



REVELATION 2.0

A New Approach
To The Coming Tribulation

J. K. Kelly

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Revelation 2.0: A New Approach to the Coming Tribulation

Fulfillment of the Feasts in Discipleship

Worship in Spirit and Truth

Cover Design: Jay Cookingham

To my wife,
my constant support and help
on the Never-Ending Book

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Dr. Roger Houtsma,
who taught that the truth
always stands up under investigation

Kahu Brian Welch,
scholar's flint to my iron

“For just as the lightning flashes in the east and is seen to the very west, so will be the Coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the dead body is, there will the vultures flock together. But immediately after those times of distress the sun will be darkened, the moon will not shed her light, the stars will fall from the firmament, and the forces which control the heavens will be disordered and disturbed. Then will appear the Sign of the Son of Man in the sky; and then will all the nations of the earth lament, when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with great power and glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet-blast, and they will bring together His own People to Him from north, south, east and west—from one extremity of the world to the other.”

— Matthew 24: 27-31

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

— Rev. 22: 12

Introduction

Since I came to Christ, I have had occasional dreams about the future. In the early 1990's, I was doing volunteer work with a small Christian organization called Ministry Behind the Iron Curtain (MBIC) in Sacramento, California. This was during the time when the vaunted Soviet Empire was crumbling, and thousands of Jews were being airlifted daily to Israel. During an evening Bible study with people from various ministries, talk turned to the subject of the Lord bringing his chosen people back to Israel in fulfillment of end times' prophecy. Then a few people started sharing accounts of recent visions that God was going to judge America. I had my own to share.

I had recently had a vivid dream where I was standing on a bridge set very high over an ocean inlet, somewhat like a deep fjord. The bridge started shaking and swaying so violently that I became afraid it would collapse. I looked up to heaven and yelled, "Lord, will the bridge hold?" In response, a girder was opened, and I saw what looked like dirt or sawdust being poured into the hollow steel to strengthen the bridge. The next day as I prayed about the interpretation I understood that the bridge represented a transition between two financial systems, and the poor would be sacrificed to keep the system from collapsing. I knew then we were headed towards a big financial crash.

During the discussion, people shared different visions, including soldiers in the streets and a great earthquake that would affect the west coast of the United States. I went home, and before retiring, asked the Lord to show me if these things were true. That night I had another vivid dream that I was listening to the radio. There was an emergency broadcast and the announcer said that three nuclear bombs or missiles had exploded: one in Los Angeles, one in Atlanta, and the third in a city that I could not remember, since I had never heard of it before. I awoke very troubled. Since then, other people have shared dreams and visions similar to the ones discussed that night.

Shortly before having these dreams, I had one that was personal for me. The Lord showed me that every act we did in this life made an impact in the next, in fact, our works "colored" our future, determining our reward in the next life. Then he let me know that I had not done anything with my life! (I was surprised because I thought that I had, even though I was walking with one foot in the Kingdom and one in the world.) This called to mind the Scripture: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."* This dream somehow seemed to fly in the face of my understanding of complete forgiveness and salvation by faith, with its one size-fits-all reward of eternal life. Shortly thereafter, I was repeatedly drawn to read Revelation, but could make little sense of it. I also knew I was supposed to study the feasts of Israel. It took many weeks of study before I saw the connection between the two and began to discover the pattern of the feasts in Revelation. I also began to understand Revelation's emphasis on worth and reward.

After writing a manuscript on the feasts, I started working on a Revelation commentary, sometimes with great enthusiasm, other times with flagging reluctance. After a few years my wife started calling it the Never Ending Book. (She always pronounced it with capital letters.) As world events progressed along with my research, I came to the realization that New York City is Mystery Babylon, and the US was indeed going to come under God's judgment, perhaps even starting before the tribulation. America's finances were in shambles and we had managed to

make enemies around the world. I believe that the economic and possibly other judgments I have seen and others have been good enough to share may occur as a prelude to those prophesied in Revelation.

The Lord always calls his people to repentance before judging a nation, and not just with prophetic warnings. The book of Amos describes a progression of his judgments against Israel, attempting to secure her repentance. As this book went to the publisher, the financial crisis was starting to unfold. It will get much worse, of that I am sure, as the financial system itself will change. I don't know the timing of the other judgments to follow, but am saddened they may come sooner rather than later, and they will not be limited to the United States. Judgment is coming on the whole world. God is calling his people to repentance. My burden is that believers are spiritually prepared for coming events as we move towards the kingdom of the beast, and that the character of Christ in us and the works we are called to do will be found worthy of reward when Jesus returns to establish his Kingdom on earth.

J.K. Kelly
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THEMES OF OLD COVENANT FEASTS

FEAST	DATE	OT WORSHIP	THEME
Passover	14 Nisan	Passover Lamb	Deliverance to New Life
Unleavened Bread	15 - 21 Nisan	Removal of Leaven	Cleansing from old way of life
Firstfruits	16 Nisan	Consecration of First Crop	Sanctification to New Life
Pentecost	6 Sivan	Consecration of Two Loaves	Sanctification in Power
Trumpets	1 Tishri	Self Examination & Repentance	New Beginning
Atonement	10 Tishri	Scapegoat & Lord's Goat	Purification and Removal of Sin
Tabernacles	15 - 21 Tishri	Living in Booths	Rejoicing and Rest after Harvest

The Day of the Lord

“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night... But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.”

– 1 Thessalonians 5: 1, 4

Every book of the Bible points toward its final Revelation, the conclusion of humanity’s saga of creation and redemption, sin and salvation, judgment and reward. The book of Revelation depicts great and terrifying events in heaven and on earth, woven together to form a grand tapestry of the final days of the age. It also gives rise to numerous controversies: the identity of the antichrist, the duration of the tribulation, the timing of the resurrection and rapture of the saints. While there are many differing opinions as to how its judgments unfold, there is little disagreement that the book of Revelation portrays a joyful ending for believers with the return of Christ to institute a millennial reign of peace.

In Search of a Framework

The book of Revelation’s grand sweep of earthly and heavenly events is so complex that it is difficult to determine whether it is thematic or chronological, or which passages are literal and which might be symbolic. While many scenes clearly depict future events, others are contextual, symbolic, or historical. Some Bible expositors try to impose structure through an arrangement of a parallel series of seven judgments: seals, trumpets, and bowls, while others key on certain words as chronological indicators. However, none of these specific methods establishes more than a general framework. There is however a comprehensive framework that was grasped at least in part by the early church. It has lain dormant for the better part of two millennia largely because the book of Revelation has come to be viewed by the church as being exclusively a Christian book. Its Jewish roots and Greek influences are seen as making a few cultural contributions rather than structural ones.

The Ways of God

Although Revelation is the last book of the Christian New Testament, its scope exceeds the confines of the New Covenant instituted by Christ. It is the culmination of God’s long interaction with humanity through the many covenants he made throughout the ages. Revelation is not just the last book of the Christian New Testament; it is the last book of the Bible. The book of Revelation records the ultimate fulfillment of the redemption promise made in Genesis and prefigured in the covenants and the formal arrangement of Old Covenant worship. It is only within this broader theological, historical, and cultural context that we can begin to understand the structure and therefore the flow and content of the book of Revelation.

Although the person of Jesus Christ is the most intimate revelation of the nature and character of God given to mankind, the New Testament Gospels do not provide us with a *systematic* model by which we can examine God's ways in a search for structure in the book of Revelation. Such a systematic paradigm can only be found in the model of Old Testament worship. The arrangement of Old Covenant worship into feasts, temple furnishings, and sacrifices contains a formalized pattern that reveals the ways of God in his dealings with mankind. As we begin to comprehend God's ways, we start to understand the way he looks at things.

One of the more important aspects of God's ways as they relate to the book of Revelation is the pattern by which he organizes time. This model is found in the annual cycle of the feasts celebrated in Israel. Although this is not an exciting subject, to understand the book of Revelation, it is important to understand the themes of the feasts. They are in fact the organizing structure of chapters 4 – 22 of Revelation. A brief sketch of the feasts helps us begin our search for understanding.

The seven Old Covenant feasts of Israel were harvest festivals, organized according to the spring, summer and fall crops. These three harvests were celebrated with festivals, requiring mandatory attendance. The spring harvest celebrated the festival of Unleavened Bread, which was also called Passover, because it contained three separate feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. The summer harvest festival fell on the day of Pentecost. The final fall harvest of Ingathering consisted of the final three feasts: Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. These seven feasts expressed seven different themes that imparted meaning to the annual cycle of worship. Because they prefigured Jesus' work of salvation through time, the feasts also reveal God's ways of *thematically* organizing time as it relates to his plan of redemption for mankind. They also complement God's longer-term organization of time into ages or eras. According to the Talmud, mankind would be allotted six millennia, corresponding to the first six days of creation. The sixth millennium would be followed by a thousand-year age of peace, a seventh day of God's rest and rejoicing for mankind when the Messiah establishes the Kingdom of God on earth.

Because the book of Revelation is an account of the final harvest of mankind and the culmination of God's redemption plan of the ages, the seven harvest feasts of Israel's Old Covenant worship define Revelation's underlying thematic structure. The feasts provide the key by which we can see the framework of the events portrayed in John's apocalyptic vision. The application of the feasts to the book of Revelation can be compared to use of a scoring key superimposed on student answer sheets to show the correct answers; the template of the feasts reveals the pattern of the underlying thematic framework.

In order to understand how the themes of the feasts reveal the structure of the book of Revelation, it helps to grasp the difference between earthly and heavenly views of time. Man's basic understanding of time is chronological: a succession of days that measures the span of a lifetime or forms a history. God, on the other hand, has a more purposeful view of time, since one day is the same as a thousand years to the One who is eternal. It is not the passage of days or even so much the span of ages that is significant to him. What is really important to God is his plan to redeem mankind. *Heavenly time can thus best be described as a thematic unfolding of events that measures progress toward accomplishing God's salvation plan.* The book of Revelation is best understood when viewed from this perspective.

The Medium and the Message

When God reveals truth to mankind, he uses a medium that is understood by the society that receives it. At the time of John's writing, Greek language and culture suffused the Roman Empire. The Romans had adopted the Greek gods as their own, and the majority of people throughout the empire spoke common Greek instead of Latin. Greek theaters had spread across the Hellenic world after Alexander's conquests. Greek plays were well known throughout the first century Roman world, and were even performed at the local theater in Galilee. Most everyone was familiar with their format, which contained the common elements of plot, character, theme, diction, music, and spectacle. The same format has been passed down through the centuries and is still in use today as the basis of modern drama. Due to the pervasiveness of Greek culture throughout the first century Mediterranean world, it is no surprise to discover that John's vision contains elements of a first century Greek play.

Being familiar with Greek and Hebrew culture, the early church would have understood the Greek composition of the book of Revelation as well as its Hebrew structure. Even though Revelation was read from a scroll rather than acted out in a theater, it used the familiar concepts and techniques of popular Greek drama that would have made it more easily understood by its hearers. With its strong reliance on theme and spectacle, its conflict and evolving plot, the format of John's vision is best understood as a dramatic play. The book of Revelation starts with a prologue, an exposition contextualizing the vision that follows. The feasts comprise seven 'thematic acts' that unfold in ever changing scenes. These acts are even punctuated by a working intermission. The book closes with an epilogue, a direct speech summarizing its reliability and direct application to its audience.

Like any good dramatic production, Revelation poses a dilemma early on that will be resolved through discovery and crisis by its central character and hero. The earth rightly belongs to the Lamb of God, but he must battle the Dragon and beasts who have seized it. Much like the consequences of the classical struggles between Greek deities, humanity suffers as a result of this conflict. Everyone must make a choice of whom to follow, just as in life. Dramatic literary devices are used to bring a sense of order and cohesion to events occurring in different times and locations, as well as to introduce background material and prophetic foreshadowing without unduly interrupting the flow of events. Finally, a chorus bears witness to the justice of significant events as they unfold and draws our attention to their importance.

Of much greater importance than understanding the Hebrew structure and Greek composition of the book of Revelation, however, is that we heed the call of Christ to walk in faithfulness and overcome. Our whole-hearted response to the message will bring us into maturity, growing in the character of Christ and doing the kingdom works to which we have been called. We are living in the generation that will witness the return of Christ. Let us be diligent to endure in our salvation.

Therefore do not cast from you your confident hope, for it will receive a vast reward. For you stand in need of patient endurance, so that, as the result of having done the will of God, you may receive the promised blessing. Heb 10: 35-36

The prologue in chapters one through three of the book of Revelation contains a 2,000-year long call to believers. We are to turn from our own ways and follow Christ so we will be prepared for his return, regardless of the generation in which we live. We are urged to overcome the temptations of the world and the trials of this life to live for the Kingdom of God instead of

for ourselves. Chapters four through twenty-one comprise the main body of Revelation, describing a time of tribulation and persecution, culminating with judgment on the wicked and reward for the faithful. The final chapter contains the epilogue, with its promise of eternal Life.

THE FEASTS, FURNISHINGS AND SACRIFICES IN THE LIFE OF BELIEVER

FEAST	FURNISHING	SACRIFICE	RESULT
Passover	Altar	Passover Lamb/ Burnt Offering	Deliverance to New Life in Christ*
Unleavened Bread	Laver	Drink Offering	Cleansed Conscience
Firstfruits	Bread Table	Grain Offering	Initial Consecration
Pentecost	Lampstand	Wave Offering	Consecration in Power
Trumpets	Altar of Incense	Trespass Offering	Repentance; New Beginning
Atonement	Ark of Covenant	Dual Sin Offering	Purification
Tabernacles	Atonement Cover	Fellowship Offering	Completeness

* Since Old Covenant worship was a foreshadowing of Christ and his redemptive work on the cross, Jesus fulfilled the Feasts, Furnishings, and Sacrifices in himself. Because believers are "in Christ," we receive the blessings of his fulfillment of Old Covenant worship. As believers we thematically fulfill the feasts in our discipleship walk.

Christ's Call to the Church

Revelation 1 - 3

"Be on the alert therefore, for you do not know the day on which your Lord is coming. Therefore you also must be ready; for it is at a time when you do not expect Him that the Son of Man will come."

— Matthew 24: 42, 44

Prologue

The seven churches of Revelation were all founded by Paul on his missionary journeys in Asia Minor. Some, like the church at Antioch, were major centers of commerce. Others, like Pergamum, had less contact with the outside world, since a burdensome inland journey was required to reach them. These churches were located in cities on the mainland of Asia Minor opposite Greece, on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea. Despite the fact that the seven cities lived under Roman rule, they retained the disparate cultural, social and economic identities they had previously formed over the centuries. The early church faced a wide variety of problems, from false teachers and occult practitioners within the church to persecution from without. Christian churches around the world would face similar issues over the next two millennia. It was to these seven churches that the Revelation manuscript was addressed, but the message applies to believers of the entire church age. While some commentators believe the seven churches signify different times in church history, the most important application is to be open to the conviction of the Spirit as we read Christ's message to each one.

The first three chapters of Revelation are introductory, forming the prologue of the book. Chapter 1 provides the geographic, temporal, and spiritual context for John's vision. Chapters 2 and 3 record Christ's call to repent and endure in the faith for the hope of our promised inheritance. In these two chapters, Jesus exhorts his beloved church to live a life worthy of him. He admonishes us to turn aside from sin, self, and the world, to be pure in our motivations, faithful in our walk, and diligent in works of love. He encourages his followers not to lose heart in suffering and trials, reminding us of the reward that will be ours at his coming.

Revelation 1

The revelation given by Jesus Christ, which God granted Him, that He might make known to His servants certain events which must shortly come to pass: and He sent His angel and communicated it to His servant John. This is the John who taught the truth concerning the Word of God and the truth told us by Jesus Christ—a faithful account of what he had seen. Blessed is he who reads and blessed are those who

listen to the words of this prophecy and lay to heart what is written in it; for the time for its fulfillment is now close at hand.

John sends greetings to the seven Churches in the province of Asia. May grace be granted to you, and peace, from Him who is and was and evermore will be; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the truthful witness, the first of the dead to be born to Life, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins with His own blood, and has formed us into a Kingdom, to be priests to God, His Father—to Him be ascribed the glory and the power until the Ages of the Ages. Amen. He is coming in the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and so will those who pierced Him; and all the nations of the earth will gaze on Him and mourn. Even so. Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “He who is and was and evermore will be—the Ruler of all.”

I John, your brother, and a sharer with you in the sorrows and Kingship and patient endurance of Jesus, found myself in the island of Patmos, on account of the Word of God and the truth told us by Jesus. In the Spirit I found myself present on the day of the Lord, and I heard behind me a loud voice which resembled the blast of a trumpet. It said, “Write forthwith in a roll an account of what you see, and send it to the seven Churches—to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

I turned to see who it was that was speaking to me; and then I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the center of the lampstands some One resembling the Son of Man, clothed in a robe which reached to His feet, and with a girdle of gold across His breast. His head and His hair were white, like white wool—as white as snow; and His eyes resembled a flame of fire. His feet were like silver-bronze, when it is white-hot in a furnace; and His voice resembled the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and a sharp, two-edged sword was seen coming from His mouth; and His glance resembled the sun when it is shining with its full strength.

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if I were dead. But He laid His right hand upon me and said, “Do not be afraid: I am the First and the Last, and the ever-living One. I died; but I am now alive until the Ages of the Ages, and I have the keys of the gates of Death and of Hades! Write down therefore the things you have just seen, and those which are now taking place, and those which are soon to follow: the secret meaning of the seven stars which you have seen in My right hand, and of the seven lampstands of gold. The seven stars are the ministers of the seven Churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven Churches.”

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Revelation 1 Commentary

v. 1-3 The revelation given by Jesus Christ, which God granted Him, that He might make known to His servants certain events which must shortly come to pass: and

He sent His angel and communicated it to His servant John. This is the John who taught the truth concerning the Word of God and the truth told us by Jesus Christ—a faithful account of what he had seen. Blessed is he who reads and blessed are those who listen to the words of this prophecy and lay to heart what is written in it; for the time for its fulfillment is now close at hand.

In his introductory statement, John makes it clear that Jesus Christ himself gave the vision to him, and that it is prophetic. He states that Jesus sent his angel to reveal these things, testifying to the reliability of the vision. John is actually delivering a three-part message: 1) The events are true: *it is a faithful account*; 2) There is a blessing involved for taking the message seriously and responding in obedience: *Blessed are those who listen to the words... and lay to heart what is written*; and 3) The events of Revelation will happen soon: *certain events [which] must shortly come to pass*. Unfortunately, Christ's main point of taking the message to heart has often been overshadowed by an emphasis on the imminence of his return. However, the nearness of Christ's return is just the motivational factor in receiving the blessing for obeying the message.

When dealing with Scriptural pronouncements of time, it is important to remember that God looks at time from a thematic and eternal perspective rather than a chronological, temporal one as we do. When the vision was given to John on Patmos, the first and second festivals of Passover and Pentecost had been prophetically fulfilled with Jesus' death, resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to guide the church. Only the last festival remained to be fulfilled with Jesus' return. The Daniel 9 prophecy confirms this perspective. Out of the full 70 'weeks' until the Kingdom of God would be established on earth, 69 weeks had passed when Jesus was crucified. Mankind was living in the 'gap' of the times of the Gentiles, to which no set time was affixed.

The promised blessing of reading Revelation is realized only as we take its message of repentance and faithfulness to heart, living our lives in readiness for Jesus' return – in a manner worthy of our high calling in Christ. The message of Revelation has borne its intended fruit for the past 1900 years, as the expectation of Jesus' return and the hope of our inheritance induces Christians to live Godly lives regardless of the times in which they live.

v. 4-5 John sends greetings to the seven Churches in the province of Asia. May grace be granted to you, and peace, from Him who is and was and evermore will be; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the truthful witness, the first of the dead to be born to Life, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

New Testament letters to the early Christian churches generally started with an identification of the sender and a salutation, or greeting to the church. This was followed by a blessing and the doxology, a statement of praise to God. After greeting the churches, John offers a blessing from God, the One behind the message. Because God is a triune being, the heavenly blessing is threefold: from the eternal Father, his son Jesus Christ, and the 'seven-fold' Spirit (NIV) before God's throne.

Jesus' identity is established in terms of his work rather than his being. He is: *Truthful witness to the light*, *First of the dead to be reborn to Life*, and *Ruler of the kings of the earth*. These three titles describe the work of his ministry in bringing the light of truth to man (Jn. 3: 19-21), his mission of overcoming death along with the promise that his followers would do the same (Jn. 11: 25-26), and his position as divine ruler over the earth (1Tim. 6: 15-16). Because

this was a book written to Christians, its emphasis is on faithfulness rather than faith, on harvest rather than sowing. It is therefore not primarily an evangelical “altar call” to enter the kingdom of God, but an encouragement to the church to endure in faith and bring forth kingdom fruit.

v. 5-6 To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins with His own blood, and has formed us into a Kingdom, to be priests to God, His Father—to Him be ascribed the glory and the power until the Ages of the Ages. Amen. John praises Jesus for his work of salvation: redeeming and forming us into a kingdom, and priests who will serve during his millennial reign. (See Commentary on Rev. 5:10)

v. 7 He is coming in the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and so will those who pierced Him; and all the nations of the earth will gaze on Him and mourn. Even so. Amen. Whereas the prior two verses describe Christ’s past and present work of Redemption, this passage recalls the promise of his coming fulfillment of our Redemption. Jesus stated that his coming would be manifested in a manner greater than when he ascended into heaven: *“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”* (Mt. 24: 27) When Jesus returns, it will be as he left: in the clouds, plainly visible to all. People will grieve because they did not previously recognize him as the Messiah, or because they opposed his coming and realize their destruction is near.

v. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “He who is and was and evermore will be—the Ruler of all.” As the true author of the message, Jesus introduces himself, claiming two principal characteristics by which God is identified, his eternal nature and his authority over all things. As Alpha, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, Jesus was with God in creating the universe before time began; as Omega, the last letter of the alphabet, he will reign with the Father for eternity, when time is no more.

v. 9-11 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.” (KJV)

While in exile on Patmos, John states he was in the Spirit on the “day of the Lord.” This phrase has caused much discussion among scholars, because Revelation was written a couple of centuries before Sunday was chosen as the Christian day of worship and designated as “the Lord’s day.” The other accepted meaning of “the Day of the Lord” in Scripture is the day of God’s wrath at Christ’s return. Obviously, neither applies here.

John’s description of Christ’s voice as sounding like a trumpet is the exception to every other Scriptural description of the voice of God as sounding like thunder or the rushing of many waters. When Christ speaks again in verse 15, his voice does in fact have the sound of ‘many waters.’ There is therefore a specific allusion being made here. First century Christians would have understood the special significance of a voice sounding like a trumpet. The reason for this is found in the composition of early church.

Acts records that when Paul established churches in Asia Minor, his practice was to go first to the synagogue in every city he visited. Dissension would inevitably arise when some believed his message and some did not, so Paul would leave, taking his new Jewish believers with him. His converts from the synagogue formed the nucleus of the house churches he established among Gentile believers. The core group of converts from the synagogue carried the knowledge and traditions of the Old Covenant into their new life in the Christian church.

The feasts of Old Covenant worship were therefore familiar to first century Christians, becoming part of early church tradition and *didaché*, the teaching of the apostles. Several epistles make direct as well as indirect mention of the feasts. Paul references the feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Trumpets. The communion meal itself was a reenactment of a portion of the Passover Seder. The early church would therefore have understood John's description of a voice sounding "like a trumpet... on the day of the Lord" as a reference to a feast day. Of all the feasts, only the Day of Trumpets was identified by the continual sounding of trumpets and horns from sunrise to sunset.

The Day of Trumpets, or *Rosh Hashanah*, had several names, one of which was *Yom HaDin*, literally: "the day of judgment." In Rabbinic theology, this was the day reserved to the Lord once a year, "when judgment was pronounced on the world... on New Year's Day all the children of men pass before him like lambs."¹ The Jews knew *Yom HaDin* as "the day belonging to the Lord for judgment," or by its short version: "the Lord's day." On the Day of Trumpets the individual's fate for the following year was decided. The fate of those with a questionable walk, however, would not be decided until Atonement. The Day of Trumpets was therefore above all a warning to repent in order to avoid the imposition of God's judgment ten days later on Atonement.

The fact that John heard a heavenly voice 'sounding like a trumpet' on 'the day of the Lord' provides more than circumstantial evidence that his vision actually occurred on the Day of Trumpets, the Lord's day of judgment. The subject matter of the book of Revelation is in fact a grander version of the essential theme of the feast of Trumpets: a warning for believers to repent and overcome the world (Rev. 2-3) in order to avoid the judgment of God (Rev. 4-20), when Jesus returns to earth.

v. 12-16 I turned to see who it was that was speaking to me; and then I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the center of the lampstands some One resembling the Son of Man, clothed in a robe which reached to His feet, and with a girdle of gold across His breast. His head and His hair were white, like white wool—as white as snow; and His eyes resembled a flame of fire. His feet were like silver-bronze, when it is white-hot in a furnace; and His voice resembled the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and a sharp, two-edged sword was seen coming from His mouth; and His glance resembled the sun when it is shining with its full strength.

John describes Jesus as being "like a son of man." This term was first used by Daniel (7:13) to describe the Messiah, coming on the clouds to receive an eternal kingdom. Jesus commonly used the term Son of Man rather than Son of God to describe himself, in order to avoid an outright claim of divine status, which had the unpleasant effect of inciting riots. The description of Jesus emphasizes his priestly role in relationship to his church. The ankle length white alb girdled by a wide golden sash was the temple garment worn by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. One of the priestly duties was to ensure that the sanctuary lamps were kept

burning. This picture of Jesus completes the three-fold office of Christ: as Prophet (Rev. 1: 1, bearer of revelation); as King (Rev 1:5, ruler of the kings of the earth); and here as High Priest.

The description of Christ in his glorified body emphasizes his divinity. His feet of glowing bronze are like those of the Cherubim seen by Ezekiel (1:7); his face as brilliant as the sun, reflects the Shekinah glory of God that filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34). His voice is as the sound of rushing waters when God spoke to Ezekiel (43:2); his hair is white as snow or wool, matching the description of God the Father as the Ancient of Days, seated on his heavenly throne (Dan. 7:9). His face and eyes like blazing fire reflect the description of the angelic visitor who appeared to Daniel by the Tigris River (Dan. 10:6); the sharp double-edged sword is the Word of God that cuts to the truth, symbolic of the righteous judgment of God (Heb. 4:12).

v. 17-18 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if I were dead. But He laid His right hand upon me and said, “Do not be afraid: I am the First and the Last, and the ever-living One. I died; but I am now alive until the Ages of the Ages, and I have the keys of the gates of Death and of Hades!” John faints at the awesome power and glory of Christ. Jesus strengthens John, and identifies himself as being both man and God, stating that he did indeed die, but that he overcame death by the power of the Spirit to live forever. In so doing, he gained authority (the keys) over death and Hades, the location of those who had died.

v. 19-20 “Write down therefore the things you have just seen, and those which are now taking place, and those which are soon to follow: the secret meaning of the seven stars which you have seen in My right hand, and of the seven lampstands of gold. The seven stars are the ministers of the seven Churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven Churches.” The Modern Speech (NTMS) translation, an early 20th Century attempt to make the King James more accurate and user friendly, interprets the stars as being the *ministers* of the seven churches. The message of Revelation was addressed and delivered not to angelic beings, but to the pastors whom Jesus holds as stars in his right hand, his “messengers” of the word of truth.

Revelation 2

To the minister of the Church in Ephesus write as follows: “This is what He who holds the seven stars in the grasp of His right hand says—He who walks to and fro among the seven lampstands of gold. I know your doings and your toil and patient suffering. And I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, but have put to the test those who say that they themselves are Apostles but are not, and you have found them to be liars. And you endure patiently and have borne burdens for My sake and have never grown weary.

Yet I have this against you—that you no longer love Me as you did at first. Be mindful, therefore, of the height from which you have fallen. Repent at once, and act as you did at first, or else I will surely come and remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Yet this you have in your favor: you hate the doings of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Let all who have ears give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. To him who overcomes I will give the privilege of eating the fruit of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God.”

To the minister of the Church at Smyrna write as follows: “This is what the First and the Last says—He who died and has returned to life. Your sufferings I know, and your poverty—but you are rich—and the evil name given you by those who say that they themselves are Jews, and are not, but are Satan’s synagogue. Dismiss your fears concerning all that you are about to suffer. I tell you that the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be put to the test, and for ten days you will have to endure persecution. Be faithful to the End, even if you have to die, and then I will give you the victor’s Wreath of Life.

Let all who have ears give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. He who overcomes shall be in no way hurt by the Second Death.”

To the minister of the Church at Pergamum write as follows: “This is what He who has the sharp, two-edged sword says. I know where you dwell. Satan’s throne is there; and yet you are true to Me, and did not deny your faith in Me, even in the days of Antipas My witness and faithful friend, who was put to death among you, in the place where Satan dwells.

Yet I have a few things against you, because you have with you some that cling to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling-block in the way of the descendants of Israel—to eat what had been sacrificed to idols, and commit fornication. So even you have some that cling in the same way to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent, at once; or else I will come to you quickly, and will make war upon them with the sword which is in My mouth.

Let all who have ears give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. He who overcomes—to him I will give some of the hidden Manna, and a white stone; and—written upon the stone and known only to him who receives it—a new name.”

To the minister of the Church at Thyatira write as follows: “This is what the Son of God says—He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and feet resembling silver-bronze. I know your doings, your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance; and that of late you have toiled harder than you did at first. Yet I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and by her teaching leads astray My servants, so that they commit fornication and eat what has been sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent, but she is determined not to repent of her fornication. I tell you that I am about to cast her upon a bed of sickness, and I will severely afflict those who commit adultery with her, unless they repent of conduct such as hers. Her children too shall surely die; and all the Churches shall come to know that I am He who searches into men’s inmost thoughts; and to each of you I will give a requital which shall be in accordance with what your conduct has been.

But to you, the rest of you in Thyatira, all who do not hold this teaching and are not the people who have learnt the “deep things,” as they call them (the deep things of Satan!)—to you I say that I lay no other burden on you. Only that which you already possess, cling to until I come.

And to him who overcomes and obeys My commands to the very end, I will give authority over the nations of the earth. And he shall be their shepherd, ruling them with a rod of iron, just as earthenware jars are broken to pieces; and his power over them shall be like that which I Myself have received from My Father; and I will give him the Morning Star. Let all who have ears give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.”

Revelation 3

To the minister of the Church at Sardis write as follows: “This is what He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars says. I know your doings—you are supposed to be alive, but in reality you are dead. Rouse yourself and keep awake, and strengthen those things which remain but have well-nigh perished; for I have found no doings of yours free from imperfection in the sight of My God. Be mindful, therefore, of the lessons you have received and heard. Continually lay them to heart, and repent. If, however, you fail to rouse yourself and keep awake, I shall come upon you suddenly like a thief, and you will certainly not know the hour at which I shall come to judge you.

Yet you have in Sardis a few who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. In this way he who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; and I will certainly not blot out his name from the Book of Life, but will acknowledge him in the presence of My Father and His angels. Let all who have ears give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.”

To the minister of the Church at Philadelphia write as follows: “This is what the holy One and the true says—He who has the key of David—He who opens and no one shall shut, and shuts and no one shall open. I know your doings. I have put an opened door in front of you, which no one can shut; because you have but a little power, and yet you have guarded My word and have not disowned Me. I will cause some belonging to Satan’s synagogue who say that they themselves are Jews, and are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall at your feet and know for certain that I have loved you. Because in spite of suffering you have guarded My word, I in turn will guard you from that hour of trial which is soon coming upon the whole world, to put to the test the inhabitants of the earth.

I am coming quickly: cling to that which you already possess, so that your wreath of victory be not taken away from you. “He who overcomes—I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God, and he shall never go out from it again. And I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which is to come down out of Heaven from My God, and My own new name. Let all who have ears give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.”

And to the minister of the Church at Laodicea write as follows: “This is what the Amen says—the true and faithful witness, the Beginning and Lord of God’s Creation. I know your doings—you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot! Accordingly, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, before long I will vomit

(spit) you out of My mouth. You say, I am rich, and have wealth stored up, and I stand in need of nothing; and you do not know that if there is a wretched creature it is you—pitiable, poor, blind, naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy of Me gold refined in the fire that you may become rich, and white robes to put on, so as to hide your shameful nakedness, and eye-salve to anoint your eyes with, so that you may be able to see. All whom I hold dear, I reprove and chastise; therefore be in earnest and repent. I am now standing at the door and am knocking. If any one listens to My voice and opens the door, I will go in to be with him and will feast with him, and he shall feast with Me.

To him who overcomes I will give the privilege of sitting down with Me on My throne, as I also have overcome and have sat down with My Father on His throne. Let all who have ears give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.”

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Revelation 2 & 3 Commentary

Jesus’ messages to the seven churches all followed a similar pattern. After addressing each church, Jesus identified himself in terms that represented his authority: the one who died and came back to life, the one with the sharp double-edged sword of truth, etc. He included a reference to the spiritual condition or an identifiable trait of each church location, such as the white stone in the temple at Pergamum or the lukewarm water of Laodicea. This word of knowledge helped authenticate the message for each church. Jesus acknowledged or commended the churches where they had done well, and rebuked them where they had fallen short. Two of the churches did not receive correction from Jesus, and all seven were encouraged to walk in love and faithfulness.

Jesus’ parting word in each message is to individual believers, addressing the requirement of overcoming in order to receive the promised reward of our inheritance. We have the example set by Jesus of resisting temptation and overcoming the world. Though he was man, he overcame the allure of the world and the temptations of the devil to walk in obedience to the Father’s will; though he was God, he overcame the pride of life, humbling himself to serve others in love. There is urgency in his message because the stakes are so high. That is why he calls us to live every day as though he were coming back tomorrow.

There is little in the way of mystery in chapters two and three of Revelation. Jesus’ message to the seven churches is clearly stated. Everyone reading these seven messages with an open heart and mind will hear both the encouragement and conviction of the Holy Spirit. The quickening of the word will be different for every believer, for everyone is unique, with an individual set of strengths, weaknesses, and responsibilities. However, the overriding message is similar to that of the Day of Trumpets: repent of all sin, make a new beginning where necessary, endure trials in faithfulness, deny self and do the work of the kingdom out of love for God and our neighbor.

The Basis of our Reward

Revelation 2 and 3 list the rewards that await those who overcome the world. They reflect the incredible blessings of living and reigning with Christ in the millennial Kingdom of God.

- 1) Eat from the Tree of Life (2:7)
- 2) Not hurt by second death (2:11)
- 3) Eat of hidden manna (2:17)
- 4) New name on a white stone (2:17)
- 5) Authority over nations (2:26)
- 6) Receive Morning star (2:28)
- 7) Walk with Christ (3:4)
- 8) Wear white garments (3:5)
- 9) Name in Book of Life (3:5)
- 10) Name acknowledged before Father (3:5)
- 11) Pillar in temple of God (3:12)
- 12) Written name of God, city, and Christ (3:12)
- 13) Sit with Jesus on his throne (3:21)

On the flip side of the coin, those who do not overcome the world are promised the following:

- 1) Removal of lampstand from its place (2:5)
- 2) War with sword in the Lord's mouth (2:16)
- 3) Intense tribulation (2:22)
- 4) Children killed with the pestilence (2:23)
- 5) Repayment for wicked deeds (2:23)
- 6) Surprise visit from the Lord (3:3)
- 7) Spit out of the Lord's mouth (3:16)

All of the negative consequences listed above are accompanied by a warning to repent. Failure to do so results in earthly discipline or tribulation. It is important to note that the seven consequences described above do not explicitly describe the loss of eternal life, unending punishment, etc. Even the phrase "spit you out of my mouth" is not an eternal judgment but an indication of unworthiness that could result in loss of reward for failing to overcome the world, though not of eternal life. (The reference is to the lukewarm water of Laodicea's stream that was fed by both a cold water creek and hot thermal springs, resulting in water that was unfit to drink until it had cooled.) Except for the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, there is a presumption of eternal security in the Scriptures (Mt. 12:31). Jesus is not warning the churches here about the loss of eternal life, but about the loss of reward. Since Salvation is not a reward for anything we have done, and we do not earn eternal life with Christ, we are *not* at risk of losing our salvation if we do not overcome the world. Salvation, and the eternal life that proceeds from it, are the free gift of God, the result of Jesus' sacrifice and our response of faith. Even faith to believe in Jesus is a gift from God (Eph 2:8, 9). However, there is no blanket promise of reward for all believers here; Jesus states that reward is given to all those who overcome.

Clearly, not everyone in the church is living an overcoming life. Although the Holy Spirit does his part to complete the work Jesus has started in us (Phil. 1:6; 1Cor. 1:8), we are called to

overcome the world so that we may bear fruit and come into the completeness of our faith. This requires our willingness to deny ourselves and put the kingdom first in our lives. The parable of the weeds states that not everyone will do this.

“... the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.” Mark 4:19 NIV

As believers, we will be recompensed for what we have done with our gift of salvation. If we overcome the world to do the will of God, we will bear kingdom fruit and receive the rewards listed above. If we are entangled in the cares and desires and riches of this life, we will bear tasteless fruit, and miss out on the rewards Jesus has set aside for us.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad [Gr. – worthless].” 2Cor. 5:10 NIV “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” 1Cor. 3:11-15 NKJV

Paul confirmed the distinction between receiving the gift of eternal life, which comes by faith and confession (Rom. 10:9), and the great reward of reigning with Christ. He expressed this difference in his own yearning to “lay hold of the prize,” or reward, of his salvation. He did not doubt his salvation unto eternal life. However, he did understand that his reward in the Resurrection was based on enduring in the faith and persevering through the temptations and trials of this life to overcome the world, so Christ could complete the work he had begun in him.

“I long to know Christ and the power which is in His resurrection, and to share in His sufferings and die even as He died; in the hope that I may attain to the resurrection from among the dead. I do not say that I have already won the race or have already reached perfection. But I am pressing on, striving to lay hold of the prize for which also Christ has laid hold of me.” Phil 3:10-12

In a letter to Timothy, Paul stresses the importance of enduring in the faith to reign with Christ.

“If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us: If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” 2 Tim. 2:11-13 NIV

Because reigning with Christ in the Kingdom of God is based on overcoming in this life, this brings the element of worth into the discussion of rewards in the Kingdom of God. This discussion recognizes the distinction between salvation by works, which is a false doctrine, and reward for our works, which is the basis of judgment (i.e. reward) for every believer. We are not judged for our sins, as these have been forgiven. Therefore the only judgment left is the reward we receive for what we have done with our faith. Once we are saved, we are called to act in a manner that is worthy of the Kingdom of God (Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10). Paul elaborates on the meaning of worth as it relates to the Kingdom of God. It is a description of the overcomer.

“Your faith is growing more and more, and the love everyone of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore we boast... about your perseverance and faith... and as a result you will be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God.” 2Thess. 1:3-5 NIV

Jesus’ Call to His Bride

The message of Revelation 2 & 3 may be viewed as a letter to the bride of Christ to make herself ready for him. Jesus offers encouragement to his beloved where applicable and admonishment where necessary. In order to better understand the church as the bride of Christ, it is helpful to review the role of both the bride and groom in Jewish society.

In the Hebrew culture, the parents arranged weddings. Some marriages might not take place for a long time – for example, if the bride and groom were betrothed as children. The groom or his father paid the dowry, or bride price, in order to enter into a contract of marriage. In the New Covenant, the Father gave his only Son, and the Son agreed to die for mankind. The betrothal price was the life of Jesus, sacrificed to redeem mankind from the power of sin and death.

The Dowry: *“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy...” Eph 5:25*

Before the marriage could take place, there had to be a time of preparation for the bride. The bride was set apart socially to prove her purity and prepare herself for her new life, refining the skills expected of a good wife. During this time, she worked on making her wedding dress, while the groom would be building the house in which they would live.

Preparation Time for the Bride: *“... cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Eph 5:27 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” Rev 19:8*

Preparation Time of the Groom: *“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may also be where I am.” John 14:2-3*

At the end of the preparation time, the groom came to the bride’s home and took her to the wedding feast. Jesus has promised that he will return for his bride.

The Groom’s Return for his Betrothed: *“According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and who are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” 1Thess 4:15-17*

The wedding celebration lasted a full week. In the case of a royal wedding, the king gave a portion of his kingdom to his son, the prince, who ruled as sovereign king over the land. The celebration week is the seventh millennium, symbolized by the weeklong feast of Tabernacles.

The bride of Christ is revealed in her glory as the New Jerusalem, where Jesus will rule over the earth with his bride for eternity.

The Bride: *“One of the angels who had the bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.” Rev. 21:9-11*

The King: *“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns... On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Rev. 19:11-12, 16*

THE FEASTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST AND IN REVELATION

FEAST	THEME	LIFE OF CHRIST	REVELATION
Passover	Deliverance/Redemption	Crucifixion	Revelation 4 & 5 Lamb of God w/ Scroll
Firstfruits	Sanctification of Whole Crop	Resurrection	Revelation 7 144, 000; Multitude in White
Unleavened Bread	Cleansing	Explained Scripture	Revelation 6: Leaven Revealed Rev. 8-9: Cleansing Judgments
(7 weeks -	Seeking God	Disciples Waiting	Revelation 10: Seven Thunders)
Pentecost	Dual Sanctification in Power	Sent Holy Spirit	Revelation 11: 1-14: Two Witnesses
Trumpets (Days of Awe -	Beginning of New Year Fasting & Repentance	Lamb Awarded Title Deed Justification for Final Harvest	Revelation 11: 15-19: 7th Trumpet Revelation 12-13: 3 ½ yr.) Trib.)
Atonement	Purification/Removal of Sin	Judgments on Beast	Revelation 15 – 20 Judgment/Harvest
Tabernacles	Rest after Harvest	Millennial Rule	Revelation 21-22: Reigning/Eternity

The Feast of Passover

Revelation 4 & 5

“In (our Lord Jesus Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace...”

— Ephesians 1: 7

Background

Israel’s first festival, known as Unleavened Bread, or Passover, lasted for a week. It consisted of three feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. The Passover feast started on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, the first month of the religious calendar, and lasted only a few hours. It was a memorial of the night God spared his people from the wrath of the destroying angel that killed the firstborn of Egypt. The Hebrew people were delivered from this judgment by placing the blood of a sacrificial lamb on the frame of their front door. The blood of the sacrificial lamb acted as a substitute for the life of those inside the house, redeeming (purchasing) Israel’s firstborn from the judgment of death. The following morning they were delivered from their slavery to the Egyptians.

The theme of Passover is *deliverance* through redemption. Redemption is a purchase of that which has been lost or sold into slavery. As the blood of the lamb ‘purchased’ the life of the firstborn Hebrew children and delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt, the Lamb of God purchased us with his blood from bondage to sin and death, delivering us to new spiritual life in him.

The Lord established the feast of Passover as an annual memorial of this redemption and the nation’s deliverance from physical bondage in Egypt. The sacrifice of the Passover lamb was a type, or foreshadowing, of Jesus’ sacrifice of his own blood, shed to redeem mankind from bondage to sin and death. A short review of significant events in earth’s spiritual history sheds some light on the spiritual significance of Passover.

The Spiritual Battle for Earth

When Adam and Eve were created, The Lord gave them spiritual as well as physical life. He granted them title, or authority over the earth, giving them a commission to populate and rule his creation. They ruled their small corner of the earth in the righteousness, wisdom, and compassion of God. However, the Dragon deceived Eve and tempted Adam to disobey God. On the day they proved unfaithful to the one command God had given them, several things happened. Man would now be subject to physical death. Mankind was also subject to the knowledge and therefore the power of sin, from the day of his birth to the day of his death. Adam and Eve also died spiritually on that day, so they could no longer exercise God’s spiritual authority. Adam no longer held the spiritual title deed to the earth that God had entrusted to him.

The Dragon made plans to fill this power vacuum and rule the planet himself. Having previously lost his bid for God's throne in heaven, he preferred a throne on earth to being a wandering star in the heavens. He had convinced a third of the angels to forsake God and follow him; this was his opportunity to get mankind to worship him as well. Although the line of Seth walked in righteousness, the prolific line of Cain provided the Dragon with the opportunity to accomplish his goal.

