 1815 eruption of Mt. Tambora.<sup>63</sup> That blast created a local tsunami of 13 to 16 foot waves, and the Molucca Islands (over 600 miles away) had waves over 6 feet high.<sup>64</sup> A volcanic eruption

<sup>61</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1815\\_eruption\\_of\\_Mount\\_Tambora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1815_eruption_of_Mount_Tambora); <https://www.livescience.com/31337-mount-tambora-image.html>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.livescience.com/31337-mount-tambora-image.html>

<sup>64</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1815\\_eruption\\_of\\_Mount\\_Tambora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1815_eruption_of_Mount_Tambora); Google Earth.

of VEI-8 strength would cause tremendous devastation through a world-wide temperature drop because of dramatically reduced sunlight, and massive deposits of ash over thousands of miles



Mt Pinatubo (VEI-6): before, during, and after eruption

around the eruption – even a few millimeters of ash will destroy crops, and a meter or more will render land unusable for decades.<sup>65</sup> It is as the eruption sends sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) into the stratosphere (at a height of 10 to 17 kilometers<sup>66</sup>) that the greatest impact is felt by the whole world; the sulfur dioxide reacts with hydroxide (OH<sup>-</sup>) in the atmosphere to form sulfuric acid (H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, referred to as a *sulphate aerosol*), which, in turn, blocks the sun's radiation from reaching the surface of the earth.<sup>67</sup> Within the lower atmosphere (the troposphere) the sulfuric acid is quickly washed out by rainfall; however, when it forms in the stratosphere, it is quickly spread around the world by the strong horizontal winds that are present at this height.<sup>68</sup> For example, when Mt. Pinatubo (in the Philippines) erupted in 1991 as a VEI-6, the sulphate aerosol that formed in the stratosphere spread around the world in a matter of 22 days;<sup>69</sup> from this VEI-6 eruption, some regional temperatures dropped by .4°C, the aerosol was detectable for up to three years, and weather patterns were disrupted (both temperature and rainfall did not follow historical norms).<sup>70</sup>

John notes the effects of the second trumpet: a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed; the impact is most significant upon the sea and its creatures, and man's seafaring activities. What John records for us is the regional impact of a massive volcano; what isn't noted are the less obvious secondary results: the resulting tsunami would wreak great havoc against all low-lying areas for hundreds, if not thousands of miles around, the aerosol impact would reduce sunlight hitting the earth – the resulting devastation would be considerable. Here, too, increased famines would be prevalent around the world.

### **THE THIRD TRUMPET**

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/07/here-s-how-world-could-end-and-what-we-can-do-about-it>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/science/stratosphere>

<sup>67</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/wea.263>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid; <https://www.livescience.com/14513-pinatubo-volcano-future-climate-change-eruption.html>

<sup>70</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/wea.263>



**10. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; 11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. (Revelation 8)**

The third trumpet is blown, and John describes a *great star*, burning like a torch (*lamp*), falling upon a third of the *rivers* and upon the springs (*fountains*). *Star (aster)* can refer to the visible planets (Jude 13, *wandering stars*), the starry hosts in the heavens, or to meteors that are often called *falling stars*.<sup>71</sup> This *great star* is most likely a large meteoroid (a piece of interplanetary matter less than a kilometer in size<sup>72</sup>) that enters the earth's atmosphere. It is described as burning like a torch; a moving torch will always show a trail of fire, which is the picture that John paints as he observes this *star* falling from heaven. Clearly, what John is describing is a very large meteoroid that enters the atmosphere, and impacts one-third of the sources of fresh water.

In 1908, a meteoroid (it is sometimes referred to as being an asteroid<sup>73</sup>) descended upon Tunguska, Siberia. Although there are many theories as to what took place, the most plausible seems to indicate that, as this meteoroid entered the earth's atmosphere, it exploded; there are accounts of a great fireball in the sky, intense heat for miles around, and a resulting airburst that hit the earth with dramatic results.<sup>74</sup> The energy released by this event has been estimated as being more than 185 times greater than that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, flattening an estimated 80 million trees over an area more than 30 miles across.<sup>75</sup> Evidence of acid rain has been found for miles around the epicenter, which, even today, remains largely barren.<sup>76</sup> Acid rain is



Trees felled by blast

Lake Cheko

Aerial View

formed when sulfur dioxide or nitrogen dioxide combines with moisture in the air to form sulfuric acid or nitric acid (respectively); the former is a product of active volcanoes, and the latter of lightning strikes and meteoroids.<sup>77</sup> High levels of uncommon nitrogen compounds have been found

<sup>71</sup> <https://starchild.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/StarChild/questions/question12.html>

<sup>72</sup> [http://hubblesite.org/reference\\_desk/faq/answer.php.id=22&cat=solarsystem](http://hubblesite.org/reference_desk/faq/answer.php.id=22&cat=solarsystem)

<sup>73</sup> The differentiation between meteoroids and asteroids comes down to size; asteroids are large rocks (greater than one km) that orbit the sun; a meteoroid is much smaller (less than a km), and also orbits the sun; the moment that it enters the earth's atmosphere, it becomes a meteor, and a meteorite if it hits the ground.  
<https://phys.org/news/2015-06-difference-asteroids-meteorites.html>;  
<http://www.sun.org/encyclopedia/asteroids-meteoroids-meteors-meteorites-comets>

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20160706-in-siberia-in-1908-a-huge-explosion-came-out-of-nowhere>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunguska\\_event](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunguska_event)

<sup>77</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acid\\_rain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acid_rain)

in the peat bog layers in the area of the blast, which seems to indicate that acid rain, in the form of nitric acid, fell on this area.<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, particularly for our study, nitric acid is said to have a bitter taste.<sup>79</sup>

As John describes this *star* falling upon one-third of the rivers and upon springs, it can easily be seen that the Tunguska event provides us with a glimpse into the devastation that a meteoroid can cause when it explodes upon entering the earth's atmosphere. Although it is generally agreed that the Tunguska meteoroid exploded in mid-air, there are some who believe that a small fragment survived the explosion and made a crater (Lake Cheko); if the explosion had destroyed the entire meteoroid, there would have been no crater and an even larger area of devastation. An exploding meteoroid could very easily impact a third of the world's rivers and, through acid rain, make the fresh waters bitter.

*Wormwood* is a bitter herb that holds some medicinal values, but is also poisonous when taken in sufficient quantities or for a length of time. As the name might suggest, it is a digestive aid that, among other things, is used to control worms and parasites in the digestive tract.<sup>80</sup> However, it is also used in treating malaria, cancer, and a host of intestinal diseases; thujone is the poisonous chemical that is present in wormwood, it has a similar molecular structure to that of the THC in marijuana that causes the "high," and is reportedly toxic to the liver, kidneys, and brain when taken in sufficient quantities.<sup>81</sup> In all likelihood, the meteoroid that will bring significant death will be named *Wormwood* after its contaminating effects are known; in other words, I do not look to the heavens for a comet, asteroid, or meteoroid that presently has this name (there are those who do).

Once again, the impact to the agricultural communities around the world will be great; famines will be intensified, and diseases of pandemic proportions will be very probable. The activities of the black and pale-green horsemen will be increasingly evident during this time of great calamity.

### **THE FOURTH TRUMPET**



**12. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. 13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! (Revelation 8)**

The fourth angel blows his trumpet, and how the sun, moon, and stars are viewed from the earth is impacted. These three, created by God *for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years and to give light upon the earth* (Genesis 1:14-15), will suddenly be changed. After the events of

<sup>78</sup> <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2008/07/080722-russia-blast.html>

<sup>79</sup> [http://creationwiki.org/Nitric\\_acid](http://creationwiki.org/Nitric_acid)

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.encyclopedia.com/plants-and-animals/plants/plants/wormwood>

<sup>81</sup> <https://thujone.wordpress.com/>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thujone>

the first three trumpets, this will, indeed, be a sign that God wants to get the attention of everyone on earth; the first three might be explained as being natural phenomena, but this may well go beyond scientific explanation. It is true that the first three trumpet blasts will bring events that produce a massive amount of air pollution – the burning of the trees and grass, the volcanic ash, and smoke from the fires from the meteoroid will fill the skies, resulting in daylight being dramatically reduced for much of the world. The smoke and ash in the air will reduce the visibility of the heavenly lights to that portion of the day when they are most directly overhead. We've seen this occur in localities where there is dense forest fire smoke; however, beyond the air pollutants, it seems that God will strike (*smitten*) the sun, moon, and stars. As Jesus spoke to His disciples about end-time events, He said that there would be “signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity [at their wit's end]” (Luke 21:25).<sup>82</sup> *Darkened* (*skotizo*) means to become dark, unable to give light; therefore, God will remove one-third of the light from the day and the night. As Jesus said, this will cause great distress among the people of the earth: they will be at their wit's end. The theme of many around the world, in recent decades, has been global warming (now often rephrased as *climate change*); a reduction of one-third of the light hitting the earth will send these people into great *distress*, for it will bring measureable cooling.

Each of these calamities, which God will send upon the earth with the sounding of the first four trumpets, will fall upon all of mankind, including the children of God. This will be a time when the doors of salvation remain open to *whosoever* will come; for the child of God, it will serve as the sounding of the watchman of what is coming – a sign that we must be alert and expectant of the Lord's coming. For the world at large, it will serve as a warning of the judgment that will come when God's wrath will fall upon them; yet, we are told that even though the signs in the heavens will be recognized as coming from God (scientific explanations will not be adequate), for the most part the people will only seek to hide from His face, rather than bow before Him – they will appeal to the rocks and mountains rather than submit to Him (Revelation 6:16-17).

When the Lord brought the plagues against Egypt, the first three were experienced by the Israelites as well. Despite this, which is written as an example for us (1 Corinthians 10:11), there is a general sense among Evangelicals today that they will be spared the hardship of the Antichrist's rule and the calamities of the trumpets; this is so important to their pre-tribulation-rapture theory. However, their *pre-trib* position is also founded upon two very significant and fundamental flaws: 1) the most generally accepted rationale is that the “tribulation is not for the Church,” and 2) a less known justification is that “the Church and Israel are separate entities.”<sup>83</sup> There are many other reasons mentioned for this rapture theory, but most seem to spring from these two. Let's take a brief look at them.

### **Fallacy: tribulation is not for the Church**

The *tribulation is not for the Church*. Couched within this statement is a misunderstanding of what *tribulation* really means, for they will frequently quote the Lord's promise that His children

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<sup>82</sup> Vine's “perplexity.”

<sup>83</sup> <http://christinprophecy.org/articles/why-i-believe-in-a-pre-tribulation-rapture/>

have “not [absolute] been appointed [destined] to wrath [*orge*]” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).<sup>84</sup> A very simple examination of the NT Scriptures reveals that *tribulation* and *wrath* are NOT the same thing. Nevertheless, those who advocate for a pre-trib position continue to make statements like this: “the Tribulation is God’s wrath upon the unbelieving world,”<sup>85</sup> “the Tribulation Period will be a time when God pours out His wrath upon mankind for his wickedness,”<sup>86</sup> and “those who’ve been born again are *not appointed to God’s wrath* yet that is *precisely* what the Tribulation is” (emphasis in the original).<sup>87</sup> Let’s carefully consider these two words (*tribulation* and *wrath*) and their Greek roots, so that we may come to understand them correctly. *Tribulation* is from the Greek word *thlipsis*, which literally means a pressing together, oppression or affliction; *wrath*, on the other hand, has been translated from two Greek words: 1) *orge*, which speaks of God’s abiding response to sin and evil, including the justice that He will bring against it, and 2) *thumos*, which is a passionate expression of judgment against sin and evil.<sup>88</sup> Jesus placed the signs of His coming after a time of *tribulation* (Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24), and He promised us *tribulation* in this world (John 16:33); John described himself as being a *companion in tribulation* (Revelation 1:9), and he saw a multitude of saints in heaven who had come out of *tribulation* (Revelation 7:14) – in each case, the Greek word that is used is *thlipsis*.<sup>89</sup> Clearly, those who have an abiding faith in Christ for salvation from their sins cannot possibly claim that they are exempt from *tribulation* – i.e., oppression and affliction; tribulation has been promised to us, and we have seen that John considered himself to be a *companion in tribulation* (i.e., he was not alone).

The Greek words that are translated as *wrath*, and have already been noted, speak of something entirely different from *tribulation*. *Orge*, when attributed to God, describes His abiding anger against sin and evil. Concerning Jesus, John the Baptist said: “He that believeth [*pisteuo* – persuaded, which requires a change in actions] on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not [*apeitheo* – refuse to believe **and** obey] the Son shall not see life; but the wrath [*orge*] of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).<sup>90</sup> For the one who refuses to believe **and** obey the Lord, God’s *orge*, His long-standing hatred of sin and evil (as well as the justice that He will bring against it), abides upon him. We have been promised that “being now justified by his [Christ’s] blood, we shall be saved from wrath [*orge*] through him” (Romans 5:9); through an ever-present faith in the sacrifice that Christ made for our sins, we will be (*shall be* – future tense) saved from the *orge* of God.<sup>91</sup> Romans 8:1 assures us that if we are *in Christ* (a living faith) **and** *walk after the Spirit* (an active obedience) then we are not condemned by God; this affirms that the *orge* of God abides upon the one who does not believe (he is not *in Christ*) and obey (he does not *walk after the Spirit*). In other words, God’s wrath (*orge*) abides upon the unbeliever – whether pagan or apostate (Ephesians 2:2-3; Hebrews 10:26-29); it is as we remain obediently *in Christ* that we will not be subject to God’s abiding anger against sin and evil.

<sup>84</sup> Strong’s Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> [https://www.jesus-is-savior.com/End%20of%20the%20World/pretrib\\_proof.htm](https://www.jesus-is-savior.com/End%20of%20the%20World/pretrib_proof.htm)

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.calvaryoxnard.org/2010/reasons-to-believe-in-a-pre-tribulation-rapture>

<sup>88</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>89</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Strong’s Online.

The other Greek word that has been translated as *wrath*, is *thumos*, which is a passionate expression of anger (*orge*).<sup>92</sup> Therefore, when we read of the seven angels being instructed to “Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath [*thumos*] of God upon the earth,” this is the **expression** of God’s *orge* (His abiding response to sin) against the sin and evil in the world (Revelation 16:1). However, the saints of God are not on the earth at this time, and therefore are not subjected to this expression of His *orge* – in keeping with the promise of Scripture. To those who “do not obey [*apeitho* – believe and obey] the truth” there awaits “indignation [*thumos*] and wrath [*orge*]” (Romans 2:8).<sup>93</sup> A very simple word study has revealed that there is a fundamental difference between *tribulation* and *wrath* (both *orge* and *thumos*); yet, for some reason, this seems to have escaped the notice of those who hold tenaciously to their pre-trib eschatology.

What should be very obvious by now is that Jesus’ promise of *tribulation* for His disciples, and this promise that we will not be subject to His *wrath* (*orge*), are both taught in Scripture, and, furthermore, it is not a contradiction for these to co-exist. Great confusion has resulted by endeavoring to make *tribulation* and *orge/thumos* to mean the same thing.

### **Fallacy: the Church and Israel are separate**

The other fundamental flaw cited (*the Church and Israel are separate entities*<sup>94</sup>) not only creates a plethora of its own problems in understanding the Scriptures, but it also provides additional fodder for the claim that the “the Church” will not go through “the Tribulation.” Although there is no hesitation to confuse *tribulation* and *wrath* to their own apparent advantage, these same promoters of pre-trib theology take great care to emphasize the *need* for a strict separation between Israel and those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: “Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel ... a member of the Church does not become a form of spiritual Israel.”<sup>95</sup> John F. Walvoord, a prominent Evangelical name in eschatological studies and a strong advocate for pre-tribulation rapture, has stated: “Pretribulationism distinguishes clearly between Israel and the church and their respective programs.”<sup>96</sup> There can be no mistaking the separation to which they zealously hold; as before, we must be careful to extract from God’s Word that which is His truth, whether it conforms with their conclusions or not.