The Dragon knew that he could eventually control the earth if he could get enough people to turn away from God's ways and follow him. And so began the battle for the souls of men: God calling mankind to worship him, the Dragon seeking to turn man away from God by tempting him in his thoughts, emotions, and natural appetites. The devil used temptation, deception, and fear to subvert souls and draw mankind to wealth, power, and pleasure – all the motivations that appeal to our worldly desires. During the 1600 or so years between the Fall and the Flood, the Dragon gained spiritual and physical control over the earth, exercising a squatter's right in the absence of the spiritual authority lost by Adam. By the time of the Great Flood, the Dragon was so successful at his self-appointed task of becoming the god of this world that he had corrupted all but eight souls.

The Dragon's plan for complete dominion of the earth came to an abrupt end when the Lord destroyed everyone except Noah and his family in a great cleansing flood. After the Flood, however, the Dragon lost no time in once again subverting mankind. Men began to abandon God's patriarchal rule and establish monarchies that claimed rule by 'divine right.' When God saw his creation once again headed so quickly down the path of corruption, he confused mankind's language. This prevented the Dragon from re-establishing global rule through a single kingdom. The Dragon's response was to apportion his authority, establishing demonic powers and principalities to rule over the various kingdoms that developed wherever mankind scattered. After an additional twenty four hundred years of corrupting souls, the Devil could legitimately boast to Jesus that the authority and splendor of all the kingdoms of the world belonged to him (Luke 4:6).

In the fullness of time, God sent his only begotten Son to pay the price to redeem the earth from bondage to sin and death. Jesus was the Lamb of God who sacrificed his own life to deliver mankind from the Dragon's power and authority. When we reject the power of darkness and embrace Jesus as savior and Lord, we spiritually place the blood of Christ on the doorposts of our heart, just as the Hebrews placed the lamb's blood over their doors that fateful night in Egypt. Our sins are forgiven and the sentence of death against us is cancelled, and we are born again of God's Spirit. Through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit we grow in the character of Christ. As we endure through the trials and tribulations of our salvation walk, we are changed into the image of Christ and prepared for a position of spiritual authority in the coming kingdom of God.

The redeeming work of Jesus as the Lamb of God was foreshadowed in the theme of deliverance through redemption that infused the feast of Passover. The theme of deliverance is associated with the altar of burnt offering, the first furnishing. The daily burnt offering provided a memorial 'covering' over Israel, reminding them of their deliverance from Egypt and their covenant with God.

Revelation 4 & 5 – Feast: Passover

Theme: Deliverance/Redemption by the Lamb

To review, the prologue covered the first three chapters of Revelation, introducing the messenger (Rev. 1), and his message (Rev. 2-3). In keeping with the format of a dramatic play, Revelation 4 opens with the ‘cast’ in heaven. This chapter sets the stage for the introduction of the protagonist, or hero in Revelation 5.

Following the pattern of the feasts in Revelation, chapters 4 & 5 present the thematic fulfillment of Passover, with its deliverance through redemption by the blood of the lamb. Redemption always involves a purchase of something that has been lost, delivering it from the possession of another. By paying the price of death for Adam’s sin, Jesus purchased, or redeemed not just mankind, but also the spiritual title deed to earth that Adam forfeited through disobedience.

Revelation 4

After all this I looked and saw a door in Heaven standing open, and the voice that I had previously heard, which resembled the blast of a trumpet, again spoke to me and said, “Come up here, and I will show you things which are to happen in the future.”

Immediately I found myself in the Spirit, and saw a throne in Heaven, and some One sitting on the throne. The appearance of Him who sat there was like jasper or sard; and encircling the throne was a rainbow, in appearance like an emerald. Surrounding the throne there were also twenty-four other thrones, on which sat twenty-four Elders clothed in white robes, with victors’ wreaths of gold upon their heads. Out from the throne there came flashes of lightning, and voices, and peals of thunder, while in front of the throne seven blazing lamps were burning, which are the seven Spirits of God. And in front of the throne there seemed to be a sea of glass, resembling crystal.

And midway between the throne and the Elders, and surrounding the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind. The first living creature resembled a lion, the second an ox, the third had a face like that of a man, and the fourth resembled an eagle flying. And each of the four living creatures had six wings, and in every direction, and within, are full of eyes; and day after day, and night after night, they never cease saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Ruler of all, who was and art and evermore shall be.”

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is seated on the throne, and lives until the Ages of the Ages, the twenty-four Elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives until the Ages of the Ages, and they cast their wreaths down in front of the throne, saying, “It is fitting, O our Lord and God, That we should ascribe unto Thee the glory and the honor and the power; For Thou didst create all things, And because it was Thy will they came into existence, and were created.”

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Revelation 4 Commentary

v. 1-2 After all this I looked and saw a door in Heaven standing open, and the voice that I had previously heard, which resembled the blast of a trumpet, again spoke to me and said, “Come up here, and I will show you things which are to happen in the future.” Immediately I found myself in the Spirit, and saw a throne in Heaven, and some One sitting on the throne. This verse is often used to assign everything after this point as a future event at the end of the age, but this is not the intention here. Just because John is going to see future events, this does not mean that they will all be presented without background or context. Any good story or play provides both of these.

v. 3 The appearance of Him who sat there was like jasper or sard; and encircling the throne was a rainbow, in appearance like an emerald. For some reason John chooses not to convey the glory of heaven, supplying no adjectives in his description of God’s throne room. His description is consistent with Ezekiel’s vision of God in Babylonia (Ezek. 1), Isaiah’s vision in Samaria (Isa. 6), and Moses’ vision at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24), except these all saw God’s throne from below. It may be that John downplays the appearance of the One on the throne because the Lamb rather than the Father is the central figure in the drama about to unfold.

The rainbow above the throne is probably a memorial of the promise the Lord made to Noah never again to destroy the earth with water. The emerald hue of the rainbow may be attributed to the combination of light that emanates from the Father and his throne. Ezekiel’s account states that God’s throne had the appearance of sapphire, and the One above had the appearance of amber with flames inside it, the orange color of ‘sard’ or jasper described here. When the color of fiery amber coming from the One on the throne mixes with the translucent blue sapphire of the throne itself, the combination would make the rainbow around the throne appear to be green.

v. 4 Surrounding the throne there were also twenty-four other thrones, on which sat twenty-four Elders clothed in white robes, with victors’ wreaths [NIV, KJV – *crowns*] of gold upon their heads. The number of the Elders may reflect the division of the Old Covenant priests into twenty-four courses (1Chr. 24), or it may be symbolic of the twelve tribes from the Old Testament church and twelve apostles of the New Covenant. Some claim that the Elders are heavenly beings, while others believe they are a special class of the redeemed. However, it is not their origin but their purpose and function that are important.

One of the more important functions of Elders in Jewish society was to act as witnesses to the justice of every public transaction; that is also the apparent function of the twenty-four Elders here. Dressed in white robes of righteousness and wearing gold crowns of authority, they act as witnesses to God’s judgments of the earth. Their presence gives this scene the judicial atmosphere of a court. Later, the Elders act in the capacity of a jury, confirming the guilt of the accused and affirming that the Judge’s judgments are indeed justified.

v. 5-6a Out from the throne there came flashes of lightning, and voices, and peals of thunder, while in front of the throne seven blazing lamps were burning, which are the seven Spirits (seven-fold Spirit – NIV) of God. And in front of the throne there seemed to be a sea of glass, resembling crystal. Old Testament passages indicate that the lightning, voices, and thunder are indicators of God’s Presence, conveying his power over the

earth and his right to judge its people. Similar signs accompanied Moses' meeting with God on Mount Sinai. The sea on which the throne sits may be made of solid crystalline water, the basic building block of Creation (2Pet. 3:5). It is a fitting floor for the Creator. Lacking any impurities, pure water in a solid state would have a perfect crystalline structure with translucent properties, allowing observation of everything below by the One seated on the throne.

"Thou shall be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire." Isa. 29:6

v. 6b-8 And midway between the throne and the Elders, and surrounding the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind. The first living creature resembled a lion, the second an ox, the third had a face like that of a man, and the fourth resembled an eagle flying. And each of the four living creatures had six wings, and in every direction, and within, are full of eyes; and day after day, and night after night, they never cease saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Ruler of all, who was and art and evermore shall be."

Closest to the throne are the awesome celestial beings called Seraphim by Isaiah and Cherubim by Ezekiel. In this context they appear to be Seraphim. Ezekiel, who saw these beings when they were below the crystal sea, describes them as Cherubim. Isaiah saw them above the throne and called them Seraphim. Here, instead of being beneath the sea they are around God's throne. Additionally, they have six wings of Seraphim instead of the four ascribed to Cherubim.

The four faces of these creatures represent absolute dominion over Creation. The lion is king of the wild beasts; the eagle is king of the air, and the ox king of the tamed beasts, while man himself is the appointed ruler over all God's created works. Standing closest to the throne, these beings are its guardians, with innumerable eyes vigilantly observing all that transpires at the center of universal rule. Their continual praise affirms the holy and eternal nature of God.

Ezekiel: *"These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River, and I realized they were cherubim. Each had four faces and four wings, and under the wings was what looked like the hands of a man."* Ezek. 10:20

Isaiah: *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."* Isa. 6:1-3

v. 9-11 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is seated on the throne, and lives until the Ages of the Ages, the twenty-four Elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives until the Ages of the Ages, and they cast their wreaths down in front of the throne, saying, "It is fitting, [NIV – You are worthy] O our Lord and God, That we should ascribe unto Thee the glory and the honor and the power; For Thou didst create all things, And because it was Thy will they came into existence, and were created." The highest form of the Elders' worship is to lay face down on the crystal sea and place their crowns in front of the One on the throne, praising him for his work of Creation. The NTMS describes the Elder's crowns as wreaths, since these were given to victorious athletes in Greek games. Whether described as crowns or wreaths, they are symbols of victorious living.

Revelation 5

And I saw lying in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written on both sides and closely sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel who was exclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?" But no one in Heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book or look into it. And while I was weeping bitterly, because no one was found worthy to open the book or look into it, one of the Elders said to me, "Do not weep. The Lion which belongs to the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed, and will open the book and break its seven seals."

Then, midway between the throne and the four living creatures, I saw a Lamb standing among the Elders. He looked as if He had been offered in sacrifice, and He had seven horns and seven eyes. The last-named are the seven Spirits of God, and have been sent far and wide into all the earth. So He comes, and now He has taken the book out of the right hand of Him who is seated on the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four Elders fell down before the Lamb, having each of them a harp and bringing golden bowls full of incense, which represent the prayers of God's people. And now they sing a new song. "It is fitting," they say, "that Thou shouldst be the One to take the book And break its seals; Because Thou hast been offered in sacrifice, And hast purchased for God with Thine own blood Some out of every tribe and language and people and nation, And hast formed them into a Kingdom to be priests to our God, And they reign over the earth."

And I looked, and heard what seemed to be the voices of countless angels on every side of the throne, and of the living creatures and the Elders. Their number was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, and in loud voices they were singing, "It is fitting that the Lamb which has been offered in sacrifice should receive all power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

And as for every created thing in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and everything that was in any of these, I heard them say, "To Him who is seated on the throne, And to the Lamb, Be ascribed all blessing and honor And glory and might, Until the Ages of the Ages!" Then the four living creatures said "Amen," and the Elders fell down and worshipped.

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Revelation 5 Commentary

v. 1 And I saw lying in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book [Gr. – *scroll*] written on both sides and closely sealed with seven seals. God's court is in session, much as an earthly king would convene court to hear evidence and decide matters of state. The business before the court is the scroll in God's hand. Appreciating the significance of the scroll within the context of deliverance and redemption is central to understanding all the events that

follow. Lacking this, John's vision turns into a jumble of seals, trumpets and bowls without an underlying reason for the order of their occurrence. To appreciate the importance of the scroll, one needs to have at least a basic understanding of Jewish law, history, and culture relating to redemption.

The Kinsman Redeemer

After the Lord delivered Abraham's descendants from Egypt, he entered into a covenant, or contract, with them. The covenant was founded on the Law, a set of rules that governed morality as well as social and property transactions of God's people. In the interest of maintaining an orderly transition from one generation to the next, property laws elevated possession of the land to the status of a family trust. While the Israelites' relationship with the Lord defined them individually and as a nation, the land gave them a sense of family, community, and tribal identity.

When the Israelites finally reached Canaan, each tribe, clan and family, except for the Levites, was assigned its own geographic territory. The Jews were tenants on God's land rather than its owners, keeping it in trust for generations to come. Individual tracts or parcels were held as an inheritance that was passed from father to firstborn son. The Lord promised that if his people obeyed the commands of the covenant they would retain the land, never again becoming captives or slaves of another nation as they had been in Egypt. The land itself was a daily reminder of the freedom and blessings God had bestowed on them. Continued possession of each family's allotted portion of land was so important to maintaining social structure that the Lord established regulations to insure that no family would ever permanently lose its land.

Every fiftieth year, the Year of Jubilee, all the land in Israel that had been sold, leased, or lost through debt had to be returned to the family of the original owner or his heir. This provision eliminated the redistribution and consolidation of land into the hands of the rich and powerful, preventing the creation of an impoverished homeless class of society. No family would ever permanently lose their land through misfortune or the foolishness of one individual's actions. In addition to maintaining the integrity and patrimony of the family line, this system helped maintain Israel's traditions and agrarian way of life.

The Lord also established a means of redeeming the land on an individual basis before the year of Jubilee, as the need arose. When one's debts exceeded the ability to repay them and no other assets existed, the land could be sold to cover the debt. The first choice was to offer it for sale to the nearest relative. Jeremiah 32 contains an account of a property sale for later redemption. As a last resort, the land could also be sold to someone outside the family line. (Lev. 25) In this case, the transaction was not really a sale but a prorated lease until Jubilee, when the land automatically reverted to its rightful family owner.

When land was sold in this manner, the parties met at the city gate, where all business transactions were conducted. An original and a copy of the title deed containing a description of the land were presented and examined in the presence of the elders. The original was rolled into a scroll, sealed in wax, and signed on the outside by the elders who acted as witnesses or notaries to the validity of the transaction. The sealed and unsealed copies of the title deed were preserved until the land was repurchased, or until it was returned at Jubilee.

This system of redemption was not limited to land; people could also be redeemed. If an individual fell into debt beyond his ability to repay, he might be sold into physical slavery to

work off his debt. A relative who had the resources could redeem him, paying what was owed. There was one other circumstance in which an individual might be redeemed. If a landowner died leaving no male heirs, the nearest relative could take possession of the land. Whoever did this incurred the obligation to marry the widow and adopt any children of the family of his deceased kinsman. The story of Boaz and Ruth provides an example of a relative purchasing the land of a dead relative and gaining a wife in the transaction. Although Boaz was not the closest relative of the deceased, he was the nearest one who was willing to acquire a family.

The redemption procedures were the inverse of those involved in selling a parcel of land. The one who had acquired the land met the original owner or his nearest relative at the city gate, with the elders in attendance. If a relative was redeeming the land, he had to prove two facts before the matter could proceed. First, he must prove that he was kinsman to the original owner, thus having the right of redemption, so the property would remain within the extended family as prescribed by law. Second, he had to demonstrate that he had the full purchase price for the land, making him the purchaser or redeemer. When these facts were proven, the deed and money changed hands. The original title to the land became the property of the kinsman redeemer. He then broke the seals on the scroll and unrolled it to confirm the title description of his purchase.

v. 2 And I saw a mighty angel who was exclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the [scroll] and break its seals?” The angel issues his challenge in the presence of those assembled in God’s court. Only someone who could prove he was a kinsman to Adam would be eligible to claim the scroll, since Adam was the one who had forfeited the title deed to earth. Whoever claimed the deed would also have to prove he had paid the redemption price. In addition to the land, Adam’s descendants who had been sold into spiritual slavery would be included in the redemption. Like Boaz, as Kinsman Redeemer, Jesus would have to be willing to acquire a bride along with spiritual title to the earth.

The angel proclaims the central question of Revelation: “*Who is worthy?*” The worth of the kinsman is found in his sinless character as well as his willingness to pay the purchase price. The purchase price of the earth and Adam’s descendants is not money, however. Just as the Passover lamb was sacrificed to redeem the children of Israel from death and deliver them from slavery in Egypt, the Kinsman Redeemer had to offer his own life so Adam and his descendants could be delivered from death and slavery to sin. The principle of blood redemption was codified in the Old Covenant law of “a life for a life,” and in the value of blood sacrifice: “*It is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.*” (Lev. 17:11)

None of Adam’s descendants could qualify as the kinsman redeemer, for they had all been sold into the slavery of sin. A slave cannot redeem another slave, since both are in bondage. The Redeemer would have to be a kinsman of Adam, but without sin. This impossibility could only be resolved if Adam’s Creator were willing to lay aside his divine form and be born as a man in the lineage of Adam. Since he was divine, he would be without sin; since he was human, he would be Adam’s kinsman. This required a monumental sacrifice by the Son of God. He had to give up his place with the Father in heaven and humble himself to become man, allowing himself to be crucified for sins he did not commit. In the ultimate act of love, he shed his own blood to deliver mankind from spiritual and physical death.

v. 3-4 But no one in Heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book [scroll] or look into it. And while I was weeping bitterly, because no one was found worthy to open the book or look into it... The matter of the scroll is so momentous that

John grieves when no one is found to open it. John understands that the scroll is the sealed title deed to the earth. If no one can be found to open the scroll, the long awaited Kingdom of God will not be established.

v. 5 ...one of the Elders said to me, “Do not weep. The Lion which belongs to the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed, and will open the book and break its seven seals.” An elder announces the arrival of one who qualifies as kinsman to Adam. He is *the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David*. On his deathbed, Jacob prophesied that the Messiah would come from the line of Judah, and the Lord promised David that one of his descendents would sit on the throne forever, ruling from Jerusalem. As the Messiah, Jesus was both David’s ancestor and his descendant (Mt. 22:41-45). Proof of this dual fulfillment of Jesus’ lineage is traced through both David and Judah back to Adam in Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

v. 6 Then, midway between the throne and the four living creatures, I saw a Lamb standing among the Elders. He looked as if He had been offered in sacrifice, and He had seven horns and seven eyes. The last-named are the seven Spirits of God, and have been sent far and wide into all the earth. The Lion of Judah also turns out to be the Lamb of God. This is the same Lamb that was identified by John the Baptist at the River Jordan: “*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’*” (John 1:29) Christ’s divinity, and therefore his freedom from sin, is represented by his symbolic identification with the Holy Spirit, “the seven spirits (seven-fold Spirit) of God.”

His qualification as kinsman to Adam having been established, the Lamb needs to prove to the court that he has paid the purchase price for the earth and its inhabitants. Most versions translate the Lamb’s appearance of having been offered in sacrifice, as “looking *like* [or *as if*] it had been slain.” In the original Greek however, the verb denotes that the Lamb had actually been *butchered*, as in a sacrifice. When he shed his lifeblood on Passover, Jesus paid the purchase price to redeem the earth and its people. With his identification as the Passover Lamb slain for the sins of mankind, Jesus is confirmed as both Kinsman and Redeemer.

v. 7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. The Lamb takes possession of the scroll, the title deed to spiritual rule over the earth lost by Adam. Since that time, the Dragon has usurped spiritual rule over the earth, setting up the world system and the demonic principalities still in effect today. By claiming the title deed, the Lamb now has the legal standing to return to the earth, eject the Dragon and his ‘family’ from the property, and establish the Kingdom of God. This defining moment determines the course of the events that follow.

The central event of earth’s history was Jesus’ death on the cross. His sacrifice was the price that established his right as Kinsman Redeemer to claim legal title to the earth. John witnesses the future moment when earth’s title deed is claimed by the Son of its original owner, the Creator who gave it to Adam. The remainder of Revelation describes the events leading up to Jesus’ return to take possession of the earth and enforce his rightful rule over the nations.

v. 8-9 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bows full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song: You

are worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. (NIV) Revelation 4: 9-11 described the worship of the Elders that accompanies that of the Seraphim in praising the One seated on the throne. Here they worship the Lamb, confirming the divinity of Jesus and praising his work of Redemption.

This song, continuing through verse 14, is the first appearance of a chorus, which in Greek theater is comprised of a group singing or speaking in unison. It was a familiar concept in the first century Roman Empire. The role of the chorus was to emphasize significant events as well as to provide a trusted perspective. Since this song to the Lamb is the first interaction of the chorus with an individual, according to the rules of Greek drama this makes the Lamb the protagonist of Revelation, its main character and hero.

v. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth. (NIV) Bible versions are divided on whether to translate this passage as “kings and priests” or “a kingdom and priests.” Strong’s Concordance at G932 states the word used here is “*royalty, that is (abstractly) rule or (concretely) a realm (literally or figuratively) kingdom + reign.*” The question is whether resurrected believers will rule in a secular (Monarchic) or Godly (Theocratic) government. The issue is addressed in Revelation 20:6, which describes those ruling in the resurrection: “*they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*” Although Christ combines both the secular kingly and religious priestly offices in himself, those who reign with him serve as his priests rather than kings. Peter succinctly captures the full sense of what this means, describing believers as “a royal priesthood.” (1Pet. 2:9) The reason why believers are a kingdom rather than kings is a simple one. A kingdom is defined by its king and its subjects, not just its geography. The mystery of the ages is that the kingdom of God is in us; as members of the ‘mystical body of Christ’ we *are* the spiritual kingdom of God. The kingdom consists of those who have given up their lives to follow Jesus and be trained in the way of righteousness. Those who overcome will serve as priests in Christ’s millennial reign.

v. 11-14 And I looked, and heard what seemed to be the voices of countless angels on every side of the throne, and of the living creatures and the Elders. Their number was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, and in loud voices they were singing, “It is fitting that the Lamb which has been offered in sacrifice should receive all power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” And as for every created thing in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and everything that was in any of these, I heard them say, “To Him who is seated on the throne, And to the Lamb, Be ascribed all blessing and honor And glory and might, Until the Ages of the Ages!” Then the four living creatures said “Amen,” and the Elders fell down and worshipped. The fact that every living creature in heaven and on earth worship both the Father and the Son indicates the importance of what has just occurred. The Father loved the world so much that he sacrificed his Son to die for mankind. The Son loved us so much that he gave up his position with the Father and suffered the trials of this life, culminating in his being treated as the lowest form of society, a criminal worthy of being tortured and crucified.

FEASTS AND SEALS THROUGH SEVEN MILLENNIA

FEAST	THEME	SEAL/LEAVEN	HISTORICAL EVENT
Old Testament			
Passover	Deliverance	White Horse: Adam/Fall (BC. 4000-3000)	Creation, Population
ULB	Cleansing	Red Horse: Violence (BC. 3000-2000)	Cleansing Judgment: Flood
Firstfruits	Initial Consecration	Black Horse: Famine (BC. 2000-1000)	Abraham to Saul
Weeks	Consecration in Power	Pale Horse: Conquest (BC. 1000-01)	Rise of World Kingdoms/Israel
New Testament			
Trumpets	New Beginning	Martyrs: Tribulation (01-20?? AD.)	Repentance/Forgiveness in Christ
(Interregnum	"Great Tribulation"	Between Seals 5&6 (01-20?? AD.)	Times of Gentiles – Gospel)
Atonement	Judgment/Final Harvest	Sign of Son of Man (20??)	Purifying Judgment at End of Age
Tabernacles (8 th day of feast	Rejoicing Rest	Silence – No Leaven (7 th Millennium) Eternity	Millennial Kingdom of God No More Time)

Seven Days of Unleavened Bread

Revelation 6

“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

– 1 Corinthians 5: 8

Background

The feast of Unleavened Bread immediately followed Passover and continued for a full week. The Israelites left Egypt in such haste the following morning that there had been no time to leaven the bread, so they ate the unleavened bread of their Passover meal for the first week of their journey. The seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates their Exodus from Egypt. Because leaven is actually a bacterium that spreads and ‘corrupts’ the entire measure of flour in which it is mixed, it represents sin and the corrupting influences of the world. The theme of Unleavened Bread is *cleansing* from the sin and unbelief symbolized by the leaven of worldly Egypt.

Christ fulfilled this feast when he appeared to his closest disciples during the week after his resurrection, explaining his fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. His explanation of the Scriptures removed the leaven of unbelief and doubt that pervaded their understanding of his life and ministry when he failed to establish the kingdom of God. He told his disciples plainly that he had come to earth to establish the *spiritual* kingdom of God in peoples’ hearts through the simple expedient of faith in him. This kingdom would grow and flourish through the ministry of the Holy Spirit until Christ’s return, when he would establish the long awaited physical Kingdom of God on earth.

In a tradition that communicated this truth to each generation, adults hid small pieces of leaven for the children to find at the beginning of the feast. The children searched the house to discover the leaven, which was then thrown out, symbolically removing worldly influences from the lives of the family members. This child’s game embodies the theme of the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread: cleansing from the corrupting influence of sin and unbelief. This feast is associated with the washbasin, the second furnishing in the temple, which was placed just outside the sanctuary. Before offering a sacrifice at the altar or entering the sanctuary, the priests were required to wash their hands and feet, symbolically cleansing themselves of the impurities of sin and the corrupting influences of the world. The washbasin is also symbolic of baptism, cleansing the conscience of the new believer from guilt.

Revelation 6 – Feast: Unleavened Bread

Theme: Cleansing; Discovery of the Leaven

The four horsemen are almost universally viewed today as symbolizing the start of God's end time judgments on the earth. This opinion is held because Revelation is a book of judgments, and John was told he would see events that "must take place after this." This reasoning assumes that the Revelation narrative does not contain any historical, spiritual, or cultural background. Quite the opposite is true, and the four horsemen of the Apocalypse fall into this category, providing context for Jesus' redemption of the earth. Without this background, the reader does not have a full appreciation of just how much the earth and mankind have been corrupted by sin since the Fall, and thus the enormity of the price Jesus had to pay to redeem us.

In the pattern of the feasts that reveals the thematic structure of the book of Revelation, chapter 6 introduces the theme of Unleavened Bread. The first six seals of the scroll are opened to reveal the leaven of six millennia of sin. The six seals provide the context of the moral state of the earth that justifies God's coming trumpet judgments. They reveal the process whereby this once pristine planet was overcome by spiritual and physical degeneration, growing worse in each succeeding age. The first through the sixth seals reveal the reason *why* God is about to judge the earth.

In accordance with the Rabbinic tradition of six millennia being allotted to mankind's rule of the earth, each seal represents an age of approximately a thousand years, except where God cut the time short for the sake of his salvation plan. The breaking of the seals shows the growing corruption caused by the moral degeneration of man and decay of the earth during each millennium. The leaven of sin and unbelief found new expression in every age, with the leaven of previous ages continuing to manifest and grow in each succeeding age. The horsemen of the first four seals represent the first four millennia of mankind's history, between the time of Adam and the birth of Christ. They could properly be called the Four Horsemen of the Old Testament.

With the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the gates to the spiritual Kingdom of God were re-opened. Jesus restored man's relationship with the Father lost by Adam. This was a broadside into the Kingdom of Darkness, marking the commencement of a new spiritual era. The Dragon's response was the brutal persecution of the followers of Christ in a no-holds-barred attempt to stop the spread of the Gospel. The fifth seal symbolizes this age of persecution. The Gospel continued to spread though, accompanied by new forms of persecution and tribulation.

Like the leaven of previous ages, the physical and spiritual persecution that characterized the fifth millennium would continue to increase throughout the church age into the sixth millennium. This will only intensify as Christ's return draws near. During this millennium, the violence, famine, sickness, war and persecution of the first five millennia continue to manifest in increasing virulent forms. Just before Christ's return, the leaven of six ages of mankind will have worked its way through the whole of planet earth. The moral state of mankind at the end of the age will ensure that the earth is well deserving of God's judgment. Just as the first seal revealed events at the start of the first millennium, the sixth seal shows the signs that occur at the conclusion of the sixth. Rather than introducing any new leaven, the sixth millennium is characterized by great signs that occur at the end of the age, the terminal result of sin and the decay of the earth's systems set in motion at the Fall, and aggravated during the intervening millennia. Science, of course, will provide rational explanations for unfolding events.

Revelation 6

And when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals I saw it, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, as if in a voice of thunder, “Come.” And I looked and a white horse appeared, and its rider carried a bow; and a victor’s wreath was given to him; and he went out conquering and in order to conquer. And when the Lamb broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come.” And another horse came out—a fiery-red one; and power was given to its rider to take peace from the earth, and to cause men to kill one another; and a great sword was given to him.

When the Lamb broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come.” I looked, and a black horse appeared, its rider carrying a balance [scales] in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice speaking in the midst of the four living creatures, and saying, “A quart of wheat for a shilling, and three quarts of barley for a shilling; but do not injure either the oil or the wine.” When the Lamb broke the fourth seal I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come.” I looked and a pale-colored horse appeared. Its rider’s name was Death, and Hades came close behind him; and authority was given to them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword or with famine or pestilence or by means of the wild beasts of the earth.

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw at the foot of the altar the souls of those whose lives had been sacrificed because of the word of God and of the testimony which they had given. And now in loud voices they cried out, saying, “How long, O Sovereign Lord, the holy One and the true, dost Thou delay judgment and the taking of vengeance upon the inhabitants of the earth for our blood?” And there was given to each of them a long white robe, and they were bidden to wait patiently for a short time longer, until the full number of their fellow bondservants should also complete—namely of their brethren who were soon to be killed just as they had been.

When the Lamb broke the sixth seal I looked, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became as dark as sackcloth, and the whole disc of the moon became like blood. The stars in the sky also fell to the earth, as when a fig-tree, upon being shaken by a gale of wind, casts its unripe figs to the ground. The sky too passed away, as if a scroll were being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. The kings of the earth and the great men, the military chiefs, the wealthy and the powerful—all, whether slaves or free men—hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, while they called to the mountains and the rocks, saying, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb; for the day of His anger—that great day—has come, and who is able to stand?”

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Revelation 6 Commentary

v. 1 And when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals I saw it, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, as if in a voice of thunder, “Come.” The title deed contains a description of the earth as it existed before the Fall, in a state of perfection before sin started corrupting the world. The Garden of Eden where God had placed man was not an isolated paradise in a hostile world; it was a small fertile valley in a wonderful, perfect earth. It was the only time in earth’s history when there was neither violence nor war, no famine, no disease, suffering, persecution or even death, quite a different world from the one mankind currently inhabits. (It has been claimed that if the four horsemen of the Apocalypse were to suddenly appear now, no one would even notice a difference.)

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day. Thus, the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.” Gen. 1:31 NIV

v. 2 And I looked and a white horse appeared, and its rider carried a bow; and a victor’s wreath [NIV, KJV – *crown*] was given to him; and he went out conquering and in order to conquer. The first seal reveals the great commission God gave to Adam. The first millennium (approx. 4000 BC to 3000 BC) was characterized by Adam’s fulfillment of his commission to populate and rule the planet. As the first *created* son of God (Luke 3: 38), Adam rides a white horse *as a type of Christ* (Rom. 5: 14), to conquer and rule the earth. (As the only *begotten* Son of God, Jesus fulfills the type of Adam. In Revelation 19, he is mounted on a white steed, returning as conqueror to become ruler of the earth.) The rider on the white horse here has a crown because Adam was given spiritual and physical rule over the earth: “*let them have dominion over... all the earth.*” (Gen. 1:26) As father of mankind, Adam rides forth with a bow to shoot his sons as arrows far and wide over the land, propagating the human race: “*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.*” (Gen. 1:28) In the pictorial Hebrew language, arrows are equated with sons, the perpetuation of one’s strength.

Because of the Fall, Adam’s progeny carried a fallen nature stained by original sin. Rather than planting trees of righteousness throughout the earth as God originally intended, the fulfillment of the great commission resulted in spreading seeds that would grow mostly stunted trees with twisted branches. Seven generations after Cain, Lamech boasted to his wives that like Cain, he too had killed a man. The corruption of his soul is revealed by the fact that he did not go to God to plead for mercy as Cain did, but instead bragged that he would be even greater than Cain. As the world spins towards final judgment, the sons of Adam continue to increase, sowing the seeds of a corrupt human nature, more than six billion strong over the earth.

v. 3-4 And when the Lamb broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come.” And another horse came out—a fiery-red one; and power was given to its rider to take peace from the earth, and to cause men to kill one another; and a great sword was given to him. The second millennium (3000 BC to 2000 BC) was characterized by the red horse of violence riding throughout the land. During this age, violence grew so prevalent that God destroyed the earth with a flood, some three and a half centuries before the end of the millennium. He was forced to cut this age short to preserve his plan of salvation. When the rain started falling, only eight souls had not corrupted their way. *So God*

said to Noah, *"I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them."* (Gen. 6: 13) Today, a culture of violence once again covers the earth like a cloak.

v. 5-6 When the Lamb broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come." I looked, and a black horse appeared, its rider carrying a balance [scales] in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice speaking in the midst of the four living creatures, and saying, "A quart of wheat for a shilling, and three quarts of barley for a shilling; but do not injure either the oil or the wine."

The third millennium brought with it the specter of famine. The color black is associated in Scripture with famine: "Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine." (Lam. 5:10) Previously unknown on earth, famines were the result of droughts caused by changing weather patterns following the Flood. Prior to that time, there had been no need for rain. The earth existed in a hothouse environment due to the high water content of the atmosphere, with water coming from streams and rising from the ground as fog (Gen. 2:5-6). After the Flood, crop production depended on rainfall, which was very irregular at the time due to the new weather patterns. According to the geological record, this situation existed for few hundred years before weather and rainfall patterns stabilized.

Secular history and geological evidence establish the first part of this age (2000 BC to 1000 BC) as undergoing numerous and widespread droughts, often lasting several years at a time. Scripture records the first famine in Abraham's time, around 2000 BC. More droughts followed: *"And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham."* (Gen. 26:1) Scripture records the great famine in Egypt during the time of Joseph when the spring and summer grain crops failed due to seven years' drought. Yet there was no recorded shortage of wine or oil during this time. Because grapes and olives come to fruition at the end of long hot summers and require very little rainfall, summer droughts would not have substantially affected the production, and therefore the price, of wine and oil.

Natural catastrophes, desertification and changing weather patterns have ensured that famine remains a problem today. As improving diets in third world countries demand more meat production and cropland is converted to grow bio-fuel, global stockpiles of grain are rapidly diminishing. Once again, climate change is affecting the earth. Economic distress sends the price of food beyond the ability of people in poor nations to afford it. After the last large earthquake in Haiti, it came to light that due to the global increase in the cost of rice, many of its vast impoverished class regularly mix their meager food supply with dirt to make it last longer. These developments assure that famine, at one time alleviated by achievements in modern agriculture, will once again affect significant areas of the planet.

v. 7-8 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come." I looked and a pale-colored horse appeared. Its rider's name was Death, and Hades came close behind him; and authority was given to them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword or with famine or pestilence or by means of the wild beasts of the earth. Shortly after the Great Flood, men began to congregate in the great cities of Babylon and Nineveh. From this small start, other cities grew and power was consolidated over larger and larger areas by petty kings. The lust for power and wealth drove such men to expand their kingdoms through the power of the sword, the traditional symbol of the strong ruling over the weak. Thus, the violence that came to the fore in the second millennium became widespread during the fourth, organized by men claiming a divine right to rule.

The fourth millennium (1,000 BC to 1 BC) was characterized by the rise of great empires, as mighty kings moved vast armies across continents to establish ever-larger domains. It was an era of previously unknown misery as armies of tens, and then hundreds, of thousands marched across the land, stripping it of food and laying waste to entire cities. Great battles left destruction and disease in their wake, filling conquered territories with corpses. Because people fled before the invaders, few were left to bury the masses of dead. Fields and streams became polluted and diseases spread when local populations returned, while predatory animals multiplied to maintain the natural balance. The first recorded plague in the Bible, described in the fifth chapter of 1st Samuel, occurred at the beginning of this era.

Because Satan's previous attempt to dominate the world had been so successful, God set a limit on the power of any one empire. The division of the earth and the confusion of languages after the Flood ensured that no more than approximately a quarter of the earth would be under the sway of any one empire at a given time. Competing kingdoms, motivated by opposing cultural and ideological beliefs, maintained a balance of power so no single empire would be able to rule the world.

The leaven of the fourth horseman continues to grow. Two thousand years after the end of the fourth millennium, national and multi-national conflicts still occur on a regular basis, despite a united world assembly devoted to peace. Satan still seeks to rule the entire planet, plotting his next move to bring the whole earth under his dominion. The economic and military pieces are even now being moved into place to establish a global kingdom under the control of the Dragon and his appointed rulers. The coming global economic crash will enable a transfer of power and better control of national and local populations, while the international conflicts that follow will set the stage for implementation of the one world government under the control of the beast of Revelation 13.

9-11 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw at the foot of (KJV – *under*) the altar the souls of those whose lives had been sacrificed because of the word of God and of the testimony which they had given. And now in loud voices they cried out, saying, "How long, O Sovereign Lord, the holy One and the true, dost Thou delay judgment and the taking of vengeance upon the inhabitants of the earth for our blood?" And there was given to each of them a long white robe, and they were bidden to wait patiently for a short time longer, until the full number of their fellow bondservants should also complete—namely of their brethren who were soon to be killed just as they had been.

A catch basin was placed under the bronze altar in the temple to collect the blood that flowed from the sacrifices. The image of the souls under the altar testifies that they are martyrs, their blood sacrificed for the Gospel of the kingdom. Their prayer is for justice, that their deaths at the hand of the wicked will be recompensed when God settles accounts at the end of the age. The answer to their prayers will be seen in the coming seven bowl judgments of God.

The usual treatment of the fifth seal martyrs is to view them as somehow having less dramatic importance than the horsemen of the first four seals. No common thread is seen between them, since the horsemen are 'the bad guys' and the martyrs are 'the good guys.' *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, for example, states of the fifth seal: "There is no... new event predicted; but the whole is intended to comfort the followers of God under their persecutions, and to encourage them to bear up under their distresses." Quite the opposite is true. All the seals carry the same weight, each one revealing different manifestations of the leaven of sin through the ages. (The first and sixth vary slightly in that they show just the beginning of the first and the end

of the sixth millennia.) The persecution of Christian martyrs is in fact a new event that started only after the crucifixion of Christ. The martyrs are just as significant as the horsemen, describing the major characteristic of an entire millennium. The fifth seal signifies the leaven of a great tribulation and persecution of the saints, which continues, like the leaven of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, to the end of the sixth age.

When the Dragon's plan to discredit Jesus with a criminal's death backfired, he turned to persecuting his followers in an attempt to stop the spread of the Gospel. However, instead of Jesus' followers being silenced, they became world-class witnesses to the truth under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Persecution and tribulation became the prominent spiritual characteristic of the fifth age of man (AD 1 to 1000). The wholesale slaughter of believers by Roman Emperors is legendary, but these are by no means the only persecutions suffered by Christians during this millennium. The spread of Islam resulted in the conquest and subjugation of portions of several continents, resulting in much tribulation and the apostatizing of entire Christian communities. The persecution of God's people, Christians and Jews, has continued through the sixth millennium, becoming more systematic and widespread as Christ's return draws near.

v. 12-13 When the Lamb broke the sixth seal I looked, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became as dark as sackcloth, and the whole disc of the moon became like blood. The stars in the sky also fell to the earth, as when a fig-tree, upon being shaken by a gale of wind, casts its unripe figs to the ground. The fall of man in the Garden of Eden had repercussions not just for mankind, but also for the earth itself, as Creation became subject to decay. (Rom. 8:19-22) Just as the opening of the first seal depicts events that occurred at the beginning of the first millennium, so the sixth seal shows events that mark the end of the sixth. The sixth seal reveals the unexpected consequences of Adam's disobedience with signs in the heavens above that portend changes in the earth below.

Due to the spread of wickedness after the Fall, the Lord destroyed the earth with water in order to preserve his plan of redeeming mankind. The massive release of the waters above and under the earth resulted in fundamental changes to the ecosystem. Famine was not the only consequence of the Flood as the earth lost the vaporous water barrier that had protected it from cosmic radiation and allowed man to live for hundreds of years. The resulting division of the earth (Gen. 10:25) resulted in new stresses in the earth's tectonic plates. Although the earth is in relative balance today, it is not as perfect as it was when it was created. The great earthquake and the rending of the atmosphere described in verses 12-14 are the end result of geologic forces set in motion by the Flood, an indirect result of the Fall.

While the geologic forces that will result in these final signs continued to build, the sixth age of man (AD 1000 to 2000) also brought an increase in the scope of sin and wickedness. The violence, famines, plagues, wars and persecution of the first five millennia grew in intensity and severity as the world's population increased and the weapons of warfare became ever more advanced and deadly. Famine and disease grew more widespread and religious persecution intensified. Towards the end of the millennium, as the nations of the world moved towards the acquisition of global wealth and power, the planet has suffered potentially disastrous radiological, chemical, and biological pollution. At the end of the age, all of this leaven, from population pressures to famine, war, and plagues will come to its full expression at the end of the age.

The sixth millennium saw the warfare of the Crusades, the Ottoman invasions of Eastern Europe, continuing European wars, the Bubonic plague, the Inquisition, the violent subjugation of entire races to establish colonies, and both internecine and international wars that spanned continents and decades. In the twentieth century alone, tens of millions of people died through war, famine and disease, while martyrs for Christ numbered in the multiplied millions. The Twentieth Century hosted the 1918 flu at the end of World War I that killed 50 million people worldwide, with another 35 million military and civilian deaths occurring in World War II. Persecution under Nazi and Communist regimes took the lives of several million Jews and tens of millions of Christians. Conditions continue to deteriorate rather than improve as the Day of Christ draws near.

The sixth seal signs are not a new subject in Scripture, having been foretold by several Old Testament prophets. They are associated in numerous prophecies with the Day of the Lord and the salvation of Israel from her enemies. These signs are not the only ones to precede the return of Christ; they are just the last and most spectacular ones. They are the result of great terrestrial and cosmic forces that will overtake the earth just prior to the return of Christ.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke record Jesus' warning of continuing persecutions, earthquakes, plagues, famines and wars that will precede the sixth seal signs. The earth has seldom in its long history recorded the great number of earthquakes, plagues, wars, volcanic eruptions, and widespread violence that exist today. To illustrate just the first of these, the number of recorded earthquakes has been rising dramatically. The average number of total earthquakes, both large and small, first exceeded 10,000 a year in 1984, according to the USGS. The annual number of all earthquakes between 1980 and 2007 went from 7348 to 29672, a 400% increase in 27 years. The media largely ignores the great increase in the number of quakes, and society seems to have become accustomed to hearing about them.

It appears that the USGS has its own take on this subject. This government agency answers the question of whether earthquakes are increasing by deflecting the public's attention to the number of earthquakes over 7.0 magnitude, stating that these have remained constant since the beginning of the last century. However, USGS data shows that the total number of earthquakes is in fact increasing: The average number of quakes globally of all magnitudes, from 1980 to 1882 was 7,308; for the 1980s it was 10,667; for the 1990s the average was 19,678; from 2000 to 2007 the average was 28,213; for 2003 to 2007, it was 30,466.

v. 14 The sky too passed away, as if a scroll were being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. In the original Greek, the sky is not described as departing, but as being "rent," as a fabric might be torn in two. This tearing is illustrated by the analogy of a scroll being rolled up. The description is consistent with what would occur with a sudden physical shifting of the earth's poles. Viewed from space, one would see the earth's crust moving, as the mantle broke free and rotated about its molten core. Geographic landmarks such as islands and mountains will be 'removed from their places.'

Standing on earth, this event would look much different. One would have the impression that it was the stars that were moving rather than the earth. At the locations where the sun was rising or setting, the sky would appear as though it were actually being "rolled up," as the stars were suddenly replaced with sunlight and vice versa. The last days' geographic pole shift described in this verse was prophesied long ago as a sign of the Day of the Lord.

"Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger." (Isa. 13:13) "The

floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls (KJV – swoons) – never to rise again.” (Isa. 24:18-20) “Beware, the Lord will empty the earth, split it open and turn it upside down, and scatter its inhabitants.” Isa. 24:1 New English Bible

Luke records an additional natural effect that would precede the physical pole shift described in this passage, “the roaring and tossing of the sea.” The disturbance in earth’s gravitational field and the raising of earth’s core temperature that precedes a pole shift will result in severe storms and other noticeable events, as the physical pole shift is preceded by a magnetic one. Initial signs include changes in temperature, weather patterns, and ocean currents, melting icecaps, and rising ocean levels. Earth changes are becoming more noticeable. Alaskan islands are being inundated, mini tornadoes have been reported on both coasts of the United States, and hail the size of softballs has repeatedly fallen in Australia. Airports in the higher latitudes must repaint the numbers on runways every few years as the increasing magnetic polar shift results in changes to compass landing bearings. The earth will experience more super storms like the one that lashed Europe and North America in January 2007, causing 80 to 100 foot waves at sea.

“There will be signs in sun, moon, and stars; and on earth anguish among the nations in their bewilderment at the roaring of the sea and its billows; while men’s hearts are fainting for fear, and for anxious expectation of what is coming on the world. For the forces which control the heavens will be disordered and disturbed.” Luke 21:25-26

v. 15-17 The kings of the earth and the great men, the military chiefs, the wealthy and the powerful—all, whether slaves or free men—hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, while they called to the mountains and the rocks, saying, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb; for the day of His anger—that great day—has come, and who is able to stand?”

The desire to hide from judgment is the same reaction Adam and Eve had when God came looking for them in the garden after they had sinned. All men, regardless of social position, are in terror when catastrophic events strike the earth and changes become apparent in the order of the heavens. Scientists have told us that such cataclysmic events could never occur with such rapidity, but only come on a slow evolutionary scale. When mega-quakes rock the earth, man will lose faith in the belief that science will save him.

“Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.” Isa. 2:19 NIV

The Feast of Firstfruits

Revelation 7

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”

– 1 Corinthians 15: 20-23, 42-44

Background

The feast of Firstfruits was celebrated on the second day of Unleavened Bread. The Jews were consecrated by God in the desert outside Egypt to be his holy people, set apart from the rest of the nations for his purposes. This group was the first fruits of the future Hebrew nation, sanctifying those who came later. Once Israel settled in the Promised Land, the feast of Firstfruits celebrated the start of the barley harvest. The theme of this feast was therefore *initial consecration*, the dedication of the first harvest to the Lord. The harvest was from God, so the first fruits of the crop were set aside as holy to him in thanksgiving. The first few barley sheaves were lifted up by the priest at the altar and consecrated to the Lord. This consecration of the first fruits offering sanctified the whole crop. Jesus fulfilled this feast when he rose on the morning of Firstfruits in fulfillment of the Scriptures. By his resurrection to new life, he became the first fruits of the Resurrection of the dead, consecrating all who would follow him.

As part of the same spring festival, the consecration of Firstfruits complements the initial deliverance of Passover and the cleansing theme of Unleavened Bread. The feast of Firstfruits reminded the people that they had not only been delivered from bondage and cleansed from the worldly influences of Egypt, they had been chosen from among the nations and consecrated to the Lord, just as the Levites were consecrated and set apart to serve in the tabernacle. Israel’s consecration was based on the covenant relationship they had entered into with the Lord at Mount Sinai, agreeing to serve him as his chosen people. In return, they received God’s promise that obedience to the laws of the covenant would result in blessings on them and their land and deliverance from their enemies.

The feast of Firstfruits is the start of a period of consecration. It is fulfilled seven weeks later at the feast of Pentecost. Both Firstfruits and Pentecost were first fruits harvest festivals, characterized by a wave offering of the first grain crop of the season. These two feasts are associated with the two tabernacle furnishings that stood directly across from each other in the sanctuary: the table of the bread of the Presence, and the lampstand. Together they symbolized the Word of God illuminated by the quickening light of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 7 – Feast: Firstfruits

Theme: Consecration

Revelation 7 presents the thematic fulfillment of Firstfruits in the pattern of the feasts that overlays the book of Revelation. Reflecting God's placement of the feast of Firstfruits during the week of Unleavened Bread, the fulfillment of Firstfruits in Revelation 7 interrupts the flow of chapters 6, 8 and 9. The cleansing theme of Unleavened Bread that began with identifying the leaven in the six seals in Revelation 6 will be picked up again in chapters 8 and 9, describing the six trumpet judgments that fall on the leaven revealed in chapter 6.

Revelation 7 presents a dual firstfruits offering to the Lord. 144,000 Jews are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Like any firstfruits offering, they are worthy. As the firstfruits of all Israel, the 144,000 will ensure the sanctification of the rest of the crop, *"and so all Israel will be saved."* (Rom. 11:26) After this consecration we are shown a second first fruits group, the bride of Christ, the "firstfruits of all he created." (Jas. 1:18) Unlike the 144,000, which are sealed at one time, everyone in the great multitude was consecrated and sealed with the Holy Spirit over the previous two millennia when they came to a saving belief in Jesus.

Revelation 7

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, and holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind should blow over the earth or the sea or upon any tree. And I saw another angel coming from the east and carrying a seal belonging to the ever-living God. He called in a loud voice to the four angels whose work it was to injure the earth and the sea. "Injure neither land nor sea nor trees," he said, "until we have sealed the bondservants of our God upon their foreheads." When the sealing was finished, I heard how many were sealed out of the tribes of the descendants of Israel.

They were 144,000. Of the tribe of Judah, 12,000 were sealed; Of the tribe of Reuben, 12,000; Of the tribe of Gad, 12,000; Of the tribe of Asher, 12,000; Of the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000; Of the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000; Of the tribe of Symeon, 12,000; Of the tribe of Levi, 12,000; Of the tribe of Issachar, 12,000; Of the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000; Of the tribe of Joseph, 12,000; Of the tribe of Benjamin, 12,000.

After this I looked, and a vast host appeared which it was impossible for anyone to count, gathered out of every nation and from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in long white robes, and carrying palm-branches in their hands. In loud voices they were exclaiming, "It is to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb, that we owe our salvation!" All the angels were standing in a circle round the throne and round the Elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces in front of the throne and worshipped God. "Even so!" they cried: "The blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanks and the honor and the power and the might are to be ascribed to our God, until the Ages of the Ages! Even so!"

Then, addressing me, one of the Elders said, "Who are these people clothed in the long white robes? And where have they come from?" "My lord, you know," I replied. "They are those," he said, "who have just passed through the great distress [tribulation], and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they stand before the very throne of God, and render Him service, day after day and night after night, in His sanctuary, and He who is sitting upon the throne will shelter them in His tent. They will never again be hungry or thirsty, and never again will the sun or any scorching heat trouble them. For the Lamb who is in front of the throne will be their Shepherd, and will guide them to watersprings of Life, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

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Revelation 7 Commentary

v. 1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, and holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind should blow over the earth or the sea or upon any tree. The four winds generally represent scattering, tribulation and judgment. This is therefore the calm before the coming storm. Although this description of four corners sounds like the four angels are at the farthest possible distance from each other, they are actually gathered together in one place. The four corners are not to be perceived from the perspective of a two-dimensional plane or square, but rather in the context of a three dimensional sphere, which is how one would see the earth from heaven. On a sphere, four corners come together to meet in one spot, just as the single meeting point of the states of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico is called the "four corners" area.

This is not just any four corners of the earth, however. The meeting place of these four corners pinpoints a location of remarkable importance in the history of man, from its simple beginnings to its troubled end. Its location is described in Genesis 2: "*A river watering the garden flowed from Eden, and from there it divided; it had four head streams... the Pishon... the Gihon... the Tigris... and the Euphrates.*" The four corners are located at the confluence of these four rivers, just outside the valley where God placed Adam, his newly created son. While the original location of two of these rivers is unknown today, the other two, the Tigris and the Euphrates, feed the great river valley known as the Fertile Crescent in the land of Mesopotamia, the center of early civilization.

The singular location of the four corners is confirmed in Revelation 9, where these same four powerful angels are found together at the Euphrates River. In Revelation 16, these four angels dry up the Euphrates to allow invading troops to march against Jerusalem. The same four corners designation appears again in Rev. 20: 8, where it is described as the location of the tribes of Gog and Magog that seek to destroy Israel at the end of the seventh millennium.

v. 2-8 And I saw another angel coming from the east and carrying a seal belonging to the ever-living God. He called in a loud voice to the four angels whose work it was to injure the earth and the sea. "Injure neither land nor sea nor trees," he said, "until we have sealed the bondservants of our God upon their foreheads." When the

sealing was finished, I heard how many were sealed out of the tribes of the descendants of Israel. They were 144,000. Of the tribe of Judah, 12,000 were sealed; Of the tribe of Reuben, 12,000; Of the tribe of Gad, 12,000; Of the tribe of Asher, 12,000; Of the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000; Of the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000; Of the tribe of Symeon, 12,000; Of the tribe of Levi, 12,000; Of the tribe of Issachar, 12,000; Of the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000; Of the tribe of Joseph, 12,000; Of the tribe of Benjamin, 12,000. The text does not specify the kind of protection provided by God's seal, whether it is spiritual, physical or both. It is reminiscent of Ezekiel 9: 4, in which a protecting seal was placed on the foreheads of those *"who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in [Jerusalem]."*

Some of the numbers in Revelation are clearly figurative, such as the enormous dimensions of New Jerusalem, and some are literal, such as the seven trumpets and four living creatures around God's throne. The number 144,000 could lend itself to either interpretation. It is 1,000 times the foundational number of 12 squared, lending weight to a symbolic interpretation. However it may be literal since the 12 tribes are named, and 12,000 from each tribe is not an entirely unrealistic number.

The twelve tribes listed here are not the same as the twelve children of Jacob or even the twelve tribes that received an allocation of land under Joshua. There is some speculation as to the reason for this. After the conquest of the Promised Land, Dan and Ephraim became synonymous with idolatry and backsliding in Israel. This may be why Joseph replaces Ephraim, and Levi replaces Dan in this list. Both Joseph and Levi were counted as being especially faithful to God. This substitution is consistent with the requirement of worth demanded of a firstfruits offering.

The 144, 000 are specifically described as "firstfruits" in Rev. 14: 4. This can be confirmed by examining them in light of the four identifying characteristics of firstfruits offerings: 1) they must be found worthy, without blemish or fault; 2) they are consecrated as holy to the Lord; 3) they are a small portion of the crop that follows; and 4) they sanctify the whole crop. The 144, 000 fulfill these four requirements. That they are worthy is confirmed by the fact that they are *"without fault before the throne of God."* (Rev 14:5) They are consecrated when the seal of God is put on their foreheads, they are a small number compared to all Israel, and their consecration sanctifies the whole crop, for *"all Israel will be saved."*

v. 9-12 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (KJV)

Opinions as to the identity of the great multitude vary greatly. As Famed 19th century Revelation researcher and international lecturer Joseph Seiss observed, "A greater chaos of opinions and fancies is scarcely to be found on any other distinct subject presented in the Scriptures." Unfortunately, it seems as though most of the conclusions as to the identity of the great multitude appear to be drawn less from objective analysis than from a tendency to support one's existing eschatological beliefs. The first step in attempting to objectively identify the great multitude is to place their appearance within the perspective of Revelation's overall dramatic development and the thematic pattern of the feasts.

The thematic structure of Revelation would indicate that, like the 144,000, the great multitude is a first fruits offering to God. The 144,000 and the great multitude are divided into two separate first fruits groups. The one is composed of Jews, the other of Gentiles. The two groups are consecrated, or sealed, at different times and in different ways. As Gentile populations far outnumber the Jews, the great multitude greatly exceeds the 144,000. The identification of the multitude as a first fruits offering can be confirmed by examining whether they meet the characteristics of firstfruits offerings. Like the 144,000, they must 1) be found worthy, having no blemish or fault, 2) be consecrated as holy to the Lord, 3) be a small portion of the whole crop that follows, and 4) sanctify the whole crop.

The great multitude dressed in white is without fault or blemish, having “*washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*” (v. 14) They are obviously consecrated, as “*they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.*” (v. 15) Since this is a “great multitude” (Gr. – *ochlos polos*), in order for them to be a small firstfruits offering, the crop that follows must be a very, very great multitude. This requirement is also satisfied. Just as Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection (1Cor. 15: 20-23), the great multitude in white robes are the firstfruits of the entire harvest of everyone who has ever lived. However, they cannot sanctify the whole crop of Gentiles, as not everyone is saved, any more than Jesus’ sacrifice is able to save all men, due to free will.

“In accordance with His will He made us His children through the Message of the truth, so that we might, in a sense, be the Firstfruits of the things which He has created.”
Jas. 1:18

The dramatic development of Revelation reinforces the probable identification of the first fruits great multitude as the bride of Christ. Chapter four introduced several main characters of Revelation. Notably missing were the Lamb, the Dragon, and the Lamb’s bride. The Lamb was introduced in the following chapter, and the Dragon in Revelation 12. Yet in what seems like an odd development for a fairly major character, no direct mention is made of the bride until Revelation 19. The fact that the bride is an important character in the drama of redemption leads to the possibility that there might at the very least be an earlier reference to her. This may well be the case here with the appearance of the great multitude of Revelation 7. The great multitude is seen again in Revelation 19, fulfilling the function of the chorus, providing an objective explanation of events, even stating that the bride has made herself ready. The same words, *ochlos polos*, are used to describe the great multitude there as here in Revelation 7. Just who is the great multitude? They are not angelic beings, but saints of God, since they are coming out of the great tribulation (v. 14). Since the saints that comprise the bride of Christ, this lends weight to the conclusion that the great multitude is in fact the bride.

Several additional contextual observations can be made, strengthening the identification of the great multitude as the bride of Christ.

1) *The great multitude is wearing long white robes and carrying palm branches.* Aside from heavenly beings, the saints are the only ones given white robes in heaven. Besides the great multitude in chapter 7, only the martyrs under the altar (Rev. 6) and the bride of the Lamb (Rev. 19) wear them. Palm branches are associated with joy and triumph, the hallmarks of the redeemed in heaven.

2) *The great multitude is from every nation and race.* The Scriptural designation of a group as coming from every nation and race is always an identification of the Gentile nations.

This is consistent with the multitude being the New Testament church, as the Gospel was to be “*preached in all the world for a witness to all nations.*” (Mt. 24:14)

3) *The number of the multitude is great.* This great number tends to rule out the composition of this group being limited to a particular segment of saints, such as martyrs. The great number of the multitude is much more consistent with all Christian believers, a sort of group portrait of the bride of Christ.

4) *The great multitude is standing before the throne.* This reinforces the identification of this group as saints. As Paul states: “To be absent from the body is to be present with Christ.” Like the martyrs under the altar, they are still awaiting the full completion of their number when John sees them.

5) *The great multitude cannot be counted.* While this appears to indicate that there are so many that they are uncountable, there may be a different meaning here as well. Since John has no problem knowing the number of the 200 million strong army of Revelation 9, it may be that the reason “no man could number (them)” is because God does not permit them to be counted. This could be a reflection of the Lord’s Old Testament prohibition against the king numbering the people of Israel, since God’s people belong to him, not to their leaders. Only the Lamb knows all of his wife’s qualities, and that includes her number. Another possibility also exists. No man or angel, or even Jesus himself knows the day of his return, but only the Father (Mk. 13:32). This occurs only when the full number of Gentiles has been saved. If anyone knew the full number of the great multitude, he would also know the time of Jesus’ return, and so would God’s enemies; therefore the multitude is uncountable.

v. 13-14 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (KJV) The elder asks John two questions regarding this group: who they are, and where they come from, and then answers his own questions. His first answer addresses where they come from. Second, he addresses who they are: they are the redeemed, having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. It is the angel’s first answer that has created some controversy.

Whence came they? The use of the past tense in the KJV and NIV and others is incorrect here. Greek grammar includes a range of voices, tenses and auxiliary words in verb construction. In the original Greek, the form of the verb “to come” used in this passage can be translated only into the imperfect or present tense, both of which denote an incomplete, or continuing action. The correct translation is “Whence *come* they?” or better, “From where are they *coming*?” The redeemed are therefore still coming to heaven when John sees them. The great multitude does not come as a single body, since it is still continuing to arrive. This continuing action is correctly reflected in numerous Bible translations, such as the ASV, NKJV, Darby, Young, etc.

(They are coming) out of great tribulation. The term “the great tribulation” is popularly assumed to describe the period of judgments that immediately precede Jesus’ second coming. But does it? This conclusion is partially based on the mistaken belief that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are part of God’s judgments at the end of the age. If this were true, then the saints would be coming up from the tribulation started by the horsemen. However, when viewed through the thematic pattern of the feasts, it is clear that the four horsemen do not represent end times’ judgments, but instead a symbolic representation of the first four millennia of mankind’s history. Thus, the end times’ judgments have not even started when the great multitude is seen

continuing to arrive in heaven. Judgment does not in fact commence until Revelation 8, when the angel hurls fire on the earth with the blowing of the first trumpet.

Therefore, since the saints are coming “out of the great tribulation,” this term must describe a period of suffering and persecution that starts *before* the end times’ judgments of Revelation. Such a broad interpretation of the great tribulation is not a new idea. Support for the inclusion of the entire New Testament church age in the great tribulation can be found in more than one reputable source. After presenting several verses describing the tribulation of the saints, O. T. Allis’ concludes in *Prophecy and the Church*: “If it is to be the lot of Christians generally that through ‘many tribulations’ they are to enter into the kingdom, it is quite appropriate to refer to this entire period as ‘the great tribulation.’”²

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Jn. 16:33 “We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22

This broad concept of the great tribulation is supported by the symbolism of the martyrs under the altar in the fifth seal. In the same way that violence characterized the second millennium to such a degree that it caused God to destroy the world with water, the entire fifth millennium is characterized by the shed blood of the saints. Since the leaven of each age continues into successive ones, this great tribulation continues right up to the time of Christ’s return. The “great” in great tribulation (*megas or megale*), is not limited to denoting intensity; it can also convey the sense of lasting a long time, in this case roughly two millennia. Given this fact and the large number of the multitude, the best explanation is that John is seeing the passing of the saints one at a time to be with Christ in heaven, starting with Christ’s founding of the church and ending with his return to earth and defeat of the Dragon.

v. 15-17 For this reason they [the multitude] stand before the very throne of God, and render Him service, day after day and night after night, in His sanctuary, and He who is sitting upon the throne will shelter them in His tent. They will never again be hungry or thirsty, and never again will the sun or any scorching heat trouble them. For the Lamb who is in front of the throne will be their Shepherd, and will guide them to watersprings of Life, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes. The description of the great multitude here reinforces their identification in Revelation 21:4 as the bride of Christ: *“(God) will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death shall be no more; nor sorrow, nor wail of woe, nor pain; for the first things have passed away.”*

Six Trumpets of Unleavened Bread

Revelation 8 & 9

“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

— James 4: 8-10

Revelation 8 & 9 – Feast: Unleavened Bread

Theme: God’s Cleansing Judgment on the leaven

The previous opening of the seals in Revelation 6 revealed the leaven of sin and unbelief introduced during six millennia of mankind’s history. Having digressed in chapter 7 to cover the theme of the feast of Firstfruits during the week of Unleavened Bread, the present two chapters return to this weeklong feast, describing the coming six trumpet judgments on the previously revealed leaven that permeates the earth at the end of the age.

The six trumpets of Revelation 8 & 9 judge the leaven of six millennia of sin and unbelief. Before this judgment can occur, the seventh seal is broken. Because the seventh millennium will be under the righteous reign of Christ and the saints, the opening of this seal is greeted with silence. No leaven is revealed, so there will be no cleansing judgment on this millennium. Therefore, only the first six trumpets are needed to fulfill the feast of Unleavened Bread. These trumpet judgments are related to God’s creative work, with each trumpet cursing the blessing of one of the first six days of Creation. Because the purpose of God’s trumpet judgments is to bring mankind to repentance, they are partial in nature, affecting only a third part of God’s Creation.

Opinions about whether the six trumpet judgments are literal or symbolic have changed through the centuries. A literal interpretation of mountains and fiery stars falling to earth has generally been viewed as a remote possibility, even in modern times. However, the world’s opinion regarding the probability and results of encounters with cosmic objects was forever changed with the impact of the Shoemaker-Levy comet into Jupiter in 1994. A great deal was learned from observation of this collision, opening the eyes of the scientific community to the chain of events a comet strike would precipitate. Two worldwide programs now monitor the night skies 24-7 in an attempt to track and anticipate the threat of possible earth collisions with objects from space. NASA has even undertaken long-range missions designed to test the feasibility of intercepting and changing the direction of earthbound objects with nuclear weapons. The possibility that the trumpet judgments of Revelation may describe the consequences of an actual comet or asteroid strike can no longer be discounted.

Revelation 8

When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who are in the presence of God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood close to the altar, carrying a censer of gold; and abundance of incense was given to him that he might place it with the prayers of all God's people upon the golden altar which was in front of the throne. And the smoke of the incense rose into the presence of God from the angel's hand, and mingled with the prayers of His people. So the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and flung it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder, and voices, and flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made preparations for blowing them. The first blew his trumpet; and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, falling upon the earth; and a third part of the earth was burnt up, and a third part of the trees and all the green grass. The second angel blew his trumpet; and what seemed to be a great mountain, all ablaze with fire, was hurled into the sea; and a third part of the sea was turned into blood. And a third part of the creatures that were in the sea—those that had life—died; and a third part of the ships were destroyed. The third angel blew his trumpet; and there fell from Heaven a great star, which was on fire like a torch. It fell upon a third part of the rivers and upon the springs of water. The name of the star is 'Wormwood;' and a third part of the waters were turned into wormwood, and vast numbers of the people died from drinking the water, because it had become bitter. Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet; and a curse fell upon a third part of the sun, a third part of the moon, and a third part of the stars, so that a third part of them were darkened and for a third of the day, and also of the night, there was no light.

Then I looked, and I heard a solitary eagle crying in a loud voice, as it flew across the sky, "Alas, alas, alas, for the inhabitants of the earth, because of the significance of the remaining trumpets which the three angels are to blow!"

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Revelation 8 Commentary

v. 1 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour. Revelation 8 picks up where chapter six left off, with the Lamb unsealing the scroll. Since each seal covers approximately a thousand years of earth's history, the seventh seal represents the millennial reign of Christ. All of heaven waits for any witnesses to come forward with evidence of heaven that can be charged to the seventh millennium. This is somewhat reminiscent of the part of a wedding ceremony when an opportunity is given for anyone to come forward with a reason why the marriage should not proceed. There is only silence because no charges can be brought against Christ and his bride.

Christ's character was proven at his trial. The only admitted or proven charge was his own admission that he would be seated at the right hand of the Almighty and would return to

earth on the clouds of heaven, a claim that will be proven true soon enough. As for the bride, the trials and tribulations that test and purify the believer's faith in this life will have produced a blameless bride, above reproach, "without spot or wrinkle."

It could be argued that because the seventh millennium has yet to take place, there is nothing to judge. However, Revelation is primarily a thematic progression rather than a chronological one, and the character of Christ's millennial reign is already known. Righteousness will cover the earth and iniquity will be quickly punished (Rev. 19:15).

v. 2-5 Then I saw the seven angels who are in the presence of God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood close to the altar, carrying a censer of gold; and abundance of incense was given to him that he might place it with the prayers of all God's people upon the golden altar which was in front of the throne. And the smoke of the incense rose into the presence of God from the angel's hand, and mingled with the prayers of His people. So the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and flung it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder, and voices, and flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

The golden altar of incense was placed in front of the heavy curtain that separated the sanctuary from the inner chamber of the Holy of Holies. Twice daily, the priest on duty would offer incense and prayer at this altar, interceding for the nation. All those in the vicinity of the temple were also called to pray. The time for God's trumpet judgments has finally come, symbolized by thunder, voices, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. Each trumpet announces a partial cleansing judgment that will affect a third of creation. Partial cleansing judgment is always a call to repentance. The six trumpet judgments are a warning from the Lord for mankind to turn from the ways of the world and seek him before final judgment falls.

v. 6-7 Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made preparations for blowing them. The first blew his trumpet; and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, falling upon the earth; and a third part of the earth was burnt up, and a third part of the trees and all the green grass. The first day God created light and divided the light from darkness. The first trumpet curses this division, bringing the two extremes associated with light and darkness together in judgment. The fiery heat of light and the intense cold of darkness are combined into the contradictory elements of fire and ice, falling on the earth as instrument of injury and destruction.

If the earth's orbit passed closely enough across the path of an inbound comet, this would subject the planet to a shower of fire and ice that would cover a third of the planet, given the earth's rotation. The notation of the fiery hail being "mixed with blood" could describe a toxic substance that poisons the earth's waters, as announced by the second and third trumpets. It might also be a symbolic description of the injury resulting from being struck by one of these objects.

v. 8-9 The second angel blew his trumpet; and what seemed to be a great mountain, all ablaze with fire, was hurled into the sea; and a third part of the sea was turned into blood. And a third part of the creatures that were in the sea—those that had life—died; and a third part of the ships were destroyed. On the second day God made the seas; the second trumpet curses them. It brings an impact of a 'fiery mountain' that results in some kind of contamination that causes death to a third of sea life. This could occur with the

destruction of nuclear reactors that release large amounts of radioactive pollution into the ocean. Or it could happen as a result of the introduction of some toxic substance. The destruction of a third of the ships could result from the huge tsunami that would follow the impact of a large asteroid or comet into the ocean. One might question why God's *cleansing* judgments would result in greater pollution. The answer is that judgment always involves destruction in some form. It is only in the fires of tribulation that a rebellious world can be called to repentance. It is better to come to repentance and find spiritual salvation in a world scarred by judgment than to continue in sin.

v. 10-11 The third angel blew his trumpet; and there fell from Heaven a great star, which was on fire like a torch. It fell upon a third part of the rivers and upon the springs of water. The name of the star is 'Wormwood;' and a third part of the waters were turned into wormwood, and vast numbers of the people died from drinking the water, because it had become bitter.

The third day God separated land from the water and clothed it with plants and trees. Implicit in this description is the formation of streams that were necessary to give life to the land and allow vegetation to grow. Judgment now falls on the streams of water that perpetuate the life of the land. The question is whether the blazing mountain of the second trumpet and the fiery star of this one involve two separate space objects or just one. Due to mathematical probabilities, it is more likely that John is seeing events resulting from a comet's collision with the earth. His description closely matches the results of the impact of the Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet into Jupiter in 1994. The planet's gravitational field caused it to break up into numerous large and small pieces well before it entered the atmosphere. The blazing mountain announced by the second trumpet would likely be the largest piece, while the third trumpet accurately describes the continental impact of numerous smaller pieces of a single comet as it breaks apart.

The name Wormwood means bitterness, which implies the work of some kind of pollution or poison, perhaps even a virus. People will sicken and die from drinking the water polluted by this star. The obvious question on reading this passage is how this might occur. A comet's impact into nuclear biological, or chemical storage facilities could release enough pollution into the atmosphere to affect large areas of earth's lakes and streams for years afterward. Another possibility is toxic pollution from the comet itself. There is recent scientific support for the theory of space borne viruses that can sicken and kill over large areas of the planet.

Recent analysis of the influenza of 1918 that killed 50 million people worldwide indicates that the virus may actually have come from space. The flu struck simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean as well as in numerous remote villages along the coastline of Alaska, although there had been no opportunity for anyone to travel between them to carry the virus from one village to the next. Given the lack of air travel between continents in 1918, this simultaneous global outbreak could be explained by a virus coming from space.

With the recent global interest and research on avian flu, it is now believed that these viruses may actually exist. It has been suggested that they enter earth's atmosphere with the increased solar wind during active sunspot cycles. Researchers theorize that birds may be the initial contractors and carriers of space borne viruses circulating in the atmosphere. As our scientific knowledge increases, the idea of a comet carrying a fatal disease from space is becoming more plausible. This theory is consistent with the belief held by some scientists that life on earth got its start from a planetary impact carrying space borne bacteria.

v. 12 Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet; and a curse fell upon a third part of the sun, a third part of the moon, and a third part of the stars, so that a third part of them were darkened and for a third of the day, and also of the night, there was no light. The fourth day God created the sun, moon and stars that served as “signs to mark seasons and days.” (Gen. 1:14) This trumpet judgment on the sun, moon, and stars removes any doubt that these trumpet judgments are a curse on the blessings of the six days of creation.

Some expositors interpret the fourth trumpet events to mean that the light from these bodies will be cut by one third, which might result from the atmosphere becoming occluded by volcanic eruptions. Others theorize that the actual length of the day and night are cut by a third. This latter scenario could result if the earth’s rotation were increased by 30 percent from a massive object striking the planet. Astronomers discount this possibility, calculating that a direct strike by an object of such great magnitude would wipe out all life on earth.

Even a relatively small comet striking the earth could result in earthquakes and a significant increase in volcanic activity that would block the light of the sun, moon and stars for an extended period. History records that the ash from previous volcanic eruptions such as the Krakatau (Krakatoa) eruption in 1883 was responsible for several weeks of darkened skies thousands of miles from the volcano itself. The dust and ash that circled the planet was believed to be the reason for a worldwide drop in mean temperatures that lasted five years and cut crop production. It is possible that a comet strike would result in a Mammoth volcanic eruption, causing similar global atmospheric pollution and a significant decrease in the intensity of light reaching the earth. Such an event would be consistent with the darkness that covers the earth with the fifth trumpet.

v. 13 Then I looked, and I heard a solitary eagle crying in a loud voice, as it flew across the sky, “Alas, alas, alas, for the inhabitants of the earth, because of the significance of the remaining trumpets which the three angels are about to blow!” Although an eagle’s wings can signify deliverance, in the Jewish culture the eagle itself was considered a vulture. The eagle flying in midair with its proclamation of coming woe is a familiar Scriptural symbol, implying a severe judgment resulting in unburied corpses. This same omen is found in Hosea’s warning: “*Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the Lord because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law.*” (Hos. 8:1) The eagle’s pronouncement of coming woe means that the remaining three trumpet judgments will be directed specifically at mankind.

Revelation 9

The fifth angel blew his trumpet; and I saw a Star which had fallen from Heaven to the earth; and to him was given the key of the depths of the bottomless pit, and he opened the depths of the bottomless pit. And smoke came up out of the pit resembling the smoke of a vast furnace, so that the sun was darkened, and the air also, by reason of the smoke of the pit. And from the midst of the smoke there came locusts on to the earth, and power was given to them resembling the power which earthly scorpions

possess. And they were forbidden to injure the herbage of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree. They were only to injure human beings—those who have not the seal of God on their foreheads. Their mission was not to kill, but to cause awful agony for five months; and this agony was like that which a scorpion inflicts when it stings a man. And at that time people will seek death, but will by no possibility find it, and will long to die, but death evades them.

The appearance of the locusts was like that of horses equipped for war. On their heads they had wreaths which looked like gold. Their faces seemed human and they had hair like women's hair, but their teeth resembled those of lions. They had breast-plates which seemed to be made of steel; and the noise caused by their wings was like that of a vast number of horses and chariots hurrying into battle. They had tails like those of scorpions, and also stings; and in their tails lay their power of injuring mankind for five months. The locusts had a king over them—the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is 'Abaddon,' while in the Greek he is called 'Apollyon.'

The first woe is past; two other woes have still to come. The sixth angel blew his trumpet; and I heard a single voice speaking from among the horns of the golden incense altar which is in the presence of God. It said to the sixth angel—the angel who had the trumpet, "Set at liberty the four angels who are prisoners near the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had been kept in readiness for that hour, day, month, and year, were set at liberty, so that they might kill a third part of mankind. The number of the cavalry was two hundred millions; I heard their number.

And this was the appearance of the horses which I saw in my vision—and of their riders. The body-armor of the riders was red, blue and yellow; and the horses' heads were shaped like the heads of lions, while from their mouths there came fire and smoke and sulphur. By these three plagues a third part of mankind were destroyed—by the fire and the smoke, and by the sulphur which came from their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails being like serpents, and having heads, and it is with them that they inflict injury.

But the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues, did not even then repent and leave the things they had made, so as to cease worshipping the demons, and the idols of gold and silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear, nor move. Nor did they repent of their murders, their practice of magic, their fornication, or their thefts.

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Revelation 9 Commentary

v. 1-2 The fifth angel blew his trumpet; and I saw a Star which had fallen from Heaven to the earth; and to him was given the key of the depths of the bottomless pit [Abyss], and he opened the depths of the bottomless pit. And smoke came up out of the pit resembling the smoke of a vast furnace, so that the sun was darkened, and the air also, by reason of the smoke of the pit. This star is not a flaming object like the star of the

third trumpet, but is personified as a spiritual being who is allowed to open the Abyss. Due to the negative spiritual implication of having ‘fallen’ from heaven to earth, this is not a ‘good’ angel. The dark smoke that covers the earth conveys an end times’ demonic oppression as well as actual smoke.

v. 3-6 And from the midst of the smoke there came locusts on to the earth, and power was given to them resembling the power which earthly scorpions possess. And they were forbidden to injure the herbage of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree. They were only to injure human beings—those who have not the seal of God on their foreheads. Their mission was not to kill, but to cause awful agony for five months; and this agony was like that which a scorpion inflicts when it stings a man. And at that time people will seek death, but will by no possibility find it, and will long to die, but death evades them.

The fifth trumpet continues with the theme of judging the earth according to the days of Creation. On the fifth day, God created fish to fill the depths of the earth, and birds to grace the heights of the sky. When the fifth trumpet sounds, dark smoke and flying insects are released to torment mankind: a dual plague that rises from the depths of the earth and curses the heights of the sky. Examining this subject more closely, the Hebrew word *ofe* translated here as ‘bird’ literally denotes “a winged creature.” According to the fossil record, the first winged creatures to appear on earth were actually insects, not birds.

Locusts are creatures of destruction. They gather when conditions bring females together at a common location to produce offspring. They swarm by the billions, flying at great heights; they have even been known to interfere with commercial jetliners. When they descend they completely strip crops over large areas of land. Rather than destroying crops, these locusts attack people instead. Due to their small size and great number, the effect would be similar to being stung by a swarm of killer bees. The text is not clear whether the locusts continue to attack mankind for five months or if, once stung, the torment of the sting lasts that long. The former scenario is probably the better one, as locusts generally have an adult life cycle of a few months.

Although those sealed by God would be the first target of a demonic attack, the locust’s stings are limited to those who have not been sealed by God. Although this sounds like a direct reference to the 144,000, the Holy Spirit has sealed all believers (2Cor. 1:22), so all of God’s people are protected from this attack. As with the ten Egyptian plagues, God does not allow his chosen ones to experience all of his trumpet judgments. This may be a partial fulfillment of Jesus’ remark: *“Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able (counted worthy – KJV) to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”* (Lk. 21:36)

v. 7-11 The appearance of the locusts was like that of horses equipped for war. On their heads they had wreaths which looked like gold. Their faces seemed human and they had hair like women’s hair, but their teeth resembled those of lions. They had breast-plates which seemed to be made of steel; and the noise caused by their wings was like that of a vast number of horses and chariots hurrying into battle. They had tails like those of scorpions, and also stings; and in their tails lay their power of injuring mankind for five months. The locusts had a king over them—the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is ‘Abaddon,’ while in the Greek he is called ‘Apollyon.’

John paints these locusts as an army of winged, longhaired, lion toothed, scorpion tailed insects. Throughout church history, this imagery has been interpreted as being symbolic. The specific interpretation has depended on the age in which it was made. In the late middle ages, the locusts were believed to represent Moslem invaders sweeping across Europe, not an unrealistic threat at the time. Today, some believe that John's description of these locusts is an elaborate depiction of some type of airborne biological or chemical agent that results in five months of agonizing pain. Whatever the locusts represent, the symbolism is consistent with the portrayal of Apollo, the destroyer who is described in Greek mythology as using pestilence, poison and even locusts to accomplish destruction.

A symbolic interpretation is easier to accept than a literal one. If this passage does describe literal hordes of locusts, they are not your garden-variety insect. Unlike ordinary locusts (or even viruses) that move with the prevailing winds, these locusts are described as being subject to the control of Apollo, the destroying angel of the Abyss. These creatures are apparently animated or at least controlled by a demonic force. If the demons that Jesus cast out from the Gerasene man were able to enter into a herd of pigs and direct their course (Lk. 8:33), then it is plausible that legions of demons could direct the course of these creatures. The only thing that would be up for speculation is the cause of their odd appearance. Ongoing genetic experiments are currently attempting to create just such chimeras containing the combined genetic makeup of two or more insect classes or even phyla.

v. 12 The first woe is past; two other woes have still to come. This is a reference to the pronouncement of the eagle in Rev. 8: 13 that three more woes would be unleashed on mankind with the sounding of the last three trumpets. While the first four trumpets fell on the earth with indirect consequences for mankind, the last three trumpets are directed specifically at man, with indirect consequences for the earth. The implication appears to be that each woe is worse than the preceding one.

v. 13-16 The sixth angel blew his trumpet; and I heard a single voice speaking from among the horns of the golden incense altar which is in the presence of God. It said to the sixth angel—the angel who had the trumpet, “Set at liberty the four angels who are prisoners near the great river Euphrates.” And the four angels who had been kept in readiness for that hour, day, month, and year, were set at liberty, so that they might kill a third part of mankind. The number of the cavalry was two hundred millions; I heard their number. The sixth day God created man to be the crowning glory of his Creation, giving him a home in Eden near the source of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This is where Adam sinned, and near where Cain slew Abel. It is also in the general vicinity where Nimrod raised his tower in defiance of God, the same location in which the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Alexander the Great would establish the capital city of their empires.

These are the same four angels encountered in Revelation 7, whose job it was to loose the winds of violence and destruction on the earth. It is likely that they were imprisoned at this location when God destroyed the earth in the great Flood. When they are released, they do not need to be given any further commands. Given their malevolent nature, their actions will have been planned for a long time. Under the direction of the Dragon, they will resume their previous crime of stirring up the people of the earth to violence and bloodshed.

The great conflict that follows the release of these four dark angelic beings will involve several different alliances of nations, including a “cavalry” 200 million strong. This is an almost

unbelievable claim in light of the fact that the US boasts a standing army of less than a million men. However, the pieces are already in place. In the year 2000, China announced that it could field an army of two hundred million men, declaring that it was working to become a world power that would one day challenge the United States. This is no idle boast. Military engineers have been working for a decade on the reconstruction of the Chinese portion of the Old Silk Road traversed by Marco Polo in the 13th Century, leading to the heart of the Middle East.

v. 17-19 And this was the appearance of the horses which I saw in my vision—and of their riders. The body-armor of the riders was red, blue and yellow; and the horses' heads were shaped like the heads of lions, while from their mouths there came fire and smoke and sulphur. By these three plagues a third part of mankind were destroyed—by the fire and the smoke, and by the sulphur which came from their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails being like serpents, and having heads, and it is with them that they inflict injury.

The horses and their riders are an apt first century description of modern mechanized cavalry, i.e., tanks and armored personnel carriers. Unlike first century conflict of armies that resulted in the cuts and slashes of personal combat, John's description of fire, smoke, and sulfur characterizes modern warfare. It is possible that the colors red, blue, and yellow identify countries or national blocs, symbolized by their flags: Red could be identified with China and blue with NATO, the two opposing continental powers likely to come into conflict over events in the Middle East.

v. 20-21 But the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues, did not even then repent and leave the things they had made, so as to cease worshipping the demons, and the idols of gold and silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear, nor move. Nor did they repent of their murders, their practice of magic, their fornication, or their thefts. There is still time for repentance and salvation, even after the great war of the sixth trumpet. However, like Pharaoh, people's hearts will be hardened towards God. Love for others will have grown cold and people will turn away from their Creator. Mankind will continue to follow the passions of its lower nature and its idols despite God's cleansing trumpet judgments.

Seven Weeks: Firstfruits to Pentecost

Revelation 10

“From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks.”

– *Leviticus 23: 15*

Revelation 10 – Interval between Firstfruits and Pentecost

Theme: Continuation and Expectation

The next feast in the Jewish worship calendar is Pentecost, celebrated seven weeks after Firstfruits at the beginning of the summer wheat harvest. Seven is God’s number of completion. The period between these two feasts is not considered a ‘timeout’ in the worship calendar, but a continuation of the theme of first fruits consecration. It is a time of seeking God in fasting and prayer, of looking forward to completion of the personal consecration begun on the feast of Firstfruits. The seven thunders of Revelation 10 symbolize this seven-week period of consecration. This chapter acts as the interval between these two feasts, conveying an expectancy of the coming fulfillment of Pentecost in Revelation 11.

Revelation 10

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, “seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.”

Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raise his right hand to heaven. And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth, and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, “There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”

Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: “Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, “Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as

honey.” I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.” (NIV)

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Revelation 10 Commentary

v. 1-4 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, “seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.”

The mighty angel’s stance on both land and sea indicates that events have moved from heavenly realms to the earth. It is also representative of the Creator’s authority over his creation: the land, symbolic of Israel, as well as the sea, representing Gentile nations. It is an affirmation of God’s right to judge the nations of the earth.

Two additional observations can be made here. First, this is the only time in Scripture when seven voices are heard speaking as one. Second, the purpose of Revelation is to reveal; there is no other time in Revelation that a message is sealed. Because of this, our attention is drawn to the specific *number* of the seven thunders rather than their message. The symbolism of the seven thunders is a fairly good confirmation of the seven-week passage of time between Firstfruits and Pentecost in the pattern of the feasts.

v. 5-7 Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raise his right hand to heaven. And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth, and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, “There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”

God’s salvation plan contains many facets, both hidden and revealed. Parts of God’s plan were mysteries, or secrets, kept hidden from the powers of darkness that sought to prevent his plan from being accomplished. The essence of the Mystery of God is that through Christ’s atoning sacrifice, salvation would be made available to all people, Gentiles as well as Jews. Salvation would no longer be based on birthright through the line of the patriarchs, but on faith in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. The ‘days of the seventh angel’ is when the mystery of God, i.e., the redemption of the Gentiles, will be completed. Since the seventh angel initiates the Day of Trumpets in the themes of the feasts, this is a reference to the coming rule of the beast that concludes the times of the Gentiles.

“This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” Eph. 3:6 “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from

generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Col. 1:26, 27

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

When God commissioned Ezekiel as a prophet, he directed him to eat a scroll containing the words of his prophecy against Jerusalem. In this way Ezekiel not only had knowledge of the message, he could also experience the Lord’s burden of the injustice and sin that justified the coming judgment. This ensured that the message would be delivered in the spirit in which it was given. John is being given a similar commission here by the mighty angel. He is no longer just a spectator, but will become involved as a prophetic voice, understanding the anger of God’s Spirit at the crimes of mankind.

“Then I looked and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe... So I ate it and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth... The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit...” Ezek. 2:9-10; 3:3 and 14

The Feast of Pentecost

Revelation 11: 1-14

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble... See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers...”

– Malachi 4: 1, 5

Background

Like the feast of Firstfruits, Pentecost is a feast of consecration. It was celebrated the fiftieth day after Firstfruits at the beginning of the summer wheat harvest. Whereas the consecration of the feast of Firstfruits consisted of barley still in its sheaf, the consecrated first fruits offering of Pentecost was of two baked loaves of wheat. The grain was threshed, ground, mixed with leaven and baked into two immense loaves of bread. These were ceremonially lifted up and waved above the altar, consecrating the entire crop to God. The large size and dual number of the loaves represented a double portion, with the theme of *consecration/sanctification, in power*.

This feast was called Weeks by the Jews because it was celebrated seven weeks after Firstfruits. Seven is God's number, symbolizing perfection and completeness. The seven weeks between the two feasts emphasized the completion of the consecration that began on Firstfruits. This was a time of consecration and self-denial, including fasting. According to Edersheim, “The feast of Unleavened Bread may be said not to have quite passed till fifty days after its commencement, when it merged in that of Pentecost or ‘of Weeks.’”³

This feast became known in the New Testament church as Pentecost because the Greeks counted the time in days rather than weeks: Pentecost morning was the fiftieth day (Gr. ‘five’ – *pente*) after the seven-week interval between the two feasts. Jesus fulfilled this feast when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples gathered in the upper room on Pentecost morning, consecrating them with power to witness and preach the Gospel. This single event turned a group of apprehensive followers into the most powerful continuing testimony the world has ever seen.