**John F. Walvoord**  
(1910 – 2002)

Paul dealt very carefully with this matter in his letter to the Roman Christians. As he began, he carefully noted that the Gospel of Christ is God’s power of salvation for the Jew first and also for the Greek (Romans 1:16). Why to the Jew *first*? It was the Jewish nation (Israel) that carried God’s promise of a coming Savior from Abraham through to the birth of the Lord Jesus. Salvation, within the context of the OT, came by faith in the promises of God – beginning in the

<sup>92</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>93</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>94</sup> <http://christinprophecy.org/articles/why-i-believe-in-a-pre-tribulation-rapture/>

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> <https://amos37.com/50-reasons-pre-tribulation-rapture/>

Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15), but then more specifically reiterated to Abraham (Genesis 12:3), to Isaac (Genesis 26:4), and finally to Jacob (Genesis 28:14). God's expressed desire was that Israel should become a kingdom of priests to Him (Exodus 19:6), but they failed to such an extent that when the Promised One came, they did not even recognize Him as their Messiah; nevertheless, through the family line of Israel, the Redeemer of mankind came in fulfillment of all of God's promises. When Jesus came, He brought His message of the Good News of the kingdom of God primarily to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24). This was not because He had no love for the Gentiles (even His Covenant with Israel included provisions for the stranger, those who were not "of Israel" [Leviticus 24:22]), but Jesus came to fulfill all of the Mosaic Laws (which are the interpretive part of the Covenant that God made specifically with Israel at Mt. Sinai), thereby bringing them to an end, but also ended was the unique Jewish advantage (Ephesians 2:14-16). Paul clarifies that the Jewish *advantage* is that it was to them that the Lord entrusted His words (Romans 3:1-2); the OT Scriptures came through the prophets of Israel being used by the Spirit of God – there is no denying the central role that Israel played in bringing God's Word to us, as well as providing the physical line of promise through which Jesus came as the Messiah of the world.

To the Romans, Paul established that the Gospel message, although it came first to the Jews, is also for the Greeks (the non-Jews). Beginning with Abraham (the father of all Jews), he lays a firm foundation that Abraham was accounted righteous before God through faith – not works: "Abraham believed [*pisteuo*] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3).<sup>97</sup> As Abraham believed God, he expressed his belief through obedience; there is no other way, for unless faith results in action, there is no faith (James 2:17). Having demonstrated that righteousness

## The Good Shepherd has only ONE FLOCK

before God comes only by faith, Paul summarizes: "the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe [*pisteuo* – present tense; active voice]: for there is no [an absolute] difference [distinction; the same

word is used in Romans 10:12]: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22-23).<sup>98</sup> Through Christ, the access to salvation has been made level; it is open to *whosoever* (John 3:16) – under the New Covenant there is absolutely *no difference* between the Jew and the Gentile. Jesus said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [*aule*; i.e., Israel]: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold [*poimne* – flock], and one shepherd" (John 10:16); He made it abundantly clear that **He only has one flock!**<sup>99</sup>

However, Paul elaborated even further on this truth: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28-29). What is Paul, who was a Jew, saying? He, through the Spirit of God, has redefined what it means to be a Jew – it is not what is externally evident, and circumcision is no longer the fleshly act practiced by the Jews from the time of Abraham. By

<sup>97</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>98</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

contrast, under the New Covenant, to be a *Jew* is to circumcise the heart in the Spirit – it is forsaking the works of the flesh and living according to the leading of the Spirit of God; it is faith in the Lord and a life of obedience to Him, thereby receiving His approval (Romans 8:1). Christ completed the role of Israel before God the Father, and He made it very clear that He will have only **one flock** over which He is the Shepherd. The Mosaic sacrifices, the priesthood, and all of the required ordinances were fulfilled in Christ and brought to an end: the *Law of the commandments in ordinances* has been destroyed by replacement (*abolished*) (Ephesians 2:15).<sup>100</sup> Everything that defined a Jew externally has been removed by Christ.

This was not unforeseen, and should not have been a surprise to the religious Jews of Jesus' day – nor should it be difficult for us to comprehend. Jehovah spoke of this day through Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33). The promise was that the Lord would establish a *New Covenant* with **His** people. As Jesus sat with His disciples at the “Last Supper,” He said, “This cup *is* the **new testament** [New Covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).<sup>101</sup> How can we miss it? Jesus, in fulfilment of the prophecy made through Jeremiah, established with His disciples (who were all of the house of Israel) a *New Covenant*! The writer of Hebrews explained the words of Jeremiah this way: “In that he [the Lord God through Jeremiah, the prophet] saith, A *new covenant*, he hath made the first old [declared to be obsolete]. Now that which decayeth [has become outdated] and waxeth old [is becoming obsolete] *is* ready to [about to] vanish away [disappear]” (Hebrews 8:13).<sup>102</sup> There should be no doubt left that the Mosaic Covenant of ordinances has been removed by Christ through His death, burial, and resurrection; however, we must also be careful to understand that this does NOT include the Ten Commandments, which were written by the finger of God upon tables of stone, and (according to the Lord's words through Jeremiah) under the New Covenant they are now placed upon our minds and written upon our hearts! Understand that **everything** that identifies someone as being Jewish has been **done away with in Christ**, but the Law of God (*My Law*) is now within the child of God. This helps us to grasp the significance of what Paul is teaching to the Roman Christians: a true Jew is one who has placed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and, through the Spirit of God, is living according to His dictates; it requires both a spiritual rebirth and a life of obedience to the Lord in order to be a New Covenant *Jew* (Romans 2:29), and physical ancestry no longer holds any merit.

Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). The word-picture is evident: Jesus is the *vine*, the main part of the plant, and we are the branches that come out of the main vine; in such a case, the branches bear fruit because they are attached to (*abiding* in) the vine.

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<sup>100</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>101</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>102</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree to present exactly the same truth, but in a broader application under the New Covenant: "... if the root [the source; in this application, Jesus] *be* holy, so *are* the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off [speaking of unfaithful Israel], and thou, being a wild olive tree [i.e., a branch from the Gentiles], wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree [Jesus]; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee [cp. John 15:5]. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; **because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.** Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee" (Romans 11:16b-21; cp. Hebrews 3:12). The metaphor used is of Christ, the Olive Tree, with the original branches being Israel, most of whom have been removed because of their unfaithfulness (*unbelief*), and we have been grafted-in by faith and made partakers of the holiness of Christ (if the *root* is holy, then so are the *branches*). The true, New Covenant *Jew*, then, is a branch that is abiding in the Olive Tree, nourished and bearing the fruit of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22-23). Earlier Paul stated that "they *are* not all [out of] Israel, which are of [a Greek demonstrative pronoun meaning, **this!**] Israel" (Romans 9:6b), which is a reiteration that not everyone who is born of the physical line of Israel is a true Israelite before God; the lineage of true Israel follows the promise (Romans 9:8) and comes only through faith (Romans 4:16; Hebrews 11:17-23) – without faith, the branch is removed (John 15:6; Romans 11:20; Hebrews 11:6), and it is by faith that the wild branch is grafted-in.

However, despite all of what we have just learned, the pre-trib position requires that all of this must be set aside during "the Tribulation." Within their view, "the seven year tribulation will really center around the nation and the people of Israel";<sup>103</sup> "the final year-week [the Tribulation] ... will be a time of testing and spiritual awakening for Israel."<sup>104</sup> In other words, they believe that Israel, as a nation, will be the focus of the Lord's attention during the Tribulation period, and that this will result in their salvation (*spiritual awakening*). Yet Paul made it so abundantly clear that everything that physically defined a spiritual descendant of Abraham (those of promise) has been done away with in Christ; the **ONLY** *spiritual awakening* that can come to Israel is through the Lord Jesus Christ – the sacrifices, the priesthood, the temple, and all that separated the Jewish people from the Gentiles has been ended (Ephesians 2:15). However, the "pre-tribbers" will appeal to Paul's words: "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26a), and endeavor to use this as proof that the spiritual awakening of Israel as a nation will take place.<sup>105</sup> What they fail to recognize is that this statement comes within the context of the metaphor of the Olive Tree's branches, where Paul makes it clear that if the original broken branches (those of Israel) "abide not still in unbelief [i.e., they have come to faith in Christ], [then they] shall be grafted in" just like the Gentiles (Romans 11:23); **salvation for the Jews comes only through Christ** (Acts 4:12) – God's purposes for Israel as a nation have been ended in Christ. Paul arrives at the conclusion that *blindness* (a callous has formed making Israel spiritually insensitive) has come to part of Israel (as a nation) until the desired end (*fulness*) of the non-Jews (*Gentiles*) should be realized, *and so all Israel* (those who are *in Christ* – New Covenant *Jews* who are grafted into the Olive Tree) *shall*

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1329/israel-in-the-tribulation>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engbooks/Darkness/Darkness6.htm>

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/is-god-finished-with-israel.php>

(will) *be saved* (Romans 11:25-26a).<sup>106</sup> Could it have been made any more clear? There is **only one way of salvation**, and that is through Christ (John 14:6); Jesus stated explicitly that He would be the Shepherd of **one flock**, not two (John 10:16). The separation of “the Church” from Israel makes two flocks, which is diametrically opposed to the words of Jesus.

A proponent of the pre-trib position has stated that “many people make the mistake of failing to observe Israel in the apocalyptic events of Revelation. Because of this ignorance, much of the biblical perspective on the great tribulation is lost, as well as one of the most important prophetic signs of the end of the **Church’s dispensation**, namely the restoration of the people of Israel and their capital city, Jerusalem.”<sup>107</sup> However, it is the *ignorance* of the promoters of a pre-trib rapture that permits them to disregard what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection; they show no understanding of the teachings of Paul that make it so clear that all things Jewish have been removed (Ephesians 2:15), and they refuse the words of the Lord Jesus Himself when He stated unequivocally that He would be the Shepherd of only one flock (John 10:16). In their dispensational frenzy, they will even degrade the New Covenant that Jesus established through His shed blood: “The New Covenant is God’s promise to convert rebellious Israel, restore her to her own land, and bless her”;<sup>108</sup> that is a restoration of the Old Covenant that God has removed (Hebrews 8:13). Jesus, in the presence of His Jewish disciples, held up the cup and said, “This cup *is* the new testament [New Covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).<sup>109</sup> God’s everlasting Gospel was about to be established through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, even as He had predetermined before creation began (1 Peter 1:19-20).

Consider again what the writer of Hebrews clarified for us: “In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old [to treat as obsolete]. Now that which decayeth [has been made old] and waxeth old [has become obsolete] *is* ready to vanish away [close to vanishing away] (Hebrews 8:13).<sup>110</sup> The writer is anticipating the removal of the Old Covenant: the priesthood, the sacrifices, the temple, the Jewish advantage, etc. Jesus spoke of such a time: “And when ye shall [should] see Jerusalem compassed [surrounded] with armies, then know [understand] that the desolation [destruction] thereof is nigh” (Luke 21:20).<sup>111</sup> Through the stubborn stance of the zealots who controlled Jerusalem at the time, the Roman general Titus destroyed the city and completely obliterated the Jewish temple in AD 70 – the city was surrounded and it was destroyed, just like Jesus had declared. Concerning the temple, Jesus said, “there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2). The temple was the hub of everything Jewish, and, as Jesus said, in AD 70 there was nothing left to identify the temple. The writer of Hebrews said that the Old Covenant was close to vanishing away, and within a few years of penning those words, it was all destroyed. Truly, the Old Covenant vanished away; despite this, because the dispensationalists have taken a hard line on their belief in the absolute separation of *the Church* and Israel, they choose to ignore what Jesus established with His Jewish disciples

<sup>106</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engbooks/Darkness/Darkness6.htm>

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/is-god-finished-with-israel.php>

<sup>109</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>110</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

(Luke 22:20) and the events under commander Titus.<sup>112</sup> In fact, when it comes to the plain texts of Scripture that would speak against their understanding of “the Tribulation,” they will either ignore them completely, or they will force them to fit into the grid of their dispensational mindset; their dispensationalism, for some reason, must remain intact at all costs.

The pre-trib rapture understanding is firmly rooted in dispensationalism, which, unfortunately, has become an accepted view of the Scriptures among Evangelicals – even if there are only a few who might actually realize that it underpins most of what they profess to believe. A careful examination of the Scriptures (as we have just done), with a mind that is open to the Truth, will very quickly debunk the arguments made for this popular position.

As we consider the events of the first four trumpets, it must be with the realization that there will be faithful children of God present on the earth during this time, which, in turn, means that *the rapture* has not taken place. The hardships for the people of the earth will dramatically increase, and the persecution of God’s saints will escalate; “And it was given unto him [the Antichrist] to make war with the saints, and to overcome [defeat] them” (Revelation 13:7).<sup>113</sup> No one can deny that, historically, Christians have faced tremendous persecution, yet today’s Evangelical has readily accepted a sense of justification for being exempt from any persecution under the Antichrist.

As the sun, moon, and stars are darkened for a third part of the day and night, we are told that a warning is given to the world – a declaration of three *woes* that are to follow. A *woe* is an affliction or distress;<sup>114</sup> the Greek word so translated, is an exclamation of displeasure at that which is unfavorable.<sup>115</sup> We’re not told whether or not this angelic proclamation will be heard by those on the earth, but, to those who are alert, the declaration of the last three trumpet blasts being heralded as *woes* is a sign that these will be more significant than the first four (Revelation 8:13). However, before we move into the coming woes, let’s look back at the two witnesses, who will be faithfully prophesying during the time that these first four trumpets have been sounded.

### **THE WORK OF THE TWO WITNESSES**



**5. And if any man will hurt them [the two witnesses], fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. (Revelation 11)**

<sup>112</sup> David Cloud, who prides himself on being a *fundamental Baptist* and a strong defender of the necessity for holding a dispensational interpretation of Scripture, does not explain either Luke 22:20 or Hebrews 8:13 anywhere in his article, *Is God Finished with Israel?*; Jesus’ declaration that He was instituting the New Covenant through His shed blood, is ignored ([www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)), as is the affirmation that the Old Covenant was about to disappear.

<sup>113</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>114</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/woe?s=t>

<sup>115</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Earlier we looked briefly at the two witnesses who will be an unrestrainable aggravation to the Antichrist throughout most of his rule. Their defensive tool is *fire* that comes out of their mouths; whether this is literally *fire* coming from the mouth, or if this means that they can simply speak a word to bring death to those who might seek to do them harm, is not clear. However, the word-picture is that they will use *fire* to destroy their enemies. The first three trumpets signal three incidents of destruction, each of which includes *fire* (1 – hail, fire, and blood, 2 – a mountain of fire, and 3 – a burning *star*); I believe that these will take place well into the Antichrist’s rule – a time when he will no longer need to appear to be a benevolent savior to the world. He will then become more aggressive in his attempts to silence these two witnesses (thereby providing evidence of their ability to destroy those who come against them), and it will be during this time that the trumpet calamities will begin to fall upon the earth.



**13. And he [the False Prophet] doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men (Revelation 13)**

You will recall that the magicians of Egypt were able to replicate some of the signs that the Lord gave to Moses. As Moses came into Egypt, the Lord gave him signs to perform before Pharaoh to show him that He was behind Moses’ request for the Israelites to leave Egypt; one of those signs was that Moses’ rod would become a serpent. However, when Moses displayed this sign before Pharaoh, the magicians of Egypt also turned their rods into serpents (Exodus 7:11-12); furthermore, for the first two plagues that the Lord brought against Egypt (of water turned to blood, and the plague of frogs), the magicians were able also to imitate them (Exodus 7:22; 8:7). In similar fashion, it seems that the False Prophet will use the sign of fire falling from heaven to convince the Jews (in particular) that he is the promised Elijah who precedes their Messiah, the Antichrist (1 Kings 18:37-39; Malachi 4:5). *Fire* will be a significant sign of God’s judgment against the Antichrist (possibly through the two witnesses, and in the plagues from the first three trumpets: the *hail and fire* [Revelation 8:7], the *mountain burning with fire* [8:8], and the *star burning as a lamp* [8:10]), but it will also be used by the False Prophet to solidify support for the Antichrist, and affirm his own role as the forerunner for this *Messiah* figure. It would not be unreasonable to think that the False Prophet will endeavor to use the calamities sent by God as an extension of his own power; he is empowered by the master of deception, and if Satan can make the calamities sent by God to appear to be his, then you may be sure that he will. Considering the significance of the plagues from the first three trumpet blasts, if the False Prophet can explain these with a twist to make the Antichrist look like the one who can restore order, then he will. Man is very capable at rationalizing and justifying that which he cannot explain (creation being spun as evolution is one example), but the False Prophet is functioning under the direct guidance of Satan – his ability to skew events to his advantage will be phenomenal.

However, there could well be a double-twist to the interpretation of the plagues from the first three trumpets. Since it is possible that the two witnesses will use *fire* as their defense against attack, there is also a real chance that the blame for these plagues (which all involve fire) will be laid at their feet. If this should be the case, then it is equally likely that every child of God on the earth will also bear the blame. To the Antichrist (and the False Prophet) “it was given ... to make

war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Revelation 13:7); any and every excuse that is plausible will be used to decimate the saints of God during this time – Satan is still at war with the children of God’s kingdom (Revelation 12:17).

However, with the sounding of the fourth trumpet, God smites the sun, moon, and stars so that one third of the day and night is darkened. This goes well beyond what the False Prophet will be able to use to his advantage, and the entire blame will be laid at the feet of the two witnesses, first of all, and then, more generally, upon all of the saints of God. If he cannot skew the events to his advantage, then he will lay the blame so that the purposes of Satan (the authority behind the Antichrist and False Prophet – Revelation 13:2,12) will still be accomplished. The fourth trumpet brings a change to the plagues – it will become evident to those who have eyes to see that the Lord is orchestrating these events. This will be a time of tremendous encouragement to the saints who recognize the signs: Jesus said, “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ... Men’s hearts failing them for fear ... And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:25-28). The fourth trumpet will be a significant sign that the Lord’s return for His own is very near.



**<sup>6</sup> These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. (Revelation 11)**

However, the two witnesses are given *power* well beyond that which is described as fire to destroy those who would seek to do them harm. They have authority to shut heaven so that it might not rain during the time of their witnessing against the Antichrist, and they will be able to turn water to blood, and bring any calamity (*all plagues*) that they desire against the earth. From the Antichrist’s perspective, the witnesses will bear responsibility for the disasters that occur upon the earth during the time of the sounding of the trumpets in heaven, which will only heighten his determination to eliminate these two “problems.” Even as the False Prophet works to explain events to the advantage of the Antichrist, they will both realize that what is taking place falls well outside of their control, which will only serve to increase their motivation to gain the upper hand. Their primary target will be the two witnesses, but they will quickly learn that they are invincible, and so the saints of the Lord will become the focus of their destructive efforts – Satan has declared war against the saints, and he will not relent in his efforts to destroy them (Revelation 12:17, 13:7).

### **THE FIFTH TRUMPET – THE FIRST WOE**



**<sup>1</sup> And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. <sup>2</sup> And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were**

darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.<sup>3</sup> And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.<sup>4</sup> And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.<sup>5</sup> And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.<sup>6</sup> And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. (Revelation 9)

Beginning with the sounding of the fifth trumpet, which is the first of the three pronounced *woes* (Revelation 8:13), things are different. The calamity that breaks out upon the earth does not touch the saints of the Lord – those who bear the *seal of God*. Let's review: "... in whom [in Christ] also after that ye believed [active voice, *ye believe*], ye were sealed [*sphragizo* – mark in order to identify; passive voice, God seals you] with that holy Spirit of promise [promised by the Lord Jesus Christ – John 16:7] ..." (Ephesians 1:13b).<sup>116</sup> The *seal* of the Holy Spirit is **not** a preservative, but a mark of identification that every child of God has even now. When we arrive in the new heaven and earth, we will be able to see God's mark (His name) in our foreheads (Revelation 22:4), but that does not negate the fact that the Lord's saints all bear His mark now.

As the trumpet sounds, John sees a fallen *star* (Satan), who fell from the grandeur of heaven to the earth, and he is given the key to the earthly access (*pit*) to the abyss (*abussos* – *bottomless*).<sup>117</sup> Within the NT Scriptures, this Greek word (*abussos*) is only used twice outside of the Revelation: in Luke 8:31 the demons plead with Jesus not to send them into the *deep* (*abussos*), an unpleasant place even for them; in Romans 10:7 Paul uses it to refer to the place of the dead, which is a place from which no one can return (Hebrews 9:27). We are told that Satan and the angels who followed him into rebellion were cast into the earth (Revelation 12:9), and Peter tells us that these angels were cast down to Tartarus (the underworld, a place below hades) pending a day of judgment (2 Peter 2:4).<sup>118</sup> However, since Jesus, during His earthly ministry, dealt with many who were possessed by devils (Matthew 8:16), we know that Satan's demons are not confined to the abyss; Paul warns us that they will disguise themselves as *ministers of righteousness* in an effort to deceive (2 Corinthians 11:15). The demons are spirit beings (like Satan), and will, therefore, look for someone in whom to live; we must use Holy Spirit-guided discernment in order to identify those who might well appear to be *righteous*, but are, in truth, living under the influence of a devil. We must measure all things according to the Word of God (John 7:24), for it is possible for those who do many wonderful things in the name of the Lord Jesus, to be rejected by Him (Matthew 7:21-23). Why are they rejected? Because Jesus *never knew* them; they appeared to be righteous, yet their *righteousness* did not come from the Lord, and, if it does not come from the Lord, then it must be the work of Satan's demons feigning godliness in order to deceive (Matthew 12:30).

<sup>116</sup> Strong's Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>117</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>118</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/tartarus>

As we begin to understand the significance of Satan’s work today through those who are the leading Evangelical preachers and theologians, it becomes increasingly evident that the way to life is truly *narrow* (Matthew 7:14). When the Galatians were faced with Jews endeavoring to add



Alongside-of-the-Bible teachers: Rick Warren, Chuck Swindoll, Ravi Zacharias, John MacArthur, Charles Stanley, Erwin Lutzer

circumcision (something that God had given to Abraham) to the message of the Gospel (Acts 15:1), Paul stated unequivocally that that destroyed the Gospel (*pervert*), and that God’s wrath (*accursed*) was upon those who promoted such error (Galatians 1:7-8).<sup>119</sup> Therefore, when we hear men like Rick Warren, Chuck Swindoll, Ravi Zacharias, John MacArthur, and everyone like them who feels free to teach alongside of the message of God’s Word, we must learn to discern the voice of *righteous-sounding demons*. They may not be demon-possessed (as we might imagine such a state), but there is great certainty that they are permitting Satan’s forces to influence the message that they are bringing; they proclaim it as the Gospel, even though they have left it behind (if they ever had it) as they have developed teachings according to their own philosophies – teachings that meet the expectations of their audiences (2 Timothy 4:3-4). They do not have to relinquish their churches, they will continue to use the identity of being *Christian*, and they will still hold their coveted positions as highly-acclaimed spiritual leaders within the “Christian” church. However, it is clear from Scripture that they abide under the curse (*anathema*) of God, for their doctrines go well beyond, or fall short of, what God has given to us in His Word; when they come to the end of their lives, they will hear Jesus say, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). Jesus commands us to enter through the narrow (*strait*) gate onto the restrictive (*narrow*) way that leads to life, and He also tells us that there will be only a few who will find it (Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus left no doubt as to this narrow way, for He said, “**I am the way**, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). When we place our faith in the Lord Jesus for salvation, we become a blood-bought saint who must continually live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for only then will we remain free from God’s condemnation (Romans 8:1).

As Satan opens the access to the abyss, smoke comes billowing out of it so that the sun and the air are darkened. This is why I described this as being the *earthly access* to the abyss; the smoke that comes pouring out from the abyss brings darkness to the earth. Out of this black smoke come locusts that have a sting like a scorpion; however, they are told not to harm the grass, nothing that is green, and no trees. Even though they are called locusts, they will not follow the natural instinct of the locust to eat everything that is green – they will sting, not eat. Beyond that, they are told to focus their attacks against those who do not have the seal of God. We are not told who it was who

<sup>119</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

told these *locusts* not to follow their natural instincts, but this is the Lord turning the activities of Satan against his own. Satan opens the abyss unleashing hordes of critters equipped as scorpions to inflict great pain, and he probably envisioned them stinging the general population of the world



Locust – Scorpion; combined as a hybrid from the abyss

– more particularly the children of God, since these are his critters. Nevertheless, God limits their attacks to those who do not bear His mark – the Holy Spirit abiding within (Ephesians 1:13). For the next five months, all of those who are not in Christ may be in anguish (*tormented* is in the subjunctive mood); they will not die, even

though they might desire to. The subjunctive mood of the word *tormented* is significant; the torment by the *locusts* is a possibility, but not necessarily a certainty because God’s saving grace is still open at this time. The targets of the *locusts* are all of those who do not belong to the Lord, not just those who have committed themselves to following the Antichrist by worshipping his image and receiving his mark.

We are told that these *locusts* are under a master (*king*), who is known as Abaddon (in Hebrew) and Apollyon (in Greek). We have already learned that these *locusts* will not eat grass, but will inflict stings like unto scorpions, and now we’re told that they have a leader; clearly, they are not earthly locusts (Proverbs 30:27). They come out of the abyss, the spiritual holding place of Satan’s demons and the unrighteous dead, and even though they are physical, based upon their description (Revelation 9:7-10)<sup>120</sup>, it seems that they are mutant, unnatural beings. John’s description of these *locusts* is filled with *like* and *as*, which would indicate that John is struggling to describe the *locusts* using terms with which he is familiar. However, because they came out of the abyss, we can be assured that they are Satan’s forces that he has unleashed upon the world; he willingly launches his attack, only to find that God has circumvented his plan by limiting him to those who are his – those who are not walking with the Lord; everyone who does not bear the mark of God.

The names ascribed to the *king* of the *locusts* are telling. *Abaddon* means destruction, and is translated as such in the OT Scriptures: “Hell [*sheol*, grave] and destruction [*abaddon*, ruin] are before [known to] the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?” (Proverbs 15:11).<sup>121</sup> *Apollyon* is clearly the Greek equivalent to Abaddon, for it means destroyer.<sup>122</sup> This *angel of the abyss* is obviously bent on destruction. Jesus said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction [*apoleia*, ruin], and many there be which go in thereat” (Matthew 7:13); the broad and most popular way of Satan leads to *destruction*.<sup>123</sup> The *narrow* way of Jesus leads unto *life* (Matthew 7:14), the very opposite of the

<sup>120</sup> There are some who have gone to great lengths to demonstrate how John’s description identifies military helicopters; although this is very interesting, there are fundamental flaws in their application of the activities of these *locusts* to helicopters: they sting like scorpions and only target the unrighteous before God.

<sup>121</sup> BDB.

<sup>122</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

broad road, and His narrow pathway is found by only a few. Jesus brings life; Satan brings ruin. The *king* over the locusts is Satan, the *angel* of the abyss – Apollyon, the destroyer.

We must be careful to understand this *destruction* correctly. Jesus said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). In other words, do not harbor any fear for those who are able to render physical death but have no power to kill the soul; rather, we are to fear the One Who is able to ruin (*destroy*) both soul and body in Gehenna (*hell*).<sup>124</sup> What we must see here is that *destroy* does not mean annihilation; those who enter Gehenna (the lake of fire) do not cease to exist, but enter a place of torment and eternal ruin. Jesus described Gehenna as the destiny for those who live in sin, and as a place where the fire is unquenchable (Mark 9:44). The Antichrist, the False Prophet, and even Satan can only *kill the body*, and we are to have no fear of them; our fear must be for the Lord Who can, if we are not *in Christ*, send us to Gehenna where both soul and body are in eternal ruin, but not *killed* (Revelation 20:15).

Remember that the seven trumpets herald seven *plagues*, or calamities, that will fall upon the earth (these are **not** seven judgments, as is so commonly presented); at the time of the fifth trumpet blast, the *ekklesia* of Christ is still present on the earth, the rapture of those who are in Christ has not yet taken place, and the door of salvation is still open to *whosoever* will. The first three trumpets bring *natural* phenomena to bear upon the earth; the fourth brings a calamity that will not be attributable to *natural* causes – God is beginning to become directly involved; the fifth trumpet signals a completely unnatural plague (locusts that sting, but don’t eat anything that is green), the first of the three proclaimed *woes*, and God’s miraculous protection of His own.

### **THE TESTIMONY OF THE TWO WITNESSES ENDS**



**7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. 11. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. 13. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven**

<sup>124</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Revelation 11)

Let's return for a moment to the Lord's two witnesses who have been bringing great grief to the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Those who would seek to do them harm have been killed (Revelation 11:5), so that, for the majority of their *testimony*, they have been able to proclaim the Lord's message without interference. They will inflict the earth with plagues as they see fit, and, throughout their declaration of the Lord's truth, there will be no rain. All of these calamities (*plagues*) will be brought against the earth in support of their *prophecy*;<sup>125</sup> they will bring strong evidence to bear in defense of their message to the world. However, it becomes very clear that their prophecy will go largely unheeded; even during a time such as this, when the Lord's message will be declared with great power and signs, the narrow pathway to life eternal will be found by only a few (Matthew 7:14).

As these witnesses draw their testimony to an end (they complete their 1,260-day prophecy – Revelation 11:3), we are told that the beast who is coming out of the abyss will kill them. You will recall that the term *beast* has been applied to Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet at various times throughout the Revelation; however, this beast is identified as coming out of the abyss. The Antichrist will come out of the *sea* (of humanity) (Revelation 13:1), and the False Prophet will arise from the *earth* (not out of the general population, but out of those who are enthusiastically heralding the Antichrist) (Revelation 13:11); therefore, from this (and Revelation 17:8) we can easily identify this *beast* as being Satan, whom we have already identified as being the *angel* of the abyss (Revelation 9:11).

Remember that these two witnesses are in their glorified bodies (being earlier identified as possibly being Enoch and Elijah), which has made them immune to the attacks from the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and anyone else who will seek to do them harm (Revelation 11:5) – men will not be able to prevail against them. However, as they come to the end of the prescribed period for their prophecy, Satan, a spirit-being, rises up out of the abyss (*bottomless pit*; no reference here to the *access* to the abyss), launches an attack against them, and conquers and kills them.<sup>126</sup> The Lord permits this to take place; we are told that it is the determination for all of mankind to die (Genesis 3:19; Job 30:23; Romans 5:12; Hebrews 9:27), and so these, who have never died, will die now. Their dead bodies are left in a broad-place (*street*) in Jerusalem, the city where the Lord Jesus was crucified; this is where they will lie for three and a half days, they will not be allowed (*suffer*) to be buried, and the attention of the world will be upon them.<sup>127</sup> Their apparent defeat through the efforts of the *beast* will be used to bolster the control of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet over the world – the two apparently invincible witnesses are dead; the fact that no one will be permitted to bury them, illustrates the devil's deep hatred toward these men.

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<sup>125</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>126</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>127</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

Why three and a half days? Jewish tradition (not God's Word) teaches that the spirit of a dead person will hover around the body for a period of three days, and then it will leave.<sup>128</sup> Their tradition also holds that facial identification of a body has to be made within three days of death, otherwise the process of decay will sufficiently mar the face so that it is beyond recognition.<sup>129</sup> The significance of the three and a half days is that this goes beyond the time when it might be possible for a person to revive spontaneously – i.e., someone who was not truly dead (in keeping with the Jewish tradition). Therefore, after the passage of this amount of time, there is absolutely no question that these two witnesses are dead.

However, the world will not only see their lifeless bodies lying in Jerusalem, but their death will bring them great joy. They do not wait for the passing of three days to confirm that they are dead, the world is immediately filled with an atmosphere of jubilation, and their celebrations will include giving one another gifts. Keep in mind that the blame for all of the affliction that the world has gone through up to this time will have been laid upon the Lord's faithful ones and these two untouchable witnesses. In truth, they will bring various plagues upon the earth, but they do so in order to test the commitment of the inhabitants of the earth. It was when Israel came under great distress that they would remember the Lord God Whom they had forsaken, they would cry out to Him, and He would send them a deliverer (Judges 3:9); in like manner, those dwelling on the earth during this time are being proven (*tormented*) in order to determine their allegiance – will they call on the God of heaven?<sup>130</sup> Their affliction will be grievous, but, clearly, it will not be the means of turning them to the Lord – with the death of God's witnesses, they rejoice and make it a time of great celebration – their allegiance is completely to Satan. Although the door of salvation remains open during the time of the witnesses' testimony, those who call out to the Lord will be very, very few in number, but that is not new.