The theme of consecration is seen in the two sanctuary furnishings associated with Firstfruits and Pentecost. Against the right wall was the table on which newly baked and consecrated loaves were placed; the lampstand was located against the opposite wall. The large loaves of bread placed on the table were known as the bread of the Presence. They were replaced weekly, after which they were eaten by the priests. The bread was the Presence of God that sustained them, the lampstand his light on their path. Edersheim states that in both Jewish and early Christian tradition the bread was symbolic of the Messiah. Jesus is both the light of the world and the bread of life. Scripture equates bread with the life-giving word of God that illuminates the believer's walk. “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*” (Ps. 119:105)

Revelation 11: 1-14 – Feast: Pentecost

Theme: Two Witnesses, Power of a Sanctified Life

In the pattern of the feasts that overlays Revelation, verses 1-14 of chapter 11 present the thematic fulfillment of Pentecost. God's two witnesses are the *antitype*, or ultimate fulfillment, of the *type* of the two consecrated loaves of this feast. During the rule of the beast, the two witnesses issue the final call of repentance to Israel. They have the power to strike the earth with every manner of plague, testifying to the truth of their warnings. Their power, manifested as reprisals against the beast, prevent him from destroying Israel during their three and a half year ministry. The necessity for this is better understood in the context of history.

A Concise History of Israel after AD 70

After the destruction of the temple in AD 70, the Romans returned in force to crush the Judean revolt of AD 135. In an effort to prevent future rebellions, Emperor Hadrian exiled the Jews from the city of Jerusalem. (On a positive note, this dispersion resulted in a period of rabbinic study over the next several centuries, during which the Talmud was compiled.) With Constantine's conversion, the capital of the Empire was transferred from Rome to Constantinople, and Jerusalem came under the authority of its patriarch, or bishop. The Jews would not return to the city for more than 300 years.

Aside from a brief 18-year period when the Persians held Jerusalem, the Holy Land continued to enjoy relative peace under Roman rule from Constantinople. This tranquility ended in AD 638, when the Muslim forces of the previously unknown religion of Islam overran the Middle East. The Muslims set about turning the city of Jerusalem into an Islamic center of worship, gaining the cooperation of the Jews by allowing them to return to the city. In 691, Muslim invaders completed construction of the Dome of the Rock on the location of the temple mount as a shrine to their god, Allah.

The Dome was intended to be more than just another shrine among the numerous Christian and Jewish edifices in Jerusalem. It was built on the location of the former temple to convey the message that Islam was the true religion, sharing a common birth with Judaism but replacing it as the final manifestation of God. Islam not only claimed to supersede Judaism, it denounced Christianity. Inscriptions on the Dome made it clear that the God of the Christians was a false god. These inscriptions affirm Islam as the one true faith and condemn the central Christian tenet that God is a triune being: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; denying Jesus' divinity as the Son of God. The Al Aqsa mosque was later built just south of the Dome, in what had been the Court of the Gentiles.

The Jews were initially supportive of the arriving Muslims, believing that their former troubles at the hand of the Romans were at an end. They saw the defeat of the Christian Gentiles by the sons of Ishmael as a sign of the end of the age and embraced Muslims as friends. However, things did not turn out quite as rosy as the Jews expected. After an initial honeymoon period, they came to understand and then formally reject some Muslim beliefs. The Muslims responded by rejecting the new friendship and thereafter faced toward Mecca instead of Jerusalem during prayer. They treated Jews and Christians alike as *Dhimmis*, second-class

citizens, though recognizing them as “People of the Book.” Because of this, the death sentence automatically applied to members of other faiths was not imposed on Christians and Jews as long as they submitted to Islamic law and paid their taxes. If they didn’t, they would be killed or sold into slavery.

Around the turn of the first millennium, several crusades were launched by the Roman Catholic Church to retake Jerusalem. The crusaders were eventually driven out of the holy land, but not before a deeply ingrained enmity developed between the Christian and Muslim worlds. The land of Israel, no longer a nation, remained under Muslim rule. Jerusalem was firmly established as an Islamic Holy City, with a shared heritage among Jews and the few remaining members of Christian religious orders, who lived as submitted minorities in Jerusalem or in scattered settlements.

The Jews came back into possession of the land following World War II. This was due to a deal struck during the World War I between a cash-starved Britain and a small cadre of Jewish financiers interested in re-establishing a Jewish homeland. The day after Israel declared its status a nation, it was invaded by five aligned Muslim countries. Most of the Palestinians left before the invasion, believing they would be able to return after a quick Arab victory. However, they Muslim invaders were driven off, and the Palestinians decided not to return. Israel was able to expand its small territory each time it was attacked over the next few decades.

A generation later, a Palestinian homeland movement developed, after subsequent attacks by bordering states failed to defeat Israel. This movement was dedicated to retaking the land by political as well as revolutionary means. The Palestinians agitated for a right to self-rule and demanded the “right of return” for all Palestinians who fled when control of the land was transferred to the Jews.

From its inception, the Palestinian movement (PLO) has worked to undermine and subvert the state of Israel, a goal fully supported by Israel’s Muslim neighbors. In 1987 and again in 2000, the Palestinians launched *intifadas*, or uprisings, designed to lead to the establishment of Palestinian control over the West Bank and Gaza strip. These were led by Islamic jihadist organizations intent on terrorizing the Jews into submitting to demands for an independent state of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital. They relied on garnering financial support from the Muslim world, bringing political pressure to bear in the United Nations and world press, and conducting suicide bombings and rocket attacks. These were designed to inflict mass civilian casualties and maximum psychological and political pressure on the Israeli government. Israel responded by bulldozing suicide bombers’ homes, carrying out selective assassinations of terrorist leaders, and building a very long wall to reduce terrorist attacks.

Although the Palestinians are not well received by their host countries in the Middle East, these countries actively support their goal of returning to Palestine and destroying the Jews. One reason for this is the Islamic principle of “*waqf*.” Once Muslims have conquered a territory it is submitted to Allah, belonging forever after to Islam. With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the Muslim Middle East was faced with the unthinkable reality of losing ‘their’ country of Palestine. Additionally, the Jews are a hated race according to the principles of Islam. The small state of Israel was and still is viewed as a blasphemous dagger in the heart of the Middle East, an insult to every Muslim believer. To retake lost Muslim lands, Islam endorses a ‘take no prisoners’ conquest by violent *Jihad*, or holy war. This is why many of Israel’s Muslim neighbors continue to deny her right even to exist as a Middle East state. Under Islamic law, any peace treaty made with Israel is temporary, and can only be used as a tool of deception to strengthen the Muslim military position for the eventual conquest of Israel.

This dedication to retake the land of Palestine for Islam still drives the Muslim ‘street’ in the Middle East today. It is this dynamic that makes peace between Israel and her neighbors impossible, regardless of how many concessions Israel makes. The few Muslim countries that are not publicly committed to the destruction of Israel are those whose governments are pro-western for reasons of economic and internal security. These governments walk a razor’s edge to keep the hatred of their Muslim populations against Israel from igniting protests that would signal the end of their regimes. Other Muslim countries maintain a neutral public stance towards Israel while privately funneling large sums of money from oil revenues to terrorist organizations inside its borders, even offering large financial rewards to the families of successful suicide bombers.

The popular perception is that the situation in the Middle East is some sort of Biblical blood feud between Arabs and Jews, but this is not the case. The conflict is not one of nationality, but of religion. Iran, one of the principal backers of terrorism and currently the most vehement and vociferous enemy of Israel, is Persian, not Arab. Turkey is also Muslim, but its people are Turks, not Arabs. *The common bond of Israel’s enemies is the religion of Islam.* The Muslim world looks forward to the day when Palestine will be returned to Muslim rule and the Jews driven into the sea.

Revelation 11: 1-14

Then a reed was given me to serve as a measuring rod; and a voice said, “Rise, and measure God’s sanctuary—and the altar—and count the worshipers who are in it. But as for the court which is outside the sanctuary, pass it over. Do not measure it; for it has been given to the Gentiles, and for forty-two months they will trample the holy city under foot. And I will authorize My two witnesses to prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.

“These witnesses are the two olive-trees, and they are the two lamps which stand in the presence of the Lord of the earth. And if any one seeks to injure them—fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies; and if any one seeks to injure them, he will in this way certainly be killed. They have power given to them to seal up the sky, so that no rain may fall so long as they continue to prophesy; and power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with various plagues whenever they choose to do so.

And when they have fully delivered their testimony, the wild Beast which is to rise out of the bottomless pit will make war upon them and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies are to lie in the broad street of the great city which spiritually is designated ‘Sodom’ and ‘Egypt,’ where indeed their Lord was crucified. And men belonging to all peoples, tribes, languages and nations gaze at their dead bodies for three days and a half, but they refuse to let them be laid in a tomb. The inhabitants of the earth rejoice over them and are glad and will send gifts to one another; for these two Prophets had greatly troubled the inhabitants of the earth.”

But at the end of the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they rose to their feet; and all who saw them were terrified. Then they

heard a loud voice calling to them out of Heaven, and bidding them come up; and they went up to Heaven in the cloud, and their enemies saw them go. And just as that time there was a great earthquake, and a tenth part of the city was overthrown. 7,000 people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of Heaven.

The second Woe is past; the third Woe will soon be here.

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Revelation 11, verses 1-14 Commentary

v. 1 Then a reed was given me to serve as a measuring rod; and a voice said, “Rise, and measure God’s sanctuary —and the altar—and count the worshipers who are in it. One of the requirements of God’s justice is that two witnesses must prove the truth of any serious charges before judgment can be executed. Examples are found in both the Old and New Testaments. Genesis 19 records the investigation of the two angels who personally confirmed the wickedness of Sodom before God destroyed it. This principle was codified in the Law and carried into the New Testament church. (Deut. 17:6, Mt. 18:16) The two witnesses fulfill this requirement so judgment can proceed, observing all that transpires during the rule of the beast.

Additionally, John now becomes an active participant in events, serving as a witness himself. In the case of Solomon’s temple after the return of the exiles as well as in the plans for Ezekiel’s temple, the temple must be measured before it can be rebuilt. Measuring the temple is in fact only undertaken when there is a need to rebuild it. John’s task is consistent with the temple’s destruction two decades before he received his vision. In confirming the need to rebuild the temple, John acts as a witness to God’s first century judgment against Israel and her leaders for the blood of Jesus and the prophets. (Mt. 23:35-37, Lk. 21:22) The fact that priests and Levites were the only worshipers allowed in the Sanctuary confirms that the leadership of Israel was held accountable in this judgment. Since “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1Pet. 4:17), John confirms that the way is now clear for God to judge the Gentile world for the blood of his saints, the “*many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings*” of chapter 10.

v. 2 “But as for the court which is outside the sanctuary, pass it over. Do not measure it; for it has been given to the Gentiles, and for forty-two months they will trample the holy city under foot.” John is being told that judgment will not proceed against the kingdom of the beast until it has run its three and a half year course. Because the temple cannot be rebuilt until it has been completely measured, there is also an implication here that the temple will not be rebuilt until the rule of the beast has come to an end.

The forty-two month time frame is consistent with every reference in Daniel to the length of the end times’ tribulation. Daniel describes this three and a half year period as “a time, times, and half a time,” or ‘one year, plus two years, and a half year.’ In early church history, even in Gnostic writings, there was no indication that the book of Revelation might cover more than three and half years.⁴

v. 3 And I will authorize My two witnesses to prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. Tribulation comes on the whole world, affecting Gentile and Jew alike. It will be a time of testing designed to bring many to repentance; for Israel, it will be a time of preparing their hearts to receive Jesus as their Messiah. God sends the two witnesses during the tribulation, not to judge Israel, but to turn their hearts back to him.

The three-and-a half-year period of the end times' tribulation is variously listed as 1260 days, forty-two months, or "times, time and half a time." Commentators generally agree that Scriptural descriptions of prophetic days are based on a thirty-day month, or 360-day year. While the 1260 days given to the two witnesses may appear at first to be the same amount of time as the forty-two months for the Gentiles trampling Jerusalem (and the rule of the beast), the two time frames are not identical. The forty-two months denote the passage of a full three and a half years. The length of the testimony of the two witnesses is therefore slightly shorter than the time of the beast's rule, since the man of lawlessness kills the two witnesses just before Christ's return. Daniel chapter 12 also indicates a slightly longer allotment of time for the kingdom of the beast than 1260 days noted here for the two witnesses.⁵

v. 4 These witnesses are the two olive-trees, and they are the two lamps which stand in the presence of the Lord of the earth. This verse identifies the two witnesses, first encountered in the book of Zechariah. The prophet was shown a vision of a lampstand. Unlike the candlestick in the temple, this one had an olive tree on either side of it, providing a continuous natural supply of oil to keep the lamps burning. His curiosity aroused, Zechariah asked the angel what he was seeing. The angel replied with a two-part riddle.

Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, "This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." Zech. 4:6-7

Not understanding the angel's answer, Zechariah rephrases his question, asking the angel about the olive trees.

Again I asked him, "What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?" So he said, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth." Zech. 4:14

The angel responded to Zechariah's second question by telling the prophet that the olive trees are anointed to serve the "Lord of all the earth." The use of this title implies that these two anointed ones serve in earthly matters, identifying them as men rather than angelic beings. They are in fact the two witnesses of Revelation 11. To identify who they are, the angel's first answer needs to be examined in the light of Scripture. The first witness is identified by the following verse.

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty." Zech. 4:6

This describes an incident in the life of Elijah that occurred just after he had slaughtered 400 priests of Baal and fled from the wrath of Jezebel into the wilderness. (1Ki. 19) Elijah journeyed south to Mount Sinai and hid in a cave. The Lord told him to go outside, because his Presence would pass by. Even though a mighty wind, an earthquake, and a fire struck the

mountain, the Lord was not in any of these things. Finally, The Lord's Presence came in "a small still voice."

The lesson for Elijah was that the things he accomplished for God did not come from the exercise of great power, but through the ministry of God's Spirit. God's power is in his holiness, which can be just as effective in a whispered word as it is in acts of great power. Prophecy confirms Elijah as one of the two witnesses: "*See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*" (Mal. 4:5) Jesus confirmed that Elijah would precede his return: "*To be sure, Elijah comes, and will restore all things.*" (Mt. 17:11)

The second part of the riddle identifies the second witness: "*Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of Grace, grace, unto it.*" (Zech. 4:7) The question: "Who art thou?" is a rhetorical marker indicating that the angel has finished describing the first witness. In colloquial language it might be phrased: "And who is the second guy?" The picture of a mountain is a familiar Old Testament image of the strength and (usually) righteousness of an individual. Like Elijah, this individual is a man of righteousness, likely to be a prophet. Then, in the Hebrew language of word pictures, the angel describes a scene in which the one who was once a mighty mountain disappears, becoming a level plain.

The Hebrew word for *before*, in "before Zerubbabel," is *paw-neem*. Although the angel's symbolism is geographic in the sense of a mountain becoming a plain, the primary definition of *paw-neem* is related to time. Since Zerubbabel is a direct ancestor of Jesus, the angel is describing an individual in the line of the Messiah existing prior to Zerubbabel. The angel confirms the Messianic lineage forward from Zerubbabel. He would "bring forth" the Messiah, the capstone of the Messianic line, who would redeem humanity through the covenant of grace: "*grace, grace, unto it.*"

The question is which one of Jesus' ancestors is being described? Scripture records only one 'great mountain' in the Messiah's line before Zerubbabel, and that is Enoch, a prophet who received amazing revelations of the future. Jude's epistle quotes from the *Book of Enoch*, and even confirms him as a prophet: "*Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied... 'See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone...'*" (Jude 1:14-15) The angel's riddle describes Enoch as "a mountain becoming a plain," a graphic picture of Enoch's disappearance from the earth when God took him to heaven (Gen. 5:24). Enoch and Elijah are the *only* two men recorded in Scripture who were so righteous that they did not die. At the end of the age these two men will return to earth as the two witnesses of Revelation 11 to face a martyr's death, fulfilling the Scripture: "*...man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...*"

v. 5-6 And if any one seeks to injure them—fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies; and if any one seeks to injure them, he will in this way certainly be killed. They have power given to them to seal up the sky, so that no rain may fall so long as they continue to prophesy; and power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with various plagues whenever they choose to do so. The two witnesses are given extraordinary power over the elements for two reasons: first, as a testimony to Israel of the truth of their words, and second, to prevent the antichrist from destroying Israel and stopping them until they have fulfilled their ministry. Like John the Baptist, their ministry will be a call to repentance in preparation for Christ's return. Israel's tribulation under the rule of

the beast will provide the pressure that causes Israel to heed their warning to repent, preparing them to recognize and accept Jesus as the Messiah.

v. 7-10 And when they have fully delivered their testimony, the wild Beast which is to rise out of the bottomless pit will make war upon them and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies are to lie in the broad street of the great city which spiritually is designated 'Sodom' and 'Egypt,' where indeed their Lord was crucified. And men belonging to all peoples, tribes, languages and nations gaze at their dead bodies for three days and a half, but they refuse to let them be laid in a tomb. The inhabitants of the earth rejoice over them and are glad and will send gifts to one another; for these two Prophets had greatly troubled the inhabitants of the earth.

The dark power of the antichrist will let him know when the time of the two witnesses has been fulfilled. Once he knows he can defeat them, he will do so at the first opportunity, since possession of Jerusalem and destruction of the Jews are by then his remaining unfulfilled goal. Due to the plagues the two witnesses inflicted on the earth, they are objects of universal rancor, so their death becomes an occasion of worldwide celebration. The reference to Jerusalem (where their Lord was crucified) as *Spiritual Sodom and Egypt* conveys a sense of the moral corruption and worldliness of Israel in the last days, reinforcing the necessity of repentance.

v. 11-13 But at the end of the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they rose to their feet; and all who saw them were terrified. Then they heard a loud voice calling to them out of Heaven, and bidding them come up; and they went up to Heaven in the cloud, and their enemies saw them go. And just as that time there was a great earthquake, and a tenth part of the city was overthrown. 7,000 people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of Heaven.

Old Testament prophets were often called to demonstrate future events in a physical manner. The three and a half days that the two witnesses lay in the street before they come back to life may be viewed as a prophetic demonstration of the coming resurrection of the martyrs at the end of the three and a half years of the antichrist's rule. The world is terrified at their resurrection because it fears immediate retribution for their death. This will occur, but in God's timing. The most important result is that this event, and the earthquake that follows, convicts Israel of God's power to judge and to save, causing the nation to acknowledge God as the sovereign ruler of the world. This conviction sets the stage for the mass conversion of Israel at Jesus' return shortly afterwards.

v. 14 The second Woe is past; the third Woe will soon be here. The first woe was the plague of scorpion-tailed locusts announced by the fifth trumpet. The second woe, precipitated by the sixth trumpet, unleashed a great war with much suffering and loss of life. The two witnesses are included in the sixth trumpet woes because of the plagues they send against mankind. The seventh trumpet heralds the three and a half year rule of the antichrist over the earth.

Day of Trumpets

Revelation 11: 15-19

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance... The axe is already at the foot of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

– Matthew 3: 8, 10

Background

The Day of Trumpets fell on the first of Tishri, the start of the secular calendar year. Tishri was also the seventh month of the religious calendar. This day is similar to our New Year's Day, except that it was celebrated as a call to repentance instead of rejoicing. Israel awoke to the sounding of numerous trumpets and horns that continued throughout the day. Although several different horns were sounded, the *Shofar*, or ram's horn, came to symbolize the Day of Trumpets with its call to repent.

The ten-day period that started on the Day of Trumpets was a time of self-examination and fasting in preparation for the coming judgment on the Day of Atonement. In Scripture, a ten-day period is symbolic of an indeterminate time, usually involving tribulation, with the object of perfecting those being tested. The ten-day testing of the church at Smyrna (Rev. 2) is an example of this. The Day of Trumpets had a dual theme. It was not only a call to *repentance*, it was also a call to make *a new beginning* with God in preparation for the coming judgment of the Day of Atonement. This idea of a new beginning was mirrored in the start of the new year, much as we view New Year's Day as a time to make resolutions to live a better life. Christ's fulfillment of the Day of Trumpets is still a future event. According to Rabbinic teaching, the Day of Trumpets will be fulfilled with the Resurrection at the completion of 6000 years of history.

Jewish tradition has an interesting explanation of the importance of this feast and its connection to the Day of Atonement. Later set down in the Talmud, this tradition held that on the Day of Trumpets “three books were opened – that of life, for those whose works had been good; and another of death, for those who had been thoroughly evil; and a third, intermediate, for those whose case was to be decided on the day of Atonement, the delay being granted for repentance, or otherwise, after which their names would be finally entered, either in the book of life, or in that of death.”⁶

Everyone's fate during the coming year was decided on his or her deeds of the previous year. This tradition explains why one of the names for this feast was *Yom HaDin*, the day belonging to the Lord for judgment, “the day of the Lord” of Rev. 1: 10. Because anyone's name might be found in the book of ‘undecided cases,’ the ten days of Trumpets were a time of tribulation for all – thus the fasting and repentance of the ten days between the Day of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement – the “Days of Awe.”

The Talmud teaches that the Day of Trumpets is a type of the Resurrection of the Just, calling it “the day of the awakening shout,” because the dead will be awakened for judgment. This title had a present application in that God's people were to awaken to the sound of trumpets,

repent and live for God. Repentance was rightly understood as walking in a new direction rather than a momentary act of contrition.

The Day of Trumpets, the fifth feast, was associated with the altar of incense, the fifth furnishing, which was placed in front of the curtain in the sanctuary. Incense from the altar was offered morning and evening to accompany the prayers of the priest and those in the temple courts interceding for the nation. The incense is symbolic of coming to God in prayer with an attitude of humility and contrition for our sins. The high priest always carried a censer of burning incense when he entered into the Holy of Holies.

Revelation 11: 15-19 – Feast: Day of Trumpets

Dual Theme: A new beginning for the earth; A Call to Repentance during tribulation

To review the ordering of trumpets in Revelation, the typical model lumps the seven trumpets together as a single thematic unit, noting the interval between the sixth and seventh trumpets. However, no significant meaning is attached to this. Taking into account the pattern of the feasts, the seventh trumpet is separate from the first six because it initiates a new thematic chapter in Revelation. The first six trumpets fulfill the cleansing theme of Unleavened Bread. (Rev. 6:8-9) Moving forward in the religious calendar, Revelation 10 marks the seven weeks between Firstfruits and Pentecost, while the two witnesses of Revelation 11: 1-14 fulfill Pentecost, the fourth feast. Verses 15-19 of Revelation 11 fulfill the Day of Trumpets, with its dual theme of *repentance*, assigned to the spiritual feast day, and *a new beginning*, the first day of the secular new year.

The new beginning of Revelation 11 is the sovereignty of Christ over the earth, announced as an accomplished fact of the New Year, or in this case, the new age. This is proclaimed as a present reality in heaven by the Elders. However, the new millennium is not immediately implemented on earth, just as the rejoicing of the Jewish New Year was not celebrated until after the judgments of the Day of Atonement. The suffering during the rule of the beast must come first, fulfilling the theme of repentance during the tribulation of the “Days of Awe.”

Revelation 11: 15-19

The seventh angel blew his trumpet; and there followed loud voices in Heaven which said, “The sovereignty of the world now belongs to our Lord and His Christ; and He will be King until the Ages of the Ages.” Then the twenty-four Elders, who sit on thrones in the presence of God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, “We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Ruler of all, Who art and wast, because Thou hast exerted Thy power, Thy great power, and hast become King. The nations grew angry, and Thine anger has come, and the time for the dead to be judged, and the time for Thee to give their reward to Thy servants the Prophets and to Thy people, and to those who fear Thee, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

Then the doors of God's sanctuary in Heaven were opened, and the Ark, in which His Covenant was, was seen in His sanctuary; and there came flashes of lightning, and voices, and peals of thunder, and an earthquake, and heavy hail.

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Revelation 11, verses 15 -19 Commentary

v. 15-18 The seventh angel blew his trumpet; and there followed loud voices in Heaven which said, "The sovereignty of the world now belongs to our Lord and His Christ; and He will be King until the Ages of the Ages." Then the twenty-four Elders, who sit on thrones in the presence of God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Ruler of all, Who art and wast, because Thou hast exerted Thy power, Thy great power, and hast become King. The nations grew angry, and thine anger has come, and the time for the dead to be judged, and the time for Thee to give their reward to Thy servants the Prophets and to Thy people, and to those who fear Thee, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

While some interpret this passage as the actual start of the Kingdom of God on earth, this is not the case. It is a proclamation of the heavenly spiritual reality that Christ, having claimed the title deed to earth, is now officially its king. This spiritual reality will be manifested on earth only with Christ's return. Future prophetic events on earth are present realities in heaven, seen only later on earth. Isaiah explains this dynamic.

"Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isa. 42:9

The first part of the dual theme of the Day of Trumpets is a new beginning. Loud voices proclaim the New Year in heaven: a new beginning is coming for the earth with the Lamb as its King. The image is somewhat like crowning a prince in exile, legally confirming his right to the throne so he may return and take possession of his kingdom. The chorus announces that the reign of Christ over the earth has officially begun, even though it is not yet implemented. When he does return, Christ the King will judge the earth, deciding reward for those who have remained loyal to him during his absence, and the punishment of those who did not want him to be king over them. (See the parable of the ten minas in Luke 19:11-26.)

v. 19 Then the doors of God's sanctuary in Heaven were opened, and the Ark, in which His Covenant was, was seen in His sanctuary; and there came flashes of lightning, and voices, and peals of thunder, and an earthquake, and heavy hail. The ark inside the Holy of Holies is symbolic of judgment. It held the stone tables on which God had written his law, the standard by which Israel was measured to determine if individuals and the nation deserved blessing or punishment. Since the ark is associated with the Day of Atonement, its appearance here reminds the reader that the ten days of Trumpets are followed by the final judgment of Atonement. The ark and the elements of hail, lightening, thunder, voices and earthquake all confirm that the earth has entered a season of tribulation and coming judgment,

during which God calls men to repentance. This fulfills the second aspect of the theme of the Day of Trumpets, a call to repentance during the ten Days of Awe.

Days of Awe

Revelation 12 & 13

“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.”

– Daniel 11: 36-37

Revelation 12 & 13 – Interval between Trumpets and Atonement

Theme: Tribulation for the Earth

The ten Days of Awe started with Trumpets on the first of Tishri and ended with Atonement on the tenth. This period was a time of tribulation, fasting, and prayer, filled with purpose and meaning. Trumpets continually called the people to repentance during this period. It was a time of seeking repentance in the hope of escaping judgment on the Day of Atonement. The New Covenant fulfillment of this principle is found in Paul’s writings.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”
(1Cor. 11: 31-32)

Revelation 12 and 13 describe the tribulation under the rule of the beast. The Dragon finally realizes his long-held dream of conquering and ruling the planet, to be exalted as god of the earth and worshiped by all mankind. Revelation 12 starts with signs that contextualize the events that follow. After the signs, the heavens are cleansed and the dragon is thrown down to earth, unleashing mankind’s third woe.

Revelation 13 introduces two beasts, the Man of Sin and his false prophet. Comprised of four different animals prefigured in Old Testament prophecy, the first beast symbolizes an alliance of three nations evolved from first century BC empires that inherit the power of the fourth. This beast symbolizes both the end time kingdom of the antichrist and its king. He is known by various names, including the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, the Man of Lawlessness. The second beast is the false prophet, a religious figure claiming to be Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12

And a great marvel was seen in Heaven—a woman who was robed with the sun and had the moon under her feet, and had also a wreath of stars round her head, was with child, and she was crying out in the pains and agony of childbirth. And another marvel was seen in Heaven—a great fiery-red Dragon, with seven heads and ten horns;

and on his heads were seven kingly crowns. His tail was drawing after it a third part of the stars of Heaven, and it dashed them to the ground. And in front of the woman who was about to become a mother, the Dragon was standing in order to devour the child as soon as it was born. She gave birth to a son—a male child, destined before long to rule all nations with an iron scepter. But her child was caught up to God and His throne, and the woman fled into the Desert, there to be cared for, for 1,260 days, in a place which God had prepared for her.

And war broke out in Heaven, Michael and his angels engaging in battle with the Dragon. The Dragon fought and so did his angels; but they were defeated, and there was no longer any room found for them in Heaven. The great Dragon, the ancient serpent, he who is called ‘the Devil’ and ‘the Adversary’ and leads the whole earth astray, was hurled down: he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him.

Then I heard a loud voice speaking in Heaven. It said, “The salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God have now come, and the sovereignty of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren has been hurled down—he who, day after day and night after night, was wont to accuse them in the presence of God. But they have gained the victory over him because of the blood of the Lamb and of the testimony which they have borne, and because they held their lives cheap and did not shrink even from death. For this reason be glad, O Heaven, and you who live in Heaven! Alas for the earth and the sea! For the Devil has come down to you; full of fierce anger, because he knows that his appointed time is short.”

And when the Dragon saw that he was hurled down to the earth, he went in pursuit of the woman who had given birth to the male child. Then, the two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman to enable her to fly away into the Desert to the place assigned her, there to be cared for, for a period of time, two periods of time, and half a period of time, beyond the reach of the serpent. And the serpent poured water from his mouth—a very river it seemed—after the woman, in the hope that she would be carried away by its flood. But the earth came to the woman’s help: it opened its mouth and drank up the river which the Dragon had poured from his mouth. This made the Dragon furiously angry with the woman, and he went elsewhere to make war upon her other children—those who keep God’s commandments and hold fast to the testimony of Jesus.

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Revelation 12 Commentary

v. 1a And a great marvel [sign] was seen in Heaven... This chapter can be somewhat confusing because of the tendency to view the signs as last days’ events rather than what they actually are: signs in the heavens, having astronomical, historical, and prophetic components. The astronomical component provides an indication of the general timing of when these things will come to pass, i.e., the season of Jesus’ return to earth (Mt. 24:32-35). The

historic component provides background information, while the prophetic component is just that, a foretelling of events that will immediately follow. These signs furnish context for the chapter's narrative events, which start with verse seven.

v. 1b-2, 4 ...a woman who was robed with the sun and had the moon under her feet, and had also a wreath of stars round her head, was with child, and she was crying out in the pains and agony of childbirth. And in front of the woman who was about to become a mother, the Dragon was standing... The arrangement of the constellations provides the astronomical component of this sign, foretelling Jesus' second coming in accordance with his own prophecy that his return would be preceded by signs in the heavens. Just as Christ's first coming was announced by the position of stars and planets at his birth (the 'star in the East' followed by the Magi), the season of his second coming is foretold by the position of the constellations described here. It is during this.

The sign describes the relative placement in the sky of the constellations that indicate the nearness of the Day of Judgment, including the coming of the Man of Sin. *The woman, with a wreath of stars around her head, standing in front of a dragon...* Virgo, the virgin (Heb: *Bethulah*, the woman); Draco, the dragon, crouching just above the bottom of her legs; and Bernice's Hair, an Egyptian constellation of twelve stars seen over her head. *The woman is "robed with the sun and... the moon under her feet..."* This describes these three constellations aligning over a rising moon in the east while the rays of the setting sun still touch her robes in the west, i.e., at dusk when the stars first become visible. The only time these constellations have come into this relative position was on 1-2 Tishri, *during the first Days of Awe*, four years running, from 1996 to 1999. According to one astronomer, this event will not re-occur for another 26,000 years.⁷

Jesus prophesied that his return would be preceded by 'great *signs* (plural) in the heavens,' following the principle of more than one witness warning of the coming judgment. During the first two years that the sign of the woman appeared, several total lunar eclipses occurred in which a 'blood red' moon was observed from Jerusalem. (See Joel 2:31, Rev. 6:12) The first occurred on the evening of April 3rd, 1996, at the start of the Passover feast, the second on September 26th, on the eve of the feast of Tabernacles. The following year, two more eclipses occurred, accompanied by same phenomenon: the first on March 23rd, during the feast day of Purim, and again on the 16th of September during the Days of Awe. During the eclipse on the feast of Purim, the comet Hale-Bopp made its closest approach to earth, being clearly visible for some time, as it was the largest and brightest comet to appear in over 400 years. Only a world steeped in the cold logic of science could miss the significance of all these signs occurring during the same short period of time.

According to Jewish theology, the Resurrection of the Just will occur on the calendar Day of Trumpets, as the ultimate fulfillment of the symbolism of this feast. The Apostle Paul confirms this timing in his first letter to the Corinthians, stating that the dead will be raised "at the last trumpet." Contrary to popular speculation, this statement does not mean that the Resurrection would be the last trumpet-event in God's salvation plan, or that it would occur at the blowing of the last of the trumpets mentioned in Revelation. The Talmud gives names to just three of the many trumpets that were sounded in Israel during feast days, full moons, etc. The "first trumpet" was sounded at Pentecost, the "last trumpet" at the feast of Trumpets, while the "great trumpet" announced the Day of Atonement. When Paul told the church that the Resurrection would take place "at the last trumpet," he was referring to the Day of Trumpets,

when Christ would return for his church. Since the feast day of Trumpets finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Resurrection, Paul was merely stating the obvious.

"We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." 1Cor. 15:52

v. 3-4 And another marvel [sign] was seen in Heaven—a great fiery-red Dragon, with seven heads and ten horns; and on his heads were seven kingly crowns. His tail was drawing after it a third part of the stars of Heaven, and it dashed them to the ground. And in front of the woman who was about to become a mother, the Dragon was standing in order to devour the child as soon as it was born.

This is not a completely separate sign, since it is observed in conjunction with the sign of the woman. It is emphasized to provide the historic context. Lucifer, the light bearer, was removed from his place in heaven and his name was changed to Satan, God's adversary and the accuser of mankind. His action of drawing a third of the stars ('angels' v. 9) away from their heavenly estate and down to the earth symbolizes the rebellion he led against God. Even though he still had access to heaven because he is a spiritual being (Job 1:6), it was no longer his home. He made his home on earth, with the goal of leading mankind in rebellion against God.

The Dragon's seven heads and ten horns identify him as the dark spiritual power behind the kingdom of the beast, which also has seven heads and ten horns. (Rev. 13) The symbolism of the Dragon waiting to devour the child at birth is interpreted by most commentators as representing Satan's attempt to kill Jesus through the execution of hundreds of babies by King Herod. By extrapolation, it is symbolic of all Satan's attempts to prevent the coming and work of Christ.

v. 5 She gave birth to a son—a male child, destined before long to rule all nations with an iron scepter. But her child was caught up to God and His throne... This verse continues the historic element of the sign. There is a difference of opinion on what the woman symbolizes. The most logical is that she symbolizes the Old Testament church, giving birth to the New Testament church, represented by the child, Jesus. (This is consistent with the fact that believers, comprising the New Testament church, are spiritually part of the mystical body of Christ, spiritually found "in him.") Though the Dragon tried to swallow Christ both at his birth and in death, Jesus escaped from his traps. After descending into Hades, he was taken up to heaven to appear before the throne of God. On the third day he came back to life, rising from the dead by the power of the Spirit, and he appeared to many in his glorified body. He will return at the end of the age to rule the nations.

Many have claimed that this is a picture of the rapture, with the child representing a church 'caught up out of the tribulation.' However, the sign itself does not support this. Since this verse is still part of the historical component of the sign, the catching up of the child cannot symbolize a present or future rapture of the New Testament church. For this imagery to apply to last days' events (rather than historical ones), it would have to be part of the prophetic component of the sign. This would require it to be repeated later in the text, which it is not.

v. 6 ...and the woman fled into the Desert, there to be cared for, for 1,260 days, in a place which God had prepared for her. This is the prophetic component of the sign. It

can easily be identified as such because it comes to pass as an actual event in verse 14 of this chapter.

v. 7-9 And war broke out in Heaven, Michael and his angels engaging in battle with the Dragon. The Dragon fought and so did his angels; but they were defeated, and there was no longer any room found for them in Heaven. The great Dragon, the ancient serpent, he who is called 'the Devil' and 'the Adversary' and leads the whole earth astray, was hurled down: he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him. The sign of verses 1-6 having concluded, verse 7 returns to the narration, describing events occurring both in heaven and on earth.

There is some discussion as to whether these verses represent Satan's fall from heaven when he originally rebelled against God or if they describe an end times' event. The issue is decided on the context and order of the chapter. The history of Satan's previous rebellion against God was already described in the historical component of the signs (v. 3-4). In that original battle, Lucifer initiated the rebellion and was driven from heaven. However, the three components of the sign have been completed, so these verses describing the fall of Satan are therefore an account of ongoing events as they unfold for John. That this war and Satan's fall is a 'current event' is in fact confirmed in verses 10-12 by the loud voice in heaven, which states that the 'kingdom and authority' of Christ has just now begun, "for the Accuser... has been hurled down." (NIV)

In the current battle, Michael and his angels start the fight because they are required to. It is an end times' event in which the visiting privileges of the Dragon and his dark angels are permanently revoked in order to fulfill the Scriptural principle that "Judgment must begin at the house of God." (1Pet. 4: 17 KJV) Before God's purifying seven bowl judgments can fall on the earth, he must first purify his own dwelling. Once the Dragon and his followers have been cast out of heaven, the requirements of righteousness will have been fulfilled, and the Lord will be at liberty to judge the powers of wickedness on earth. The identification of the Dragon as the devil and Adversary (Satan) in these verses leaves no doubt about his identity. The term "the ancient serpent" is a rabbinic expression that refers to the tempter in the Garden of Eden. There is some speculation that it may have been an actual dragon that caused Adam and Eve's Fall in Eden, but thereafter its kind became serpents, reproducing without arms and legs due to God's curse: "*You will crawl on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life.*"

v. 10 Then I heard a loud voice speaking in Heaven. It said, "The salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God have now come, and the sovereignty of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren has been hurled down—he who, day after day and night after night, was wont to accuse them in the presence of God." Satan's accusations in God's throne room have been allowed because heaven and earth have both been bound by the results of sin and rebellion. However, the new millennium has officially begun (though not yet implemented on earth) with the thematic fulfillment of the Day of Trumpets; the heavens have been purified, and the earth soon will be. The Dragon has now been defeated in two arenas, in Hades by Jesus after his crucifixion, and by Michael and his angels in Heaven. Only the battle for the earth remains. Since Satan has no fallback position left to him, he will attempt to attain complete mastery and control over the earth by eliminating every vestige of light on the planet.

v. 11 But they have gained the victory over him because of the blood of the Lamb and of the testimony which they have borne, and because they held their lives cheap and did not shrink even from death. Even though the rule of the beast under the direction of the Dragon will be one of merciless persecution and martyrdom of the saints, ultimate victory will be theirs. This victory comes through the redeeming blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit that enables them to faithfully witness for Christ, even by the sacrifice of their lives.

v. 12 For this reason be glad, O Heaven, and you who live in Heaven! Alas for the earth and the sea! For the Devil has come down to you; full of fierce anger, because he knows that his appointed time is short. The Dragon has read Scripture, so he knows that he will have only forty-two months to gain control over the earth and fortify it for a defense against the return of Christ. Angry at his recent defeat and fearing the loss of his last stronghold, the Dragon rushes about in a great rage to implement the final stage of his plan to prevent Jesus from establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

v. 13-16 And when the Dragon saw that he was hurled down to the earth, he went in pursuit of the woman who had given birth to the male child. Then, the two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman to enable her to fly away into the Desert to the place assigned her, there to be cared for, for a period of time, two periods of time, and half a period of time, beyond the reach of the serpent. And the serpent poured water from his mouth—a very river it seemed—after the woman, in the hope that she would be carried away by its flood. But the earth came to the woman’s help: it opened its mouth and drank up the river which the Dragon had poured from his mouth.

The modern manifestation of the woman, the Old Testament church, is the state of Israel. The logical question is why the Dragon pursues her before attacking New Covenant believers. The answer is that the significant points of God’s salvation plan have all been prophesied in Scripture, and each prophecy has been fulfilled in its proper time, because God’s word cannot fail. Jesus’ return to earth is contained in Messianic prophecy, which comes to pass through the salvation of the Jews. (The Gentile church, as Paul explains in his letter to the Romans, is a wild olive branch grafted into the tree of Israel.) The Dragon reasons that if he can destroy or even scatter Israel, he will be able to prevent Jesus from fulfilling at least part of God’s prophetic word regarding his return. If he can prevent even one Biblical prophecy from coming to pass, there is a chance he will be able to prevent others as well, including his eventual defeat when Christ returns.

The two witnesses of Revelation 11 prevent the Dragon from destroying or scattering Israel. He therefore initiates spiritual warfare, his area of expertise. If he can discourage and defeat Israel spiritually, or perhaps even turn the Jews to rebellion, his planned physical attack against Jerusalem will be that much easier. As “the father of lies,” he will attempt to deceive the Jews to turn them away from the warnings of the two witnesses. The water spewing from the Dragon’s mouth symbolizes the great spiritual delusion and lies with which he will enchant and subvert the earth at the end of the age. However, this attack against Israel also fails.

“The coming of the man of sin will be in accordance with the works of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will

believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” 2Thess. 2:9-12

This passage is often misinterpreted as describing an end times’ flight of Israel into the desert east of the Jordan in a repeat of the first century flight from Jerusalem. To the contrary, such an end times’ flight scenario is not supported in Scripture. Old Testament prophecy indicates that the Jews will gather to Israel at the end of the age, not flee from it, except for a panic reaction to the large earthquake at the end of the time of Israel’s troubles (Zech 14). Instead of physical flight, the wings of the eagle represent God’s protection and strength, and thus deliverance from the Dragon’s spiritual attack. The woman flies to the wilderness, “to her place,” – the land given to her by God. In Scripture, the desert is a place away from civilization, a refuge for those in need. During the tribulation, Israel itself is the desert, the only place on earth not under the ‘civilization’ of the beast. The opening of the land to swallow the Dragon’s stream of lies and threats against the woman symbolizes the spiritual protection available to the Jews by fleeing to Israel, the land originally given them by God as an eternal possession, and restored to them in the last days. Because God’s prophetic word is at stake, he preserves Israel as a nation during the forty-two months of the Man of Sin’s rule, ensuring that end times’ prophecies will be fulfilled.

v. 17 This made the Dragon furiously angry with the woman, and he went elsewhere to make war upon her other children—those who keep God’s commandments and hold fast to the testimony of Jesus. Seeing that God will preserve Israel as long as the two witnesses are around, the Dragon goes to war against the remaining people of God still on earth, the New Testament church. Christian believers, Jesus’ brothers and sisters, or the woman’s “other children,” now receive the brunt of the Dragon’s rage, suffering spiritual and physical persecution, imprisonment, and martyrdom.

Revelation 13

And he took up a position upon the sands of the sea-shore. Then I saw a Wild Beast coming up out of the sea, and he had ten horns and seven heads. On his horns were ten kingly crowns, and inscribed on his heads were names full of blasphemy. The Wild Beast which I saw resembled a leopard, and had feet like the feet of a bear, and his mouth was like the mouth of a lion; and it was to the Dragon that he owed his power and his throne and his wide dominion. I saw that one of his heads seemed to have been mortally wounded; but his mortal wound was healed, and the whole world was amazed and followed him. And they offered worship to the Dragon, because it was to him that the Wild Beast owed his dominion; and they also offered worship to the Wild Beast, and said, “Who is there like him? And who is able to engage in battle with him?”

And there was given him a mouth full of boastful and blasphemous words; and liberty of action was granted him for forty-two months. And he opened his mouth to utter blasphemies against God, to speak evil of His name and of His dwelling-place—that is

to say, of those who dwell in Heaven. And permission was given him to make war upon God's people and conquer them; and power was given him over every tribe, people, language and nation. And all the inhabitants of the earth will be found to be worshipping him: every one whose name is not recorded in the Book of Life—the Book of the Lamb who has been offered in sacrifice ever since the creation of the world.

Let all who have ears give heed. If any one is eager to lead others into captivity, he must himself go into captivity. If any one is bent on killing with the sword, he must himself be killed by the sword. Here is an opportunity for endurance, and for the exercise of faith, on the part of God's people.