Jesus told us that the way to life eternal is particularly narrow, and that there would be few who would actually find it (Matthew 7:14); the Lord has always identified His faithful ones as being a remnant.<sup>131</sup> Noah (Genesis 6:8), Elijah (1 Kings 19:18), the saved of Israel (Isaiah 10:22), and those saved by grace (Romans 11:5). The Lord's faithful children have always been a very small minority. Jesus stated that He is the only Door and Way to life (John 10:9; 14:6) – it is that narrow! A *narrow* understanding of salvation and the way to life eternal is an abhorrence to most today – it clashes sharply with the accommodation and compromise of ecumenism. However, Jesus did not teach a *believe-and-receive* gospel, but counseled us to count the cost of following Him (Luke 14:33), and, if we are willing to pay the price, then believe and obey (John 14:15). It is because the salvation that God has provided is so exclusive that many today who sincerely believe

<sup>128</sup> <https://dwork.wordpress.com/2012/08/27/he-had-been-in-the-tomb-four-days/>

<sup>129</sup> E. Christopher Reyes, *In His Name*, p. 508;

(<https://books.google.ca/books?id=4BnmQWtXeAIC&pg=PA508&lpg=PA508&dq=bar+kappara+on+soul+after+death&source=bl&ots=t3PzRfGrIn&sig=86HmlIIBSCgGzsQzj0qBjXgx96U&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiblyntuojdAhWIA3wKHSW3AYsQ6AEwAXoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=bar%20kappara%20on%20soul%20after%20death&f=false>)

<sup>130</sup> Liddell-Scott Lexicon.

<sup>131</sup> *Remnant* speaks of a part left over after use; this identifies the *remnant* as being significantly smaller than the original; God's faithful ones will be a small portion compared to the numbers of humanity as a whole.

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/remnant?s=t>

that they are saved, are not; they have believed man rather than God, and have either endeavored to broaden the doorway to salvation or used modern ecumenism as an excuse be joined together with error. In the former, they violate the Word of God, and, in the latter, they grieve the Spirit of God causing Him to leave them (if He actually did abide within them) – in both cases they remain outside of the salvation that Jesus purchased on the cross.

Jesus sends His Spirit to those who place their faith in the sacrifice that He made as payment for their sins; the Spirit's mission is to open the Truth to us (John 16:13), and we simply cannot *know* the Truth and embrace error at the same time – any attempt to do so is unacceptable to the Lord. James said, “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?” (James 3:11); *doth* in the Greek (*meti*) clarifies that this question requires a negative response – it is impossible for a fountain to pour forth both sweet and bitter water, and so it is impossible for anyone to embrace God's Truth (the Lord Jesus Christ) and error at the same time.<sup>132</sup> “Wherefore [based upon what came just before; i.e., *righteousness* has no *fellowship* with *unrighteousness*] come out [a command that we must obey] from among them, and be ye separate [*mark off with boundaries*; if we *come out*, then the commanded separation will take place], saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean [do not cling to what is unclean before God] *thing*; and I will receive [accept] you” (2 Corinthians 6:17).<sup>133</sup> What is so clear from this text of Scripture is that the Lord will **not** accept those who refuse to *come out*. Ecumenism dictates that such a *coming out* is unloving and divisive, and, thereby, they deceive those who are overly trusting of men and ignorant of the Scriptures (Romans 16:17-18). It is those who **do** the will of the Father who will be accepted into glory (Matthew 7:21); clearly, it is His will that we *come out* from among those who have departed from or refuse to accept that *narrow* Way that leads to life eternal – they will not accept a love for the narrow truth of God in order to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

When the two witnesses are killed by Satan, the time will be very near when the Lord Jesus will come in the clouds to remove His elect from the earth. We have the assurance that there will be those who will be caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17), but this will only be the *few* who have found the way to life (Matthew 7:14), who have remained faithful to Him unto the very end (Matthew 24:13), and who have somehow managed to survive the tyranny of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:7). The world will rejoice over the death of these two faithful witnesses; it will bring them greater pleasure than anything that they have known since the opening of the first seal and the arrival of the Antichrist. All of the calamities that the world has experienced since the Antichrist came, will be somehow attributed to these two prophets of the Lord. However, because they are able to defend themselves against the attacks from the Antichrist and his forces, everyone else who is faithful to the Lord will become the targets for his attacks (Revelation 13:7). With the death of these two prophets, the world anticipates great relief, but their celebration will be short-lived.

*After three days and a half*, the celebrations of the world come to an abrupt end. At the end of this time, when there will be absolutely no doubt from a human perspective that these two men are dead, life from the God of heaven enters into them, and they stand up. The world has been watching

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<sup>132</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>133</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon.

their bodies and celebrating their death; in an instant their celebrations will cease, for they will have witnessed life returning to those whom they had rejoiced over as being dead. Their manner will be changed immediately from great delight to great terror (*fear; phobos*).<sup>134</sup>

As the two witnesses come to their feet, a voice is heard from heaven that calls them to *come up hither*, or, come up to this place.<sup>135</sup> In the sight of the people of the earth, they ascend to heaven *in a cloud*; this will serve to deepen the terror that has entered into the hearts of those who rejoiced over their deaths. This is followed by a *great earthquake* that causes ten percent of Jerusalem to collapse, and it kills seven thousands of the people.<sup>136</sup> The survivors are filled with fear (literally, they *become in fear: ginomai emphobos*), and we read that they *gave glory to the God of heaven*.<sup>137</sup> However, this does not mean that they became the children of God. What does it mean to give *glory to God*? Who can give *glory to God*? Let's consider a few examples where this phrasing is used.

The first time that we see this phrase is in Joshua 7:19, where Achan is confronted regarding his sin against the Lord God: “And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, **give**, I pray thee, **glory to the LORD God** of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide *it* not from me.” In this case, this is a Hebrew idiom (an expression that does not mean what the words used might indicate<sup>138</sup>), which Joshua uses as a charge to Achan to tell the truth concerning his sin.<sup>139</sup> We see exactly the same use of this phrase when the Pharisees questioned, for a second time, the blind man whom Jesus had healed; they said, “Give God the praise [*doxa – glory*] ...” (John 9:24).<sup>140</sup> The Pharisees desperately wanted something with which to discredit the Lord Jesus, and they used this phrase in an attempt to exact what they wanted to hear from this man – unfortunately, they didn't want the truth, they only wanted fuel for their campaign to destroy the Lord.

However, this phrase is not always used to arrive at the truth; sometimes it simply speaks of giving praise to the God of all – i.e., the words truly describe the meaning that is intended. Luke provides us with an example that somewhat parallels what we are looking at in Revelation 11. When a man who was sick with the palsy (a loss of voluntary muscle movement – either tremors or paralysis<sup>141</sup>) was let down through the roof of a house so that Jesus could heal him, Jesus' first words to him were, “Man, thy sins are forgiven thee” (Luke 5:20). This immediately created a buzz among the Pharisees and scribes who were present, for they knew that only God could forgive sins. Jesus, knowing their reasoning, then said, “Whether [which] is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? [clearly, the first is easier, for there is no obvious external evidence to either corroborate or deny that sins have been forgiven] But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I

<sup>134</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>137</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>138</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/idiom?s=t>

<sup>139</sup> <http://itsinthetext.blogspot.com/2013/01/hebraisms-and-idiomatic-language-of.html>

<sup>140</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>141</sup> <https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/kjd/p/palsy.html>

say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them ... And they were all amazed, and **they glorified** [*doxazo* – verb form of *doxa*] God, and were filled with fear [*phobos*] ...” (Luke 5:23-26).<sup>142</sup> The scribes and Pharisees were beside themselves (*amazed* – *ekstasis*, literally, put out of place);<sup>143</sup> they grudgingly acknowledged the work of God in this man (God was glorified to that extent), but terror gripped their hearts because Jesus had just given them proof that He was able to forgive sins – in other words, He was God! Despite this overwhelming evidence of Jesus’ authority, they refused to accept Him as being their Messiah, the Lord of hosts, and said, “We have seen strange things [something that occurs that is contrary to belief or expectation] today” (Luke 5:26).<sup>144</sup> Despite attributing this miracle to the Lord (and glorifying Him to that extent) and being filled with fear, the scribes and Pharisees (as the Jewish religious leaders) remained committed to their mission to destroy the Lord Jesus – they refused to bow before Him.

Likewise, when we see that the people of the earth, and more particularly those in Jerusalem, being filled with terror (*emphobos* – in fear) at the raising of the two witnesses and the powerful earthquake, and it is noted that they gave *glory to the God of heaven*, we must understand that this does not mean that they have had a change of heart – they are simply acknowledging that God had something to do with what just happened, and they are filled with panic because of it. With the opening of the sixth seal, there will be a great earthquake and signs in the sun, moon, and stars, and even though the people of the earth will recognize that the Lord Jesus is orchestrating these events, they will call upon the *mountains and rocks* to fall upon them so that they won’t have to face the *wrath (orge) of the Lamb* (Revelation 6:12,16); they have correctly attributed these happenings to the Lord, yet their plea is not to the Lord for mercy, but to the mountains to crush them so that they won’t have to face God’s wrath. They bring glory to God to the extent that they recognize His hand in what is happening, but that’s their limit – they will not bow before Him. We might be amazed at their refusal to humble themselves before the Lord, even in the face of what they know to be His coming wrath, but we shouldn’t be.

As Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, he explained how such seemingly incomprehensible contradictions become characteristic of those who should know better. He begins by stating that the eternal power and divine nature of God are clearly evident through His creation, so that no one has an excuse for not acknowledging Him (Romans 1:20). However, even when they did come to understand (*knew*) God (or realize that there was a Power beyond what they could see), they refused to honor Him as God, nor were they thankful to Him; as a result, they could no longer think clearly (*became vain*; given to deception) – because they did not truly give God His rightful place in their lives (have faith in Him, and offer obedience to Him), their minds were filled with darkness (Romans 1:21).<sup>145</sup> If we do not live in obedience to what God has shown us, then we, too, will become darkened in our understanding, and will fall prey to deception. “Professing [claiming (active voice)] themselves to be wise, they became fools [foolish (passive voice)]” (Romans

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<sup>142</sup> Strong’s Online.

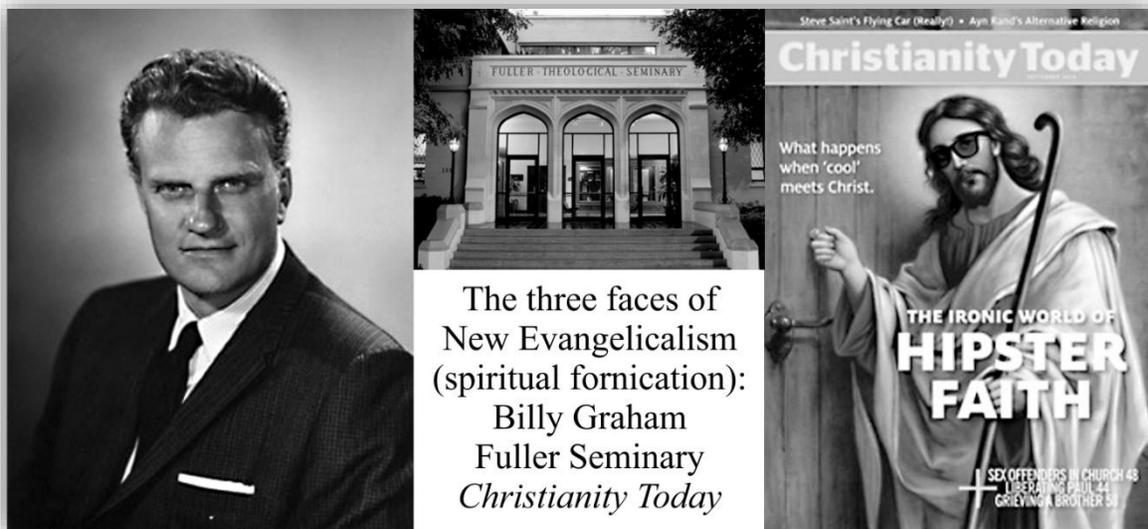
<sup>143</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

1:22);<sup>146</sup> these, who are unable to think clearly and whose minds have been darkened because they will not acknowledge God, will promote their foolishness as wisdom. In their darkness, they consider their stupidity to be intelligence, and they are filled with pride concerning their alleged *wisdom*. Consequently, God has given them over to this mind that fails His test (*reprobate*; unqualified, rejected) so that they are doing what ought not to be done (*not convenient*) – they are living in keeping with their *pseudo-wisdom* (Romans 1:28).<sup>147</sup> Paul goes on to list many deplorable things that characterize the lives of these who are committed to their own darkened *wisdom*, and concludes with this: “Who knowing [to know thoroughly] the judgment of God [the justice of God against sin], that they which commit such things are worthy [deserving] of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in [approve of] them that do them” (Romans 1:32).<sup>148</sup> This attitude of disregard for what God requires is a very common element within the world today – an element that has quickly been adopted into much of modern-day Evangelicalism, and buried under the mantra of *God is love*.

This Evangelical downgrade began in earnest through the efforts of Harold J. Ockenga; he was not alone in his endeavors, but his influence was most remarkable. He was a founding member of the National Association of Evangelicals (and its first president),<sup>149</sup> a founder and first president of Fuller Seminary,<sup>150</sup> influential in the appointment of the first editor of *Christianity Today* and a member of its board,<sup>151</sup> and had a formative influence on the work of Billy Graham.<sup>152</sup> Graham considered Harold to be “*the* evangelical intellectual leader” in the USA, admitted that he was intimidated by him, and said that he “valued his wise and thoughtful counsel” (emphasis in the



<sup>146</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>147</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>148</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>149</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Association\\_of\\_Evangelicals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Association_of_Evangelicals)

<sup>150</sup> <https://www.fuller.edu/about/history-and-facts/fuller-seminary-through-the-years/>

<sup>151</sup> Billy Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 169, 290.

<sup>152</sup> George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 167.

original).<sup>153</sup> Harold openly declared that neo-evangelicalism would present a two-fold approach that was new: 1) “a repudiation of separatism” and 2) “the summons to social involvement.”<sup>154</sup> He went on to elaborate on what the latter meant: “Neo-evangelicals emphasized the restatement of Christian theology in accordance with the need of the times, the reengagement in the theological debate, the recapture of denominational leadership, and the **reexamination of theological problems** such as the antiquity of man, the universality of the Flood, God’s method of creation, and others.”<sup>155</sup> As a leader within the Evangelical community of that time, Harold had significant sway in the formative years of Fuller Seminary (a training center for *Christian* leaders), with Billy Graham (who spread the middle-of-the-road message around the world), and with *Christianity Today* (a magazine that propagated the same message).

If we take one of Ockenga’s identified *problems*, God’s method of creation, it is interesting to see what has transpired within these three voices of New Evangelicalism since his announcement. In an article titled, “Eden and Evolution” that appeared in the *Washington Post*, Nancey Murphy, who is Senior Professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Seminary, is described as believing in evolution, and considers intelligent design to be poor theology and generally stupid.<sup>156</sup> *Christianity Today*, in 2007, published an interview with Francis Collins<sup>157</sup> under the title *Creation or Evolution Yes!*, along with the very telling subtitle: *Francis Collins Issues a Call to Stand on the Middle Ground*; the position of *Christianity Today* has been described as that of *theistic evolution*.<sup>158</sup> *Theistic evolution* inserts an element of God into the evolutionary process; it might be that God started evolution, or, perhaps, that He is guiding it – the essence is that there is an effort to unite the theory of evolution with the Bible. What about Billy Graham? He is quoted as making this statement on the subject: “I believe that God created man, and whether it came by an evolutionary process and at a certain point He took this person or being and made him a living soul or not, does not change the fact that God did create man.”<sup>159</sup> There it is: the three faces of Ockenga’s New Evangelicalism have all capitulated to secular science regarding the *problem* of creation. There is no evidence of a fight to protect the six-days of creation that we find in the first



Nancey Murphy

<sup>153</sup> Graham, p. 167, 169.

<sup>154</sup> Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, Foreword by Harold J. Ockenga.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/03/AR2006020300822\\_pf.html?noredirect=on](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/03/AR2006020300822_pf.html?noredirect=on)

<sup>157</sup> An *Evangelical* geneticist whom Pope Benedict XVI appointed to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 2009; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis\\_Collins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Collins)

<sup>158</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/january/32.62.html>; [https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Christianity\\_Today](https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Christianity_Today)

<sup>159</sup> <https://letterstocreationists.wordpress.com/2010/11/06/billy-graham-on-evolution/>

chapters of Genesis; it seems to have been more about embracing so-called science in order to appear to be defensibly intelligent – “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22).