Then I saw another Wild Beast, coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like those of a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. And the authority of the first Wild Beast—the whole of that authority—he exercises in his presence, and he causes the earth and its inhabitants to worship the first Wild Beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. He also works great miracles, so as even to make fire come down from Heaven to earth in the presence of human beings. And his power of leading astray the inhabitants of the earth is due to the marvels which he has been permitted to work in the presence of the Wild Beast. And he told the inhabitants of the earth to erect a statue to the Wild Beast who had received the sword-stroke and yet had recovered. And power was granted him to give breath to the statue of the Wild Beast, so that the statue of the Wild Beast could even speak and cause all who refuse to worship it to be put to death. And he causes all, small and great, rich and poor, free men and slaves, to have stamped upon them a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, in order that no one should be allowed to buy or sell unless he had the mark—either the name of the Wild Beast or the number which his name represents.

Here is scope for ingenuity. Let people of shrewd intelligence calculate the number of the Wild Beast; for it indicates a certain man, and his number is 666.

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Revelation 13 Commentary

v. 1 And he took up a position upon the sands of the sea-shore. Then I saw a Wild Beast coming up out of the sea, and he had ten horns and seven heads. On his horns were ten kingly crowns, and inscribed on his heads were names full of blasphemy. In some Revelation manuscripts the subject of this sentence is "I" while in others it is "he." Either one works to establish that events are taking place on earth. Since the figure presents a close semblance of the angel's stance in chapter 10, it is likely that this describes the continuing actions of the Dragon of chapter 12, claiming the earth as his domain.

In chapter ten, the angel stood on both land and sea. Here, the Dragon stands on the seashore. In Biblical economy, the land is associated with Israel. Considered from ancient times to be outside the control of man, the sea represents the untamed part of the earth, and is therefore symbolic of the Gentile world. Since the Dragon has already been prohibited from destroying Israel, his stance on the shore facing the sea symbolizes his coming rule over the Gentile world.

In Scripture, a horn always represents power. The placement of horns at the four corners of an altar, man's contact point with God, illustrates this principle. When applied to prophetic writings, *horns symbolize individual kings* that arise from a kingdom; *a beast or its heads symbolizes the kingdom itself*. Here, the beast can refer either to the Man of Sin, his kingdom, or both. There are two reasons for this. The time frame involved is short, so the kingdom lasts only as long as its ruler. More to the point, the Man of Sin is possessed by the spirit of the antichrist, who has been around since Satan's original rebellion. The antichrist is therefore the ruler of this kingdom as well as a malevolent spirit, with a history that goes back several thousand years. His spiritual pedigree is described by the seven heads and ten horns of the beast. The blasphemous names indicate his antithetical opposition to God.

The NTMS uses the term "wild beast" (Gr. – *zōon*) here to differentiate between this type of beast and those found around God's throne, which it translates as "living creatures" (Gr. – *thērion*). This beast is similar to the red Dragon of Revelation 12, but there are some differences. Although the beast and the Dragon both have seven heads, seven crowns, and ten horns, the Dragon's crowns are on its seven heads, while the beast wears its seven crowns on its horns. Further, the Dragon is red, while the beast is a composite of a leopard, bear, and a lion. The composite beast symbolizes the end times' kingdom of the Man of Sin, while the red Dragon is Satan, the spirit behind the kingdom.

The seven crowns on the Dragon's heads represent the chronological rule of the seven world *kingdoms* that Satan established through time as part of his plan to retake control of the world. The placement of the crowns on the beast's horns symbolizes the individual rule of the ten end times' *kings* that support the rule of the beast. (Rev. 17) It is generally accepted that these ten kings are foreshadowed in Daniel 2 by the ten toes of the great statue of gold, silver, bronze, and iron.

"You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces... the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay..." Dan. 2:31-34, 42

v. 2 The Wild Beast which I saw resembled a leopard, and had feet like the feet of a bear, and his mouth was like the mouth of a lion; and it was to the Dragon that he owed his power and his throne and his wide dominion. The composite makeup of the beast contains elements of the four beast-kingdoms of Daniel 7. The first three of these kingdoms, the lion, bear, and leopard, make up the body of the beast; the fourth kingdom is found in the ten horns atop the beast's seven heads, characterizing the beast's power.

Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. "And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!' After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.' After this I saw in the night visions, and

behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns... the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, (was) exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet.” (Dan. 7:2-7, 19 NKJV)

The question is often raised as to whether the lion, bear and leopard that make up the body of the composite beast symbolize three literal end times' kingdoms, or if these animals are merely figurative, representing character traits of the beast's kingdom. Scholars usually identify the lion with Great Britain and the bear with Russia, but can identify no modern nation with the symbol of the leopard. For that reason, a figurative interpretation of the beast's character traits is pretty much the universal choice here. Of the four beasts of Daniel 7, scholars uniformly apply a literal fulfillment only to the fourth beast, symbolizing the Roman Empire, which they have traced to the modern European Union. All that is lacking is to apply the same literal approach to the lion, the bear, and the leopard, as they also define historical empires with a modern day application.

When the literal principle of historical descent is applied to the three animals that comprise the body of the beast, all of them can in fact be traced to current nation-blocs. These nations are descended from the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires symbolized by the lion, bear and the leopard of Daniel 7. There is no need for these modern nations to have the leopard, bear, and lion as their current symbols; all that is required is that they trace their roots back to the cultural, political, and geographic heritage of these first century BC Middle Eastern empires.

The application of the principle of historical descent yields ten general observations about the composite beast. These observations lead to both deductive and inductive conclusions that differ from popular opinion regarding how end times events will unfold:

- First, the four animals of the composite beast represent the four successive kingdoms of Daniel 7. The composite beast forms one kingdom, comprised of a group of aligned nations.

- Second, consistent with established prophetic symbolism, the beasts that comprise the body of the composite beast form the nucleus of the beast's end times' world-wide *kingdom*, while the ten horns symbolize the ten subordinate *kings* that give the beast global control.

- The third observation is that the kings symbolized by the ten horns on the beast's head are not part of the nucleus of the beast's end times' empire. (If Daniel's fourth beast were in fact a core part of the beast's kingdom, then the body of the composite beast would have contained the other attributes of Daniel's fourth beast, i.e., iron teeth and bronze nails.) The horns on top of the beast's heads therefore symbolize the global power or strength of the beast's kingdom. This is consistent with Revelation 17: 12-13, which states that the ten horns 'give their power to the beast.' The ten horns become part of the beast's kingdom, *not* the other way around as is usually surmised.

- Fourth, based on Revelation 17, it is likely that the ten horns help the composite beast only after he has come to some measure of power in the nations represented by the lion, bear, and leopard. The ten kings would not likely band together to give their strength to someone who did not have the power to coerce them to do this, or at least make it to their advantage to do so.

- The fifth observation, based on the destruction of the harlot by the ten kings (Rev. 17: 16) is a logical inference that the composite beast cannot destroy the harlot himself, since he required their power to do this. This identifies the harlot as a global power in her own right.

- Sixth, The harlot's destruction probably takes place towards the beginning of the beast's rule rather than at its end. Since the beast is not strong enough to destroy the harlot himself, he would not be strong enough to come to global rule opposed by the harlot; thus her early removal. (The opposition between them is implied by the fact that the beast has the harlot destroyed.)

- Seventh, once the Man of Sin uses the power given to him by the ten kings, he will retain it, consolidating his position as de facto ruler of the world. Although the power of the ten kings predates that of the beast, they become the beast's vassals, since he is later able to depose three of them (Dan. 7:24).

- Eighth, the reason why the ten kings are necessary for the Man of Sin to destroy Mystery Babylon and rule the earth is because the ten kings are the inheritors of the military might of the Roman Empire. The modern world cannot be ruled by a kingdom that does not possess the advanced technology and power on which modern civilization rests.

- Ninth, the ten kings hold actual rule of the world due to the might of their military power (and their technology), but this power is submitted to the kingdom of the beast. Thus, although the political/military rule is exercised by nations of Roman descent, the core values that determine the beast's policies are those of the mostly Middle Eastern nations descended from the lion, bear, and leopard.

- Tenth, the core values of the kingdom of the beast will be primarily religious in nature rather than political or ideological, evidenced by the fact that the beast demands actual worship rather than just loyalty from everyone.

Composition of the Beast

The lion, bear, and leopard in Daniel 7 symbolized the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, and Greece, partly because of their cultural characteristics. These characteristics will also be evident in the nature of the composite beast. The relative 'placement' of these animals in the body of the beast also provides some idea of how they will be manifested. The lion represents the ability to intimidate by its roar, boasting of its prowess as king of all other beasts. The bear is known for the fierceness of its nature and its voracious appetite, while the leopard represents the ability to move with great speed. These characteristics take on new meaning when applied to the modern nation-blocs that make up the composite beast.

The composite beast has the body of a leopard. The leopard is known for its speed. The symbol of the leopard in Daniel 7 was fulfilled in the mobility and speed of the conquest of the known world by Alexander the Great, leading a Greek/Macedonian army several times smaller than those he defeated. The comparatively small size of his forces enabled him to move against his enemies with much greater speed and maneuverability. When he died, his kingdom was divided by four of his generals. The four heads of the leopard in Daniel 7 represent this division of Alexander's empire.

After Alexander's death, Seleucus took the heart of the empire, including Babylon. Eleven years later, he had conquered Syria and moved the Seleucid capital to Syrian Antioch. He eventually ruled the largest part of Alexander's conquests in what became the Syrian Empire, including what are now Syria, Iraq, Iran, and much of Pakistan and Afghanistan. As inheritor of the Seleucid Empire, the small Muslim nation of Syria forms the part of the composite beast

represented by the leopard. Making up most of the body of the composite beast, the leopard imparts an image of the kingdom of the beast as moving quickly to establish world dominion. Since the Man of Sin has only three and a half years to rule, the speed with which he establishes global rule will be one of the defining characteristics of his kingdom.

The most infamous of the Seleucid rulers was the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes, the archetype of the Man of Sin. He did not just conquer Israel, he went out of his way to blaspheme God and persecute the Jews. He desecrated the temple and its altar, spreading pig's blood on the sanctuary furnishings and placing a statue of Zeus in the Holy of Holies. He tried to corrupt Jewish youth with the games and idolatry of the Babylonian world system, building theatres throughout the country and even a gymnasium in Jerusalem, where athletes competed naked. He forced the Jews to sacrifice to Greek gods, inducing many to disobey the commandments and forsake their traditions. Those who did not sacrifice incense at the altars he had set up throughout Israel he tortured and killed, crucifying as many as 100,000 Jews in his persecutions.

Daniel 8 indicates that the Man of Sin will come from the kingdom of one of the four kings who succeeded Alexander the Great, though it does not state which one. Some direction is provided since this prophecy was already partially fulfilled by the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, who is considered the archetype of the Man of Sin. Two points of this prophecy indicate its future fulfillment: the fact that it will be at "the appointed time of the end," and that the Man of Sin will stand up against the Prince of princes, a title clearly referring to Jesus, who had not yet come when Epiphanes ruled over Israel.

And he said, "Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." Dan. 8:19, 22-25

The composite beast has the feet of the bear. The fierceness and strength of the bear, the third beast of Daniel seven, are the qualities for which Persia was noted. Although Persia was tolerant towards nations that quickly submitted to her rule, she reserved much harsher treatment for nations who refused to pay tribute and those who did not submit to her edicts. Even small violations, such as not registering for military service, could result in death. The Persian Empire lacked a comprehensive written legal code such as that imposed by the Babylonian Empire, so punishments were arbitrary and personal, limited only by the imagination of the commander or satrap who imposed them. In one instance, a draft dodger was flayed alive and his skin stretched as a covering over the seat from which Xerxes had issued this punishment. Like the Persian bear of Daniel 7, the kingdom of the beast will be known for its fierce retribution against those who do not comply with the Man of Sin's demand for worship or take his mark.

The feet of the bear symbolize the geographic extent of the Old Persian Empire. Persia's 'footprint' extended over most of Asia Minor, from Pakistan and Afghanistan in the east, across Iran and Iraq to Turkey, down through Syria and even across the eastern Mediterranean seaboard into Egypt and Libya. When the Man of Sin comes to power, his authority will be quickly

established throughout this area. Like the Persian bear, he will aggressively establish and defend his territory. The reason for his quick and complete consolidation of power can be found in the unifying societal and religious values of Islam, already established in the nations within the geographic footprint of the Old Persian Empire.

The Persian bear is fulfilled today in the 95% Shi'ite nation of Iran. Because of its status as the first modern Islamic theocracy, Iran will be in a unique position of influence among Muslim countries within the boundaries of the Old Persian Empire. As the first nation since the end of WWI to adopt the Islamic tribal law of Shari'a, Iran has been at the forefront of a move to reassert the Muslim power that prevailed from the 8th to the 16th centuries, exceeding even the empire of Alexander the Great in size. (Ed. Note: Since this was written, the countries in the 'footprint of the bear' have one by one begun to reestablish Shari'a based Muslim governments in preparation for a resurgent Islamic empire, most of them with active NATO and US support.)

The Islamic golden age saw Allah's armies conquer portions of three continents, transforming the Mediterranean Sea into a Muslim lake that united the western expanse of its far-flung trading empire. Muslim dominance receded only when Europe finally achieved significant military victories on land and sea. The decline of the Muslim empire ensued partly because Muslim leaders chose to retain the simple tribal way of life they had followed since the time of Mohammed, rejecting western ideas of civilization and technological progress.

This attitude did not significantly change until the early twentieth century, after the Middle East was divided into nations. Many of those nations later sought increased contact with the West to achieve economic benefits, along with military technology and security. The move towards embracing western technology took a quantum leap when Iran built its first rocket capable of reaching outer space, which would at some point be converted to an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear payload.

As the standard bearer of the Shi'ite minority in the centuries' old confrontation between the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam, Iran has sought to expand its power by manufacturing its own nuclear weapons. A nuclear-missile producing Iran will achieve two goals: intimidation of Sunni Muslim nations to her will, and the blackmail of the West to further increase Muslim power on the world stage. This course of action is viewed in Iran as the logical continuation of Jihad, the holy war against unbelieving infidels that has existed since the seventh century.

The composite beast has the mouth of a lion. The lion of Daniel 7 symbolizes the Babylonian Empire, which covered most of the Middle East. The modern descendant of Babylonia is the Muslim nation of Iraq, where the ruins of ancient Babylon are located. Since the beast is opposed to God, its lion's mouth indicates not only boasting to intimidate other nations, but also blasphemy. This pride is epitomized by an incident in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar, the archetypical king of Babylon. He lost his mind for seven years as punishment for boasting of his majesty and works after having received the knowledge of the true God from Daniel. The Man of Sin, like Nebuchadnezzar, will have a mouth that speaks "great words" against God, with an ability to deceive the nations.

"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." Dan. 7:25

"And there was given him a mouth full of boastful and blasphemous words; and liberty of action was granted him for forty-two months. And he opened his mouth to utter blasphemies against God, to speak evil of His name and of His dwelling-place—that is to say, of those who dwell in Heaven." Rev. 13:5-6

Summary: The geographical area of the empires of Alexander, Babylon, and Persia overlapped, comprising most of what are now the conservative and increasingly radical Islamic nations of the Middle East, extending from Pakistan to the Mediterranean Sea, and eastward across Africa to Libya. Their capitals were located in what are now Syria, Iraq, and Iran. This area describes part of the vast 13th century Muslim domains. When the composite beast of Revelation is viewed as the inheritor of these empires, it becomes apparent that the beast is an alliance of Middle Eastern nations. While most Bible scholars have been insisting for decades that the Man of Sin (or antichrist) comes from the European Union, the realization that the last great world power might be a resurgent Islamic Empire has only slowly begun to dawn during the first decade of the new millennium.

While the entire Middle East will be the beast's power base, the core nations of the composite beast will start with an alliance of the nations of Iraq, Iran, and Syria. These three nations in the heart of the Middle East share a common bond in their expressed hostility towards Israel and the West. The common bond between Shi'ite Iran and southern Shi'ite Iraq in the Sunni dominated Middle East has been growing with the entrenchment of radical Shi'ite militia forces in southern Iraq. Iraq's new constitution even provides for the eventual division of Iraq into the Northern Kurds, Central Sunni's, and the Shia South. Although Syria has a majority Sunni population, increasing cooperation between Iran and Syria has resulted from their joint efforts in moving *muhajadeen* and war materials into southern Lebanon to oppose Israel. Additionally, Turkey has been moving from being a NATO ally and friend of Israel into Syria's sphere of influence. The pieces for the formation of the composite beast have been gradually moving into place.

The Clash of Civilizations

The Mahdi and Jihad: Western media have systematically downplayed the growing conflict between Islam and the West. The press continues to characterize highly planned and coordinated international terrorist attacks as reckless tilting at windmills by uneducated loners from third world countries. Meanwhile, growing legions of Islamic jihadists and their sympathizers see terrorist attacks as the best means to bring about Islamic end times' prophecies regarding the global domination of Islam. The most significant of these prophecies is the coming of the *Mahdi*, the prophesied Muslim prophet who will achieve victory for Muslim forces and establish a golden age of peace under global Islamic rule. His coming is foretold in the Qur'an, as well as by Islamic *Hadiths*, recorded sayings and acts of Mohammed that supplement the Qur'an in questions of law and religious practice. Most Muslims accept the coming of the Mahdi as an article of faith, although Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims have slightly differing beliefs about him.

Muslims believe that the Mahdi will restore the Muslim Caliphate, which was terminated by Turkey in 1923 at the insistence of the British government. Christians can best understand the caliph as a sort of Islamic warrior-pope. Strict obedience is required of all Muslims to the dictates of the caliph on law and religious practice, including the call to jihad. The word "Islam" means submission. The Mahdi will thus lead not only in the moral arena, but also in military, political and societal spheres as he brings the entire world under Muslim rule.

According to the prophecies, the Mahdi will establish the global rule of Islam following a great war (jihad) in which all of Islam's enemies will be defeated. He will “fight against the forces of evil, lead a world revolution and set up a new world order based on justice, righteousness and virtue.”⁸ The Iranian government’s investment in promoting the promised rule of the Mahdi can be seen in the extent of coverage given to his coming on their official state websites. Iran’s efforts to accelerate the arrival of the Mahdi through confrontation with the West and the spread of Shari’a law have stoked the fires of violent Jihad around the world.

Iran’s President Ahmadinejad has placed himself at the forefront of preparing the world for the appearance of the Mahdi. In his address to the United Nations in September 2006, Ahmadinejad revealed the driving vision behind his actions. “I emphatically declare that today’s world, more than ever before, longs for... the perfect righteous human being and real savior who has been promised to all peoples and who will establish justice, peace and brotherhood on the planet. Almighty God, (Allah)... make us among his followers and among those who strive for his return and his cause.” While some people might have been misled into thinking he was referring to the promised return of Christ, this is not the case. This perfect human being spoken of by Ahmadinejad is the Muslim Mahdi, and “justice” is the willful imposition of Islamic law on all people through global Jihad. Contrary to the currently acceptable lie that Islam is a religion of peace between men of different faiths, the truth is that Islam promises brotherhood only to Muslims. All those who do not embrace the “peace” of Allah and his prophet are infidels who will either be brought under the yoke of Islam or slain.

Recent world events indicate that the centuries old conflict between Islam and other faiths has found renewed vitality in a resurgent conflict of civilizations. Attacks on US embassies in Muslim countries and the destruction of the World Trade Center towers in 2001, the subway bombings in London and the fatal train derailment in Spain are all examples of this conflict taking on an increasingly violent and widespread nature over the past decade. While the West perceives these ‘isolated’ terrorist attacks as political statements by disgruntled third world individuals or factions, the growing international jihadist movement views them as organized expressions of religious belief, coordinated asymmetric military attacks to achieve Islam’s destiny of ruling the world.

The conflict between Islam and the West is aggravated by the continuing presence of western coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the Muslim mind, this is reminiscent of the invasion of the Middle East by Christian Crusaders. The Crusades brought death and uncountable loss to great numbers of Muslims. Although this is ancient history to westerners, it is still spoken of and taught in the Middle East as though it took place in the recent past. The wounds are intentionally kept fresh in the heart of every child receiving a Muslim education. The occupation of Iraq by western coalition forces and their plans to refashion Middle East governments into democracies has rekindled the well documented “Muslim crusader complex.” It was less than diplomatic when President Bush referred to the invasion of Afghanistan as ‘a crusade.’ To combat the western threat, Bin Laden formed an organization of 150 Islamic jihadists called the “International Islamic Front for the Jihad against Jews and Crusaders.” The invasion and conquest of Iraq, as well as subsequent threats to invade Syria and bomb Iran in response to its nuclear program have helped to reignite the fires of jihad in the Middle East. Increasing numbers of moderate Muslims at home and abroad have been drawn to support jihadist goals in defense of their religion and way of life.

In the view of many Muslim countries, Christian crusaders are indeed once again invading sacrosanct Muslim lands, violating international law and disrupting their way of life.

The US and Britain are viewed as fighting a losing battle in a feeble attempt to seduce Muslims with ungodly materialism and decadent western ways in order to obtain oil. On the other side of the fence, the West does not seem to grasp why anybody would not desire the material luxuries and modern hi-tech conveniences and gadgets on offer to the Muslim world. No longer experiencing religion as an essential part of their own national life, western leaders fail to appreciate the central part religion plays in other nations. If they bothered to take the time to study Islam, they would realize that the Hadiths warn Muslims to shun the very evils of materialism and the freedom from morality that the West offers through the spread of democracy.

Increasing numbers of Muslims view themselves as being in a struggle between Christianity and Islam. However, the erstwhile Christian nations of the West have divested themselves of their ties to Christianity in public life. They therefore refuse to acknowledge the religious nature of the clash of civilizations unfolding before their eyes. While westerners may not define themselves as Christian, Muslims certainly see them as such. Further limiting the West's ability to perceive the scope of the problem, the politically correct doctrine of tolerance for all faiths prohibits the discussion of Islam and Muslims as religiously motivated military antagonists. By an unspoken political decree, Islam must be affirmed publicly as a peaceful religion in the press and in all overt dealings with Muslims in order not to offend them. The European press assiduously avoids associating the words 'terrorist' and 'Islamic.' Muslim organizations have been quick to exploit this self-imposed blindness. The continued selling of Islam as a religion of peace masks the jihadists' intensifying war on the West as part of their plans for world domination.

3-4 I saw that one of his heads seemed to have been mortally wounded; but his mortal wound was healed, and the whole world was amazed and followed him. And they offered worship to the Dragon, because it was to him that the Wild Beast owed his dominion; and they also offered worship to the Wild Beast, and said, "Who is there like him? And who is able to engage in battle with him?"

The description of the scarlet beast of Revelation 17: 11 sheds some light on the interpretation of this passage. John states that the beast itself is an eighth king/kingdom, coming *after* the seven previous kingdoms symbolized by the seven heads. Due to the nearly identical descriptions of the scarlet and composite beasts, they represent different aspects of the same Satanic reality. The scarlet beast is the spiritual aspect of Satan, who cannot take physical form, but is able to direct the course of human events to effect his plan of world domination. With its seven heads, the composite beast is the worldly manifestation of these eight kingdoms, in particular, the final one at the end of the age.

It is within this context that the fatal wounding and 'healing' of one of the heads of the beast is best explained. The popular belief is that this describes the assassination and subsequent recovery of the antichrist, much to the astonishment and then worship of the world. However, this reasoning does not stand up under even superficial examination. Since the seven heads represent previous kingdoms, the 'mortal wounding' of one of the seven heads could not possibly be interpreted as an assassination of the Man of Sin, who is the eighth king, the beast itself. Further examination enables the time frame of this mortal wounding to be narrowed down somewhat. Revelation 17: 8 states: "*The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit (Abyss)...*" The beast was therefore in the Abyss during the first century when John wrote that it "*was, and is not.*" Thus, it must have received its fatal wound at least

two thousand years ago. The fatal wounding of one of the heads yields further results on examination of the original grammatical construction of this passage.

In the original Greek (Interlinear, Sovereign Grace Pub. 1985), verse 3 reads: *“And I saw one of the heads of [the beast] as having been slain to the death, and the wound of the death of it had been healed.”* The Greek grammar provides additional information not conveyed in English translations: 1. ... *one of the heads of it as having been slain to the death*”: This describes the actual death of the head. In the original Greek, this death is denoted even more strongly than the death of Jesus in Rev. 5: 6 as “... a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain.” 2. *“...the wound of the death of it had been healed.”* The “it” in this passage refers back to the beast, not the head. Verse 12 confirms this interpretation. Although one of the heads was slain, it is the beast itself that was healed: “He causes the earth and its inhabitants to worship the first Wild Beast, whose mortal wound had been healed.” While appearing at first to be somewhat confusing, there is a simple explanation for this wording. One of the heads, representing a former kingdom of the beast, was destroyed. The beast itself however, cannot die, since it is in essence a spiritual being, with six other heads manifesting as kingdoms throughout history.

Here is where it gets interesting, in light of John’s description of the scarlet beast in Revelation 17. The NIV offers a simple translation: *“The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction.”* (v.8) *“The beast, who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.”* (v.11) The question has to be asked: “How can the beast have previously existed as a kingdom and been fatally wounded, consigned to the Abyss, and then return at the end of the age once again as the beast, the eighth king?” The answer is found in the identification of the red dragon with the composite beast, and the ability of spiritual beings to transcend time. The Man of Sin will be human, yet possessed by a demonic spirit. This spirit existed previously as one of the seven heads of the beast, but its kingdom was destroyed, having ‘received a fatal wound.’ On its destruction it was sent to the Abyss, but it will return at the end of the age to manifest itself in the Man of Sin, the composite beast itself. (The question as to which head received the fatal wound is discussed in the commentary on Revelation 17.)

“Who is there like him?” When the Man of Sin is revealed, he will possess great spiritual and physical presence. The incarnation of such spiritual power in human form will mark him as being greater than other men. While the presence of absolute evil in a human being would not normally be an attractive quality, the Dragon is accomplished at disguising himself, being able to appear as an “angel of light” (2Cor. 11:14). The incarnation of this malevolent being will be accompanied by a great deception, as well as great feats that will bring him acclaim. Daniel states that the Man of Sin will be known by his appearance. The Hebrew word translated “appearance” is *rab*, denoting an abundance of size, quantity or quality. He will be superior to other men in his appearance and raw personal life force, his intellect and power, just as the giants of Genesis 6 far exceeded the appearance and abilities of humankind due to their dual spirit-human nature. This is part of the reason for his widespread public acclaim in verse 4.

“Then I wished to know the truth about... the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them...” Dan. 7:19-21

“And who is able to engage in battle with him?” As a being of great personal power and the ability to impose his will on others through both military power and diplomacy, he will quickly achieve decisive political and military victories. The whole world will follow him, believing the deception that he is “the perfect righteous human being and real savior who has been promised to all peoples and who will establish justice, peace and brotherhood on the planet.” Believing the delusion, the people of the world will worship the Dragon when the Man of Sin proclaims the Dragon as God. Only Christians and Jews will see through the deception.

v. 5-7 And there was given him a mouth full of boastful and blasphemous words; and liberty of action was granted him for forty-two months. And he opened his mouth to utter blasphemies against God, to speak evil of His name and of His dwelling-place—that is to say, of those who dwell in Heaven. And permission was given him to make war upon God’s people and conquer them; and power was given him over every tribe, people, language and nation.

“Liberty of action was granted him for forty-two months”: This passage makes it clear that the Man of Sin rules for three and a half years, not the seven years of popular end times’ fiction. This same time frame is also applied to three other concurrent Revelation events: the trampling of Jerusalem by the nations (Rev 11: 2), the ministry of the two witnesses (Rev 11: 3), and God’s protection of Israel from the deceptions of the Dragon (Rev 12: 6). When a passage of time is stated in months as it is here, it conveys a time of suffering. The trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles, the duration of the Flood, the captivity of the ark in Philistine territory, and the affliction of the scorpion/locusts of Revelation 9 are all given in months rather than days or years.

The three and a half years allotted to the beast’s rule is a fairly short time frame, given his goal of conquering the world and his desire to convert, capture, or kill every Christian believer. In his attempt to accomplish so much in such a short timeframe, the beast will have to execute a preplanned and highly coordinated worldwide campaign of religious persecution. His campaign must not only be swift and efficient, it must overcome the natural moral objections of global opinion that accompany any act of mass persecution. Due to the public outcry that would develop from such an act, it is difficult for a political entity to carry out a religious genocide. History, however, teaches that there is a way to accomplish this. While it is almost impossible for a state to stamp out a religion through persecution, it is much easier for one religion to get away with making war on another religion, especially if it crosses national boundaries. In fact, the only way to eliminate one religion is to replace it with another system of religious belief that incorporates elements of the former. The Catholic Church practiced this in their conversion efforts down through the centuries. Verse 4 states that the beast and the Dragon are worshiped by the world, confirming that the kingdom of the beast will in fact be a theocracy, based on religion rather than mere philosophical ideals.

The only religion with the ability, inclination and past conduct of carrying out mass persecution of other religions is Islam. Today, with over a billion adherents, or 20% of earth’s total population, Islam is positioned in nearly every country in the world. It has an efficient worldwide legal and banking system, strict guidelines regulating societal interaction, and the ability to coerce members into obedience through its mosques, clerics and strong peer groups willing to engage in public violence. Islam is an evangelistic religion, with a codified hatred of Jews, and both past and present jihads against Christian nations. Additionally, Muslim warfare

does not discriminate between combatants and civilians. Muslim jihadists have no qualms about killing women and children to secure a place in paradise.

Not only does Islam have the ability to carry out mass persecution of Christians, Islam's stated goal is to convert the unbelievers, or infidels, of the entire world to the one true religion under Allah. Islam is not a passive religion with a live and let live attitude. According to the Qur'an, Allah is the world's only true god and Islam its only true religion, under whose banner Muslims will one day conquer the earth, subjugating all nations and all other religions under Shari'a law. It is prophesied that the Mahdi will lead Islam to global conquest through jihad against the infidels of all other faiths, ushering in an era of universal peace and prosperity.

The obligation for individual Muslims to go to war against all other religions is codified in the Qur'an and cultivated among Islam's more conservative adherents, who are promised generous heavenly rewards for killing infidels in jihad. Those who kill Christians and Jews at the end of the age will be true religious believers, zealous for the righteousness of their cause. Established Islamic courts will endorse Muslims' right to punish infidels, passing judgment on anyone failing to worship Allah and his Mahdi. The Islamic program of extermination will be so widespread that there will be no independent state raising a voice to challenge it. Few individuals will publicly object for fear of becoming its next target. These are serious charges against a religion that, despite its turbulent past, claims to be a peaceful one. Most Muslims, especially those in the western hemisphere, are in fact peaceful, rejecting outright the cause of jihad. Just what is the truth about Islam and how could such an end times' scenario come to pass?

Islamic Law and Practice: The worship of Allah, required of all Muslims, is centered about regular attendance at local mosques. These are run by clerics who impose strict religious rules on members. Unlike Christianity, all Muslims are required to participate in the life of the mosque and remain submitted to the will of their spiritual leaders. One is part of the larger Muslim community on the local as well as global level. Due to more liberal western societal values, many North American Muslims are viewed by the rest of the Muslim world as being overly lax, having been infected by western values. These more liberal Muslims do not hold the same strict attitudes towards such things as jihad, segregation of the sexes in social interaction, and the adoption of western habits and technology.

In traditional Muslim societies, including Muslim communities in the West, social pressure, intimidation, and even violence are used to ensure conformance with the traditional social and religious values of Islam. These values imbue every aspect of life, from prayer five times a day and strict dietary requirements to social prohibitions governing interactions with Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Islam is not just a religion; it is a highly regulated social order. Every follower of Islam is also a member of Muslim society, required not only to follow the dictates of the Islamic religion and its clerics, called *Imams*, but also to live according to established Muslim societal rules under Islamic law and justice.

The Islamic judicial system is founded on Shari'a law. Shari'a is considered binding on all Muslims, regardless of where they live, as well as on all non-Muslims if there is even a small Muslim community in their midst. Imams issue binding informal rulings as well as formal edicts called *fatwas* for violations of Shari'a law. These rulings are enforceable even against non-Muslims. Sentences can include stoning, the forfeiture of body parts, and even death. The death sentence can be imposed for, among other things, attempting to convert a Muslim to another faith and for 'blasphemy,' which includes making critical remarks about Mohammed. Every Muslim male having come of age is bound by law to carry out the rulings of Shari'a courts,

including its death sentences, anywhere in the world. The death sentence issued against the British author Salman Rushdie is well known. A fatwa was issued against him for writing the fictional book *Satanic Verses*, which engaged in parody of the prophet Mohammed. Assassinations of individuals opposed to Islam, as well as Islamic clerics engaged in the losing side of internal power struggles, still occur around the world as a result of these fatwas. The rule of Shari'a law is currently resurgent in the Middle East and Africa, and is gaining momentum in Europe.

"And there was given him a mouth full of boastful and blasphemous words... to speak evil of his name and... of those who dwell in heaven." The Qur'an calls all Muslim believers to support the conversion of the world to Islam. Those who die in jihad while killing members of other faiths receive immediate entry into heaven before all others, where they are promised a host of carnal delights. Islamic martyrs gain immediate entry to Paradise, unlike non-martyrs do must wait for all the Jews to be killed during the final jihad before the gates of paradise are opened. In the Islamic universe, the world is divided into those who believe in Allah and revere his prophet Mohammed, and those who do not, who are therefore allied with Satan. The phrase "strive hard" in the following Qur'anic verse is translated from the word *jahidi*, the verb form of jihad. Jihad is a call for Muslims to engage in violent warfare against infidels of all faiths.

"Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah and those who reject faith fight in the cause of evil: so fight ye against the friends of Satan." (Surah 4: 76) "O Prophet! strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm against them." (Surah 9: 73) "When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield, strike off their heads and, when you have laid them low, bind your captives firmly." (Surah 47: 4)

Islam teaches that Jesus was only a prophet, greater than Moses but less than the prophet Mohammed, who brought the final revelation of truth to mankind. The Qur'an specifically refutes the Christian belief in the triune nature of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and rejects the claims of Jesus as the divine Son of God. It reportedly states sixteen times that Allah has no son.

"So believe in Allah... and say not three! - cease! Allah is only one God. Far is it removed from his transcendent majesty that he should have a son." (Surah 4: 171) "Say: Praise be to God who has never begotten a son; who has no partner in his kingdom...." (Surah 17:111)

This core Islamic belief not only illustrates that Allah is far different from the God of the Bible; it identifies *Islam as a religion suffused with the spirit of antichrist*. Centuries before the appearance of Islam as a new religion, Paul and John both wrote about this false religious spirit that would play a major part in last days events. The two elements that would come together to identify the spirit of antichrist would be the denial that Jesus is God and the refutation of God as the Father of Jesus Christ.

"Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised

us — eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.” 1Jn. 2: 22-26

Radical and even traditional Islamic leaders and organizations have gone to great lengths to hide the plain meaning of the Qur'an and the true intentions of Islam, downplaying the differences between Islam and Christianity. They define jihad as being merely an inner religious struggle. This inner struggle does exist, and is called 'greater' jihad in the Qur'an, calling its followers to seek inner perfection. However, this tactic of drawing attention to the greater jihad is no more than a magician's trick. The Qur'an also calls for the 'lesser' jihad of holy war against all infidels. While Islamic clerics and organizations are defining jihad in terms of this inner struggle to western news media, Imams issue Sabbath calls in local mosques around the world for true believers to join the armed struggle of jihad against Israel and the West.

The true face of Jihad: According to the World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia, the doctrine of jihad presented in the Qur'an is based on three related ideas. "First, Islam is a universal community. Second, God and Muhammad have commanded all free and physically able male Muslims to spread their faith, even by waging war against non-Muslims when necessary. Finally, Muslims must spread their religion until all people have converted to Islam or agreed to live under an Islamic government."

"Seek out your enemies relentlessly." (Surah 4:103) "Slay [infidels] wherever you find them....idolatry is worse than carnage....fight against them until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion is supreme." (Surah 2: 190-193) "Make war on them until idolatry shall cease and God's religion shall reign supreme." (Surah 8:36)

Jihad is not just a historical chapter in Islamic history, as Muslim spokesmen would have the West believe. It is a foundational principle of the Islamic religion. For most of Islamic history it has been the operative principle of all Muslims. Its emphasis receded only with the breakup of the Middle East into separate nations following World War I and the abolition of the Caliphate, the spiritual leadership of Muslim power. Until fairly recently, jihad was actively embraced only by minor Islamic sects such as the Wahhabis, and by Muslims intent on dislodging Israel from the Middle East. However, with recent world developments, jihad has been moving back into mainstream Islamic consciousness. The holy war of jihad is again becoming the driving force that burns in the hearts of increasing numbers of the Islamic faithful, as radical Islam shakes off its slumber in the new millennium.

This struggle is seen as a long-term effort. Some Muslim leaders seek to allay the fears of the West while preparing for war against it. Instead of their usual denouncement of the 'false trinity' of Christianity, they sometimes try to give the impression that there is little difference between the Judeo-Christian God and Allah, implying that Muslims and Christians are brothers worshipping the same God. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Muslims actually believe that Christians worship a false god and that Allah is the One True God. The truth, however, is that Allah is *a moon god* arbitrarily chosen from a pantheon of gods at the Kaba'a in Mecca, and elevated by Mohammed to monotheistic status to be the one true god of Islam. This is not a new god, but an old one. The early Assyrians and Babylonians worshiped the moon god known as Sin.

v. 8 And all the inhabitants of the earth will be found to be worshipping him: every one whose name is not recorded in the Book of Life—the Book of the Lamb who

has been offered in sacrifice ever since the creation of the world. While one might imagine Islam taking a serious foothold in other countries, the average American understands the United States as a tolerant mix of different races and faiths. This leads to a basic question as to whether a Muslim ‘conquest’ of the West is even possible.

Can Jihad happen in the West? The great imbalance in power posed by the advanced technologies of the West compared to the backward technological state of most Muslim countries has led to a passive-aggressive approach to Muslim world conquest. This consists of terrorist attacks when possible, as well as conquest through ‘peaceful’ immigration. This dual approach is now embraced by numerous Muslim governments and clerics, and funded by Islamic ‘charities’ and organizations with the goal of achieving global Islamic rule within a generation. This two-pronged approach can be characterized as active and passive jihad. Active jihad consists of the enlistment and training of young men (women and children are also used) to become *muhajadeen*, warriors and terrorists for the fight on the ground primarily in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Israel. They are also recruited for violent terrorist acts against Europe and the U.S and their interests around the world. The main recruitment grounds for active jihad are Muslim *madrassas* (schools) and mosques, which are found in nearly every country in the world.

Active global jihad is a goal held by Muslim governments, the “Muslim street” in the Middle East, and members of Islamic organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood. In pursuit of the Qur’an’s goal of conquering the world through jihad, the Muslim Brotherhood has established the global *Ikhwan* movement. As a result, the West has been shaken by terrorist attacks such as the World Trade Center attacks in 1993 and 2001. There have reportedly been several other terrorist attacks in the US attributed to Muslim extremists, but these have been sold to the press as anything from isolated incidents to unusual accidents. This is done in order to deprive the terrorists of the weapon of fear these attacks are intended to achieve. Additionally, there have been numerous successful as well as unsuccessful attacks on transportation lines and other targets in Europe, including the spectacular London subway attacks in July, 2005. These are not just isolated incidents, but carefully planned actions in a coordinated campaign of global jihad.

The second front, passive Jihad, has been much more difficult to prove, as it smacks of conspiracy theory. It involves massive waves of Muslim immigration to Europe and North America with the intention of undermining and eventually changing the political, social and religious profile of the industrialized nations of the West. The tactics of passive jihad include setting up independent Muslim enclaves to prevent assimilation into western society, soliciting convicts inside prisons to serve as a Muslim ‘fifth column’ on their release, allowing marriages only with other Muslims from strict jihadist oriented communities, using western coffers to fund attacks by collecting social welfare benefits, and working for passage of disruptive societal and legal changes, including rioting and the adoption of Shari’a law.

The disruption of western society is a prime goal of passive jihad. Tens of thousands of Muslim youth have discovered their ability to bring European society to a standstill. In the fall of 2005, Muslim riots started in France and quickly spread across most of Europe, lasting for three weeks. As of 2009, French society had not yet reverted to the civil peace that prevailed before this event. Some areas in France have been virtually taken over by Muslims, and police have had to abandon active law enforcement duties in these areas as their presence results in renewed rioting.

The year following these riots, it was reported that on average, Muslims had attacked 15 police officers, fire fighters, or other public officials every month, and caused uncounted property damage as well – as many as 100 cars might be set afire during the course of an evening. Police, fire, and medical officers are still reluctant to enter these Muslim enclaves for fear of their own safety. On the first anniversary of these riots, a spokesman for the French police officers union stated that Muslims had organized themselves into gangs “that operate in a paramilitary fashion,” and that France itself “is in a civil war.” In one incident that was not all that unusual according to observers, immigrant Muslim youths stopped a city bus in Grande-Borne, a suburb of Paris. They ordered the driver and the passengers to get out and then set the bus on fire. When police arrived to restore order, they were attacked and the situation escalated into another riot.⁹

The smoking gun proving the existence of passive jihad was recently discovered during civil proceedings against the Muslim Brotherhood, contained in an internal memo written by Muslim Brotherhood member Mohamed Akram. Dated May 22, 1991, and titled *Understanding the role of the Muslim Brother in North America*, this memo outlines part of the *Ikhwan* (global Muslim Brotherhood) vision: “The process of settlement is a ‘Civilization-Jihadist Process,’ with all the word means. The Ikhwan must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and ‘sabotaging’ its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God’s religion is made victorious over all other religions.”¹⁰

Muslim Immigrants in the West: Unlike the tolerance and openness of western countries that have become home to a tsunami of Islamic immigrants, Muslim society does not allow accommodation with different religions and cultures. Instead, Muslim clerics seek to retain Islam’s religious and societal hold over all Muslims in foreign lands in order to prevent their assimilation into western society. Preserving the Muslim way of life is of paramount importance, since Islam views people of all other faiths as inferior.

“The only true faith in God’s sight is Islam.” (Surah 3:19) “Believers, take neither Jews nor Christians for your friends.” (Surah 5:51)

The enforcement of Shari’a law, the prevention of friendships with westerners, the domination of women by men, retention of Islamic dress, and strict observance of the Muslim religious calendar and worship are all used as means of ensuring segregation of Muslims in self-contained colonies within their host nations. These colonies are separate from and openly hostile toward their host countries. The ultimate goal of preventing assimilation into western society is to establish a functioning Muslim state within a state, eventually changing western laws and customs so these host nations might ultimately be transformed into a collection of Muslim provinces.

This segregation has been seen to a far greater degree in Europe than in the United States, which tends to attract a better-financed and educated class of Muslim immigrants, more accommodative to western culture. Most Muslim European immigrants are poor, uneducated villagers who come to take advantage of promised liberal social welfare benefits. Wave after wave of these immigrants has begun to swamp the ability of some of the more liberal European countries to continue offering benefits even to their own citizens. In several cases the perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Europe were found to have been financing their activities with automotive, job, housing and other subsistence benefits provided by the state, all the while living in self contained Muslim colonies within the nation they attacked.

Islam and Shari'a Law: Muslim clerics in Europe have been successful in their efforts to keep Muslim colonies segregated from western society, while at the same time taking steps to undermine the foundations of that society. One tactic has been to attack the underpinnings of the western legal system, attempting to substitute Islamic Shari'a law in its place. One western investigative journalist reported on the nature of Islamic law: "Shari'a is the legal and judicial system of Islam that is brutally imposed by Muslim majorities in many Islamic countries in the Middle East and is now resurgent in Africa as well. Shari'a law is based on an anachronistic vision of society that imposes a system of ancient tribal justice that dates from the founding of Islam in the sixth century. It is the specific embodiment of the totalitarian ideology practiced by the Taliban, Iranian Mullahs and Saudi Wahhabis. Shari'a law is perpetuated by claiming to have its roots in the Qur'an, but in fact it is mostly the product of rulings and dictates made by Islamic scholars and caliphs over several centuries.