Clearly, Evangelicals have no problem re-thinking how they view and understand God’s Word in their zeal to bring worldly philosophy and liberal theology together with their own beliefs – there is no other way to meld evolution with the six days of creation that are so clearly spelled out in Genesis. Their fundamental attitude is to remain open and accepting of the values of others, all in an effort to appear to be intellectually relevant; there was a strong sense that the Evangelicals of Ockenga’s day were academically inferior to their liberal and worldly counterparts.<sup>160</sup> This was deemed to be a negative situation that required immediate attention. Through the age-old, Satan-inspired use of rationalization, it was not long before Evangelicals could profess to hold a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture even while they ignored many of the foundational doctrines of the Bible. This is the bedrock of ecumenical thinking: what you freely profess among those who are your own kind, you can just as freely ignore (actually, deny) when in the company of others who do not hold the same belief. For example, most Evangelicals would say that Jesus is Lord, yet they will willingly join together with those who have a much lower view of Who Jesus is (the Roman Catholics, for instance, who make Mary a co-redeemer with Jesus). Rationalism says that it is okay to carry on spiritual activities with them because we can be a light to them – we just won’t talk about any areas of disagreement. Nevertheless, the Bible is very clear that if we expect to be accepted by the Lord, then we must not cling to anything that is unclean (2 Corinthians 6:17) – what could be more *unclean* than to denigrate the holy character of the Lord Jesus? Many Evangelicals will freely give glory to God, yet their lives reveal that this is offset by their willingness to ignore His Word at their convenience – they desperately try to be a fountain that produces both sweet and bitter water (James 3:11). Cognitive dissonance is defined as the mental stress that comes from trying to hold conflicting beliefs at the same time;<sup>161</sup> rationalism, on the other hand, is the application of reason in such a way that the dissonance is diffused and the stress is removed.

Therefore, as the two witnesses ascend to heaven and their observers on earth *give glory to God*, it is evident, from what we have considered, that this is not an indication of a changed heart. As we continue our study, this will be very clearly borne out. The people will be filled with fear because of the inexplicable events, but this will soon dissipate as rationalism sets in – now that the two witnesses (their trouble-makers) are gone, they anticipate that the calamities that have brought them such hardship will also be ended.

### **THE HARVEST OF THE FAITHFUL**

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<sup>160</sup> Lindsell, *Foreword*; Ockenga discloses that Fuller seminary was born out of a need for a “highly academic theological institution founded upon an infallible Scripture”; however, through the *restatement* of their *theology* according to the *need of the times*, infallibility was quickly lost in favor of remaining academically relevant.

<sup>161</sup> [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Cognitive\\_dissonance](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Cognitive_dissonance)



<sup>29</sup>. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken ... (Matthew 24)

<sup>12</sup>. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; <sup>13</sup>. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth ... <sup>14</sup>. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (Revelation 6)

<sup>13</sup>. And the same hour was there a great earthquake ... (Revelation 11)

<sup>30</sup>. ... And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven ... <sup>31</sup>. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24)

I have brought these passages together for a purpose. It is as we bring various Scriptures together that we can begin to understand what is being explained to us. In Matthew 24 Jesus is outlining for His disciples some of the events that will take place when He comes in the future. After speaking of a time when there will be a profusion of false messiahs and prophets who will seek to deceive even the child of God (Matthew 24:24), Jesus then identifies this as being a time of *tribulation*. The pinnacle of the *false Christs* will be the arrival of the Antichrist, who will particularly target the Lord's faithful ones for death (Revelation 13:7) – the pressure to conform will be great, but Jesus has told us of these things beforehand so that we can be adequately prepared for it (Matthew 24:25). When the fifth seal was opened, John saw the souls of those who had been killed for their faithfulness to the Lord, and they cried out to the Lord to avenge their deaths; however, the Lord tells them to rest, for there are yet others who must die as they have (Revelation 6:9-11). As the Antichrist launches his attack against God's children, it seems obvious that there will initially be a great slaughter as he seeks to establish his authority, remove those who oppose him, and vent his frustration at not being able to subdue the two witnesses; however, once his initial purging has been accomplished, even though the remaining saints will be dealt with in like manner, their numbers will be much smaller – the *great tribulation* during the early days will be followed by the *normalcy* of the Antichrist's reign. Even though the Antichrist's *war* against the *saints* will not be over, it will not be quite so evident. Jesus told His disciples that it would be *after* this time of affliction that the signs of His coming will begin, which coincides with the opening of the sixth seal; as the reign of the Antichrist starts to find its equilibrium, signs of the Lord's activity in the affairs of earth will present themselves – we noted this in our study of the fourth and fifth trumpets.

As Jesus explained this to His disciples, He said that the signs will appear in the sun, moon, and stars. As Noah left the ark, the Lord promised that “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22); there is a consistent surety to the heavenly bodies that provide us with days and seasons. The promise is that while the earth remains, the celestial rhythms will not change: the rotations of

the earth and moon around the sun will continue. However, the signs of the Lord's coming will impact these unabated rhythms: the "powers [*dunamis* – strength, ability to remain stable] of the heavens shall be shaken [disturbed, waver]" (Matthew 24:29).<sup>162</sup> The stability of both the heavens and the earth will be disturbed by the Creator of all things: the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heaven, the sky will step aside to permit the Lord Jesus and His angels to enter earth's space and accomplish the harvest of the righteous, and a massive earthquake will move mountains and islands as the righteous dead are raised to be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The snatching away (rapture) of the saints of God is taking place!

Paul encouraged the Corinthians with these words: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). From these words has come the misunderstanding that the *rapture* will be over in an instant, but that is not what is declared here. It is our transformation from mortal to immortal that will take place in an instant, but the harvesting of the righteous will take some time. John tells us that all of the people of the earth will *wail* because they have seen the Lord in the clouds and they recognize that they have missed their chance at life (Revelation 1:7); even those in Hades will see the Lord coming for His own (those who *pierced Him* will see it all). Jesus told His disciples that when He comes in the clouds, then *shall all the tribes of the earth mourn* (Matthew 24:30); the rapture will take sufficient time so that everyone being left behind will understand that they have missed heaven. With the rapture of the saints of God, Jesus and His angels have just completed the harvest of the righteous – the Feast of Ingathering has been fulfilled.

However, the people of the earth will quickly settle into a stable life once again; those who opposed the Antichrist and the False Prophet are no longer present to bother them. The world at large has become accustomed to the rule of the Antichrist, and the devastating work of the riders of the red, black, and pale-green horses has been, for the most part, completed – their work is now more easily ignored. The population of the world has been dramatically reduced (Revelation 6:8), the opposition to the Antichrist has been minimized, and the people will again speak of *peace and safety*. Although the removal of the saints will undoubtedly cause some distress, they will soon be convinced that the source of their troubles has been removed, and so they will anticipate better things to come. As the Lord removes His own from the earth, this signals a tremendous spiritual change in events; the earth is now completely occupied by those who have either actively or passively committed themselves to the *beast* (Satan) – the power behind the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Most significantly, with the removal of all of those who bear the *mark* of the Spirit of God, there is no longer any godly influence on the earth.

To the Thessalonians, Paul explained that "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4). Let's take a closer look at what is being taught here before we move on to look at what takes place on the earth after the rapture. *The Day of the Lord* is spoken of by the OT prophets as a "day of vengeance, that he [Jehovah] may

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<sup>162</sup> Strong's Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

**avenge him of his adversaries**” (Jeremiah 46:10); “for the day of the LORD *is* at hand; it shall come as a **destruction from the Almighty**” (Isaiah 13:6); “For the day *is* near, even the day of the LORD *is* near, a cloudy day; **it shall be the time of the heathen**” (Ezekiel 30:3). What becomes overwhelmingly evident is that the *Day of the Lord* is a time when the Lord will express His anger (*thumos*) against those who are not His – the unrighteous. The prophet Joel also spoke of this day and provided some additional information that is very interesting: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come” (Joel 2:31). The opening of the sixth seal brought signs in the heavens – the sun became dark and the moon appeared as blood (Revelation 6:12), which signals the sign of the Son of Man in the skies and the rapture of His saints (Matthew 24:29-31). It is after the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, and after the rapture that the Day of the Lord will come; this becomes evident when the words of Joel and Matthew are brought together. The Day of the Lord is described as a time of great devastation and destruction that will come upon those on the earth who have either not known the Lord or have not remained faithful to Him (the pagan and the apostate). In Paul’s instruction to the Thessalonians, he reminds them that they know that this time of destruction will come without warning upon those to whom it is directed (*as a thief*); when the living unrighteous settle into a time of *peace and safety* (after all, their troublemakers, the saints of God, have been snatched away), at that moment, *destruction* will rain down upon them. Paul’s assurance is that because we are the *children of light*, we will be prepared so that this expression of God’s wrath (*orge*) upon the earth will not catch us (1 Thessalonians 5:3-4,8-9); we are to be those who are awake and alert, dressed in the armor of the Lord so that we may be among those who faithfully persevere in the Lord unto the very end, and, thereby, be saved (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8; Matthew 24:13). “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5a); “Study [make every effort] to shew thyself approved unto God” (2 Timothy 2:15a).<sup>163</sup> Our eternal destiny will not be determined by a prayer that we might have uttered, but by how we live our lives before God (Matthew 7:21); do we live in willing obedience, regardless of the cost? Or, are we among those who willfully compromise the message of the Scriptures for the sake of family, friends, fellowship, or a broader acceptance? Unless we make the Lord Jesus our top priority, we are not His disciple (Luke 14:33) – claiming to be saved has no bearing on the reality of someone’s lost condition.

This brings us to the world after the Lord has snatched those away who have lived faithfully for Him to the end (i.e., the Day of the Lord). The world will know what transpired with the rapture of the saints, for they will mourn the fact that they have been excluded (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7). However, they will just as quickly believe that they are now going to enjoy a time of *peace and safety* – the Antichrist and the False Prophet will have always blamed the calamities of the trumpets upon the saints and the two witnesses; now that they’re both gone, their message will be to enjoy the peace and security that is now theirs. However, the Day of the Lord is about to strike them; “... the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them” (1 Thessalonians 5:2b-3a).

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<sup>163</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

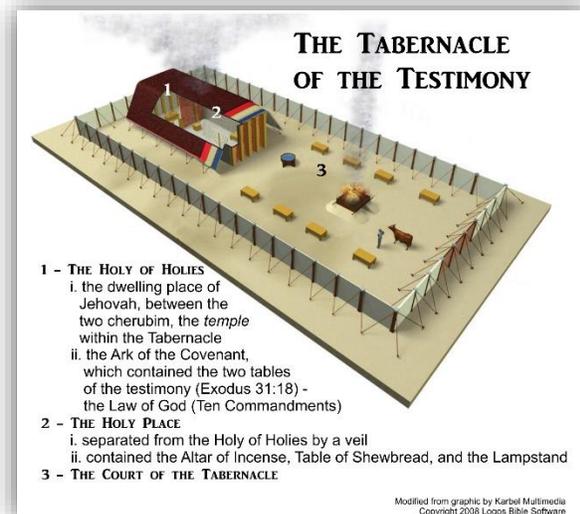
**THE VIALS OF GOD'S WRATH INTRODUCED**

<sup>1</sup> And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. <sup>5</sup> ... behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: <sup>6</sup> And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. <sup>7</sup> And one of the four beasts [living creatures] gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. (Revelation 15)

<sup>1</sup> And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. (Revelation 16)

John sees *another sign* (*allos semeion*) in the heaven.<sup>164</sup> *Sign*, as it is used here, speaks of an indication of what is coming; John catches a glimpse into what is about to take place.<sup>165</sup> Although John sees many things in the revelation that he is given, he only observes three *signs* – two are made to appear before him (the *wonders* [*semeion*] of the *woman* [the Kingdom of God] and the *red dragon* [Satan], revealing the great conflict of the ages [Revelation 12:1,3]), and this one, which he *sees* for himself. What John sees are seven angels (messengers taken from among the glorified saints [Revelation 21:9; 22:8-9]) who have been placed in charge of (*having*) the *seven last plagues*.<sup>166</sup> These angels have been given charge of the final plagues that God will bring upon the unrighteous on earth; these seven calamities will complete (*filled up*) God's expression (*wrath* – *thumos*) of His enduring anger (*orge*) against sin and evil.<sup>167</sup> This does not constitute the end of sin and evil, but it will be the Lord's last demonstration of His wrath against the unrighteous on earth (where not everyone is consumed). This will be a time of unprecedented affliction that will be visited upon all of the inhabitants of the earth; the survivors of this time of great calamity will live on under the rule of Jesus in the millennium.

After John witnesses those who had died under the rule of the Antichrist sing the song of Moses and the Lamb in praise to the Lord (Revelation 15:2-4), he sees the inner sanctuary (*temple*; *naos*, a specific reference to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies) of the heavenly *tabernacle of the testimony*, opened.<sup>168</sup> Remember that when Moses



<sup>164</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>165</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>166</sup> Liddell-Scott Lexicon.

<sup>167</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>168</sup> Strong's Online.

received the instructions on what he was to build for the Lord, he was told to be sure that he followed the pattern that the Lord had given to him (Exodus 25:9); the writer of Hebrews explains that this pattern from God was a reflection of heavenly things (Hebrews 8:5). The focal point of all that Moses built was the Holy of Holies, which was the dwelling place of God (*temple/naos*). God told Moses that He would speak to him from between the two cherubim that were set upon the Ark of the Testimony or Covenant (Exodus 25:22; Psalm 80:1). Notice that the Ark of the Testimony (a gold-covered box) contained, most importantly, the *two tables of testimony* (the Ten Commandments) that were inscribed by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18). The significance of this is emphasized in that the whole construction is called the Tabernacle of the *Testimony* (Numbers 1:50) – the entire project was to protect the sanctity of that special area where God said that He would dwell. That inner room (the Holy of Holies, the dwelling place of God) was the *temple* within the greater Tabernacle of the Testimony;<sup>169</sup> within the heavenly Tabernacle of the Testimony, the *temple* is the throne of God where God is seated, and it is the place into which John entered as he was called to heaven to witness coming events (Revelation 4:2-3).

It is out of this throne-room of heaven that the seven angels come, who are holding the *seven plagues*; these calamities that are about to fall upon the earth have been specially prepared by the Lord. Then, one of the four living creatures, about whom we first heard in Revelation 4, gives to these seven messengers of God seven golden vials (shallow bowls), which contain the wrath (*thumos*) of God.<sup>170</sup> It is in the hands of the seven angels that the specially prepared plagues are brought together with the expression of God’s wrath before they are poured out upon the earth. At this time, all of the inhabitants of the world are the unrighteous; the Lord Jesus and His angels have harvested the earth of all who are faithful to Him (Matthew 24:31).

The assurance that we have been given is that those who are living in faithfulness to the Lord will not experience the expression of God’s wrath. “For God hath not appointed [destined] us to wrath [*orge*], but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ ...” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).<sup>171</sup>

With the seven angels now bearing the seven vials of God’s wrath (*thumos*) and the plagues, John hears a command coming from the dwelling place of the Lord: “Go ... pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” We are not given any indication as to how long it will take for these vials to be emptied onto the earth, but it would be my contention that it will be a short span of time. This takes in the last of the Antichrist’s 42-month rule over the earth; his last days are filled with the outpouring of God’s wrath.

Another feature of this time, which we touched on earlier, springs from: “And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition” (Revelation 17:11). You will recall that the seven heads of the *beast* (Satan) represented seven kings or kingdoms, which we identified as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Islamic Caliphate. I believe that it will be during the time of the outpouring of God’s wrath upon the earth that Satan, the common influence evident through all of the seven world empires, will take full control of the Antichrist so that he (Satan) will be identified as being the eighth ruler of

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<sup>169</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>170</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>171</sup> Gingrich Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

the world. With the godly influence removed from the earth with the rapture, Satan will seize the opportunity to fully possess the Antichrist, who, to this time, has been provided with Satan's *power, throne, and authority* (Revelation 13:2); the Antichrist will no longer just be influenced by Satan, but, rather, he will be the expression of Satan to the world. As God's wrath is poured upon the earth, Satan will be likened to the eighth world-ruler because of his complete control of the Antichrist and his kingdom.

It is upon this earth, under the rule of Satan/the Antichrist, that God's wrath (*thumos*) against sin and evil will be poured out.