One author who has studied the subject extensively writes: "Shari'a demands total and unquestioned submission. Its subjects are told that Shari'a is given by Allah and that whatever befalls them (good or bad) is Allah's will. To question a judgment under Shari'a (right or wrong) is to question Shari'a itself and will only bring harsher punishment. If a person receives harsh punishment for something they didn't do, the rationale is that Allah could and would have prevented it if that had been his will. This fatalistic and deterministic approach allows Shari'a rulers to get away with virtually any thing that enters their head."¹¹

Shari'a civil courts are being created across Europe to serve segregated European Muslim communities. In an increasing number of cases, European courts have referred civil matters to these newly formed Islamic courts, enabling Muslim immigrants to avoid assimilation into western society. Shari'a courts have recently received official sanction to operate in Britain. While this helps lighten court dockets, it also serves the goal of establishing a separate Muslim state within the country.

Other changes to society have resulted from aggressive Muslim lobbying in the legal arena. Six western nations now allow Muslim men to practice polygamy and even keep harems. The advancing pace of such societal changes has occasionally resulted in a public backlash. One German judge raised a public outcry in 2008 when she ruled in a criminal proceeding that sentence could not be imposed on a Muslim man for beating his wife, since he had the right to beat her under Shari'a law. The long-term Muslim goal is to establish Shari'a in every western nation, first as a viable alternative, then as a replacement of the western system of justice.

To further isolate and prevent Muslim communities from assimilation into their inferior, decadent European host countries, Muslim parents increasingly practice what have come to be known in Northern Europe as "fetching marriages." Muslim girls raised in public schools are sent back to their relatives in the Middle East for indoctrination in Islamic schools, where they given in an arranged marriage to a Muslim boy, frequently against their will. The penalty for refusal such an arranged marriage is death. The groom is usually from a poor provincial village, ensuring that he will impose strict Muslim orthodoxy on his new bride. The couple then moves back to Europe under liberal immigration rules, where the new husband declines to learn the language or integrate into society, except to claim welfare benefits. One of his more important objectives is to keep his wife away from any social contact with her former European friends. A recent human rights study discovered that in 90 cases of fetching marriages, all but three of the girls were forced into marriage and sex against their will. Many were beaten into submission by their new husbands.

Under Shari'a law, women are treated as property, so their 'crimes' can be punishable by stoning, maiming, or even death. Muslim girls who date non-Muslim men or commit such serious offenses as wearing western clothes are subject to justifiable "honor killings" by any male family member seeking to avenge the girl's disrespect of Muslim customs and tradition. In numerous cases, girls have been murdered by their fathers, brothers, or cousins for refusing to agree to foreign arranged marriages, for dating non-Muslims and for socializing with western friends. In one case, using a cell phone was included in the list of transgressions that a father used to justify killing his daughter.¹²

One result of the gradual imposition of Shari'a law in the West has been the Muslim belief that it should be aggressively enforced. In one incident, Muslim youths caught stealing from shops and mugging pedestrians in Denmark claimed their Imam told them that this behavior was justified. They told police that the Qur'an taught that westerners owe their Muslim immigrants the *Jizyah* poll tax, based on the fact that Muslims are present in their country. The Muslim gang claimed they were merely collecting the money owed them under Shari'a law.¹³

Muslim Speech Police: Part of the strategy of the global *Ikhwan* movement has been to mobilize a quick and strident response against those who openly violate or even verbally oppose the teachings of the Qur'an, including moderate Muslims. Public figures with the temerity to expose Islamic practices or its sordid past have been the recipients of a media onslaught generated by vigilant Muslim organizations. Subsequent failure to offer a public apology usually results in reprisals, including negative PR campaigns that can end one's career. This has effectively curtailed politicians and religious leaders from making negative statements about the jihadist goals of Islam and the true nature of Islam. Muslims and non-Muslims alike who have publicly spoken out against Islam have even come under the sentence of death by duly issued *fatwas* that can be executed anywhere in the world. A global push for 'religious defamation' legislation that would carry criminal penalties for spoken or written language critical of Islam is scheduled to come before EU committees in early 2009. (Ed. Note: Since this was published, such legislation has already been passed within the EU.)

If the offending individual is a religious figure, additional tactics have been employed. In 2006, when newly elected Pope Benedict repeated a Middle Ages description of Islam as a violent religion, Catholic churches in Muslim countries were burned, religious clergy were killed and many more were threatened in protest, demonstrating just how peaceful Islam truly is not. A public apology was demanded, and the pope complied in order to end the loss of lives and destruction of church property.

Even innocent trespasses against Muslim sensibilities by well meaning individuals can be perceived as offensive, at times resulting in violent Muslim reactions. In September 2007, a British schoolteacher in Sudan let her first grade class name a teddy bear Mohammed, the name of the most popular boy in the class. Unfortunately for her, it also happens to be the name of the Muslim prophet. She was threatened with beatings and death by an angry crowd of Muslim men, arrested, and charged with blasphemy, which is punishable by forty lashes and up to six months in jail. Only the aggressive efforts of her embassy spared her this punishment in exchange for her deportation, lest she further corrupt impressionable young Muslim minds.

The Silent Muslim Majority: The argument is often made that the violent jihadist face of Islam is just a small fraction of the Muslim world, and that the actions of the few have unfairly branded the masses of moderate Muslims. While the ranks of active jihadist Muslims are indeed small on a proportional basis of the total worldwide billion-strong Muslim population, the issue

needs to be put in perspective — not on a personal, or individual level (Muslims need Jesus, too), but on an ideological or even theological one. As social commentator Mark Steyn noted, it is more accurate to call moderate Muslims quiescent Muslims: “This is because there is no such thing as moderate Islam. The Qur’an teaches only one kind of Islam and that is the radical approach, requiring Muslims to spread the Islamic faith even at the cost of their own lives.”¹⁴ Steyn’s position is that since moderate Muslims have no Qur’anic position to draw legitimacy or support for their position, they form a quiet majority that cannot legitimately raise a verbal objection to what is essentially the core position of Islam.

Steyn continues: “Moderate Muslims are quiescent not only because they have no tangible legitimacy within Islam, they are quiet because they are ostracized when they do speak out against jihadist beliefs and actions. Souleiman Ghali, a Palestinian emigrant to the US, started a mosque in San Francisco in 1993. His approach could only be described as moderate. The mosque website stated: ‘Our vision is the emergence of an American Muslim identity founded on compassion, respect, dignity and love.’ His moderate views were tolerated only as long as the Qur’an could be taught in its original intent by Muslim clerics over whom he had no control.

“His temperate views went too far when in 2002, he fired the Imam for urging the California faithful to emulate the example of Palestinian suicide bombers. The fired imam sued and won a \$400,000 judgment. Mr. Ghali was subsequently forced off the board and denied any further role in the mosque he founded. In 2006, the mosque was looking to buy an adjoining parcel to accommodate the overflow crowds arriving to hear the firebrand imam preaching the only kind of Islam endorsed by the Qur’an.”¹⁵

v. 9-10 He who has an ear let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints. (NIV) Bible translators have struggled over the interpretation of verse 10. The KJV and many others interpret it basically as paraphrasing the saying: “Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.” While the principle of sowing and reaping is an obvious spiritual truth, the import of this passage is not about the administration of equity, but rather as the NIV renders it here, about the unjust persecution of the saints. This interpretation is supported by the latter part of the verse, which calls for the endurance and faithfulness of the persecuted saints.

This verse may also be a confirmation of the Islamic identity of the kingdom of the beast. Although the West views death by the sword as an anachronistic way of describing a death sentence, John may well be noting the actual means of execution of those who refuse to worship the beast. The preferred Islamic instrument of execution has always been the curved sword, or scimitar. This traditional punishment is used against infidels, Muslims who leave the faith, and those who attempt to convert Muslims to another faith.

While beheadings seem outdated in the West, it must be remembered that Islam promotes an anachronistic seventh century Muslim worldview. The Shari’a mandated practice of beheadings was adopted as the preferred method of execution in Iraq to send a message to the West and the coalition Iraqi government that radical Jihad is alive and flourishing. The world learned that Muslim beheadings are not limited to the Middle East when Muslim Moros in the Philippines beheaded captured Christian missionaries in 2006. When Islam finally implements its campaign of world conquest, beheading is likely to be the preferred manner of executing

Christians. The reference in Revelation 20: 4 to those beheaded for their faith is a likely confirmation of this method of execution on a large scale.

In evaluating the violent underpinnings of Islam, one should remember that Muslims are not inherently bad. They can be some of the most generous, hospitable people in the world to anyone coming under their roof, as well as being loyal friends. Surveys have indicated that Muslims worldwide largely disapprove of violent terrorist actions. It is difficult to understand how the average Muslim in the West could endorse or be a part of a future worldwide violent persecution of Christians. The process by which Muslims will decide *en masse* to carry out the beast's violent campaign against Christian believers is unknown. It may be as simple as the Mahdi issuing an edict requiring death for any Muslim not participating in the identification of Christians.

It does not take a great deal of insight to foresee that when the prophesied jihad breaks out against Christians and Jews under the leadership of a global Caliphate, Muslims around the world will come together, willingly or not, in varying measures of support. The pressure that is brought against Muslims and non-Muslims today for offending Islam is only a foretaste of the tactics that will be applied by Muslim clerics, organizations, and youth gangs once the Mahdi appears and commands all Muslims to enforce a *fatwa* against everyone who refuses to convert to Islam. Those who do not support this agenda will come under the severe proscriptions contained in the Qur'an when it suits clerics to enforce them.

When the Mahdi appears and calls on all believing Muslims to fight against western infidel nations, the numbers of Muslim emigrants willing to engage in subversive and hostile actions in their host countries and carry out the orders of a Fatwa against Christians will increase dramatically. For many, the normal moral repugnance towards violence will be overcome by the necessity of avoiding punishment for assisting "the friends of Satan." The charisma of the Mahdi and the great deception of the antichrist spirit will play a major part in changing the attitudes of the silent Muslim majority. The coming delusion of the beast assures that many of those who participate in the persecution of Christians and Jews will believe they are actually doing the will of God.

"You will be excluded from the synagogues; nay more, the time is coming when any one who has murdered one of you will suppose he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have failed to recognize the Father and to discover who I am." Jn. 16:2-3

Islam's previous accommodative status accorded to conquered Christians and Jews as People of the Book will be revoked and replaced by the 'convert or die' ethic of the Qur'an. This will be a result of the beast's determination to snuff out the light of the Holy Spirit and bring the entire earth under the authority of the Kingdom of Darkness. According to one Muslim end-times author, under the rule of the Mahdi, *Dhimmitude* (submission by Christians to Muslim rule) will be rescinded, and Christians who do not convert to Islam will be summarily imprisoned or executed.¹⁶ Peace loving Muslims with no hostility towards Christians will be bound by law at the very least to report them. It should be remembered that the Nazi internment and mass slaughter of disfavored Jewish and gypsy minorities were policies of the seventh head of the beast. The grim statistics that resulted from these policies will pale in comparison to the results of the rule of the Man of Sin, ruling over the Dragon's eighth and final kingdom. Unlike Christians, Jews will not even have the opportunity to convert, but will be summarily executed in an attempt at mass genocide.

“ . . . the prophet...said: ‘The Hour (the Day of Judgment) will not begin until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them. A Jew will hide behind a rock or a tree, and the rock or tree will say, “O Muslim, O slave of Allah! There is a Jew behind me, come and kill him!” (Hadith al-Bukhari 2926; Hadith Muslim, 2921-2)

v. 11-12 Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. (NIV) The second beast is identified later (Rev. 16:13, 19:20, 20:10) as the false prophet. He is pictured here as coming from the earth instead of the sea because he does not come from ‘the sea’ of Gentile nations but from ‘the land,’ i.e., from the line of Abraham, through the spiritual line of Ishmael rather than Israel. As a prophet, even a false one, he is a spiritual leader rather than a secular one. Although the second beast serves the first, he is invested with the same demonic power. As a spiritual ruler rather than a secular one, he is a beast rather than a horn. He is much greater than mere earthly rulers, such as the ten kings that give their power to the beast. Like the Man of Sin, he will be possessed by a wicked spiritual being.

Even though the Man of Sin is usually identified as the antichrist, the reality may be somewhat different. As John explains, the antichrist is not a particular individual, but a spirit that can manifest in man. (1Jn. 2:18, 1Jn. 4:3) Both the first and second beasts are obviously motivated by the same spirit in that Islam is antichrist in nature, as the Qur’an is its written authority. Both the Man of Sin and his false prophet will stand in opposition to Jesus’ return to earth to establish the Kingdom of God. However, the false prophet may be considered as having a greater or perhaps more appropriate fulfillment of the antichrist spirit than the Man of Sin. The prefix ‘anti,’ meaning “the opposite,” denotes contrast *or substitution*. Although both beasts stand against Christ, as a religious figure the false prophet stands “in the place of” Christ. This is confirmed by the Muslim identification of the one who will assist the Mahdi establish Islamic global rule as the *Isa*, the Muslim equivalent of the name Jesus. Although the second beast represents himself as the Lamb of God, his power and nature will come from the Dragon.

The Man of Sin and the false prophet will work together in an attempt to prevent Jesus from returning to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. The first beast, the Man of Sin, will attempt to destroy everything that Christ stands for, replacing truth with deception, light with darkness, the testimony of the saints with apostasy, good with evil. The second beast, the false prophet, standing in the place of Christ, will cause everyone to worship the Man of Sin and the Dragon. In fulfillment of Jesus’ Olivet prophecy, *the false prophet will claim to actually be Jesus*, returned to earth to bring an era of peace to mankind. This will be the great delusion of the ages. Those who are Christian in name only will be led astray, believing the deception.

“Many will come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive many... there will rise up false Christs and false prophets, displaying signs and prodigies with a view to lead astray—if indeed that were possible—even God’s own people. But as for yourselves, be on your guard: I have forewarned you of everything.” Mk. 13:6, 22-23

The government of the beast will be an Islamic theocracy. The Man of Sin will be the secular leader of state and the false prophet Isa his religious leader, directing worship of the Man of Sin and the Dragon. Such a dual theocratic rule is exemplified in the modern state of Iran, which has an elected secular president and an unelected Ayatollah ruling as the nation’s spiritual leader, working together in a power sharing arrangement. The president is primarily concerned

with the affairs of state, while the ayatollah ensures that the dictates of Islamic law and tradition are followed.

v. 13-14a And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. (NIV) The false prophet will convince the world that he is in fact Jesus Christ by performing great miracles to convince the world to submit to the Mahdi. Those deceived by his miracles will join the great apostasy, believing that the false prophet really is Christ. This will be God's way of separating the wheat from the chaff.

"The coming of the man of sin will be in accordance with the works of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing." 2Thess. 2:9-12

In order to better understand the true nature of the two beasts, the Man of Sin and his false prophet, it is helpful to review Islamic eschatology. This deals with the same end times' events as the book of Revelation, but from quite a different perspective. The Qur'an and the Hadiths describe three last days' personalities. Each of these finds its counterpart in the three main adversaries presented in Revelation – Jesus and the two beasts: the Man of Sin and his false prophet. However, in the Islamic interpretation, their roles are twisted and even reversed from what the Bible portrays.

The first end times' Islamic figure is the al Mahdi. Islamic writings prophesy that a world leader known as *al Mahdi*, or "the guided one," will appear in the last days. The Mahdi will claim the status of a prophet in the line of Mohammed and become Caliph, receiving wide acclaim as the one who will establish the prophesied golden age of peace for all mankind under the rule of Islam. The Hadiths predict that the Mahdi will appear from Khorasan, an area that cuts a wide swath through the Middle East, from Syria eastward to Afghanistan.

As Caliph, the Mahdi will be an unstoppable force, leading the way to victory in jihad over the world's infidels. Muslims worldwide will be united under the crescent moon. The Mahdi will attain global peace, in much the same manner that Islam achieved peace throughout the Middle East in the seventh century, through the conquest of Arab, Persian, and Christian lands. Anyone who does not convert to Islam will be put to death by the sword. It does not require a great deal of insight to identify the Mahdi as the Man of Sin, the first beast of Revelation who establishes a world kingdom and initiates the persecution of the saints. This persecution, along with his attempt to impose Shari'a law and the Muslim calendar on conquered lands, will fulfill the prophecy of Daniel 7:24.

"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." Dan. 7:25

The second end times' Islamic personality is the Isa, Jesus Christ, having returned from heaven to earth to help the Mahdi impose Islamic rule. According to Muslim belief, *Isa* is the "prophet Jesus," who was previously taken to heaven by God after suffering a near death experience. Muslim teaching holds that the *Isa* will appear with the Mahdi. The prophet Jesus will declare himself to be a faithful Muslim (rather than a Christian) and swear his allegiance to

the Mahdi. He will use his well-documented miracle working powers to confirm the Mahdi's authority to rule over the earth, convincing many to convert to Islam.

The Isa actually claims *to be* Jesus; he is therefore the antichrist, "standing in the place of" Christ. He is the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic warning: "*For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*" The second beast's identification in verse 11 as a lamb with the voice of a dragon confirms his demonic impersonation of Jesus Christ. Although he will claim to be the true Lamb of God, his words will give him away as a demonic impersonation of Jesus. The Isa is clearly identifiable as the false prophet, the second beast of Revelation who does great miracles and causes everyone to worship the first beast.

The third personality in Muslim eschatology is the ad Dajjal, an incarnation of satanic evil. Opposing the Mahdi and Isa, the ad Dajjal *will falsely claim to be the real Jesus Christ*. (He could therefore be thought of as the twisted Muslim version of the antichrist.) Islamic written tradition holds that he will lead an army of 70,000 Jews against the Mahdi and the Isa, but the Isa will defeat the wicked ad Dajjal. The prominent Muslim apologist, Osamah Abdallah, explains the ad Dajjal's role in end times' events: "The army of Satan will be led by a person who will claim to be Jesus Christ himself. The Muslims will call him the Dajjal or the Deceiver. The army of the real Jesus [*the Isa*] will fight the Dajjal's army and defeat him. The empire of Israel will fall, and the religion of Islam will prevail."¹⁷

Muslim eschatology not only twists the roles of the major end times' personalities in the final battle of the age between good and evil, it changes the results of the battle. The Mahdi and Isa defeat the ad Dajjal. In a nice Hollywood ending, the Isa retires, marries and lives happily under the rule of the beneficent Mahdi for another forty years. The genius of this great end times' delusion is not only its ability to deceive the world, but also the boldness of the deception itself, claiming that Jesus himself is the antichrist! Believing this lie, it is no wonder that the armies of the world march against Jerusalem to prevent Jesus' return.

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness." Isa 5: 20

v. 14b-15 And he told the inhabitants of the earth to erect a statue to the Wild Beast who had received the sword-stroke and yet had recovered. And power was granted him to give breath to the statue of the Wild Beast, so that the statue of the Wild Beast could even speak and cause all who refuse to worship it to be put to death. Although men are not worshiped in Islam, the Man of Sin will be accorded universal worship by the masses (v. 4). Claiming the nature and power of the Dragon, he will accept worship on his behalf. The beast will break with Muslim tradition and demand worship for himself, and the false prophet will see that his wishes are enforced under penalty of death.

v. 16-18 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore *and* six. (KJV) The number 666 is probably the most well known and at the same time the most difficult to understand of the mysteries of Revelation. Many who have never opened a Bible are familiar with this number and its demonic implications. Throughout history, names and titles of famous

and infamous individuals alike have been analyzed in various alphabets to determine if the letters of their names would solve this riddle. Some of this effort is no doubt inspired by the implied challenge in the wording of this passage.

Differences of opinion over the interpretation of this riddle still abound. The popular opinion has long been that the 666 signifies the spelling of an individual's name, as mathematicians long ago assigned numerical equivalents to the letters of the Greek alphabet. Some have even tried to apply this method to individual names in the Latin and Hebrew alphabets, which have different values than the Greek. Others, starting with Iraneus, provided reasons for a much broader application of this riddle, arguing that it designated a kingdom rather than an individual. In Iraneus' view, it applied to the existing Latin kingdom, or Rome. Others later extended his 666 designation from Rome to the Roman Catholic church as inheritor of the Roman Empire. Some Christian denominations still believe that a future pope will be the antichrist.

History has shown that these proposed solutions did not in fact solve the riddle. Many of the names and titles and kingdoms that did add up to 666 relied on some variation or number massaging to do so. The bottom line is that every solution that advanced the name of a now deceased candidate was *prima facie* incorrect, since the beast has yet to appear. Scholars continue to nominate new candidates in every generation in the belief that their proposed solution may be the correct one. Out of this jumble, only one conclusion can be drawn with any certainty. To date, the Man of Sin has yet to appear to confirm any of the predictions made so far.

Although Iraneus took a more general approach to the identification of the number 666 in looking for a kingdom rather than an individual, his focus remained political. The problem with all these approaches is that they ignore the spiritual aspect of the problem, where a solution is more likely to be found. (The advancement of the papacy as a candidate at least took this into account.) The Scriptural implication of the word 'name' (onoma; Gr. - authority, character) provides the essential meaning of the phrase: "... unless he had the mark, or *the name* of the beast, or the *number of his name*." The name of someone in a position of power is the essence of their authority and character, such as "hallowed be thy name," and "they baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Since the evidence indicates that the Mahdi's coming religious kingdom will be the vehicle by which the Dragon will impose his rule on the earth, the significance of the 666 designation to Muslims is of some interest. A look at the facts links the number 666 with the authority and character of Islam.

The Qur'an itself is identified by Muslims with the number 666. The title and office of the prophesied global Islamic leader, the Mahdi, comes from the authority of the Qur'an. The coming Islamic world kingdom will be based on its authority. Just as the Bible contains the revelation of God and has the authority of his Word, the Qur'an is the authority of Islam, containing the revelation of its antichrist spirit. The Qur'an is the *name* (authority) of Islam, just as the Bible is the name, or authority, of Judaism and Christianity. Being marked with the number of the Qur'an would indicate allegiance to the antichrist spirit that suffuses it, and submission to Islam and the Mahdi. It is possible that this mark is combined with a personal identifier using modern RFID technology as many suspect. This mark, whatever it is, indicates that one is submitted to Islam and the Qur'an, and therefore the authority of the antichrist spirit.

Muslims do not deny the equation of the Qur'an with the number 666. They do not widely broadcast it either, but they do take pride in it. They believe that the Christian use of the number 666 is a plot to discredit Islam. One Muslim website states that the number 666 was

given a negative connotation in some sort of satanic attack against Islam and the Qur'an: "The number 666 is highly publicized all over the world and it is associated with evil and danger. However, it is not what it seems. It was a Satanic trick. The trick was to prevent the people approaching the 666. Satan knew that the 666 is the book of GOD and the people should be kept away from it. According to his plan, he placed a bad image to the number 666."

The website continues: "The number 666 mentioned in the book of Revelation 13:18 is a part of a satanic scheme to hypnotise (sic) the minds of Christians. It is intended to cast fear and evil. The reason is to create the negative prejudice in the minds of the people when they witness the number 666, the truth. The truth is that this Quran is the 666, The Book from The Lord of the Universe. The First Sura in the Quran, 666, is Praise. This sura is the gift of GOD to us to establish Contact with Him through our daily Contact Prayers."¹⁸

The display of a mark on the forehead or right hand is consistent with Islamic practice. Muslim men wearing conservative Islamic dress have the name of Allah written in Arabic as a 'mark' on the front of the skullcap (forehead) or on the right arm as a mark of their faith. Greek lexicons note that the word for "hand" used in this verse may be taken to mean either the hand or the arm, both of which are considered the instrument for wielding power. Since the Qur'an is Allah's witness to the world, his name and that of the Man of Sin may be equated with the 666 "name or number of the name" of the Qur'an. (John wrote the number 666 in its Greek-letter numerical equivalent. Even though Arabic numerals were not in use in the Mediterranean when the book of Revelation was written in the first century, the Holy Spirit would have foreknown that the Arabic numbering system would come into worldwide use to fulfill the 666.)



The picture above of a young Muslim cleric holding a Qur'an, with its "name," the Arabic number "666" written on the top edge, appeared on a 2008 CNN special investigative report. The cameraman who took this close-up view obviously recognized its significance. Photo from CNN Special investigations Unit: Amanpour Reports, "The War Within" aired June 16, 2007.

Past, Present & Future

Revelation 14

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.”

– Ecclesiastes 3: 14-15, 17

Revelation 14 – Interlude (Intermission)

Theme: Past Fulfillment, Present Judgment, Future Harvest

Revelation 14 is an interlude in the unfolding drama of Revelation. Similar to an intermission, an interlude is defined as “a short play, piece of music, or other entertainment performed during a break in the performance of a long work.” Its purpose here is to provide a chronological perspective, offering a glimpse into the timing of events that take place within the overall thematic unfolding of the Revelation narrative. This chapter is divided into three segments: past, present, and future.

Past: The appearance of the previously sealed 144,000 first fruits of Israel, first encountered in Revelation 7. 2. Their appearance is a reminder that all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26).

Present: The messages of the three angels are a present event within the Revelation narrative. Their messages are further subdivided into past, present, and future announcements.

Future: A prophetic message describing the coming harvest of the earth, both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous, represented by grain, are harvested first, followed by the harvest of the wicked, symbolized by the grapes of God’s wrath.

The centerpiece of the chapter is the message of the three angels, which would have presented a familiar symbol to anyone with knowledge of first century Greek drama. These three angels take the place of the three mythological Fates that appeared in many plays. The comments of the three Fates were always organized into past, present, and future pronouncements. This dramatic device helped the audience gain perspective on the development and timing of events, some of which might be taking place in different locations. Each Fate was personified with a name, and each had her own special domain of knowledge: past, present, or future.

When the three Fates spoke of past, present, and future events, it was always in that order. The first Fate reminded the audience of something that had already occurred, providing relevant background. The second Fate provided insight into present events in order to provide context to unfolding developments. The third offered predictions of the future, usually ominous ones, setting expectations for the direction the plot would take. Fulfilling the function of the

three Fates, the first angel announces a past event, the second a present one, while the third offers a dire prediction of coming judgment.

Revelation 14

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel

thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs. (KJV)

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Revelation 14 Commentary

v. 1-3 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

Many commentators hold that the 144,000 are in heaven, based on the first five verses of this chapter. This interpretation may well be correct. However, it is undermined to some degree when these verses are examined more closely. To start, the 144,000 are standing "on Mount Zion." Mt Zion is identified in Scripture with the location of God's earthly temple and with the church of the saints. It is never associated in Scripture with a heavenly locale. The earthly setting is confirmed by John's language; he heard voices *from heaven*. This places him on earth with the 144,000. Had he been in heaven he would have stated that he heard a voice from some specific location *in* heaven, consistent with his descriptions of all other heavenly pronouncements. The only time that the phrase 'from heaven' appears in Revelation is when the scene takes place on earth.

"and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand." This implies that the 144,000 are men rather than being part of the multitude in heaven, and thus still present on earth. Because Jesus has not yet returned to earth, his appearance with the 144,000 here on Mt. Zion is symbolic rather than an actual event, indicating that the 144,000 belong to the Lamb. Jesus probably does not appear as a Lamb on Mt. Zion with the 144,000 any more than he really sits on a cloud later in this chapter to harvest the earth with a sickle. The sealing of the 144,000 with the Father's name occurred in Revelation 7: 3-8. That they "were redeemed from the earth" confirms their salvation as a past event. It does not necessarily indicate that they are no longer on earth, but may instead symbolize that they are from 'the earth' of Israel rather than from 'the sea' of Gentile nations.

v. 4-5 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. The qualifications of the 144,000 are more stringent than what is required for salvation, because they are a first fruits offering to God, sanctifying all Israel. The phrase that confirms this is: "... they are without fault before the throne of God." This is consistent with the requirements established in the Old

Testament that first fruits offerings be without fault or blemish. Their qualifications should not be interpreted to mean that only virgins can be saved, any more than it means that only 144,000 people go to heaven.

The virginity of the 144,000 may be either physical, symbolic, or both. More than one Old Testament prophet castigated Israel for her unfaithfulness to the Lord, even characterizing her as a prostitute. The 'undefiled' status of the 144,000 may be indicative of their faithfulness to the Lord rather than a statement of their lack of sexual experience, or it may be that they have maintained a higher standard of conduct than required by the law out of devotion to God. That they are without fault "before the throne of God" does not necessarily mean they are standing before the throne, but that the throne is the location where fault is judged. The statement that the 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever he goes is a description of the earthly activity of discipleship. Jesus doesn't really go anywhere in heaven; however, "Follow me" is the command Jesus gave to his disciples on earth. If the 144,000 are still on earth, it is because they have work to do, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom to Israel.

This work may be the fulfillment of the commission Jesus gave to his disciples to preach the coming Kingdom of God to Israel in two-man teams. The number 144,000 is a thousand fold times the square of the original twelve apostles, who were assigned first to preach the kingdom of God to Israel. Whether literal or figurative in number, these first fruits saints may still be traveling across the length and breadth of Israel preaching repentance when Jesus returns.

"Go not," He said, "among the Gentiles, and enter no Samaritan town; but, instead of that, go to the lost sheep of Israel's race. And as you go, preach and say, 'The Kingdom of the Heavens is close at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead to life, cleanse lepers, drive out demons: you have received without payment, give without payment. Whenever they persecute you in one town, escape to the next; for I solemnly tell you that you will not have gone the round of all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."
Matt 10:5-8, 23

v. 6-7 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. John now moves to a description the three angels, with their past, present, and future messages. This angel has the "gospel of the kingdom, which will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations" before the return of Christ. (Mt. 24:14 NIV) Like the first of the three Fates, the first angel speaks of past events. The universal preaching of the Gospel is therefore a *past* event. Because this Scriptural condition has been met, the angel is stating that the Day of Judgment is at hand. This is confirmed by the fact that John says he saw "another angel," referencing a previous one. The last angel John saw was the one who sounded the seventh trumpet, announcing that authority over the earth had been given to Jesus: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." The angel of things past is confirming that the times of the Gentiles are at an end; the gospel of the kingdom has therefore been preached to every nation on earth.

v. 8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The angel is referring to Spiritual Babylon, symbolizing the world system inspired by the Dragon

and infused with his values, not the city of Babylon in Iraq partially restored as a national park for tourists. The world system is characterized by occult worship, self-indulgence, sexual licentiousness and the love of material luxuries that comes from great wealth and power. Different cities have been home to spiritual Babylon throughout the ages. Having first arisen in the Old Babylonian Kingdom shortly after the Flood, the world system spread its occult knowledge and values throughout the ancient world. At the end of the age the modern city where spiritual Babylon dwells will be judged for its wickedness.

Like the second Fate, the second angel speaks of present events. Thus, the second angel declares that Babylon *is* fallen, rather than saying Babylon has fallen, as might be expected here. The King James text preserves the original Greek grammar, which emphasizes the fall of Babylon as a '*completed present*' event. A detailed description of Babylon's judgment is reserved for Revelation 18, where it thematically fulfills the theme of the Day of Atonement. The word 'fallen' does not appear to describe a partial judgment, since Jeremiah 51: 8 (KJV), uses the same word in his prophecy of Babylon's destruction. The repetition of the word fallen may be indicative of the completeness of her judgment, or that she is struck twice, ensuring her destruction.

Although the exact timing of Spiritual Babylon's fall cannot be determined with accuracy in Revelation's thematic unfolding of events, a general time frame can be inferred from the chronology presented here. In the context of the messages of the three angels, it occurs after the Gospel is preached to every ethnic group and nation of the world (the first angel), but before the beast has implemented his economic 'mark' (the third angel). Because the fall of Babylon takes place before the third angel's pronouncement, this raises the probability that the fall of Babylon occurs sometime around the beginning of the rule of the beast.

v. 9-11 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Like the third Fate, the third angel speaks of *future* events. He warns the saints against taking the mark of the beast or worshipping the beast and his image. Because it can be assumed that in God's mercy the third angel's warning would not be given in vain, it must be announced sometime near the start of the beast's rule, before his mark is imposed on the world. As previously stated, this places the timing of the fall of Babylon around the beginning of the rule of the Man of Sin.

v. 12-13 Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. In keeping with the ways of God, Revelation holds out hope in the middle of despair. The third angels' curse is balanced by a blessing for remaining faithful, even in the face of death. John again hears a voice 'from heaven,' indicating that he is still on earth. The message is reinforced

by the Holy Spirit, encouraging the saints with a reminder of reward for every act of faithfulness and every good work done for the Kingdom of God.

v. 14-19 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

To review, there were three ritual harvests in Israel's religious calendar. The spring and summer grain harvests were followed by the gathering and pressing of the olives and grapes at the end of the fall harvest. The treading of the grapes during the final harvest festival of Ingathering is a type of the final judgment on the wicked. (Gen. 49:11, Deut. 32: 4, Isa. 49:26) The prophetic harvest symbolized in this passage foretells the coming of the Son of Man to reward the righteous and punish the wicked at the end of the age. The righteous are reaped as grain, and the wicked are cut off and thrown as grapes into the winepress of God's wrath.

Within this chapter's theme of past, present, and future events, this symbolic harvest is still a *future* event, taking place at the conclusion of the age, after the rule of the beast. The Son of man is directed by an angel coming *out of the temple* (naos) to harvest the righteous, who belong to him. The angel with the sickle then harvests the grapes, having been told to do so by an angel *from the altar*. The harvest of the righteous is thus connected to the glory of God in the sanctuary, while the harvest of the wicked is associated with the judgment of fire from the bronze altar in the courtyard. The prophet Joel also places this harvest at the end of the age, when Jerusalem is surrounded by the nations.

"Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe Come, go down; For the winepress is full, The vats overflow— For their wickedness is great." Joel 3: 12-13 NKJV

v. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs. Since bridles in John's day included elaborate reins that might drape clear down to the horses' fetlock, the joint above the hoof, the blood is probably only a few inches deep. History records previous battles in which blood ran to several inches in depth, including the battle to retake Jerusalem during the Crusades. The great length that blood covers the ground is not a picture of one long river of blood, but a depiction of conditions that exist at many battle sites, taking into account the great number of encampments arrayed for 200 miles around Jerusalem.

Day of Atonement

Revelation 15 & 16

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.”

– Mark 13: 28-33

Background

The second of three feasts in the final festival of Ingathering, the Day of Atonement fell on the tenth of Tishri. The theme of this feast is *purification through judgment* and the removal of sin. This feast day was the most solemn day of the year, because it provided forgiveness through covering of the nation's sins and judgment on the atoning sacrifice. The required sentence of death was carried out on two substitutionary sacrifices instead of on the children of Israel. The first sacrifice was the Lord's goat, which purified the tabernacle, or temple. The cleansing blood of this sacrifice enabled the Presence of God to continue dwelling in the midst of his chosen people. The second sacrifice was known as the *scapegoat*, or 'one who takes the blame for someone else.' The priest symbolically laid the sin of the people on the scapegoat's head, after which it was led out into the desert, removing sin from the camp. This day also marked the completion of treading the grape harvest to make wine. In Jewish theology, the Day of Atonement prefigures the Day of the Lord, with its vengeance against the wicked and judgment of the living and the dead.

The Day of Atonement, the sixth feast, is associated with the Ark of the Covenant, the sixth furnishing. The ark held the Ten Commandments, which were the foundation of God's law. Since the law defined sin, it was the basis for God's judgment of Israel. The ark is therefore symbolic of judgment implied by the law, as in Revelation 11: 19, when it appeared as the chorus of 24 elders announced the judgment of the coming third woe. So when it is seen here in Revelation 15 accompanied by lightning, thunder, hail, etc., it is once again indicating coming tribulation and judgment.

Revelation 15 & 16 – Feast: Day of Atonement

Theme: Purifying the Earth through Judgment

In the pattern of the feasts, chapters 15 to 20 of Revelation express different aspects of the judgment that thematically fulfills the Day of Atonement. Revelation 15 & 16 fulfill the purification of the blood of the Lord's goat. In the Old Covenant rites of the Day of Atonement, the blood of the innocent sacrifice was sprinkled from a bowl onto the ark of the testimony, purifying the temple so the Presence of God could continue to dwell among the Israelites. In these two chapters, because the disobedient are not 'covered' by the atoning blood of Christ, they are judged. They atone for their sin with their own blood, making repayment for the blood of the righteous shed over the millennia. A cleansing judgment is a warning to repent; a purifying judgment is rendered when the warnings to repent go heeded. The world has already suffered through the partial judgments of Unleavened Bread (the first six trumpets) with little or no repentance. Since the judgment of the Day of Atonement works complete purification rather than just cleansing, the bowl judgments will be complete rather than partial judgments.

Revelation 15 begins with the sign of the seven angels and the saints on the crystal sea. Like the sign of the woman and the Dragon in Revelation 12, there are three components to this sign, providing context for the coming bowl judgments of chapter 16. Of the seven plagues of the wrath of God, the first six judgments are thematically aligned with the previous partial cleansing judgments announced by the six trumpets of Unleavened Bread. Each bowl judgment shows the increasingly harmful results of the earlier trumpet judgment after it has had time to work through the earth, or brings a judgment that is similar to its respective trumpet judgment.

Revelation 15

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

“Great and marvelous *are* Your works,
Lord God Almighty!
Just and true *are* Your ways,
O King of the saints!
Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For *You* alone *are* holy.
For all nations shall come and worship before You,
For Your judgments have been manifested.”

After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven

golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

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Revelation 15 Commentary

v. 1-4 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

It can be concluded that the angels and the saints on the sea of glass are both part of this sign. The grammatical construction confirms this. The seven angels in verse 1 and the saints standing on the glassy sea in verse 2 are both introduced in the original Greek with the phrase: "And I saw..." (Later, when the actual seven angels, as opposed to the *sign* of the angels, are coming out of the tabernacle in verse 5, the grammar reads differently: "*After these things* I saw..." This indicates that the angels and the saints are 'these things,' grouped together as part of the sign.) Like the sign of the woman and the Dragon in Revelation 12, the sign of the angels and the saints has astronomical, historic, and prophetic components.

The seven angels provide both the prophetic and astronomical aspects of the sign. Prophetically, they foretell the coming judgment when the seven angels will emerge from the sanctuary to pour the seven plagues of the wrath of God on the kingdom of the beast. This takes place in verses 6 and 7. Astronomically, the seven angels have their counterpart in the constellation Pleiades, also called the seven sisters by the Greeks, and Kimah by the Israelites. (This cluster of seven bright stars is also referred to in Job 38: 31 and Amos 5: 8.) The Pleiades rises in the night sky relatively close to the pole star. Yet this was not always the case. According to the Talmud, the path of Kimah moved to a different place in the night sky just prior to the Great Flood. This shifting of the stars before the Flood was also noted by Noah, as recorded in the *Book of Enoch*. Whereas the sign of the woman and the Dragon indicates the *season* of Christ's second coming, the sign of the seven angels indicates the *imminence* of Christ's return.

Such a change in the position of the constellations can only occur with a geographic shifting of the earth relative to the poles. Given the movement in the constellations just before the Flood, it is likely that the flooding of the planet was caused by the great forces released when the earth's mantle broke free to move about its core. One of the oldest Jewish works, the B'reshit Rabbah, states that as the coming of the Messiah nears, there will again be a sign in the constellation Kimah. Although the evidence is circumstantial, it points to the 'sign' of the seven angels as symbolizing a change in the position of Pleiades in the night sky. Prophetic passages in Isaiah appear to support the occurrence of an end times' pole shift. This may not occur all at

once, however. The movement of the stars noted here may indicate a preliminary shifting of the earth's crust, with the greater portion of the shift occurring later, after internal geologic stresses have increased. The results of a major pole shift are described when the seventh bowl judgment is poured out on the earth (Rev. 16:17-21).

"The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls (KJV -swoons) - never to rise again." Isa. 24: 18-20 NIV Beware, the Lord will empty the earth, split it open and turn it upside down, and scatter its inhabitants. Isa. 24:1 New English Bible

Several observations can be made about the historic part of this sign, those standing on the sea of glass. They are saints since they have gained victory over the beast, his image and his mark. Since the crystal sea forms the 'floor' of God's throne room, its presence here along with the harps *is symbolic of* a heavenly location, confirming that they are martyrs. The inclusion of the Greek comparative particle *ōs* in describing the sea of glass renders the meaning that this group was standing on something *like* a sea of glass, indicating that this is a sign. The mingling of the sea with fire is symbolic of a heavenly state achieved through earthly tribulation. Since there is no tribulation in heaven, the fire mixed with the crystal sea confirms this as a sign. The fact that they are singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb indicates that this group is probably comprised of saved Gentiles and Messianic Jews killed during the persecutions of the beast. While this does not mean that the beast has eliminated all the saints from earth, it does indicate that the beast's economic program and his persecution is well underway, justifying the coming seven bowl judgments.

v. 5-8 After this I looked, and in heaven the temple, that is the tabernacle of testimony, was opened. Out of the temple came the angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

The phrase "after this," or "after these things," indicates that the sign of the angels and saints is over, so these are the actual angels that will deliver the seven plagues of the wrath of God. This passage contains parallels to the rites of the Day of Atonement. The seven angels are dressed in the same manner as the high priest on that momentous day. Before entering the Holy of Holies with the atoning blood, the priest poured incense over hot coals in a censer, filling the tabernacle with smoke. No one was allowed to enter the tabernacle until he had completed his task of making atonement for the nation. The same dynamic applies here, confirming the theme of judgment on the Day of Atonement. However, instead of innocent blood being sacrificed to atone for guilt, the kingdom of the beast will pay for its own sin because the people refused to repent.

Revelation 16

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead *man*; and every living creature in the sea died.

Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

"You are righteous, O Lord,
The One who is and who was and who is to be,
Because You have judged these things.
For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
And You have given them blood to drink.
For it is their just due."

And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* Your judgments." Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great. – NIV

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Revelation 16 Commentary

v. 1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.” The bowls pour out the purifying *thumos*, or passion, of God’s wrath, bringing to completion the themes of the previous trumpet judgments. This passionate wrath implies vengeance executed on earth, and is contrasted with *orge*, God’s eternal wrath imposed as a result of a judicial decision.

v. 2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. The first bowl judgment continues the theme of the first trumpet, in which fiery hail burned everything over a third part of the earth. Instead of the separation of light and darkness of the first day of Creation being emphasized in the physical properties of fire and ice, the first bowl emphasizes the spiritual separation of humanity into those who walk in light and those who walk in the darkness. The first bowl judges those walking in spiritual darkness, all who have taken the mark of the beast. Those who walk in the light are not judged. It is possible that this sore or sores (v. 11) come from being struck by the fiery hail of the first trumpet, but there appears to be more going on here due to the clear discrimination of who is affected.

v. 3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead *man*; and every living creature in the sea died. With the sounding of the second trumpet, a fiery mountain hurtled from the sky into the sea. A third of the sea had turned “to blood.” This blood may describe a red tide, a condition that exists when an ecosystem loses its biological balance and microorganisms called dinoflagellates multiply excessively. Polluting streams, lakes, and oceans, red tides kill fish either by excreting a poison or by removing the oxygen from the water. Certain toxic chemicals can also combine to turn water red and kill fish. The “blood” mixed with the fiery hail of the first trumpet may be the catalyst for this plague. With the second bowl judgment, the pollution from the second trumpet has spread from a third of earth’s oceans to destroy their entire ecosystem.

v. 4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. The third trumpet announced a blazing star named wormwood that poisoned a third of all fresh springs and rivers. By the time of the fourth bowl judgment, this plague has spread, finally polluting all the earth’s rivers with the same plague that affected the oceans.

v. 5-7 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: “You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.” And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* Your judgments.”

One cannot help being impressed by the severity of these seven plagues, perhaps even questioning if they are deserved. The angel of the waters testifies that they are, since they are repayment for the shed blood of the righteous. God’s vengeance is therefore justified. In keeping with God’s ways of requiring two witnesses for judgment, the angel from the altar confirms the first angel’s testimony.

v. 8-9 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. The fourth trumpet previously cut, or darkened the light of the sun, moon, and stars by one third, cursing the blessings of God's work on the fourth day of Creation. The fourth bowl continues this judgment, describing the radiation burns that result when the earth's magnetic shield and ozone layer are diminished to the point where there is little protection from the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

The means for a catastrophic removal of earth's protective UV shield is well known to science. This can occur when two very large coronal mass ejections from the sun strike the earth in quick succession. The first one temporarily strips the earth of its magnetic field, and the second prevents it from being restored, irradiating the earth at the same time. The earth came close to experiencing this situation during the last solar cycle after being struck by a large X-class CME, with another X-class flare rotating into position for a second strike. Fortunately, the second CME resulted in a near miss. This coming judgment, resulting in painful burns and skin cancers around the world, was foretold by Isaiah.