### **FIVE VIALS Poured OUT**



***2. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. 3. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. 4. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 8. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11. And blasphemed the God of heaven ... (Revelation 16)***

The impact of the first vial is felt by the willing followers of the Antichrist – those who have received his mark and worshipped his image; this is another indication that people, other than the Lord's faithful ones will not bow to the wishes of the Antichrist. Although no one will be able to buy or sell without the mark, in all likelihood barter will become a means of survival for those who resist the overtures of the Antichrist and the False Prophet. This first affliction is described as a bad (*noisome – kakos*) and painful (*grievous – poneros*) festering wound or ulcer (*sore*) – could it be that the *mark* will become infected?<sup>172</sup> The second vial turns the sea to the blood of the dead – a coagulated mass that kills everything in it that has life (*living soul*). The third vial turns the rivers and springs into flowing blood, after which the angel of the waters proclaims the justice of the Lord: the people of the earth shed the blood of the saints and prophets, and the Lord has given them blood to drink (v.6). The fourth vial is directed at the sun, which is given the ability to scorch men; you will recall that the fourth trumpet reduced the sunlight to the earth, which would cause it to cool dramatically; now the sun is burning men, and their response is to blaspheme the name of the Lord (v.9).

The fifth vial is emptied upon the throne (*seat*) of the Antichrist (which he received from the devil – Revelation 13:2), and his kingdom becomes darkened and his people gnaw their tongues

<sup>172</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon; Liddell-Scott Lexicon.

from the pain.<sup>173</sup> Clearly, this is a very unique darkness that brings great pain, and shows that the Day of the Lord has come. “*Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?*” (Amos 5:20). “The great day of the LORD *is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice [sound] of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly [bitterly roareth there a hero]. That day is a day of wrath [outburst of wrath – God’s expression of His wrath against sin], a day of trouble [distress, tribulation (Greek – thlipsis)] and distress [anguish], a day of wasteness [destruction] and desolation [ruin], a day of darkness and gloominess [great darkness], a day of clouds and thick darkness [heavy clouds]” (Zephaniah 1:14-15).<sup>174</sup> The ninth plague that the Lord brought against Egypt was a darkness that could be felt (Exodus 10:21), but this darkness goes well beyond that. The angels who followed Satan in his rebellion are said to be bound with chains of *darkness* (2 Peter 2:4); the devil and his forces are characterized by darkness, and this is intensified within the Antichrist’s kingdom by the fifth vial. Satan and his demons have no need to masquerade as messengers of light (2 Corinthians 11:14-15) because the saints of the Lord have been taken out of the world; therefore, they will flaunt and revel in their blackness, and, thereby, inflict pain and misery upon the people of the earth.*

### **THE SIXTH TRUMPET – SECOND WOE**



<sup>13</sup>. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, <sup>14</sup>. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. <sup>15</sup>. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. <sup>16</sup>. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. <sup>17</sup>. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. <sup>18</sup>. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. <sup>19</sup>. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. <sup>20</sup>. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: <sup>21</sup>. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. (Revelation 9)

<sup>14</sup>. The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. (Revelation 11)

<sup>173</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>174</sup> BDB; Strong’s Dictionary; Strong’s Online.

With the sounding of the sixth trumpet comes the announcement that four messengers (*angels*), who have been *bound* (perfect tense – done once; passive voice – done to them) at the Euphrates River, are to be loosed.<sup>175</sup> We are not specifically told who these messengers are, but based upon their destructive assignment, and that they have been bound for an unspecified length of time, it would seem that they are serving Satan, for these *angels* have been made ready (*prepared*) to kill one-third of the world’s population. You will recall that the rider of the pale-green horse went forth to slay a quarter of the people of the world; this is another dramatic reduction of the earth’s population – combined, the efforts of the horseman and the four angels will cut the population of the world in half. We have already seen how many of the world’s most influential individuals (and families) have, over the last century, been working quietly behind the scenes to curb the population growth of the world – they perceive overpopulation by *dependent* people to be the greatest threat to their wellbeing. The agenda to remove great numbers of people is from the devil; however, those who are empowered to carry out this agenda must still operate according to the timing of the Lord. The horseman arrives on the scene when the Lord Jesus opens the fourth seal; the angels have been bound at the Euphrates until the angel from heaven announces that they are to be loosed to carry out their task. Herein is comfort for the child of God: all of the activities of Satan are subject to the Lord’s oversight; even during the time when the wrath of God is falling upon the earth, Satan can do nothing unless it is permitted by the Lord.

John is then told how the population of the earth will be reduced by one third: the troops (*army*; plural) of the cavalry (*horsemen*; singular) are numbered at *two* myriads (*thousand*) of myriads (*thousand*).<sup>176</sup> Within the Greek, *urias* (myriad), when singular, refers to 10,000; however, when it is plural (as it is in both cases here), it refers to *countless thousands*.<sup>177</sup> The singular form does not appear in our Scriptures, and the plural form has been translated as *innumerable multitude* (Luke 12:1), *many thousands* (Acts 21:20), and *innumerable company* (Hebrews 12:22). The number of troops of this massive cavalry is set at more than 200,000,000 (which would be the count if the Greek *urias* [singular] had been used). This is the killing force that is released by these four loosed angels, and it will slay one third of the earth’s population.

This is a *cavalry*, and when we hear the term, we will typically think of troops of horse-mounted men, and that is the correct historical application. Within a modern context, *cavalry* has come to refer to troops that use military vehicles and helicopters in missions that require great mobility.<sup>178</sup> As we rapidly enter the era of unmanned and robotic everything, the latest experiments are with micro-drones (they are actually gliders) that can be launched from an aircraft at over 50,000 feet, glide to within 15 feet of a predetermined location, and, despite their small size (smaller than an adult hand



One model of mini swarm-drone.

<sup>175</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>176</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>177</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>178</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cavalry>

and weighing as little as 2.3 ounces), are still capable of carrying a “payload.”<sup>179</sup> Developers are still in the early stages of discovering their many applications, and the *payload*, although quite limited, could also conceivably be very deadly. Therefore, when we read of a cavalry of millions, we must recognize the metaphorical nature of the Revelation, and look beyond men riding horses; this *cavalry* might well be a combination of men and equipment (drones).

In a vision, John sees the horses and their riders, and goes into some detail as to what he sees. The riders are wearing *breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone*; the *breastplate* is a piece of armor that provides protection for the torso, basically from the shoulders to the waist. John describes these as appearing in three colors: *fire* (red), *jacinth* (orange or blue),<sup>180</sup> and *brimstone* (yellow).<sup>181</sup> It is as John begins to describe the horses that we recognize that this is a *vision* because of his use of metaphorical language. The heads of the horses appeared as lions’ heads, and out of their mouths come *fire and smoke and brimstone*. The lion is noted for its strength and stealth; these are imposed upon the horse, which is known for its speed and as an important means of transportation. *Fire* and *brimstone* are identified as the elements of God’s judgment against the wicked: “Upon the wicked he [Jehovah] shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup” (Psalm 11:6); the Lord’s judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah came in the form of fire and brimstone (Luke 17:29); the final destiny of Satan, his hosts, and the unrighteous is the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:10, 21:8). It is by the fire, smoke, and brimstone (sulfur) that one-third of men will be killed; when sulfur burns, it emits sulfur dioxide (a colorless, poisonous gas), therefore, death will be possible by any one of the three, and certainly by all three together.<sup>182</sup>



The dragon-horse is a part of Chinese culture.

We are told that *their power is in their mouth* (a reference to the fire, smoke, and brimstone). However, it is the Greek word *exousia* that has been translated as *power*; the power that is being exercised here is not an inherent ability or strength, but represents an authority that has been prescribed for the purpose of the decimation of the world’s population.<sup>183</sup> *Exousia*, as it appears here, is plural: each of these three (the fire, smoke, and brimstone) have been assigned to this cavalry for the destruction of men.<sup>184</sup> Together, these three will decimate mankind, but we are also told that the horses’ tails appeared to be the front part of snakes, and that they inflicted injury

<sup>179</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/innovations/wp/2015/05/20/cicadas-locusts-and-the-new-innovation-of-military-infestations/?utm\\_term=.e50ec6204b79](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/innovations/wp/2015/05/20/cicadas-locusts-and-the-new-innovation-of-military-infestations/?utm_term=.e50ec6204b79)

<sup>180</sup> There is much variation in opinions on the coloring of *jacinth*; some liken it to the hyacinth, which typically varies from blue to purple, but others point to the gem-stone that is mostly variations of orange (with reddish to brownish tones). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jacinth>; <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/jacinth?s=t>

<sup>181</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>182</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/science/sulfur-dioxide>

<sup>183</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>184</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

through their bites – those who did not die from the three plagues that issued from their mouths, were bitten.

Despite the concentrated devastation of one-third of the people on earth, those who survive this massive attack do not seek the Lord – nor can they. With the rapture of the saints, the Spirit of God was removed from the earth; the Lord is no longer present on the earth! This is the time of God's wrath upon the unrighteous, and His righteous ones are not present on earth. Often we consider the calamities of nature that strike our world as being a wake-up call for mankind – a reminder that man is not in control, and a sign that consideration needs to be given to the God of heaven, the Creator and Sustainer of this earth. However, even in our day, once the impact of a disaster has been rectified, most often life returns to normal without any further regard for God. After the tremendous destruction carried out by this cavalry, John tells us that men will not repent; they will continue to do what they have always done: bow before demons and idols, and live in keeping with their master, Satan. When the Antichrist is made known, the world at large will not only bow before him, but they will also *worship* Satan whom they will recognize as the authority behind him (Revelation 13:4). After the Lord has removed His people from the earth, the unrighteous will have no opportunity for salvation – they will wail when they see the Lord coming for the harvest of the righteous, but they have made their choice and cannot turn back from it.

The sixth trumpet has sounded and the second *woe* has come (Revelation 8:13); the third *woe* (the seventh trumpet blast) will not be long in coming.

### **THE SIXTH VIAL**



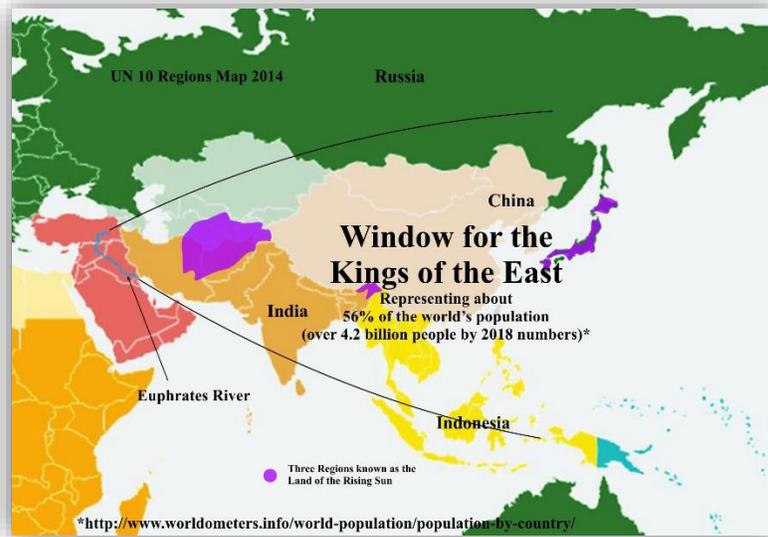
**12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 13. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God. 16. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. (Revelation 16)**

I have brought the sixth vial and the sixth trumpet together because there seems to be an association between these two that would indicate that they will take place very closely together. I have placed the trumpet first, as it signals the gathering of a mighty force that brings great devastation to the people of the earth (most likely the people of the East in particular); the sixth vial, on the other hand, opens the way for this cavalry to be gathered to the Valley of Armageddon, along with the armies of the rest of the ten kings, who will be given authority under the Antichrist for a short time (Revelation 17:12).

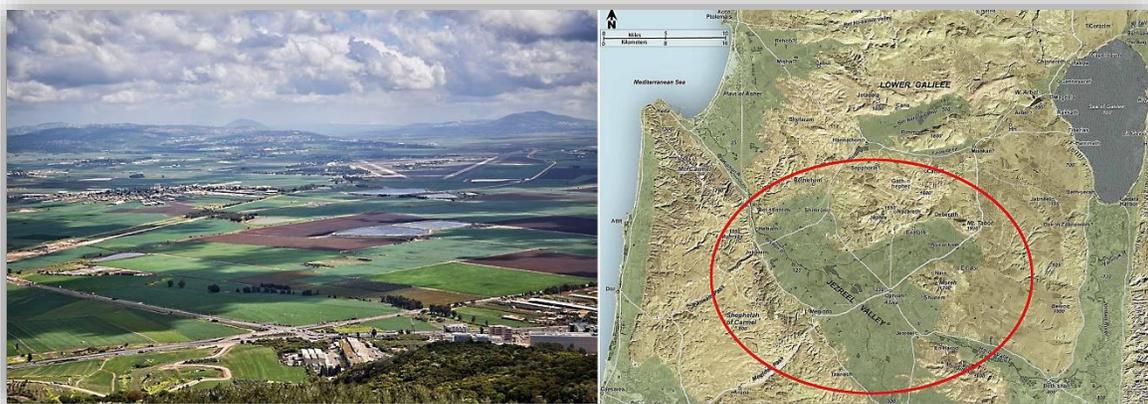
The sixth angel pours out his vial upon the Euphrates River, and it is dried up; this ancient barrier against east-west travel is removed in order to open the way for the kings of the *rising of the sun (the east)*.<sup>185</sup> This does not point to any particular country, for there are several regions that lie to the east of the Euphrates River that have been called the Land of the Rising Sun: a province in ancient Persia (Khorasan)<sup>186</sup>, a state within India (Arunachal Pradesh)<sup>187</sup>, and Japan (the

Japanese name for their country means the sun's origin).<sup>188</sup> This places the whole region from just east of the Euphrates River all the way across Asia as the place of origin for the *kings of the east*.

At the same time that the waters of the Euphrates are dried up, three *unclean spirits* are seen coming out of the mouths of the *dragon* (Satan), the Antichrist (*beast*), and the *False*



*Prophet*. The demons are likened to *frogs*, but this is in appearance only, for they immediately go to the kings of the earth, performing signs (*miracles*) in order to gather them together in battle against the Lord Almighty. Keep in mind that the world is under the rule of the *eighth king* (Satan, who has complete possession of the Antichrist), and so the kings (who have given their allegiance to Antichrist/Satan – Revelation 17:13) do not have to be convinced to go to war against the Lord,



Valley of Armageddon (Jezreel)

<sup>185</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>186</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater\\_Khorasan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Khorasan); the province included portions of modern Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (<https://www.sayahonline.com/afghanistan/history/the-legendary-land-of-khorasan.html>)

<sup>187</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomenclature\\_of\\_States\\_in\\_North\\_East\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomenclature_of_States_in_North_East_India)

<sup>188</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names\\_of\\_Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_Japan)

they simply need to be shown that now is the time. We've noted before that the Antichrist will lead ten kings into battle against the Lord Jesus in the Valley of Armageddon; these ten will be representative of the whole world (which even today has been divided into ten regions by the UN), and, not surprisingly, they will be totally committed to Satan.

It might seem to be foolhardy for these forces to come against the Lord in battle, but this is the desperation of Satan to retain control of the earth, even while he knows that he has been dealt a death-blow by the Lord Jesus at Calvary. Remember when we began our study of the Antichrist and noted that his reign was limited to 42 months (Revelation 13:5)? Satan sees the clock ticking, and realizes that unless he acts now against the Lord, he will not have another opportunity like this one. What does he care if the armies of the Antichrist will be destroyed? After all, this is only in keeping with his role as Apollyon, the destroyer. As the end of the Antichrist's rule comes into view, Satan will use him to make an attempt to defeat the Lord; both the Antichrist and the False Prophet are still active, but they are under the complete possession of the devil (who is identified as the eighth king to rule the world – remember that the Antichrist leads a revived seventh empire [a resurrected Islamic Caliphate], and Satan will so possess him that he [Satan in the Antichrist] is called the eighth [Revelation 17:11]). As the Antichrist's reign draws to a close, he, along with the False Prophet, is leading the armies of the ten kings into the Valley of Armageddon – the very place that God has chosen for this battle.

### **THE SEVENTH TRUMPET – THIRD WOE**



**15. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 11)**

The seventh angel sounds the trumpet, and this announces the arrival of the third *woe* upon the earth (Revelation 8:13). However, this *woe* is very unique for it is being announced in heaven that Jesus is taking over the rule of the earth – all of the kingdoms of the world have become His (*are become* is in the indicative mood, which is a statement of fact) – Satan has lost his control over the earth. The sixth trumpet brought the massive army from the east that wiped out a third of the world's population (Revelation 9:15-16); the sixth vial saw the Euphrates River dried up so that these eastern kings and their armies would have unimpeded access to join the other armies of the world in the Valley of Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-16). The armies of the Antichrist are assembled from all over the world when it is declared in heaven that the kingdoms, which Satan claims as his own (through the Antichrist), now belong to the Lord Jesus.

### **THE SEVENTH VIAL**



**17. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since**

men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great. <sup>19</sup> And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. <sup>20</sup> And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. <sup>21</sup> And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great. (Revelation 16)

The seventh vial is poured out upon the earth, and God, from His throne, declares, “It is done” – it is established, completed, or, simply, it is.<sup>189</sup> This is in the indicative mood (a statement of fact: God has declared it, and it is so), and the perfect tense – it has happened once, and will not be repeated.<sup>190</sup> Within heaven, it is understood that the world belongs to the Lord Jesus, and His reign over the people of the world will begin, and, with the seventh vial, the *thumos* of God’s *orge* is ended.

With this vial comes the final plague upon the unrighteous who are on the earth – this will fall upon all of the people, and will spell the end to the wrath (*thumos*) of God upon the earth. With this vial, the landscape of the earth will be changed: there will be a massive earthquake that will split the *great city* into three, and cause islands to disappear and mountains to be flattened. Both Jerusalem and Rome (the site of Babylon the Great, the false religious system led by the False Prophet) are identified in Revelation as being a *great city* (Revelation 11:8; 14:8); however, I am inclined to consider this to be Rome, as the judgment of the Babylonian religion is also mentioned here, and it is headquartered in Rome (Revelation 17:18).<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, Italy is one of the world’s most seismically active countries, and the city of Rome is not far from significant earthquake activity.<sup>192</sup> However, the earthquake from this vial will not be localized – it will be sufficiently general to level mountains and islands around the world. Beyond the earthquake, onto the people of the earth who have consistently blasphemed God throughout the emptying of the vials of His wrath, God will rain down hailstones weighing about a *talent* each – the Hebrew talent is equivalent to 90 pounds.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, even while being pummeled by this horrendous hail storm, the people of the earth will continue to blaspheme God. As the plague of this final vial ends, the earth will be significantly changed, and the people will have experienced unprecedented calamity – it is at this moment that the Lord Jesus returns to the earth with His heavenly forces.

### **THE LORD JESUS RIDES A WHITE HORSE**

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<sup>189</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, the earthquake that followed the ascension of the two witnesses caused 10% of Jerusalem to collapse (Revelation 11:13); the focus here seems to be on the center of the religion that the False Prophet led.

<sup>192</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petertaylor/2016/11/02/is-rome-really-on-the-brink-of-a-catastrophic-earthquake/#4540db60703c>

<sup>193</sup> Friberg Lexicon.



**11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. (Revelation 19)**

After the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the plagues of the seventh vial have ended, the millennial reign of Jesus is about to begin. The sixth vial brought the ten kings of the earth and their armies, under the oversight of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, into the Valley of Armageddon where they are prepared to launch an attack against the Lord Jesus Christ. Interestingly, the Lord is not on the earth at this time; perhaps they gather in this valley as a sign of their rebellion against the God of the universe for the calamities that have fallen during the time of the vials. An army gathering for battle, before a defense has been prepared, is not without precedent. The Lord used Gideon to bring victory to Israel over the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the children of the east whose armies were gathered in the Valley of Jezreel (Armageddon). It was after the armies were gathered in the valley (Judges 6:33) that Gideon sounded a trumpet, which brought those of his own family line together (Judges 6:34; cp. Judges 6:11). He then sent messengers throughout the rest of Manasseh, as well as through Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to gather men together to meet the challenge presented (Judges 6:35). All the while, Gideon was assembling his army of the 32,000 men who had responded, and then for the time that the Lord helped him to reduce this number to 300, the enemy forces were in the valley waiting – a massive army assembled in the valley awaiting the response from Israel (Judges 7:12). It seems that, in similar fashion, the armies of the ten kings under the leadership of the Antichrist will be gathered in the Valley of Armageddon (Jezreel) in defiance of the Lord Jesus. Like Gideon, who with a



remnant of his army (300 out of 32,000), defeated the enemies gathered in the Valley, even so the Lord Jesus Christ will come with a redeemed, righteous remnant (Romans 11:5) to defeat the armies gathered in the same valley.

There are two verses that tell us about this gathering: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue

Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16); “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army” (Revelation 19:19). In the first, we are told that *he* (singular) gathered (active voice) the armies

mustered by the three devils that appeared out of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet, and *he* brought them into the Valley of Armageddon.<sup>194</sup> In the latter we are told that the armies of the Antichrist (*the beast*) and his ten kings are gathered (passive voice) to make war against the Lord. What we must be sure to notice is that it is God Who ensures that the battle is set according to His plan – He actively gathers the armies of the Antichrist into the Valley.

John now sees heaven opened. When John was called to view things that were to take place *hereafter*, he tells us that he saw that a *door* had been *opened* in heaven; *opened* is in the perfect tense, describing a completed action that does not need to be repeated (Revelation 4:1); John did not open the door, it was opened for him (passive voice).<sup>195</sup> During His earthly ministry, Jesus said that He was the *Door*, and if anyone should enter through Him, he will be saved (John 10:9). The spirit of John entered heaven through the Door that has been opened – there is no other way to the heavenly Father (John 14:6); Jesus, the Door, has opened access to the narrow Way to life eternal for whoever will believe and obey. However, now John sees that *heaven* itself has been *opened* for a much different purpose – once again, this is in the perfect tense.<sup>196</sup>

Throughout Scripture, there are various times when we read of heaven (sometimes referring to the atmosphere surrounding the earth, and other times to the dwelling place of God) being opened. During creation, God made a *firmament* (the heavens where the birds could fly – Genesis 1:20) that separated the waters above from those that were below (Genesis 1:8); at the time of the flood, God opened the *windows of heaven* and the rain poured forth (Genesis 7:11). During the flood, the firmament released the waters that were above – the *windows of heaven were opened* (perfect tense).<sup>197</sup> Up to this time, the earth had been watered with a *mist* (Genesis 2:6); this was the first time that rain poured out upon the earth – God *opened* heaven and it rained – as it continues to do today. Ezekiel and Peter saw heaven opened, and visions were brought to them through the opened heaven (Ezekiel 1:1; Acts 10:11); John the Baptist beheld the opening of heaven and the descent of the Spirit of God (as a *dove*) upon the Lord Jesus Christ as He came out of the waters of baptism (Mark 1:10) – this was an affirmation to John that this, indeed, was the *Lamb of God* Who had come to pay the price for man’s sin (John 1:29).

The Apostle John now sees (*oida* – to see with understanding) the heaven opened for a Rider of a white horse and the armies of heaven to descend to the earth.<sup>198</sup> This is an unprecedented opening of heaven; it had been opened for visions from the Lord (Ezekiel and Peter), opened for Stephen to see the Lord Jesus to the Father’s right (Acts 7:56), and a *door* had been opened for the spirit of John to enter, but this is an occasion when heaven will be opened wide. There is nothing to indicate that heaven will not remain open during the time that Jesus rules the earth with a rod of iron, and those who are His fulfill their roles as *kings* and *priests* with Him (Revelation 20:6). This will be a time when the will of God will be done on earth even as it is done in heaven (Matthew 6:10). Isaiah describes the millennial reign of Christ in these words: “The wolf also shall dwell [abide] with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion

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<sup>194</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Strong’s Online.

<sup>195</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed [pasture]; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp [venomous snake], and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' [viper's] den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9).<sup>199</sup> *My holy mountain* must not be limited to the earthly Mt. Zion, for, at this time, the whole world will be filled with peace between animals, and between animals and people; the explanation that is given for this unusual time of peace is that *the earth will be filled* (perfect tense) *with the knowledge* of God – there will not be a single person who does not understand the Lord and what is required of him.<sup>200</sup> However, it is Jesus' rule with a rod of iron that will ensure that that *knowledge* finds its way into daily living; it is in this that we, who remain faithful to the Lord in this life, will assist the Lord Jesus.

As John looks to the heaven that has been opened, he sees a white horse. You will recall that when Jesus opened the first seal, John saw a *white horse* (Revelation 6:2), and the rider of that horse carried a *bow*, he was given authority (*crown*), and he went forth to subdue the earth. During our study of that passage, we identified the rider of the white horse as the Antichrist who will come as a savior to the world, will receive his authority from the devil (the *dragon* – Revelation 13:2), and will go forth to *conquer* the world – particularly targeting the Lord's faithful ones (Revelation 13:7). The only similarity between this and what John now sees is the *white horse*.

Unlike the opening of the first seal, John takes some time to describe the Rider of this white horse Whom he sees coming out of the opened heaven. The Rider Whom John now sees is named *Faithful* and *True*, and He is judging and fighting in righteousness, or with equity.<sup>201</sup> We have many illustrations in the OT Scriptures of the Lord's faithfulness to the people of Israel, often in the face of their unfaithfulness. The Psalmist declared: "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. Justice [righteousness] and judgment *are* the habitation [foundation] of thy throne: mercy and truth [faithfulness] shall go before thy face" (Psalm 89: 1-2,14).<sup>202</sup> *Faithfulness* is the expression of Who God is; beyond that, we have forthright declarations that God is faithful (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:3), and the admonition: "Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith [hope] without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised)" (Hebrews 10:23);<sup>203</sup> the phrase in parenthesis is literally, *for faithful the One Who has promised*.<sup>204</sup> In other words, we must hold tenaciously to the hope that we have in Christ because His promises are dependable.

As the Rider of the white horse appears, He is being called *Faithful* and *True*. As Jesus identified Himself to His disciples, He said, "I am ... the truth" (John 14:6) – the Greek word is *aletheia* (*al-ay'-thi-a*) and it is a noun; *True*, as another name ascribed to this Rider, is an adjective

<sup>199</sup> BDB.

<sup>200</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>201</sup> Strong's Dictionary.

<sup>202</sup> BDB.

<sup>203</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>204</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

(*alethinós* [*al-ay-thee-nos*']), a different form of the same word in Greek.<sup>205</sup> It is becoming increasingly evident that this Rider is Jesus.

John sees His eyes as *a flame of fire*. When Jesus first spoke to John on Patmos, John turned to see Who it was Who spoke with him, and described Jesus' eyes in exactly the same words: *a flame of fire* (Revelation 1:14). As we noted then in our study, *flame* could also be translated as *blaze*, and, in truth, His eyes hold a penetrating intensity.<sup>206</sup> No doubt now – this is Jesus! On His head, He has many *crowns* (*diadema*), which specifically identifies His royalty; just to clarify, the Greek word that is used for a victor's crown is *stephanos*, a woven wreath of victory or honor.<sup>207</sup> Satan is described as a red *dragon* with seven heads and seven crowns (*diadema*) upon his heads – the seven kingdoms (*seven heads*) all held some earthly royalty (Revelation 12:3); the Antichrist is seen as a *beast* with seven heads (his is the culmination of the seven historical kingdoms, and the revival of the seventh – Revelation 13:14), ten horns (ten kings under his control), and ten crowns (*diadema*) upon his horns (Revelation 13:1). The ten horns are identified as being ten kings who will evidently be royalty among men (Revelation 17:12), and who, with their armies, will follow the Antichrist into the Valley of Armageddon (Revelation 16:14-16; 17:14). As Jesus appears upon the white horse, He is wearing *many* crowns (a sign of His heavenly royalty): He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16), and that includes Satan, the Antichrist, and the ten kings – even though they have all projected a measure of royalty. It is interesting to note that for many years the Roman Catholic popes, at the time of their coronation, wore a tiara that included three crowns – in their minds they are God's representative on earth.<sup>208</sup>



One of 23 tiaras owned by Catholic Church

Jesus also has a written name that no one can know. Because Jesus, as a member of the Godhead, took upon Himself the form of man, and, in obedience to the plan, died for the sins of the world, “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a [the] name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ...” (Philippians 2:9-10).<sup>209</sup> This God-given name would seem to be the one that no one can know; Joseph was instructed to name Mary's child *Jesus* (Matthew 1:21); however, *Jesus* was a very common name at that time (Colossians 4:11), and, through the Hebrew *Yeshua* (meaning to deliver or rescue), it is likened to

<sup>205</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>206</sup> Strong's Dictionary; Vine's “flame.”

<sup>207</sup> Vine's “crown.”

<sup>208</sup> One of the pope's many titles is: the Vicar (meaning substitute or agent) of Christ, “A title of the pope implying his supreme and universal primacy, both of honour and of jurisdiction, over the Church of Christ ... The title Vicar of God ... is employed as an equivalent for Vicar of Christ”;

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15403b.htm>; a *vicar* is one who serves as a substitute or agent –

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vicar>

<sup>209</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

the name *Joshua* (Hebrews 4:8).<sup>210</sup> However, God gave Jesus an exalted name – one that we don't know.

Within our western culture, newborns are named without a great deal of thought; however, this is not the case among Middle Eastern cultures – especially historically. You will recall that Jehovah called Abram (meaning, exalted father) out of paganism to separate himself unto the Lord, and, when the Lord promised him Isaac, He changed his name to Abraham (meaning, chief of a multitude), thereby embedding within his name His promise to make him the father of many nations (Genesis 17:5).<sup>211</sup>

As Jesus gave John the message that He had for the elder of each *ekklesia* that He identified, He also included some information specifically for the *overcomers* – those who remain faithful to Him through all things. For the elder at Pergamos, Jesus added this message for the *overcomer*: “I ... will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Revelation 2:17). A white stone, at this time, could mean several things depending upon its context: judicially, it spoke of acquittal; politically, it represented a favorable vote; athletically, it meant victory; for a special guest at a gathering, it expressed honor and additional privileges.<sup>212</sup> For the *overcomer*, the white stone speaks of cleansing from sin, being elect in Christ, gaining the victory, and being a new creature in Christ; a new name emphasizes the unique relationship that Christ has with those who are His – for our growth, we are each directly linked to Him (Ephesians 4:15-16). In the message to the elder of Philadelphia, Jesus said that He would write upon the *overcomer* the name of God the Father, the New Jerusalem, and *His* new name (Revelation 3:12). In all likelihood, this *new name* is that which is referred to in our text – the name that no one knows, except the Lord. Those who *overcome* will be clearly marked as belonging to the Lord; in the new heaven and earth, the faithful (the *overcomers*) will “see his [God's] face; and his name ... in their foreheads” (Revelation 22:4). Today, the faithful receive the mark of the Spirit of God (*sealed*) as a deposit against the work that God wants to do in us so that we may be numbered among the *overcomers* (Ephesians 1:13-14).

This Rider comes *clothed* in a garment that has been *dipped* in blood. The root of the Greek word translated as *dipped* is *bapto*, and means to immerse.<sup>213</sup> Both *clothed* and *dipped* are in the perfect tense – a completed past action with present results.<sup>214</sup> As Jesus instituted the New Covenant with His disciples, He said, “This cup *is* the new testament [Covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20); the symbol of the New Covenant is the shed blood of the Lord Jesus.<sup>215</sup> As He descends with the armies of heaven, He is clothed with a garment that reflects His shed blood, which is sufficient to cover the sins of mankind (1 John 2:2), but which is effective only for the sins of the faithful. The sacrifices of the OT, when combined with individual faith, brought temporary cleansing; the single sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made, when combined with personal faith and faithfulness, brings eternal cleansing to the repentant sinner. Jesus' sacrifice

<sup>210</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus\\_\(name\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_(name))

<sup>211</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>212</sup> <https://endtimelect.com/tag/the-white-stone/>

<sup>213</sup> Strong's Online; the same root for the Greek word translated as *baptize*.

<sup>214</sup> [http://www.biblestudymanuals.net/new\\_testament\\_greek.htm](http://www.biblestudymanuals.net/new_testament_greek.htm)

<sup>215</sup> Strong's Online.

fulfilled all of the OT sacrifices for sins: all of the blood that was shed in order to bring cleansing from sin, from the Garden of Eden onward, foreshadowed the one sacrifice that He would make on the cross of Calvary. He now descends in victory, not only wearing crowns of royalty, but also showing by His garment that He has paid the full price for the sins of mankind.