"The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore the earth's inhabitants are burned up (KJV - scorched), and very few are left." Isaiah 24:5 NIV

v. 10-11 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds. The fifth trumpet opened the depths of the Abyss, causing great clouds of volcanic smoke and ash that darkened the sun. Stinging insects came out of the depths of the smoke, further cursing the sky. The fifth bowl continues the judgment of darkness from the Abyss. In the fifth trumpet the painful suffering is attributed to the locusts; here it is implied as being the result of pains and sores from the previous judgments.

By this time humanity has been struck by fiery hail, had its water and food supply polluted, been stung by swarms of locusts, suffered through a great war, and been burned by intense solar radiation. All this is aggravated by the darkness, which may be caused by a Mammoth volcanic eruption, eclipsing all previous ones in magnitude. The ash from such an eruption gets into everything, making even breathing difficult. Sulfuric ash cannot feel very good on solar radiation burns. The unrepentant, even blasphemous response to these judgments indicates that the world has already embraced wickedness under the rule of the antichrist. The one consolation in this is that those already martyred for their faith are spared these judgments.

v. 12-14 (+16) Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.) The sixth trumpet of Revelation 9 released the four angels imprisoned at the Euphrates River, allowing

them to turn the hearts of men to war, resulting in the death of one third of mankind. However long the sixth trumpet war lasts, it will likely leave the Middle East highly militarized, so a great deal of preparation for the final battle will already have occurred. Perhaps this is part of the beast's plan.

In the sixth bowl judgment, the antichrist calls all nations of the world to gather for the final battle against Israel. The timing, previously covered in Revelation 12 and 13, places this event just after the death of the two witnesses, so Israel will have lost her protectors. Due to the water shortage caused by the ecological disasters of the previous judgments, the Euphrates River will be dried up, probably due to Turkey or Syria cutting off its flow to conserve water. This opens the way for the invading forces from the North and East to march against Israel, the only nation to hold out against the rule of the beast.

The antichrist obviously does not need all the nations of the earth to overcome Israel's defenses. However, it is not really against just Israel that he brings so much armor and men to bear, but against Jesus, returning to reclaim the earth. The Dragon has read the prophecies; he knows that he is supposed to lose this battle at the valley of Armageddon (*Har Meggido*) and be cast into the lake of fire, so he musters all the forces he can both to overwhelm Israel and defeat Jesus.

Three demonic spirits are sent throughout the earth to convince the nations that Jesus is really the ad Dajjal, the Wicked One prophesied in Islamic texts who would come to attack the Mahdi's faithful armies and plunge the earth into evil. The military forces of the nations will gather to prevent what they believe to be an invasion by the antichrist! The great confrontation that follows will involve great spiritual and physical battles as the Dragon hurls his dark angelic and demonic forces against Christ, returning with his angels and the saints. This will coincide with the armies of the world marching against Jerusalem once the two witnesses are gone.

v. 15 Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. This verse is a reference to those on guard duty in the temple who had to keep watch through the night. If a guard was caught sleeping, the consequence was the shame of being stripped of one's white outer garment. The urge to sleep was greatest during the last watch, just before dawn. Jesus' encouragement is not given to his saints at the beginning of the final tribulation period, but to those enduring its long night, just before the dawn of his return when endurance has reached its limit.

v. 17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" The only other time the expression "It is done" (or finished) is encountered in the New Testament is when Jesus made this final statement on the cross just before he died (Jn. 19:30). This was likely a reference to his redemption of mankind and judgment of the Dragon (Jn. 16:11). Here the Lord makes the same statement, in a similar context of judgment and redemption. The first instance resulted in the Dragon being stripped of his rule over death and Hades. Here, the Dragon has lost his rule over the earth.

v. 18, 20-21 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And

great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great. Just before his death on the cross, Jesus cried out: "It is finished!" Immediately following this a violent earthquake split apart the large rocks that sealed off the burial chambers near Golgotha. Many people were resurrected from death and later seen walking about Jerusalem. (Mt. 27:50-54). The great earthquake in this passage comes right after the Lord makes the same statement, just before he returns to resurrect the dead.

The seventh bowl brings the last of the seven plagues of the wrath of God, causing the most widespread destruction of any of the Revelation plagues. The disappearance of entire mountain ranges is likely a description of them moving to new geographic locations in light of the sixth seal events prophesied to occur at the end of the age: "*The sky too passed away, as if a scroll were being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.*" The massive earthquake is brought on by the jarring of continental plates as the earth's crust finally breaks free and rotates on its molten core. Cities are leveled and Jerusalem is split into three parts by the great forces involved.

The large hailstones are also related to this phenomenon. In a pole shift, when the earth's crust suddenly rotates in a new direction, the atmosphere tries to change with it, but cannot do so immediately. The result is that the atmosphere 'backs up,' becoming very dense in one spot. As a result, on the opposite side of the planet it thins out so much it creates a large rent in the atmospheric envelope around the earth. The resulting tear allows the freezing air of space into the ionosphere and stratosphere, super-cooling the moisture there and creating large, crystallized chunks of ice that fall to earth.

v. 19 And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Babylon's destruction was completed in chapter 14, most likely around the beginning of the beast's rule. The 'remembering' of Babylon described here takes place at the very end of the age as a completion of that judgment. It is a final stroke that fulfills Scripture and God's vengeance. This second stroke against Babylon may be the fulfillment of the angel's repetition in chapter 14 of Babylon's fall: "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the Great."

Babylon and Her Punishment

Revelation 17 & 18

“Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; she made the whole earth drunk; therefore they have now gone mad. The Lord will take vengeance, vengeance for his temple. The Lord will carry out his purpose, his decree against the people of Babylon. You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be cut off.”

– Jeremiah 51: 7, 11, 13

Revelation 17 & 18 – Feast: Continuation of the Day of Atonement

Theme: God’s Vengeance

Chapters 17 and 18 continue with the theme of purification through God’s judgment, offering a more detailed look back at events that transpired in God’s judgment of Spiritual Babylon in Revelation 14. This judgment is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s judgment against historic Babylon. Both Babylons are mentioned in Scripture. The first, the city of Babylon, was the capital city of the Babylonian Empire. The other is Spiritual or Mystery Babylon mentioned as “fallen” in Revelation 14 and described here. She is the spiritual daughter of Babylon, manifested in each subsequent age and symbolized in Revelation 17 by *Mystery Babylon*, the woman seated on the red Dragon. A quick look at history provides some context to understand the dynamic between the two.

During the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC, the army of the Babylonian Empire conquered Jerusalem and took the city’s inhabitants back to Babylon. Even though God allowed the Babylonian captivity as a consequence of Judah’s disobedience, the Babylonians went beyond the boundaries of God’s justice and mistreated the Jews during their captivity. Jeremiah foretold the destruction that would come to Babylon for their abuse of God’s chosen people. The city of Babylon was conquered several times and eventually abandoned, fulfilling Jeremiah’s prophecy that Babylon would be destroyed and left forever desolate.

Some believe Jeremiah’s prophecies regarding Babylon have not yet been fulfilled. They claim restoration work on the ancient city of Babylon under Sadaam Hussein’s regime violates the prophecy that Babylon would not be rebuilt and inhabited again. A closer inspection of the records reveals that this restoration work only turned a small fragment of the city into an architectural park, commemorating a bygone age. It is still uninhabited, so Jeremiah’s prophecy regarding Babylon has in fact been fulfilled. Only the prophecies against Spiritual Babylon remain to be fulfilled. Some Old Testament prophecies about Babylon’s destruction have a dual fulfillment, applying both to the original city and to the daughter of Babylon (Spiritual Babylon) at the end of the age. However, the applicability of these prophecies can be pretty well sorted out in the description provided in Revelation 18.

Spiritual Babylon is more than a spiritual principle; it is *the world system*, a dark spiritual reality that undergirds the values of the world and stands in opposition to the ways of God. The

world system is manifested in the selfish pursuit of wealth, power, and the desires of the flesh. It is accompanied by the worship of false gods, including Mammon, the love of the world's riches denounced by Jesus (Lk: 16:11-13). The world system is actively supported by the Kingdom of Darkness, seeking to ensnare as many people as possible in order to turn them away from following God's ways and to expand its own power.

In the New Testament, the world system is referred to simply as 'the world' (Gr. – *kosmos*). Scripture calls us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27); to no longer walk according to the principles of the world (Eph 2:2); and to be in the world but not of the world, so that we might walk in unity of the spirit and come into completeness in Christ (Jn. 17:16-23). Every believer is called to overcome the world in order to do God's will.

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1Jn. 2:15-17 NIV

Historical Sketch of the World System

Before its destruction in 70 AD, the temple was the main repository of an extensive library of ancient scrolls that shed light on history and Hebrew society. One of these is the Book of Enoch, which is an early account and sayings of Enoch, the seventh from Adam. It is one of the few books to survive the destruction of the temple. This is a highly informative work, because Enoch was a prophet, enjoying a close relationship with God and recording numerous first-hand revelations, not only about God's ways and his creation, but end times prophecy as well. The epistle of Jude describes one of these, describing the Lord's return with his saints. Several of Jesus' sayings are nearly identical with those of Enoch.

According to the book of Enoch, angels called Watchers had been appointed by God to be guardians over mankind. Scripture mentions these Watchers in passing. They intermarried with women and produced a race of giants, referenced in the Genesis 6 account. The giants that resulted from this union are referred to in the Old Testament and in ancient Jewish writings as Nephilim, "fallen ones," and Rapha, "fearful ones," or "dead things." According to legend, they were able to overpower the sons of men because of their great size and strength, establishing their rule over the earth.

"There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown." Gen. 6:4

Greek mythology agrees with the Enochian account of the giants, describing the wretched state of mankind early in earth's history under their rule: "...when the human race was created, [it] was early recognized as a regrettable failure, and kept in a state of wretchedness and total subservience. Force ruled everything. Reason and right were unknown. The Titans, sons of earth begotten by the gods, were a race of gigantic size and strength..."¹⁹

Although some church leaders like Tertullian strongly supported the Enochian account of the Watchers, most did not, because of the idea that the human form was so polluted that angels could not possibly take it and have sex with women. (The sex was probably more offensive than taking human form.) The book was therefore relegated to obscurity in the church for over fifteen

centuries. Augustine and many others disapproved of the idea of angels having physical bodies. Calvin agreed and proposed an alternate interpretation of Gen. 6: 4, teaching that “the sons of God” did not mean fallen angelic beings, but represented men of the line of Seth who mated with “the daughters of men” – women from the line of Cain. Even today, Enoch is looked at with suspicion in the church.

Despite the weighty pronouncements through the centuries on the capabilities of angels, Scripture clearly contradicts the erroneous belief that they could not have bodies with the ability to perform physical functions. The two angels that ate lunch with Abraham and had to be physically protected by Lot in Sodom is one example of angels taking physical form. (Gen. 18 & 19) There is additional Scriptural evidence to support Enoch’s claims. Job 2: 1 refers to “the sons of God” coming before God’s throne with Satan among them, obviously a description of angels, not Adam’s righteous progeny. Daniel 4: 13-23 confirms the existence of the Watchers, lending additional credence to the book of Enoch. Job 26: 5 confirms Enoch’s description of God’s judgment of the giants after the Flood, noting: “Dead things (*Rapha*) are ‘formed’ (*chu’l – writhing in pain*) under the waters and [are] the inhabitants thereof.” (The Hebrew word “ra’pha” is translated dead things; “ra’pha’ ra’pha’h” means giants.)

The existence of demons is attributed by some to the spirits of these dead giants, based on the reasoning that because they were born of human mothers they could be killed, yet because of their angelic fathers, Hades could not hold them. Undeterred by the Flood, the Dragon soon set about his work of taking over the earth again with the assistance of these demons. He raised up Nimrod (Gen. 10), who established a system of idolatrous worship in the cities of the Babylonian plain and instituted monarchies to replace the patriarchal rule God had established under Adam. However, the Dragon’s plan for once again uniting mankind, this time under Nimrod’s rule, was halted by the Lord.

After God thwarted the Dragon’s plan by confusing man’s speech at Babylon (Gen. 11), Nimrod remained in the Babylonian plain. Under his rule, the Dragon was able to turn the people of Mesopotamia away from the worship of God and into the practice of idolatry, worshipping created things instead of the Creator. Nimrod and his consort Semiramis started an occult, carnal religion run by a powerful priestly caste. This religion’s precepts were founded on freedom from the moral restrictions of God’s ways. Sexual license was accompanied by indulgence in material comforts and a luxurious lifestyle, made possible by the great wealth coming into Babylon through trade. The name Babylon meant “The Gate of God,” an indication that the Dragon was again working to become god of this world. Babylonian religious worship included temple prostitution and ritualized occult practices based on the worship of several gods. Some believe that Nimrod and Semiramis claimed divine status for themselves and their son. The dark spiritual power behind these ‘gods’ helped established Babylonian worship as a powerful astral religion that would continue through the ages.

In *The Two Babylons*, Alexander Hyslop states that Nimrod was deified as Marduk, while Semiramis became Ishtar, or Ashtoreth. The worship of Marduk included the blood sacrifice of children. The worship of Ashtoreth took place around Asherah poles and consisted of flagrant sexual immorality and self-mutilation. The son of Marduk and Ishtar became the god Dumuzu or Tammuz, with whom Ishtar consorted, reflecting the incest of Semiramis and her son. This relationship was manifested in future incarnations of these two gods. Ishtar became known variously as Ashtoreth, Astarte, the Queen of Heaven and Isis. Tammuz was known as Adonis to the Greeks and Osiris in Egypt. Their worship is condemned in Ezekiel 8 and Jeremiah 44.

The sexual immorality, materialism, and idol worship of the Babylonian world system were transmitted to Babylon's trading partners and even her conquerors in the millennia following the Great Flood. Once the wealthiest and most powerful city in the world, Babylon later fell into decline and ruin when the Seleucid Greeks relocated their capital from Babylon to Syrian Antioch on the coast of the Mediterranean. To ensure the continuation of their religion, the Babylonian priesthood migrated west, establishing an occult library in Pergamum in the Roman province of Phrygia in Asia Minor. This is probably why Jesus referred to Pergamum as "the city where Satan dwells." (Rev. 2:13)

With the rise of the Romans as a world power late in the first millennium BC, Spiritual Babylon relocated even farther west, gravitating to the center of commerce and power in Rome. The symbolism and influence of Babylonian occult practices became increasingly evident in Roman society and religious practice. Babylonian values were adopted by the wealthy Roman upper class and to a lesser extent the middle class. Rome's carnal lifestyle became known throughout the world as being even more corrupt than Babylon's. The gradual infusion of Babylonian values, particularly the deification of the reigning monarch, was one of the factors that led to Roman emperor worship, replacing the previous tolerance of Roman polytheism toward all religions. This resulted in the persecution of Christians when they refused to offer the required pinch of incense and affirm, "Caesar is Lord." Under the Dragon's guiding influence, Rome was firmly established as the new Spiritual Babylon. At the close of his first Epistle, Peter confirms the city of Rome as Babylon.

Revelation 13 presented an account of the Dragon's final, almost successful attempt to eliminate every last vestige of righteousness from the planet and establish absolute control over the earth. His belief is that if he can do this, he will be able to prevent Jesus from returning to establish the Kingdom of God. This is the reason for the coming persecution of Christians and invasion of Israel. Revelation 17 describes the spiritual background of the world system, founded on the Dragon's plan to gain control the world and become its reigning god. The record of Babylon's destruction here rather than in Revelation 14, when it actually occurred, follows the thematic ordering of the feasts. This chapter continues the theme of the purifying judgment of the Lord's goat that started in chapters 15-16. However, instead of the blood of an innocent sacrifice providing atonement, the blood of the guilty is required for their sin because they refused to come under the atoning blood of Christ.

Revelation 17

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name *was* written:

MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT,

THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

"Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful."

Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." (KJV)

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Revelation 17 Commentary

v. 1-2 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." Although God's final judgments were recorded in chapter 16, John is now shown God's judgment of the harlot, *Mystery Babylon*. Revelation chapters 17 and 18 are therefore essentially a dramatic flashback in the Revelation chronology.

v. 3-4 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. John's description of Spiritual Babylon as

the woman contains several parallels to the ancient city of Babylon, recorded in Old Testament prophecies. Jeremiah 51 identifies Babylon as sitting on many waters and having abundant treasures; she was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, intoxicating other nations with her wine.

The identity of the woman *Mystery Babylon* can be understood in light of the scarlet beast she rides. Each head symbolizes the spiritual essence of seven different world kingdoms with the power of the Dragon behind it. It is difficult to draw a definitive line between the scarlet beast and the Dragon itself, except that the scarlet beast is defined in verse 7 as the visible manifestation of a previous world kingdom under the direct authority of the Dragon. The woman's appearance and clothes declare her to be a prostitute, no longer following God's ways. The royal purple and red of her robes symbolize worldly authority and position; the jewels and gold represent great wealth and luxury. She is thus the icon of the materialism and values of the world system. Mystery Babylon also symbolizes the economic resources necessary for the world's leading power to maintain its dominant position among other nations. The gold cup represents a vessel fit for sacred contents, but instead it is filled with spiritual abominations, the fruit of Mystery Babylon's idolatry and immorality.

The description of Mystery Babylon as "sitting on many waters" is both a physical and symbolic attribute. Every world capital fulfilling the role of spiritual Babylon through history has been located on a waterway with access to the sea, ensuring it a dominant commercial position. Babylon's position on many waters is also likely symbolic of the large number of people from many nations that flow to her shores, drawn by the opportunity of great wealth. This large immigrant class was a part of the operating dynamic of Babylon, as well as of every city that inherited her mantle and fulfilled the role of 'daughter of Babylon'. The wilderness in which John finds the woman is symbolic of her dry spiritual state without God rather than a geographic location. Her spiritual desolation is confirmed by her alliance with the beast, whose blasphemy against God is one of his defining spiritual characteristics. Since the heads of the beast have physical manifestations as kingdoms, the woman also belongs to a physical location, the capital city of commerce in each of the kingdoms represented by the seven heads.

v. 5-6a And on her forehead a name was written: "**MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**" I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. As a matter of social policy, Roman prostitutes were required to have their name tattooed on their foreheads. The wealthier ones spelled it out in jewelry. Although the woman's name is Babylon, the word "mystery" before it indicates that this name has a deeper symbolic meaning. She is Spiritual Babylon, the occult (in the sense that its true spiritual source is hidden) world system that opposes the ways of God and persecutes the righteous.

Even though the composite beast and Mystery Babylon are separate entities in the last days (Rev. 17:16), persecution of the saints still takes place in Spiritual Babylon as it does in rest of the world under the rule of the beast. Since the two are no longer in the same location at the end of the age, two separate judgments are recorded. Vengeance on the kingdom of the beast for shedding the blood of the righteous was executed in Revelation 16. God's judgment on Mystery Babylon for the world's persecution of the righteous through the ages is detailed in Revelation 18.

v. 6b-8 And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the

beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit [Abyss] and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." John is awestruck and perhaps confused by the appearance of this woman wearing rich clothing and expensive jewelry. Because the Dragon makes sin attractive to mankind, she is probably quite beautiful. John no doubt recalls the sign of the virgin of Revelation 12, adorned with a starry crown and being opposed by the red Dragon. In contrast, this woman is seated *on* the red Dragon, a spectacle of earthly glory and identified as a prostitute.

Those commentators who hold that the woman represents an apostate nation or church are at least partially correct. However, it is not just the church (with the exception of the faithful) that is found to be apostate at the end of the age. In reality, the whole world is also apostate, having fallen away from following God's ways, living by the values of the world system. The symbolism of the woman and the Dragon is not limited to the church age, instead presenting events from the beginning of recorded history. In her earliest mention in Scripture, the woman currently seen on the beast appeared in Zechariah's vision (Zech. 5), well before the advent of Christ. The angel identified her as the personification of wickedness and stated that she existed "throughout the earth." He had her transported to Babylon in a large jar of the type used for commerce. This imagery provides a more comprehensive picture of Mystery Babylon. She symbolizes the idolatry of the apostate world system centered in Ancient Babylon after the Flood. Her apostasy is partly based on the 'worship of Mammon', the love of worldly riches that drives men to turn away from God and seek the power and wealth this short life has to offer.

The angel directs John's attention from the woman to the Dragon, increasing our understanding of the nearly identical beast presented in Revelation 13. The angel makes it clear that the cause of the world's amazement will not be the woman, with whom it is already familiar, but the beast that appears at the end of the age. Having existed in the past (*it was, and is not*), the beast will emerge from the Abyss at the end of the age to re-establish his previously destroyed kingdom. Because the bottomless pit, or Abyss, is the abode of wicked spiritual beings and never of human souls, the statement that: "*the beast... will come out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition,*" confirms the dark spiritual origin and nature of the beast. The phrase *and go to perdition* also identifies the beast itself as the Man of Sin. (2Thess. 2:3) Those whose names are written in the book of life will not come under the spell of the beast, because they will recognize him and resist the temptation of believing his great deception.

v. 9-11 Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

The use of the phrase "a mind with wisdom" indicates that another riddle follows. The seven mountains are generally believed to identify the woman as Rome at the time John received his vision. Rome was famous for the seven hills on which it was built. However, the word used here is "mountains," so there may well be a spiritual meaning in addition to the physical description of Rome. Mountains can signify the greatness (usually associated with righteousness) of a man, so this could also be a reference to the might of the seven empires symbolized by the seven heads, but lacking the usual implication of righteousness.

The early church adopted a somewhat narrow view of this passage. Jews and Christians of the first through third centuries believed that the great events overtaking them indicated the end of the world was upon them. They hoped and believed that Christ would return soon, possibly even at the end of the first century, to overthrow the Roman Empire and establish the Kingdom of God. The circulation of John's Revelation scroll a few years prior to the turn of the century and the short history of the Christian experience led to the belief that the seven heads were all Roman emperors. However, there had been twelve emperors by the time the Revelation scroll was distributed, so specific 'bad' emperors were speculated on as fulfilling the seven heads. While the error of this practice is apparent today, similar speculations have been applied to Revelation through the centuries, which still continue. Our perspective continues to change with unfolding events. It is only the comparative recent emphasis on the feasts that enables their themes to be perceived in Revelation.

With the benefit of hindsight, the lengthy time frame of the church age affords a perspective that identifies the heads of the beast as seven great world kingdoms ruling through time, rather than specific emperors of the early church age. Only one of the beast's heads, the sixth, symbolized the Roman Empire, including all of its emperors. John makes it clear that these seven heads will be followed by the rule of the beast itself, the eighth king and final world empire. This final king will come up from the Abyss, rule the world, and thereafter be imprisoned in the lake of fire. Since only fallen angels and demons have ever been sentenced to the Abyss, this eighth king is in essence a wicked spiritual being possessing the body of a man.

The angel's riddle identifies the beast that comes out of the Abyss as one of the heads that previously ruled a world kingdom that existed prior to Rome: he "*was, and is not.*" In order to identify which of these seven kingdoms returns at the end of the age, one needs to discover the one whose ruler was consigned to the Abyss. The angel's statement that this kingdom existed prior to John's day eliminates both the sixth and seventh heads, which are generally held to be the Roman Empire and Hitler's Third Reich, or 'third Rome.' This leaves only the first five heads as possible candidates. Obviously, four of these five kingdoms were ruled by men whose acts are contained in the historical record, while one was ruled by a spiritual being who will reappear at the end of the age as the Man of Sin. To discover which one it was, the previous kingdoms must first be identified.

There is general agreement among expositors that the first five heads of the beast are Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and Greece. But is this list correct? The last four of these kingdoms are listed in Daniel 7 as being either present or coming world kingdoms, symbolized by the lion whose wings were removed (Assyria's symbol was the winged lion while Babylon is generally symbolized as a lion without wings), the bear (Persia), and the leopard (Greece). There is therefore no basis to eliminate any of these. Neither Scripture nor history gives an indication that any of these kingdoms was ruled by a demonic being. Because of the limited time frame included in Daniel's prophecy, scholars must look elsewhere for the identity of the first kingdom.

Because Egypt predates all other kingdoms in the historical record save for the Old Babylonian kingdom, it is the logical choice to be the first head of the beast. In order to qualify for this distinction, however, Egypt had to have been ruled by a wicked spiritual being whose kingdom was destroyed. Since Egypt was actually ruled by numerous Pharaohs, it is difficult to pinpoint one ruler as representing Egypt, and no one Pharaoh is presented in the record as being a spiritual being, or even a truly evil ruler, though they all claimed a divine right to rule. With the resulting logical exclusion of Egypt as the first head of the beast, the only place left to examine is the age that precedes the historical record. There is in fact one world kingdom that predates the

historical record and fulfills the requirements. Fortunately, its existence and a description of its 'fatal wound' are preserved in a few early non-historical accounts. A clue to its identity is can even be found in an obscure verse in Genesis 6.

The First World Kingdom

Prior to the written historical record, mankind was not the only race of intelligent beings on earth. The Dragon made his home here after his eviction from heaven. Earth was also home to the Watchers, the angels assigned by God to watch over the affairs of mankind. (These may be the first of the guardian angels of Christian theology.) These spiritual beings followed the Dragon's example of rebellion, mating with women and producing a race of giants known as the Nephilim or Rapha that came to rule over the earth. This race of giants is immortalized in Greek mythology as the Titans. As the product of angelic beings and humans, they were quasi-human offspring animated by a satanic spiritual life force rather than a soul, and consequently deficient in such human traits as empathy and compassion.

The Book of Enoch describes the results of the Watchers' disobedience. As the genetic union between fallen angels and mankind, the physical abilities of the giants far exceeded those of men, enabling them to establish rule over the earth. The giants dominated humanity, ruling by force and corrupting mankind with every manner of wickedness. By the middle of the second millennium after the Fall, the Watchers and their gigantic offspring had covered the earth with violence and corrupted the hearts of all but eight people. The Lord examined his creation and judged it totally corrupt: *"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth."* Only Noah and his family were still walking in righteousness.

In order to preserve his redemption plan, the Lord caused a great flood of water to destroy the kingdom of the Nephilim, drowning the giants and everyone they had corrupted. God dealt with the Watchers by imprisoning them in the Abyss, reserving them for destruction at the end of the ages. (2Pet. 2:4) The death of the giants and imprisonment of the Watchers wiped out the first world kingdom and its angelic king, inflicting the "fatal wound" to the *first* head of the beast, described in Revelation 13 and 17.

"For God did not spare angels when they had sinned, but hurling them down to Tartarus consigned them to caves of darkness, keeping them in readiness for judgement. And He did not spare the ancient world, although He preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a deluge on the world of the ungodly." 2Pet. 2 4-5 NTMS

The Greek word *Tartarus*, above, is retained in 2Pet. 2: 4 in the New Testament in Modern Speech. It is incorrectly rendered in most translations as hell or Hades, the abode of the dead. To the contrary, Tartarus is a place where wicked spirits (not humans) are imprisoned, and always bound in chains. Tartarus was believed by the Greeks to be below hell. The imprisonment of the dragon by a chain in the Abyss in Revelation 20 identifies the Abyss as Tartarus. This field of study is reflected in Greek mythology, which holds that the giants, or Titans, were also imprisoned in the place they called Tartarus. According to many theologians, the spirits of these giants are the demons that still pester the earth. The latter view is supported by the account of the

Gerasene demoniac, when the demons begged Jesus not to be sent to the Abyss. (Lk. 8:31) It may be that some demons are held in the Abyss while others are allowed to afflict the earth.

Having once experienced human form, demonic spirits have tried for millennia to circumvent the spiritual-biological barrier God erected after the Flood. The practice of some forms of meditation and New Age channeling enable demonic spirits to interact with people in the physical realm, but in a limited way. Possession enables a demon to merge to some degree with an individual, but this involves having to contend with the soul of the individual for control of the will. This renders the possessed individual incapable of interacting in any meaningful way in human events, since the battle for the will causes a mental break with reality, ultimately resulting in insanity. The barrier between the spiritual and the biological realms has held through the ages. As we approach the end of the age, however, this boundary has come under attack by science.

In its quest to prove that the creation of human life is only a biological process that does not require God, science has made great advances over the past three decades. Scientists are now close to achieving their goal of replicating a human being. Recent breakthroughs have been made with advances in cloning and in the field of *transgenics*, the splicing of genes from one species into the DNA of another. Although amphibians had been successfully cloned in the 1950's, human cloning and transgenics gained much attention in scientific research circles after the final mapping of the human genome and the first successful animal cloning experiments of the 1990's. Early transgenic research projects included mixing the DNA of tomatoes and flounders, moths and potatoes, fish and cattle. Later efforts focused on splicing human DNA into animal embryos with the ostensible goal of being able to grow human body parts for transplantation.

More recent research has included attempts to clone early humans and to combine DNA obtained from viable teeth of Neanderthal skulls with modern human DNA to form a new species. There have been recent advances in transplanting animal DNA into human embryos with the aim of producing *transhumans* or *transgenics*, human *chimeras* that possess the heightened sensory abilities of the animal kingdom. This type of creation is explored in such science fiction TV shows as Painkiller Jane, X-Men, the 4400, Jake 2.0, Heroes, etc. England allows the creation of embryonic human chimeras with the stipulation that they be destroyed after two weeks. There is no oversight to ensure compliance.

The stated goal of a small, dedicated media-shy segment of the scientific community is to create a new race of superhuman beings. By 2006, the science of transgenics was the most funded research project of first world nations, with the US outspending all others. Major law schools in Europe and the US have even written proposed legislation to deal with the legal/moral implications, including the civil rights of new species.

The major implications of this type of research and experimentation are not legal or even moral, but spiritual, an area of little or no concern to the scientific community. Science is trespassing on God's domain. Only God can create life and impart a soul to a physical body, so these manmade biological creations will have no God-given spiritual life force. Where does the soul come from when a clone of a living human being is created? Or when a trans-human being is engineered by combining human and animal DNA? A clone or chimera may be compared to a car without an engine, waiting for a new spiritual owner to come by and power it up. Unless God provides a soul, such a manmade creation will be open to possession by any spiritual being able to inhabit it, with no contest by a resident soul for the will, no battle over conscience and morality.

Due to the complexity of genetic engineering, there are far greater obstacles to human cloning than there are to cloning animals. Only a small fraction of attempts at animal cloning are reportedly successful. Even those that are successful have limited life spans. Yet at some point, humans will be cloned or transgenic humans created. Although no one has yet publicly admitted to such a breakthrough, private research centers have quietly confirmed they are working on the problem.

When science does create a viable transgenic human or clone, a doorway will have been opened between the spiritual and physical dimensions. When that crossover is made, the result will be a truly fearsome creation, a wicked spiritual being in a human or trans-human body. Lacking a God-given soul he will impose his supercharged, spiritually malevolent will on mankind. The fact that the Man of Sin and the false prophet are the only ones thrown into the lake of fire at Jesus' return may imply that when this spiritual-biological breakthrough does occur only two will be successful. Regardless of whether this occurs as such a scientific breakthrough or is merely a case of simple possession, the scarlet beast will have the experience of having ruled the earth before its kingdom was destroyed by the Flood. Having come back up out of the Abyss, its rule will be marked by deception and the demand for the absolute, universal submission that reigns in the Abyss.

Since wicked spirits rule by force and intimidation, the most evil spiritual beings would likely be the first ones to cross over from the spiritual to the biological world. The Man of Sin may even be 'The Destroying Angel' Apollo, ruler of the Abyss and lord of war, mentioned in Revelation 9 as leader of the hordes of stinging locusts. The false prophet will also cross the spiritual-biological barrier. The rule of the Man of Sin and his false prophet will reflect the same violence, corruption, and bloodshed that characterized the rule of the first world empire that was so violent God destroyed it in the Great Flood.

v. 12-13 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. The ten kings are accepted by most scholars as the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue. (Dan. 2) Nebuchadnezzar's rule, represented by the statue's head of gold, was followed by that of the Medes and Persians, the two silver arms; the kingdom of the Greeks is symbolized by the bronze belly and loins; while the Romans are the two iron legs and feet. The ten toes are popularly believed to represent a restored ten-nation end times' Roman Empire.

"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay... And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay." Daniel 2:31-33; 40-41

What is not often mentioned is that the statue's two legs symbolize the geographic and cultural split that existed between the Italian Western and Byzantine Eastern halves of the Roman Empire. The comparatively long length of the legs does not indicate the restoration of a

defunct kingdom as some claim for the Roman Empire, but the continuation of a divided one to the end of the age. This divided Roman legacy has in fact continued into modern times in the legal, cultural, economic and military cultures of western and eastern European nations, including Russia in the East and the former English colonies in the West. These modern Roman nations are still divided in some ways between East and West, reflecting the reality that existed from the division of the far-flung Roman Empire. A short history traces the this division through time and contextualizes the last days' Roman legacy in the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

Short History of a Long Empire

Constantine's relocation of the capital from Rome to the city of Constantinople in AD 330 deepened and cemented the division that already existed within the empire from the time of the first two co-emperors, Octavian and Mark Antony. The political division between East and West later widened further along religious lines, with Christian Bishops in Rome and Constantinople split over issues of church doctrine and authority. Both capitals claimed to be the true representative of both Roman power and Christianity, with each viewing the other as apostate.

By the end of the sixth century, Rome had ceased to be the center of western secular power, although her popes and bishops retained ecclesiastical and even limited physical jurisdiction over a portion of Roman territory in Italy. In AD 800, Roman power in the West was reconstituted as a mere shadow of its former self on the conquests of Charlemagne the Great, and the Holy Roman Empire came into being. Although it existed more in name than reality after Charlemagne's death, from this small start Europe developed as a loose confederation of independent kingdoms under the pope's spiritual, and to some degree temporal authority. Modern Europe continues to embody this Roman legacy.

In the East, the Roman Empire continued for nearly a thousand years after the decline of Rome. As the bastion of both Roman civilization and Christianity from the fourth through the end of the fifteenth century, Constantinople was known as the Second Rome. Roman institutions were retained with minor alterations. As the second Rome, its ensign was the two-headed eagle, doubling the single eagle of Rome. The emperors of the Roman Empire in the East defended not only their own borders, but the eastern flank of Europe as well. Roman Constantinople stood as the bulwark of Christianity against the encroaching armies of Islam from the seventh century until the fall of this great city nearly a half century before Columbus discovered America.

Constantinople was not idle when it came to planting churches. The Russian Orthodox Church got its start when Vladimir I converted to Christianity at the close of the tenth century. Prince Vladimir decreed that all his subjects were to be baptized as well. When Constantinople fell to invading Turks in 1453, there was a mass exodus of Christians northward through southeastern Europe into the Christian safe haven of Russia. Just before the city was taken, the emperor's niece Sophia was spirited off to the papal residence in Rome. From there, she was sent to Russia to marry Ivan the Great so the imperial Roman bloodline could continue without interruption. Ivan even had a new family tree drawn up that traced his family ancestry back to early Roman rulers, though its accuracy is open to question. Through this royal marriage and the mass migration of Christians from the south, Russia inherited the legacy not only of the Apostle Paul's original Christian churches in Asia Minor, but also that of the Roman Empire in the East. Through Ivan's marriage to Sophia, Russia had a valid claim as the direct inheritor of the Roman

Empire. Ivan even took the title of *Czar*, the Russian equivalent of Caesar, and adopted the two-headed eagle of Constantinople as the symbol of the nascent Russian Empire.

Ivan's claim to the legacy of the original Roman Empire was further enhanced when he moved his capital to the more centralized location of Moscow. Ironically, like Rome, Moscow is a city built on seven hills. In 1510, the Russian abbot Philotheus, famous for his holy life and the accuracy of his prophecies, declared that Moscow was indeed the "Third Rome," and that there would never be another. Just as Europe was held together by the authority of the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church was the glue that unified the growing Russian empire. The two legs of Nebuchadnezzar's great statue had in fact correctly prophesied the continuation of the Roman Empire in dual form, both East and West, into modern times.

A European Antichrist?

The popular end times' scenario holds that the ten kings of verses 12 and 13 form a united ten-nation, western European, Restored, Roman Empire, from which the antichrist rises as an eleventh king. In order to gauge the validity of this belief in the light of the unbroken continuation of the two halves of the Roman Empire, it is necessary to examine each modifier in light of Scripture, history, modern politics & geography.

A united ten-nation empire? Popular end times' theory proposes that Europe is the kingdom of the beast, ruled by ten European kings as well as an eleventh, the European antichrist. The ten kings are held to be either literal or symbolic. Some background on the evolution of this scenario helps assess its validity.

When the small European Common Market added new members to reach the magic total of 10 nations in the late 1970's, popular Christian authors proclaimed that Europe was the ten-nation beast of Revelation. When the number of nations later increased to twelve, these same writers equivocated, stating that the number ten might be more symbolic than literal. With 27 nations in the EU as of 2007 and plans to possibly add more, the ten kings are growing more symbolic by the year.

When studying apocalyptic writing, one does not get to pick and choose whether a passage is to be interpreted literally or figuratively in order to fit preconceived theories. The ten kings are prefigured by the ten toes of Daniel 2; the ten horns of Daniel 7; and the ten horns of Revelation 12, 13, and 17. The repeated enumeration of this number, along with the specificity of three horns being uprooted from the ten leaves no option but to interpret the ten kings literally. However, since there are currently 27 nations in the EU, the ten horns would form only a minority faction in support of the beast, perhaps even a renegade one. The ten kings cannot comprise a united European kingdom.

A western European empire? Western history books have long taught that the Roman Empire continued only in western Europe, so when modern Revelation scholars settled on the location of the ten kings of Revelation, they claimed they would be from western Europe. For nearly twenty years, the EU consisted only of western European nations, since Eastern Europe was under Soviet domination. Eastern Europe and Russia were not considered possible candidates for inclusion in the ten horns because their Roman legacy continued to go virtually unacknowledged in the West.

When the 'lost' history of Constantinople as the second Rome and of Russia as the third Rome is taken into account, it can be seen that the two legs and ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue prophesy two separate halves of a shared Roman legacy, one in the East and the other in the West. As inheritors of the eastern leg of the Roman Empire, the Orthodox Christian countries of Eastern Europe and Russia have an equal, if not greater claim than Western Europe to being the modern inheritors of the Roman Empire. Considering the symbolism of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, the ten kings of Revelation 17 would have to be drawn equally from both halves of Europe, not just from the western foot of the statue. The true extent of the inheritors of the Roman Empire actually extends much further.

A restored empire? This claim of restoration is not supported either by the symbolism of Nebuchadnezzar's great statue or by history. Nebuchadnezzar's statue does not portray a defunct Roman kingdom that is revived, but toes that are crumbling. Additionally, the long legs symbolize an *unbroken* continuation and evolution of this empire. There is no break between the hips and the toes of either leg. In its modern form, the Roman Empire evolved into the numerous nations of both East and West that exist today. This division was accentuated for seventy years by the "iron curtain" of the twentieth century between Europe and the Soviet Union. Since there was never a break in the history or culture of the legacy nations that currently comprise the two halves of the extended Roman Empire, there is no justification in looking for the creation of an end times' "revived" or "restored" Roman Empire.

Over forty nations can currently claim a legacy of Roman law, culture, administration and military power, yet only ten of these will rule with the beast. Since there is no need to form a Revived Roman Empire, the ten toes of Daniel 2 can be fulfilled by any ten kings with Roman heritage, with no need to form a new 'Roman' political entity. Ten Roman legacy nations or national blocs positioned around the earth, from the farthest reaches of the old Soviet Empire to the numerous colonies planted by England, France, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, etc., will be in a better position to enforce the beast's global rule than ten nations grouped together in Western Europe. The ten kings may even rule over ten global regions formed of national blocs.

The ten 'Roman' kings sought out by the beast and offered a share in global rule will be those with the strategic, military, and technological power to support his bid for global domination. They will likely be from nations with significant immigrant Muslim populations, so their governments can be more easily controlled, or blackmailed as the case may be. All it will take is for one nuclear device to be set off in Europe or the United States, and western nations will rethink their lack of support for Islam's newly restored end times' office of the supreme Caliphate. Another coordinated action that renews and extends the multinational European Muslim riots of 2005 to other continents as well, perhaps coupled with an oil embargo, might also assist ten Roman legacy nations in their decision to accede to the Mahdi's demands of support.

A Roman Empire? The symbolism of Revelation 13 & 17 is clear that the composite beast is comprised of a three-nation bloc, the inheritors of the lion, bear, and leopard. Following Scriptural principles of interpretation, the horns become the power of the beast's kingdom. These ten Roman legacy nations will support the beast, ruling the world from a military standpoint, but their power will be under submission to Islam and the Mahdi. This arrangement fulfills the symbolism of the ten toes on Nebuchadnezzar's statue, as well as that of the ten horns on the composite beast, with no contradiction between the two prophetic images.

Due to the short time he has to rule, the Man of Sin will not be able to remake every non-Islamic western nation into a formal Muslim state. However, he will not need to do so, since his immediate objective will be submission and worship. In his seminal work, *The Prince*, Machiavelli noted that throughout history the successful conqueror has let his conquered subjects retain their institutions in order to facilitate the transition to a new order. This same pattern was followed by the Muslims in their conquest of Persia. The institutions of the nations of the west will therefore retain their Roman appearance, but they will be submitted to Islamic values and tax authorities. If history is any guide, the Mahdi will first gain initial verbal submission from the leaders of the nations of the earth. Afterwards he will ensure that everyone is actually submitted to Islam, utilizing the millions of Muslim immigrants dispersed around the globe to facilitate this.

v. 14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful. As the might of the beast's kingdom, the armies of the ten Roman legacy nations will join the fight in the war against Christ when he returns. They will believe that they are doing the world a service, gathering to fight the antichrist, the wicked ad Dajjal. When Jesus returns with his angels, he will lead them in a two-pronged attack to regain control of earth. They will destroy the combined military forces of the nations gathered against Jerusalem, and evict the spiritual squatters of this world – the Dragon, the two beasts, the wicked angels, and the demonic spirits that have taken rule over the nations. Although the physical battles will be the bloodiest, they will be the easiest to win. The spiritual war will be the more important and difficult one. After this great battle, Jesus will claim his inheritance, described in the title deed he took from the Father's hand. He will establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and the saints will assist him in his reign.

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” Dan. 2: 44

v. 15-17 Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.”

Although the woman rode atop the beast in John's day, there are a couple of convincing arguments that these two will reside in different nations at the end of the age. First, if the ten kings destroyed the beast's own commercial trading center, this would cripple his ability to wage war. Second, the beast's kingdom rises quite rapidly from near obscurity, so some other nation must already be in control of world trade when he comes to power. The beast will naturally be opposed by Mystery Babylon, who will want to retain her position of preeminence in world affairs. The only way the beast can attain global dominion will be to destroy the economic power, at the same time crippling the military prowess of the nation where Mystery Babylon dwells.

Since the early days of Babylon, control of world trade has historically gone hand in hand with power over other nations. The woman riding atop the beast in John's day symbolizes the necessity of world trade being carried out ‘on the back of’ great political and military power.

Conversely, no empire has been able to function as a military superpower without the economic support that comes from controlling a major portion of the world's wealth through trade. It is only at the end of the ages that this close relationship will change, enabling the beast to destroy Mystery Babylon without destroying his own ability to generate wealth and make war.

For the first time in history, the dominant power of the earth will not already have a great commercial trading empire when it comes to world power. The beast will instead control a resource far more valuable to the world than all the gold, jewels, and merchandise of world commerce. As head of an Islamic alliance of Middle Eastern nations, the beast will have an effective stranglehold on the global supply of oil, the majority of which passes through the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Iran. World leaders have long recognized that without the Middle East's steady supply of oil, the world's factories, transportation, and air-conditioned cities would grind to a halt. The leader who effectively wields power over the oil spigot also controls the levers of economic power on an international scale.