It is appropriate, at this time, to remind ourselves that God's plan of salvation for mankind was not an afterthought – it was in place before He created Adam and Eve on the sixth day. Actually, it was in place even before the first day! We are told that the people who will follow the Antichrist are those who do not have their names written in the Book of Life of the Lamb of God Who was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). The death of Jesus (God in the flesh of man) to pay the price for man's sins was in the mind of God before He began creation; as the eternal Word (John 1:1), Jesus was a part of that planning. Paul explained that if we have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is accounted that “... he [God] hath chosen us in him [Jesus] before the foundation of the world ...” (Ephesians 1:4); in other words, God's *chosen* ones (His elect) are those who are *in Christ* – we are found to be *in Christ* by faith (Galatians 3:26), and we remain there by an enduring faithfulness (Matthew 24:13); should our faith fail (i.e., the bond of *faith* is broken), we have then departed from Christ, become apostate, and no longer have any hope in Him (Hebrews 3:12; 10:26-29). We must be careful to understand this correctly. God did not choose *John Smith*, per se, from eternity past to be a part of His kingdom; rather, it was His determination that *John Smith* must come to Him through Christ, Who, even before creation, was prepared to pay the price to redeem mankind, and His purposes and grace for us were in Christ before the world (2 Timothy 1:9). Therefore, it is only as *John Smith*, through faith, is found to be *in Christ* that he will also be counted among God's chosen ones. We are *chosen in Christ* – if we are not *in Christ*, then we have **not** been chosen. It is Christ Who is chosen, and, as a result, all of those who are *in Him*. God has predestined those for glory who remain *in Christ*, and it is only as we abide in Him that we are not under His condemnation: “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Romans 8:1). From this we can understand that it is eternally important that we are found to be *in Christ*. What does that mean? We've already noted that we must place our faith in the sacrifice that Jesus made for the sins of the world – we must continually believe that our sins were included in His sacrifice. However, that is not the end of the matter – it is only the beginning. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15), thereby drawing together the necessity of faith (expressed through *love*) and obedience to His commands – unless faith is accompanied by works (an expression of that faith), it is dead (James 2:17). Jesus' words tell us that the *works* must be a careful obedience to (*keep*) His commands.<sup>216</sup> We must be very vigilant to understand exactly what it means to be *saved*; there is much error, even within the Evangelical community, about true salvation, and many have been duped into believing that they are saved, when they are not – what a deception; what a tragedy!

We've just noted that Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of the world and our acceptance, if we are *in Him*, are two things that were in place before God began creation. Was anything else established

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<sup>216</sup> Strong's Online.

before creation? Actually, there are several things; let's broaden our understanding of how God works, by looking at these.

Jesus, as God incarnate and the sacrificial Lamb, was known before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20): "Who [Christ as the Lamb of God] verily was foreordained before [known before] the foundation of the world, but was manifest [revealed] in these last times for you [for your sakes] ...."<sup>217</sup> As Jesus faced the suffering of the cross, His prayer was: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5); this affirms that Jesus' life did not begin with His incarnation, rather, He was eternally with the Father as a member of the Godhead – Jesus participated in the development of the plan to redeem a fallen mankind. He took on the flesh of man for our sakes – so that we, through Him, might have eternal life with Him. As John declared: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word [the Word Who became flesh, John 1:14], and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 John 5:7). This provides additional evidence that Jesus, as the eternal Word, participated in the planning that would see Him born into the family of mankind in order to die for the sins of the world. However, we must understand that God's foreknowledge does not override man's ability to choose; Adam chose to disobey the Lord – he did **not** eat of the fruit because God had predetermined that he would do so. Man's free will, his ability to reason and to choose, is part of being created in the image of God; this is something that is unique to those who are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26). Jesus, as the eternal Word, was with the Father before the world came into being.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He very frequently spoke to the multitudes using parables; literally, *parable* means a throwing beside – it is the use of a story, or illustration, to draw a comparison, or parallel, to something else.<sup>218</sup> Jesus' disciples questioned Him as to why He did this, and He explained that it was simply to conceal the truth from those who already had insensitive hearts, ears that couldn't hear, and eyes that were closed to the Word of God (Matthew 13:11-15). Even during Jesus' ministry, the Gate to eternal life was narrow, and there were few who were able to enter (Luke 13:24); the use of parables was also the fulfillment of Scripture: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter [spew out, pour forth] things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35; a quote from Psalm 78:2);<sup>219</sup> God reveals His truth, but it remains hidden to those with closed eyes and ears. Paul's desire was to preach the Gospel of Christ so that everyone who heard might come to understand "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God ..." (Ephesians 3:9), "but now is made manifest to his saints ... Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26-27). Jesus, while on earth, spoke in parables of a truth that had been kept hidden *from the foundation of the world*; Paul spoke of the very same *mystery*, and revealed it as *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. This *mystery* is the central message of the New Covenant that was instituted through the shed blood of Christ (Luke 22:20); Jeremiah recorded the words of Jehovah that He would institute a New Covenant that would include Him placing His Laws within the minds of men, and writing them upon their hearts

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<sup>217</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>218</sup> [https://www.etymonline.com/word/parable#etymonline\\_v\\_7163](https://www.etymonline.com/word/parable#etymonline_v_7163)

<sup>219</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

(Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 10:16). It is the New Covenant that was hidden from the ages past, and is now revealed and declared openly in the Word of God; the New Covenant is not *new* to God because He had set it in place before creation, yet it still remains hidden to those who do not have a love for God's truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

As Jesus spoke of the separate harvests of the righteous and the wicked, His words for the righteous were: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit [imperative mood; a command] the kingdom prepared [perfect tense; completed in the past] for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). The kingdom of God is called an everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:11); once again, God was completely prepared for His faithful ones before the world was created. As Daniel was given visions of what the Lord had prepared for the future, he wrote of one *like the Son of Man* (the Lord Jesus Christ) to Whom was given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14). Clearly, the kingdom of the Lord is *everlasting* (it is without end), and it was in place before creation was begun. This is further affirmed by the author of Hebrews: "For we which have believed do enter [are entering] into rest, as he said [concerning Israel before the Promised Land], As I have sworn in my wrath, if [*if* does not appear in the Greek; rather, this is an emphatic negative quoted from Psalm 95:11, and is best understood as *certainly not*] they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:3).<sup>220</sup> The kingdom of God will include a spiritual rest – a rest that His faithful ones will not know in this life (for we must be ever vigilant against Satan's temptations), but, as we remain faithful to Him through this life, we will experience this rest with Him in eternity. The context of Hebrews tells us that the generation of Israel that perished in the wilderness chose not to enter into this rest; they committed themselves to the Lord (Exodus 19:8), and then shrank away from a test of their commitment (Numbers 14:1-4); therefore, they died in the wilderness, without hope of that rest – even though God's kingdom (including His rest) was ready for His faithful ones from the time that the foundation of the world was laid.

The assurance that we have is that the Lord established creation and mankind within the framework of planning for what was ahead – He not only knew, but He was well prepared, too. As John sees the Lord Jesus Christ descend from heaven, clothed with a garment of red, we can now understand that the salvation that He procured through His shed blood, death, and resurrection was all a part of the plan that God had in place before man was created. God chose Abraham so that through his descendants of promise would come the One Who would pay the price for man's sins, so that, through His shed blood, the New Covenant might be established and the Door of salvation might be opened to everyone (**this** is the fulfillment of the promise that through Abraham all of the families of the earth would be blessed – Genesis 12:3). Before creation began, God had determined to have eternal fellowship with a faithful remnant (Romans 11:5) – everything that took place after creation has worked, and continues to work unwaveringly toward this ultimate goal.

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<sup>220</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

We were just told that Jesus has a name that no man knows; now we are told that He is being called by the name, *the Word of God*. This name we can come to know and understand. Jesus said, “I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6), and He also said to the Father, “thy word is truth” (John 17:17). John also referred to Jesus as being *the Word Who became flesh* (John 1:1,14); even though *the Revelation* is a particular unveiling of Who Jesus is in light of what is still coming, in a real sense, the whole of God’s Word is about Jesus. The OT looks forward to His coming with promises and prophecies made all along the way (beginning in Genesis 3:15); the NT records His coming, tells us of His fulfillment of the OT prophecies, and reveals our responsibility to Him under the New Covenant that He suffered to establish. As we read and study the Word of God, we are, in essence, learning more about Who Jesus is and what it means to be faithful to Him. Our love for the truth of God’s Word is, in fact, a love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and, unless we accept a love for the Truth (the *Word*), we cannot be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments [literally: My commandments you must obey (*keep*)]” (John 14:15).<sup>221</sup> *Love* is from the Greek verb form of *agape* – the love that is an act of the will; *if* makes what follows this phrase contingent upon the *love* being present.<sup>222</sup> Therefore, if we have no love for the Savior, then the command to obey is not for us; however, if we profess a love for the Lord Jesus, then it follows that we **must also** obey Him (*keep* is in the imperative mood!).<sup>223</sup> However, if the obedience is not there, then neither is the love, and it matters not how vehemently that we might claim to love Him – the obedience is dependent upon the love being present. Earlier we established the integral relationship between faith and works (faith without works is dead – James 2:17); Paul also clarified for us this relationship: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but **faith** [present tense] **which worketh** [is working] **by** [through] **love** [*agape*]” (Galatians 5:6).<sup>224</sup> In other words, an active *love* is an expression of a living *faith*; therefore, in essence Jesus said that if we have faith (*love*) in Him, then we must also live in obedience to what He has said. He reinforced this by saying that it is the one who *doeth the will of my Father* who will enter heaven (Matthew 7:21), and, unless those *works* flow out of a heart of love for (faith in) the Lord, they will be called *iniquity*, no matter how spiritual they might seem (Matthew 7:23), for that is legalism (trying to gain God’s favor) and **not** obedience. How we live matters so much that our entrance into heaven depends on it – it is not the basis for our salvation, but our obedience is a sign of our living faith, without which we will not be saved (Matthew 24:13). Jesus, the *Word of God*, calls us to a life of obedience to Him.



**14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress**

<sup>221</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>222</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.<sup>16</sup> And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19)

John sees Jesus descending from heaven, but He is not alone – He is followed by the *armies in heaven*. A study of Scripture reveals that this is the only reference to heavenly *armies*, and the application made here seems to be very brief.<sup>225</sup> The Greek word translated as *armies* is in the plural form, which draws attention to the many individuals who make up the rallied forces. A little later (verse 19), reference is made to the Lord, and the forces that are with Him are referred to as an *army* (singular); in this case those who are with the Lord Jesus are seen as one force – an *army*.<sup>226</sup>

This coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is very different from His coming to harvest His saints. For the harvest, He will come with the angels of heaven, now we see Him coming with the armies of heaven; then He will come in the clouds, in the same manner as when He left His disciples (Acts 1:9-11), now He is coming to earth riding upon a white horse ready to do battle with the assembled armies of the Antichrist. At the time of the harvest, Jesus will not touch the earth for His faithful ones will meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17); this time He is coming to establish His reign upon the earth.

The armies of heaven, riding upon white horses, follow the *Word of God*, and they are clothed with *fine linen* (*bussinos* – a particularly delicate and expensive linen made from *byssus*, an Egyptian flax), *white* (*leukos* – brilliant, applies to the clothing) and *clean* (*katharos* – pure).<sup>227</sup> Interestingly, these are virtually the same identifiers as those applied to what the wife of the Lamb wears (Revelation 19:8): *fine linen* (*bussinos*), *clean* (*katharos*) and *white* (*lampros* – brilliant, applied to how the wearer appears, the application is a little broader than just the garment).<sup>228</sup> This *army* is made up of those who will join the Lord in His rule during the millennium – they will be priests and will reign with Him (Revelation 20:6).

John then describes a *sharp sword* coming out of the mouth of the Lord; this is reminiscent of what he saw when the Lord first appeared to him on Patmos (Revelation 1:16), and how the Lord identified Himself to the elder of Pergamos (Revelation 2:12). This is a long *sword* that is used in offensive, as opposed to defensive, fighting.<sup>229</sup> The sword appears to originate in the Lord's mouth – it is not being wielded by the Lord as a drawn sword; rather, it will be the spoken word of the Lord that will be brought against the armies of the Antichrist/Satan. As the Lord descends from heaven, He is coming to earth to establish His kingdom, and He will do this by using this *sword* to defeat the armies of the Antichrist that have assembled against Him. He will *smite* the unrighteous people (*nations*) who are gathered in the Valley of Armageddon; *smite* can be anything

<sup>225</sup> The KJV mentions *army of heaven* in Daniel 4:35; however, a careful study of *army*, as used here, shows that it would be more appropriately translated as *force*, or *power*, of the *heavens* (BDB; Strong's Dictionary).

<sup>226</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>227</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Strong's Online; Hebrews 4:12 refers to the Word of God being a sharp *sword*, but this is a small defensive knife or dagger.

from a light blow to one that is fatal – in this case, it will be a fatal blow.<sup>230</sup> This is the Lord’s first judgment of the unrighteous on earth; the second is alluded to in the metaphor of Him treading the winepress.<sup>231</sup> Jesus will come, He will kill the armies that are gathered, and He will shepherd (*rule* – *poimaino*) the unrighteous of the world (*them*) with a *rod of iron*.<sup>232</sup>

We are now given another name for the Lord Jesus; a name that is written upon his mantle (*vesture*) and upon the legging of His clothing (*thigh*).<sup>233</sup> The name is simply: King of kings and Lord of lords. There have been seven world empires, along with their numerous rulers who have all functioned under the influence of Satan; nevertheless, Jesus is still the King (singular) over all kings! Every monarch who has ever lived must bow before the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme King over all; “I [Jehovah] have sworn by myself [a strong affirmation of the surety of the word spoken], the word is gone out of my mouth *in righteousness*, and shall not return [turn back], That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear [affirm God’s authority]” (Isaiah 45:23).<sup>234</sup> Satan is referred to as being the *prince* (ruler or lord) of this world (John 12:31), but Jesus is the Lord over all lords, and that includes Satan who was defeated by the Lord at the cross, and whose judgment is established.

### **THE END OF THE ANTICHRIST’S REIGN**



17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18. That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19)

The Lord descends from heaven, and we have been reminded of His names: Faithful, True, Word of God, and King of kings and Lord of lords, and an angel calls out to all of the birds in the sky to come to a supper that will be made for them by God. The Word of the Lord Jesus (the *sword* of His mouth) will make bird-food out of the armies of the Antichrist that are gathered in the Valley of Armageddon. The angel tells the birds what is on the menu: it will be the *flesh of kings, captains,*

<sup>230</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>231</sup> We took an in-depth look at these two judgments in our study of Revelation 14:19-20.

<sup>232</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>233</sup> Liddell-Scott.

<sup>234</sup> BDB.

the strong (*mighty men*), *horses* and their riders; it will be the flesh of those who are *free* and slave (*bond*), unimportant (*small*) and significant (*great*).<sup>235</sup> Just so that we won't miss it, John identifies that it is the Antichrist (*beast*), the *kings of the earth*, and all of their armies who are come together to war against the Lord Jesus, and His followers. The birds have been invited to the feast even before their supper has been prepared.

As John watches, the *beast* (the Antichrist) is taken, and with him, the False Prophet, who performed signs in order to deceive the world into accepting the mark of the *beast* and bowing before his image. As these two men, the puppets of Satan (and, ultimately, the personification of the devil), stand at the head of this massive world army that has been gathered, they are suddenly taken, and together they are thrown *alive* into the lake of fire (Gehenna). Will the armies see them leaving? Since the unrighteous saw the rapture of the two witnesses and the saints of the Lord, perhaps they will also see this departure, and recognize that there is a difference. These two are not caught up into the clouds to the Lord, but are cast directly into the eternal lake of fire. Here are two men who will by-pass death altogether; they have become so filled with Satan that they are simply cast directly into the everlasting fire that has been prepared for *the devil and his angels* (Matthew 25:41). The end of the reign of the Antichrist has come; he goes from being Satan's chosen vessel on earth to being flung into the flames of eternal torment. The remnant (the armies gathered, now missing the Antichrist and False Prophet) are killed by a Word from the Lord, and the birds of the air are filled with their flesh. The Antichrist's reign of 42 months is over, and the Lord is about to establish His rule over the earth.

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<sup>235</sup> Strong's Online.