Because the beast will control this great treasure, once he eliminates Mystery Babylon as a threat he will rise almost immediately to global rule. However, in order to engineer the destruction of modern day Babylon, he will have to overcome her economic might, her technological and military superiority. The first means of achieving this will be to undermine the entire western economic system of finance and banking, a move that is already well underway. He will not be able to accomplish her economic and military downfall by himself, because the first-world nations have colluded to keep their technological power, especially their nuclear secrets, from being obtained by nations that do not share their Roman legacy. He will therefore only need to devise a way of convincing ten Roman first world nations to use their nuclear power to destroy the economic capital of the superpower they have already come to oppose on many levels, even while maintaining current military alliances. The most likely reason why these ten nations will attack modern Mystery Babylon is that they will have embraced Islam to a significant degree, while the nation where spiritual and material Babylon dwells has not, due to its ability to assimilate numerous faiths. A little nuclear blackmail would help convince any nations that might be somewhat resistant to taking this course of action.

v. 18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. This verse provides confirmation that Spiritual Babylon in John's time was located in Rome, the capital of the Roman world empire. As previously mentioned, the early church saw Rome as the spiritual daughter of Babylon, the iniquitous physical and spiritual manifestation of the world system. The name Babylon was even used by first century Christians as a nickname for Rome. It is generally believed that the phrase, "she who is in Babylon" in 1Pet. 5:13, conveys a greeting from the church in Rome, coded in this manner to get past Roman censors.

Revelation 18: Background

Although the end times' identity of the beast can be determined from the composite symbolism of the lion, bear, and leopard, no such Scriptural symbolism exists to identify the woman on the beast at the end of the age. In John's day she was Rome, but the spiritual nature of the daughter of Babylon ensures that she has the ability to reside in different nations and

kingdoms – wherever the world's values and wealth are concentrated in any given age. The great trading and population center of Rome now casts but a thin shadow of its former economic glory and debauchery. An examination of history is necessary to trace the rise of the great commercial empires since the fall of Rome in order to discover the final end times' manifestation of Mystery Babylon.

After the capital of the Roman Empire was relocated to Constantinople in the fourth century, Rome's power began to wane. The decline of Rome's influence in world affairs was matched by the growing economic and political influence of Constantinople until it finally became the dominant power in the Mediterranean. In Constantinople, the decadence of the upper class and the widespread immorality typified by public x-rated shows were exceeded only by the religious fanaticism of the lower classes, exhibited in running battles between the warring factions over controversy caused by the *filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed. (Not a stellar period in the history of Christianity.) Starting in the seventh century, the might of Constantinople was increasingly challenged as Islam's star ascended in the Near East. As Muslim armies spread their religion and social control over an extensive area, Muslim merchants developed a growing monopoly on trade. The power of Constantinople began to wane as she lost her southern territories and trading routes to Muslim expansion. Venice became the main trading center of Europe with its numerous Mediterranean ports providing access to goods transported from the East along Muslim trade routes.

Muslim armies were not satisfied with the gains they had made in Asia, Africa and Sicily. On the strength of prophecies that Islam would rule the world, Muslim Arab and Berber forces known as Moors invaded Spain, then France. Western Europe was preserved as a Christian continent only by the early 8th century defeat of the Muslim armies at Tours, just south of Paris. As the power and influence of Islam continued to spread, Muslim raiding and merchant ships built a far-flung trading empire that continued to grow for the next several centuries. Muslim invasions of Europe continued in the east under the Islamic flag of the Ottoman Empire, resulting in the conquest of most of the European Balkan peninsula as far north as Austria and even into Hungary by the late 1300's. The nations of Europe, once again concerned for the survival of Christianity, paused in their internecine wars long enough to join forces to combat this Muslim pincer movement, stopping the Ottoman advance in Hungary before turning its attention to driving the Moors out of southern Europe.

The same year that the last of the Moors were driven from Spain, Queen Isabella sent Columbus across the Atlantic in an attempt to circumvent the Muslim controlled overland trade route in the East. During the sixteenth century, improvements in the science of navigation allowed Spain and Portugal to expand their exploration and conquest of the newly discovered Americas, with the result that great wealth began to flow into European coffers. Shortly thereafter, Spain and Italy retook much of the Mediterranean from the Turks, due to the advantage of their new larger galleons and more powerful ships' cannon. Muslim power began to ebb as Europe once again became the center of wealth and power through trade through their colonies in the New World.

Several European seagoing nations amassed great fortunes over the next two centuries. Spain became a leading world power due to the riches she acquired exploiting South American populations. The Netherlands and Great Britain increased their own economic and military power as they too established colonies around the world and pirated Spanish treasure on the high seas. The royal courts and nobles of several European nations enjoyed immense wealth and luxury that came from looting the treasures of the New World. Over the next two centuries

European wars lasting decades were fought for dominance of this new world trade. The dawn of the nineteenth century found Britain standing in the position of being the dominant colonial sea power, with nearly a quarter of the earth under her administration.

With the rise of the Industrial revolution in the nineteenth century, a new power began to make its influence known on the world stage, as first the economic, and the later military and naval might of the breakaway British colony of the United States expanded. In the early twentieth century, the Dragon made his seventh attempt to gain control of the world through the rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930's. Under the leadership of a drug dependent and occult-obsessed Hitler, the Third Reich and her axis allies managed to gain control over the greater part of the world's economic resources before being stopped by allied forces. US power continued to increase in the twentieth century as war ravaged the European continent. European coffers were drained as the United States profited from its early neutral status as arms and oil supplier before entering the Second World War.

The Rise of Spiritual Babylon in the New World

With the exchequers and treasuries of Europe drained at the end of WWII, the United States emerged as an economic powerhouse, supported by her many natural resources and increased manufacturing capacity. Her treasury was filled with the major part of the world's gold, having provided resources to Asia and war matériel to her European allies before entering the war herself. This largess in turn enabled the US to help rebuild Europe at the conclusion of the war.

As nations turned their swords into ploughshares, the United Nations was born in an attempt to prevent another world war. The site chosen for the new UN headquarters was New York City, which was in the process of catching up to London as the world's leading center of trade. During the 1960's and 1970's, the US entered an age of economic and military expansion, enhanced by technological advances that occurred as an offshoot of the space race to the moon. The US economy continued to grow as cheap raw goods were imported from Central and South America to produce mid-and-high level manufactured goods and technology for local consumption and export.

As the US became increasingly involved in world affairs, a move towards global interdependence developed in the UN. Undeveloped third world nations perceived the great prosperity of the US and numerous advocacy groups sought a global redistribution of wealth. Meanwhile, the populations of countless nations dreamed of coming to American shores to seek better economic opportunity and freedom from oppressive societies. As the US jostled for position and advantage during the cold war, foreign policy settled on spreading monetary aid and establishing 'stable governments' around the globe. This had the effect of sharing some of the wealth while serving the nation's own security interests.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of the cold war, the US became the world's undisputed military and economic global superpower. Even as the US continued to prosper economically and cement its technological advantage, American society underwent profound changes during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Immigration patterns shifted for the first time to allow much larger quotas from non-European countries, starting with the Vietnamese boat refugees in the early 1980's. Unforeseen results would ensue from this new trend, eventually changing the cultural and religious landscape of America.

Whereas immigration of the previous two centuries had primarily brought European Christians to US shores, this new wave brought completely foreign cultures, religions, and values to America, along with the worship of foreign gods. US society morphed from a “melting pot” of many cultures with a Christian ethos into a “tossed salad” of clearly defined immigrant groups that tried to maintain their separate cultural heritage, language, and religious beliefs. While assimilating into the American economy, the first generation of these disparate ethnic groups nonetheless retained their unique identities, while the second generation developed organized gangs to be able to compete for territory in urban environments. America’s cultural landscape was refashioned as these new ethnic groups demanded equal recognition and protection under the law. This resulted in a serious challenge to America’s Christian and identity and European heritage.

Additional factors contributed to the changing social landscape. Well-funded liberal groups achieved educational, legislative, and judicial changes that first relaxed, and then overturned strictly defined traditional Christian values and mores. Divorce and abortion had already become the law of the land due to the efforts of these groups, and feminism became a potent force, changing the workplace and cultural fabric of the nation. Next came the legalization and societal acceptance of previously illegal sexual behavior. Homosexuality and other deviant sexual practices were relabeled and transformed into legal, acceptable, “alternative lifestyles” with government support.

As these changes were taking place, along came the “me generation,” espousing an ethic of ‘shop till you drop’ and ‘party hearty,’ followed by the ‘yuppie’ financial whiz kids feeding off Wall Street and then Main Street, literally earning the right to own at least one luxury house, two imported cars, several TVs, computers, and cell phones, along with an array of credit cards to finance it all. America became a nation of consumers instead of producers as its manufacturing base was shipped overseas in an engineered move to redistribute its wealth across the globe. Instead of lending to other countries, the US became a debtor nation in order to finance her spending spree, importing her necessities as well as her luxuries from the factories and businesses she had built in third world nations. This development was followed by a building boom that saw middle and even lower class families living in homes that would be considered palaces in most of the world’s nations, all to stimulate the American economy that enabled the rest of the world to raise its standard of living. The influx of the world’s luxuries, toys, and treasures being shipped to America’s shores was matched only by the flow of illegal recreational drugs that went into the veins of the poor and miserable and up the noses of the wealthy.

By the end of the twentieth century, New York City had become the center of global commerce, and the US had become the engine of world economic growth. The US was also the world’s undisputed military superpower, supported by third and fourth generation scientific technological advances and the willingness to use military force where diplomacy and foreign aid were ineffective. Merchants around the world brought their cargoes to the shores of the United States, while immigrants, visitors, and illegal aliens streamed through ports of entry and across porous borders by tens of thousands, seeking America’s luxuries and liberalities.

Yet even as the US became the buyer of first and last resort for the world’s goods, she found herself with no lack of enemies at the beginning of the 21st century. Unreported by the western press, her former cold war adversaries made new treaties for mutual defense among themselves and with America’s new Muslim antagonists. Less than a decade into the new century, America had expanded militarily into the Middle East and the southern reaches of the former Soviet Empire to protect oil pipelines. These unprecedented actions angered Russia and

her allies as well as most of the Muslim nations of the Middle East. The result was the re-emerging voice of Islamic jihad and renewal of the Middle-Ages clash of civilizations along ideological lines. Standing diametrically opposed to everything America and Europe stand for, the burgeoning international ranks of Islamic radicals have since vowed to achieve the West's conversion or destruction. Equating American (and British) democracy with immorality and unwarranted military intrusions, radical Muslims view the US as the Great Satan, spreading its love affair with materialism, drug abuse, and immorality around the world.

The Coming Storm

Iran, her neighbors, and activist Muslim nations and organizations are both wary and scornful of America's vaunted nuclear and military capabilities. Believing in the Qur'an's promised world victory for Islam and its heavenly rewards for killing infidels, jihadists have shown a willingness to strike whenever they can. They have promised that 911 will not be the last large-scale terrorist operation against the United States. All asymmetric means of warfare have been actively considered, including chemical, biological and radiological attacks. In one of his many messages to America, Bin Laden promised a coming storm of 'black rain', likely a veiled reference to the thick black radioactive rain that fell from the skies after the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima.

Muslim power and daring is spreading across southern Asia, the Middle East and northern Africa as radical Islamic governments come to power and reestablish Shari'a law. It is only a matter of time before Iran attains the capability to produce its own nuclear warheads and the delivery system to launch them. It is working on both. When Iran, Syria, and southern Iraq finally agree to a power sharing relationship, the nuclear blackmail of Europe cannot be far behind. Eventually, this small but powerful Islamic powerbase will join with the ten kings of Revelation to strike a deathblow at Mystery Babylon. As the final manifestation of the daughter of Babylon, New York City, the heart of America's economic power, will fall victim to a coordinated nuclear strike. The reason for this is simple. In his first open letter to America, Bin Laden explained that in order to defeat a nation's military, its economic base must first be destroyed. Since New York is the nation's economic capital, his attacks have been focused there. Muslim jihadists will continue to plan and execute attacks against New York City until they have achieved their objective.

The importance of the port city of New York to the United States cannot be underestimated. It is the hub of the world's central banking system, the capital of commerce and finance for the US as well as the western world. (At one time it was even the capital of the United States, with the District of Columbia later being chosen as a North-South political compromise.) New York is in some ways more representative of America than Washington D.C. An interconnected hub of several protected islands on the Atlantic coast, New York City literally sits "on many waters." Like every previous manifestation of Mystery Babylon, her great wealth has gone hand in hand with an abandonment of Godly values. Once a Christian nation, the US has publicly rejected her Godly heritage and prostituted herself to the god Mammon, trading her many blessings for self indulgence, wealth and luxury. Like Babylon, the US has transmitted the hedonistic and materialistic values of the world system to her trading partners throughout the earth. God will allow the destruction of New York City because the soul of America has turned away from him to pursue the ways of the world. When America is judged for her sins, New York

will not be the only city to fall. The US will be brought low by her enemies to ensure she is unable to retaliate. Revelation 18 describes the destruction of New York City, resulting in the fall of the United States as a world power.

Revelation 18

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, "I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow." Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong *is* the Lord God who judges her.

The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come."

And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, "Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing." Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, "What *is* like this great city?"

They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, "Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her

wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate. Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!*"

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

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Revelation 18 Commentary

v. 1-2a After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the Great!"(NIV) These are the same words used by the second angel to describe God's judgment of Babylon in Revelation 14 as a present event. Its placement here after the last of God's seven bowl judgments have fallen is a dramatic link, identifying this chapter as returning to that event in more detail.

v. 2b [She] has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! The removal of Christian values from public life and societal acceptance of alternative religious practices such as New Age channeling, eastern meditation, and witchcraft have opened spiritual doors for every kind of demon to inhabit the land. Society has undergone profound changes as a result.

v. 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury. Hollywood's materialistic, hedonistic and violent view of American life is transmitted through her entertainment industry to nearly every nation on earth, where its siren song attracts those who live far less luxurious and exciting lives than movie stars or even the average American. The leaders of numerous third world nations impoverish their people in order to live like the rich and famous, while their economies become increasingly dependent on exporting goods back to the United States. As manufacturing plants in foreign countries continue to churn out goods for American consumers, the world's merchants grow ever more wealthy from Babylon's trade.

v. 4-7 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously,

in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'"

Having been blessed by God for her faith in him, America has prospered, avoiding much of the suffering that has befallen the rest of the world. Save for a final attempt to recapture the colonies by the British, she remained relatively untouched by the aggression of others for 200 years, that is until the recent jihadist Muslim terror attacks. Yet America will come under God's judgment for two reasons. First, as a Christian nation, the United States is apostate, having turned her back on the Lord to embrace materialism and immorality. God disciplines and judges his nations as well as his children. Second, the beast and Mystery Babylon both come under God's vengeance at the end of the age for the blood of the saints.

"Come out of Babylon" is both a figurative and a literal command. God's people are always called to come out of the world system regardless of which country or in what era they live, and walk according to God's ways. However, this command may also be interpreted as a literal one. Just as God made a way of escape for Christians by the warning signs preceding his judgment on Jerusalem, he calls his people out of harm's way before the city of Spiritual Babylon is destroyed.

v. 8-10 Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong *is* the Lord God who judges her. The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come." God's vengeance results in consummation by fire. The only way that the complete devastation described here can occur in such a short time (one hour) is with the use of nuclear weapons. The fire and intense radiation that results from a nuclear attack accounts for other nations and merchant ships standing "*far off, terrified at her torment.*"

v. 11-19 And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.

The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, "Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing." Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, "What *is* like this great city?" They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, "Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate." Although US authorities have made special

preparations to prevent a nuclear strike on New York City, they are candid about the impossibility of closing every avenue of attack. The destruction of her great wealth will bring America to her knees.

v. 20-23 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her! Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived."

This is a general description of the emotional devastation that will result from Mystery Babylon's destruction. It has been pointed out that the word "sorcery" in verse 23 is a mistranslation of the Greek word *pharmakeia*. This word is strictly translated as "enchantment with drugs," a charge that is not without basis in any major urban center across the United States. However, the intent of this verse appears to be that Spiritual Babylon presented such a desirable image of the 'good life' that the nations of the world became enchanted by it, and as a result, turned away from Godly values to pursue the false promises of wealth and happiness.

v. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth. Since Cain shed first blood on the earth, the righteous have prayed to God for justice, and God has heard their plea: "*What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.*" (Gen. 4:10) The question of the martyrs under the altar in Revelation 6: "*How long O Lord, until you avenge our blood?*" symbolizes this universal cry.

Although God holds each generation responsible for the persecution of the righteous, vengeance does not fall until the end of the age. New York City, and thus the United States, is the final home of the world system that got its start in ancient Babylon and came of age in Rome. America will pay the price for the blood of all the righteous persecuted by Spiritual Babylon in every age, just as Israel paid the price in AD 70 for the blood of the righteous shed over the previous Millennium. Though some might think this unfair, America's hands are as bloody as any nation on earth, her trash bins crying out with the blood of the unborn, served up as scientific experiments and beauty products. Mystery Babylon, no less than the beast on which she has ridden through the millennia, will justifiably bear God's vengeance at the end of the age.

Final Harvest of the Earth

Revelation 19

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”

— Isaiah 63: 1-4

Revelation 19 – Feast: Continuation of the Day of Atonement

Theme: Removal of sin from the earth

Revelation 19 introduces the bride of Christ and his coming battle with the Kingdom of Darkness. This chorus once again confirms the righteousness of God’s judgment of the harlot as the King of kings prepares to go to war with his mounted heavenly army. The bride of Christ is in heaven preparing for her marriage supper to the Lamb, while birds of prey prepare to gorge on a different kind of feast. Meanwhile, the kings of the earth gather against Jerusalem to destroy Israel in an attempt to prevent Jesus’ return.

This chapter completes the second part of the dual sin offering on the Day of Atonement. The first part of the Atonement offering, the purifying judgment on the Lord’s goat, was fulfilled in God’s purifying vengeance on the kingdom of the beast (Rev. 15&16) and on the harlot (Rev. 17&18). Revelation 19 fulfills the second offering of Atonement, the scapegoat, with its theme of removal of sin from the camp. Instead of the sin of God’s people being symbolically removed so God could dwell with them, those encamped against Jerusalem are removed from the earth so the bride of Christ can dwell there with her Lord. Additionally, the wicked spiritual powers that have ruled over the earth since Adam’s fall are defeated and also removed from the earth. On a historical note, because Atonement was a solemn feast of judgment, any marriage planned for that time would only take place after it was completed, during the rejoicing of the feast of Tabernacles. The wedding supper of the Lamb will occur after the coming judgments of God are completed. Still, the bride continues to prepare herself for the wedding ceremony, confident of victory in the coming battle.

Revelation 19

After this I seemed to hear the far-echoing voices of a great multitude in Heaven, who said, “Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God. True and just are His judgments, because He has judged the great Harlot who was corrupting the whole earth with her fornication, and He has taken vengeance for the

blood of His bondservants which her hands have shed.” And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! For her smoke ascends until the Ages of the Ages.”

And the twenty-four Elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sits upon the throne. “Even so,” they said; “Hallelujah!” And from the throne there came a voice which said, “Praise our God, all you His bondservants—you who fear Him, both the small and the great.” And I seemed to hear the voices of a great multitude and the sound of many waters and of loud peals of thunder, which said, “Hallelujah! Because the Lord our God, the Ruler of all, has become King. Let us rejoice and triumph and give Him the glory; for the time for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready.” And she was permitted to array herself in fine linen, shining and spotless; the fine linen being the righteous actions of God’s people.

And he said to me, “Write as follows: ‘Blessed are those who receive an invitation to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.’” And he added, still addressing me, “These are truly the words of God.”

Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he exclaimed, “Oh, do not do that. I am a fellow bondservant of yours and a fellow bondservant of your brethren who have borne testimony to Jesus. Worship God.” Testimony to Jesus is the spirit which underlies Prophecy. Then I saw a door open in Heaven, and a white horse appeared. Its rider was named “Faithful and True”—being One who in righteousness acts as Judge, and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many kingly crowns; and He has a name written upon Him which no one but He Himself knows. The outer garment in which He is clad has been dipped in blood and His name is THE WORD OF GOD. The armies in Heaven followed Him—mounted on white horses and clothed in fine linen, white and spotless. From His mouth there comes a sharp sword with which He will smite the nations; and He will Himself be their Shepherd, ruling them with a scepter of iron; and it is His work to tread the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Ruler of all. And on His outer garment and on His thigh He has a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

And I saw a single angel standing in the full light of the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds that flew across the sky, “Come and be present at God’s great supper, that you may feast on the flesh of kings and the flesh of generals and the flesh of mighty men, on the flesh of horses and their riders, and on the flesh of all mankind, whether they are free men or slaves, great men or small.”

And I saw the Wild Beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, all assembled to make war, once for all, against the Rider upon the horse and against His army. And the Wild Beast was captured, and with him the false Prophet who had done the miracles in his presence with which he had led astray those who had received the mark of the Wild Beast, and those who worshipped his statue. Both of them were thrown alive into the Lake of fire that was all ablaze with sulphur. But the rest were killed with the sword that came from the mouth of the Rider on the horse. And the birds all fed ravenously upon their flesh.

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Revelation 19 Commentary

v. 1-5 After this I seemed to hear the far-echoing voices of a great multitude in Heaven, who said, “Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God. True and just are His judgments, because He has judged the great Harlot who was corrupting the whole earth with her fornication, and He has taken vengeance for the blood of His bondservants which her hands have shed.” And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! For her smoke ascends until the Ages of the Ages.” And the twenty-four Elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sits upon the throne. “Even so,” they said; “Hallelujah!” And from the throne there came a voice which said, “Praise our God, all you His bondservants—you who fear Him, both the small and the great.”

Having commented previously on significant events in Revelation, the chorus makes its final contribution. Here, the multitude, most likely the same as the multitude of Revelation 7, and therefore the saints, testifies to the justice of God’s judgments on Spiritual Babylon. This vengeance has special meaning for the bride of Christ as well as for God, since many were recipients of the harlot’s persecution throughout the age.

v. 6-8 And I seemed to hear the voices of a great multitude and the sound of many waters and of loud peals of thunder, which said, “Hallelujah! Because the Lord our God, the Ruler of all, has become King. Let us rejoice and triumph and give Him the glory; for the time for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready.” And she was permitted to array herself in fine linen, shining and spotless; the fine linen being the righteous actions of God’s people.

In their final choral contribution, the voices of the multitude take on the quality of God’s own voice, sounding like thunder and the roaring of waterfalls, a sound far above that of any song in its majesty. This may be a result of the saints having been formed in Christ’s character and image, and thus their close identification with the Father. Due to the initial judgment on spiritual Babylon in Revelation 14 and the final stroke when Christ returns, it is difficult to determine the timing of this event – whether it occurs at the beginning or end of the beast’s rule. Perhaps from a heavenly perspective with its different outlook on time, this doesn’t matter. As the bride of Christ, the multitude rejoices in the fact that they will soon be with him in the Kingdom of God on earth. The time is so close that the bride is allowed to put on her wedding garment.

v. 9-10 And he said to me, “Write as follows: “Blessed are those who receive an invitation to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.” And he added, still addressing me, “These are truly the words of God.” Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he exclaimed, “Oh, do not do that. I am a fellow bondservant of yours and a fellow bondservant of your brethren who have borne testimony to Jesus. Worship God.” Testimony to Jesus is the spirit which underlies Prophecy. When they appear on earth, angels are God’s messengers, representing the Lord to men. When acting in this capacity they receive any adulation directed toward them as to the Lord. In heaven, however, angels do not function as messengers of God, but as fellow servants with man of God and the Lamb. Since

John is in heaven as a fellow servant of the Lamb, he is the angel's 'equal' in this regard, so his worship is improper.

v. 11 Then I saw a door open in Heaven, and a white horse appeared. Its rider was named "Faithful and True"—being One who in righteousness acts as Judge, and makes war. Jesus had entered Jerusalem before his last Passover feast riding on a donkey, the usual mode of transportation for a prophet. Now, as a fulfillment of the type of Adam, the Conqueror of Earth (Rev. 6:2, Rom. 5:14), Jesus returns mounted on a white horse, as was the custom of victorious kings. How much more so for the King of kings! (It has only been during the last 100 years that this custom has been abandoned in favor of mechanized transport.) Whereas Adam filled the earth with his fallen progeny, Christ will fill it with his righteous servants. Unlike men who wage war on their own initiative, Jesus is returning to earth to enforce the judgment awarded him by the heavenly court. Jesus' title "Faithful and True" testifies that the coming battle will be what nations often claim, but fall short of achieving – a truly 'just war' of good versus evil.

v. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many kingly crowns; and He has a name written upon Him which no one but He Himself knows. John's wording implies that he can see Jesus' name but is unable to decipher its meaning. Jesus' unknown name resonates with the secrecy of the name promised to overcomers in Revelation 2:17. Because to know someone's name was to have power over him, the implication here is one of sovereignty; Jesus is King of kings, so no one knows this name. Overcomers will share in his reign, so they too are accorded the privilege of having their own private name. Jesus is worthy to rule, no longer as the Prince of Peace, but as King of kings over all Earth with the right to redress the wrongs committed in his kingdom.

The word for crown here may also be translated as diadem. In the Old Covenant, a diadem was a small, elongated oval plate of gold fastened by a cord to the high priest's turban which was inscribed with the phrase: "Holy to the LORD." (Ex. 28:36) Due to the physical impossibility of wearing several crowns at the same time, Jesus is probably wearing a priestly turban around which numerous diadems are tied or draped. It is possible that these diadems are engraved with the many names of Jesus identified in the book of Isaiah.

*For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever. Isa. 9:6-7*

v. 13 The outer garment in which He is clad has been dipped in blood and His name is THE WORD OF GOD. This name is a reminder of Jesus' divine nature as The Word, first encountered in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word..." The image of a robe

dipped or sprinkled in blood has been encountered previously in Scripture. It is mentioned in Jacob's blessing on his son Judah, from whose line the Messiah would come. Isaiah describes the coming divine avenger in a similar manner. The fact that the robe is red *before* Jesus' return indicates that the coming battle will not be the first blood shed in the battle between good and evil. Jesus' own blood has been joined with that of his faithful followers, and there is more to be shed in the cause of righteousness.

*Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments,
And I have stained all My robes.
For the day of vengeance is in My heart,
And the year of My redeemed has come. Isa 63:3-4*

v. 14 The armies in Heaven followed Him—mounted on white horses and clothed in fine linen, white and spotless. There is some controversy over whether the armies of heaven represent saints, angels, or both. One might see support for the former in Scriptures such as Revelation 17: 14: *"They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and Kind of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers."* On the other hand, some verses support an army comprised of angels: *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."* A case can be made for either argument. The point is that Jesus will have to wage war to implement the Kingdom of God, because the Dragon will not willingly give up his control over the earth.

v. 15-16 From His mouth there comes a sharp sword with which He will smite the nations; and He will Himself be their Shepherd, ruling them with a scepter of iron; and it is His work to tread the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Ruler of all. And on His outer garment and on His thigh He has a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. The image of the sharp sword coming out of Jesus' mouth is symbolic of the word of God. (Eph 6:17, Heb. 4:12) The same word by which the Spirit breathed life into all living things will take away the life of the rebellious, starting with the armies surrounding Jerusalem. The armies of the ten kings will be no match for legions of angels and resurrected saints; the real battle will be fought against the Dragon and his demonic hordes for possession of the earth.

As King of kings, Jesus carries the symbol of earthly rule known as a scepter, also translated as a rod or staff. A scepter, or mace as it is called in England, is an ornamental topped metal shaft approximately one meter long and ten centimeters thick, symbolizing royal rule. It is traditionally made of precious metals and set with gemstones, often with a small crown or orb on top, symbolizing earthly rule. While an ornate scepter would be appropriate for the divine sovereignty of Christ, a plain rod or staff would be more consistent with his humility. Since the word used for 'ruling' in this passage is *poimainō*, meaning 'to shepherd,' it is possible that the iron rod is a shepherd's staff. The symbolic meaning of ruling the nations with a rod of iron implies that earth's new King will tolerate no injustice, and disobedience will not have a chance to take root and grow into rebellion.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces

like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Ps. 2:6-11

v. 17-18 And I saw a single angel standing in the full light of the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds that flew across the sky, "Come and be present at God's great supper, that you may feast on the flesh of kings and the flesh of generals and the flesh of mighty men, on the flesh of horses and their riders, and on the flesh of all mankind, whether they are free men or slaves, great men or small." There will be two great suppers on earth after Jesus' return. One is the wedding banquet for the bride of Christ and invited guests of the King of kings. The other will be for the vultures that will be needed to help clean up the carnage along a 200-mile front around Jerusalem. This grisly avian feast will help curtail the spread of disease until the great number of bodies can be buried.

"It will come to pass in that day that I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travelers, because there they will bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog. For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. Indeed all the people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified," says the Lord GOD. Ezek 39:11-13

v. 19-21 And I saw the Wild Beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, all assembled to make war, once for all, against the Rider upon the horse and against His army. And the Wild Beast was captured, and with him the false Prophet who had done the miracles in his presence with which he had led astray those who had received the mark of the Wild Beast, and those who worshipped his statue. Both of them were thrown alive into the Lake of fire that was all ablaze with sulphur. But the rest were killed with the sword that came from the mouth of the Rider on the horse. And the birds all fed ravenously upon their flesh.

Of all those who gather to fight against the King of kings, all but two are slain and their souls sent to Hades to await judgment at the end of the seventh millennium. The fact that the beast and his false prophet are not killed along with the others confirms that they are not human, but are in fact two malevolent spiritual beings that crossed over from the Abyss to take human form. Since they are spirits, they have no souls, and Hades cannot hold them. To 'kill them' would only deprive them of their bodies; they would still be free to roam the earth stirring up trouble. They must be either re-imprisoned in the Abyss or sent to the eternal Lake of Fire. The likely reason they are not sent back to the Abyss is that their blasphemy and vengeful persecution of the saints have earned them immediate eternal judgment.

Reward and Punishment

Revelation 20

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

— Matthew 16: 24-27

Revelation 20 – Feast: Continuation of the Day of Atonement

Theme: Millennial Judgment of God

Chapter 20 is the last of six chapters of Revelation that fulfill the theme of the judgment of God on the Day of Atonement. This chapter presents the judgments at the beginning and end of the seventh millennium. This includes the reward of the righteous, those who have come under the atoning blood of Christ. They will receive blessing and reward for their faith, a place of service in Christ’s millennial kingdom. This chapter also includes the punishment of the wicked, the beast and his false prophet; the Dragon is chained and imprisoned in the Abyss; the final rebellion at the end of Christ’s millennial reign, and the great white throne judgment of all who have ever lived. This concludes the theme of judgment of the Day of Atonement in the thematic pattern of the feasts. The millennial reign of Christ is mentioned only in passing, since it does not thematically belong with the judgment of God, but in the following chapter, which fulfills the rejoicing theme of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Revelation 20

Then I saw an angel coming down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and upon his arm he carried a great chain. He laid hold of the Dragon—the ancient serpent—who is the Devil and the Adversary, and bound him for a thousand years, and hurled him into the bottomless pit. He closed the entrance and put a seal upon him in order that he might be unable to lead the nations astray any more until the thousand years were at an end. Afterwards he is to be set at liberty for a short time.

And I saw thrones, and some who were seated on them, to whom judgment was entrusted. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded on account of the testimony that they had borne to Jesus and on account of God’s Message, and also the souls of those who had not worshipped the Wild Beast or his statue, nor received his

mark on their foreheads or on their hands; and they came to Life and were kings with Christ for a thousand years. No one else who was dead rose to Life until the thousand years were at an end. This is the First Resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the First Resurrection. The Second Death has no power over them, but they shall be priests to God and to Christ, and shall be kings with Christ for the thousand years.

But when the thousand years are at an end, the Adversary will be released from his imprisonment, and will go out to lead astray the nations in all the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, and assemble them for war, and they are like the sands on the seashore in number. And they went up over the whole breadth of the earth and surrounded the encampment of God's people and the beloved city. But fire came down from Heaven and consumed them; and the Devil, who had been leading them astray, was thrown into the Lake of fire and sulphur where the Wild Beast and the false Prophet were, and day and night they will suffer torture until the Ages of the Ages.

Then I saw a great white throne and One who was seated on it, from whose presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing in front of the throne. And books were opened; and so was another book—namely, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged by the things recorded in the books in accordance with what their conduct had been. Then the sea yielded up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades yielded up the dead who were in them, and each man was judged in accordance with what his conduct had been. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of fire; this is the Second Death—the Lake of fire. And if any one's name was not found recorded in the Book of Life he was thrown into the Lake of fire.

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Revelation 20 Commentary

v. 1-3 Then I saw an angel coming down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and upon his arm he carried a great chain. He laid hold of the Dragon—the ancient serpent—who is the Devil and the Adversary, and bound him for a thousand years, and hurled him into the bottomless pit. He closed the entrance and put a seal upon him in order that he might be unable to lead the nations astray any more until the thousand years were at an end. Afterwards he is to be set at liberty for a short time.

The Dragon's identity is confirmed here as the devil, the ancient serpent that deceived Eve and tempted Adam. After the beast and false prophet have been sentenced to the lake of fire, an angel places the Dragon in captivity. The fact that the Dragon is chained confirms his consignment to Tartarus, the Abyss where the Watchers are held (Heb. – *chu'l*: *writhing in pain or fear* – Job 26:5), in torment awaiting the final judgment of God, traditionally depicted as bound by chains. The removal of the three most powerful satanic beings effectively curtails Satan's deception of the nations during the millennium. The reason the Dragon is chained and sent to the Abyss rather than the lake of fire is because God has a use for him later.

v. 4a And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. It is commonly held that the saints are judged at the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ in what is called here the *bema seat* judgment: *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”* (2Cor. 5:10). Some hold that this verse signifies judgment *by* the saints rather than judgment *of* them. The verse seems intentionally vague. Since believers are promised a place with Christ on his throne, this interpretation would work here as well. Jesus also told the apostles that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel. Which particular judgment is represented here is not as important as the thematic fulfillment of the Day of Atonement that requires judgment in several arenas, any of which might be expressed here.

v. 4b-6 Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (KJV)

The identity of this group is the subject of diverse opinions. Some hold the very limited interpretation that beheaded martyrs are the only ones resurrected, since this chapter does not specifically mention any other group. However, this interpretation conflicts with numerous Scriptural passages that indicate all the righteous, including Old Testament saints, will take part in the Resurrection. Rev. 2 & 3 state that overcomers (of the entire church age) will reign with Christ in the Resurrection. Care should therefore be taken not to interpret this passage too narrowly. An explanation that is more consistent with other Scripture is that this passage describes those who are slain by the beast *after* Jesus returns to earth. Because a battle is involved in Jesus taking control of the earth, it will take some time before the worldwide forces of the beast can be stopped from killing more Christians. Since the righteous dead were all resurrected to meet Christ in the air before his return, this verse is an assurance that these ‘late martyrs’ killed after his return are resurrected to receive their reward.

Those who take part in the first resurrection will receive their glorified bodies and serve as priests, ‘ruling’ (serving and ministering) with Christ during his thousand-year reign. (Even though Christ is king, he is also God. His government will therefore be a theocracy, so his ministers will be religious (priests), rather than secular (kings). (An explanation of this distinction is found in the Commentary on Rev. 5:10) Those who reign with Christ will be qualified to do so, having had their character forged in the furnace of tribulation during this life. Their judgment will therefore reflect Christ’s justice as well as his compassion. Scripture contains an admonishment that not everyone will receive the same reward, because not everyone pursues the kingdom with the same degree of obedience and zeal.

The Spirit Himself bears witness, along with our own spirits, to the fact that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs too—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ; if indeed we are sharers in Christ’s sufferings, in order that we may also be sharers in His glory. Rom. 8:16

If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It

will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. 1Cor. 3:12-15

The question remains, over whom will believers rule? While many hold that the Resurrection will include only the saints, not all the evidence supports this conclusion. Several points of discussion present themselves in light of verses 7-10, which describe a final rebellion and siege of Jerusalem at the end of the millennium under the guidance of Satan, quashed by fire from heaven: Point 1: If everyone living on earth during the seventh millennium are resurrected saints, why would there be a need for Christ to rule with 'a rod of iron,' especially since the saints are themselves ministers of Christ's rule? Point 2: What is the motivation for a group of saints ruling with Christ and passing freely through the gates of Jerusalem for a thousand years to suddenly succumb to a temptation to capture the city, dethrone their Lord, and take it for themselves? Point 3: What would the punishment be for this group of turncoat saints? Would the fire that devours the rebellious affect a resurrected body? Those who rule with Christ have already received their glorified bodies and are exempt from the great white throne judgment (v. 6). If they rebel and are consumed by fire, they can neither serve Christ nor be consigned to the lake of fire due to their exemption from the final judgment of God. Point 4: Isaiah 65 records children being born and people dying after the Messiah establishes his kingdom. Since the saints will be like the angels and therefore unable to marry in the Resurrection (Mk. 12:25), they cannot bear children or die.

Obviously some group other than saints are having children and dying and finally even rebelling in the Resurrection. Scripture does not reveal all God's plan, or who exactly will populate the earth during the Resurrection. This gives rise to difficulties with our understanding of where these people come from, as well as why some would rebel against Christ's reign at the end of the Millennium since Christ judged the earth at his return. Even after the resurrection there may be areas of knowledge that Jesus reserves to himself. This will give those with inquiring minds something to look forward to understanding as Christ's reign unfolds...

v. 7-10 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The national character of a people and their cultural and religious memory can endure for thousands of years. One need only look at the people of Tibet or the aboriginal tribes of Australia to confirm this fact. This will also be true of those living in the area designated as the four corners of the earth at the end of the seventh millennium. This location was identified in Revelation 9 as the area of the Euphrates River, generally symbolic of the Middle East. The distant cultural memory of the people of "Gog and Magog" at the end of the seventh millennium will still hearken back to the great Mahdi and his loyal prophet Isa who fought a great war for Islam, only to be defeated by the 'wicked ad Dajjal.'

When the Dragon comes to the people of Gog and Magog at the end of the millennium, he will remind them of the great Muslim empire and their defeat by the ad Dajjal, still ruling from Jerusalem. It will not be a difficult task for the Dragon to incite the people then living in the former Islamic nations of the Middle East with memories of lost glory. The purposes of God will be accomplished as the rebellion in the hearts of the disobedient is revealed by the temptation of the Dragon and they are purged from the Kingdom of God. This removal of the wicked from the earth fulfills the Parable of the Tares (weeds) in which the weeds are collected in bundles “to be burned” before the wheat is gathered. (Mt. 13:24-30) The Dragon will then join the Man of Sin and the false prophet in the lake of fire, from which there is no escape and no end.

v. 11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and One who was seated on it, from whose presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing in front of the throne. And books were opened; and so was another book—namely, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged by the things recorded in the books in accordance with what their conduct had been. Then the sea yielded up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades yielded up the dead who were in them, and each man was judged in accordance with what his conduct had been. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of fire; this is the Second Death—the Lake of fire. And if any one’s name was not found recorded in the Book of Life he was thrown into the Lake of fire.

At the great white throne, the final judgment of God is passed on everyone who ever lived, except those who took part in the first resurrection. This judgment will also include spiritual beings: the rebellious angels, the angelic Watchers who adopted the ways of earth, and the demonic spirits of the giants. Everyone’s deeds, recorded in books set aside for this purpose, will be reviewed and each judged accordingly. Then the Book of Life will be checked. If an individual’s name is not found there, he or she will suffer eternally in the lake of fire. Finally, death and Hades are themselves thrown into the lake of fire, because death is only a temporary condition resulting from Adam’s disobedience, and Hades will no longer be necessary since there is no more death.

The Feast of Tabernacles

Revelation 21 & 22

“Behold, I will create a new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”

– Isaiah 65: 17-19

Background

The feast of Tabernacles, also called the feast of Booths, was the third and last feast of the final festival, the seventh of the annual feasts. To tabernacle with a people is to dwell, or be present with them. In the desert, the Lord dwelt with Israel in the tent of the tabernacle, and later in the temple in Jerusalem. The feast of Tabernacles was a joyful commemoration of the Presence of the Lord accompanying the Israelites to the Promised Land. In remembrance of their journey, the people were commanded to build temporary shelters made of willow branches and live outdoors for a week in communal celebration.

The feast of Tabernacles started several days after the Day of Atonement and lasted eight days. The entire week of the feast of Tabernacles was a time of rejoicing and rest, celebrating the completion of the year's harvest and the Presence of the Lord with his people. It was a time of meditating on God's provision for all their needs: past, present and future. The seventh day of the feast of Tabernacles, a Sabbath day of rest, prefigures the reign of Christ during the seventh millennium. The eighth day was also a Sabbath. This day symbolizes eternal rejoicing and rest in the Presence of the Lord, forever abiding among men in the Kingdom of God on earth. (In Scripture, the number eight represents eternity; in higher math, eternity is symbolized by an “8” lying on its side.)

Every fifty years, the nation celebrated the year of Jubilee, the Year of the Lord's Favor. It was a special time of rejoicing and restoration, because captives and indebted servants were set free and all property reverted to its owner of record. No planting or harvesting was to be done this year. The Year of Jubilee also prefigured the seventh millennium and the eternal state of freedom and rejoicing that would one day be established on earth in the Kingdom of God. Although the feast of Tabernacles normally started on the fifteenth of the month, during the year of Jubilee it started immediately after the conclusion of the rites on the Day of Atonement.

The feast of Tabernacles, with its emphasis on God's Presence, is related to the seventh tabernacle furnishing, the Atonement cover. The Presence of the Lord dwelt between the two Cherubim on the atonement cover resting atop the ark. The sacrifice most closely associated with the feast of Tabernacles was the voluntary fellowship offering. This was an opportunity for individuals and families to offer a sacrifice that was not required, a ‘free will offering’ in thanksgiving for God's blessings received through the year. Those who could afford to bought a lamb to sacrifice at the temple, sharing the meal with family and neighbors in communal fellowship.

Revelation 21 & 22 – The Feast of Tabernacles

Theme: Rejoicing and Rest in the Presence of God — The Bide of Christ

Due to Revelation's thematic organization, the final two chapters include both the seventh millennium and eternity that follows. It can therefore be difficult to discern which events apply to the millennium and which to eternity or perhaps to both. Such questions as whether the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven at the beginning or the end of the seventh millennium are at best difficult to resolve. Discovering a definitive answer to these questions is not as important as appreciating the great reward God has prepared for those who love him.

As a prelude to eternal rejoicing and fellowship with God, the seventh millennium is the penultimate fulfillment of the year of Jubilee. The earth is returned to its rightful owner, and the redeemed are finally freed from the long bondage of sin and death. These two chapters complete the drama of the redemption of the earth set in motion in Revelation 5. At the end of the seventh millennium, the fellowship, joy, and righteousness of the Kingdom of God will continue into eternity, fulfilling the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles. The thousand-year Jubilee will become eternal.

Chapter 21 describes the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven when the new earth replaces the former creation. The city of New Jerusalem is both a physical place and a spiritual depiction of the bride of Christ. This great city will be the capital of the King of Kings, the center of worship and authority on earth. The earthly glory of all past kingdoms will be surpassed by the grandeur of the city of New Jerusalem, infused with the same Shekinah glory of God that tabernacled in the Holy of Holies above the cherubim.

The first five verses of chapter 22 belong with the subject matter of chapter 21, so they are included here. They depict the essence and function of New Jerusalem as the earth's capital city. The remaining verses form the epilogue.

Revelation 21

And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth; for the first Heaven and the first earth were gone, and the sea no longer exists. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God and made ready like a bride attired to meet her husband. And I heard a loud voice, which came from the throne, say, "God's dwelling place is among men and He will dwell among them and they shall be His peoples. Yes, God Himself will be among them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death shall be no more; nor sorrow, nor wail of woe, nor pain; for the first things have passed away."

Then He who was seated on the throne said, "I am re-creating all things." And He added, "Write down these words, for they are trustworthy and true." He also said, "They have now been fulfilled. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To those who are thirsty I will give the privilege of drinking from the well of the Water of Life without payment. All this shall be the heritage of him who overcomes, and I will be his

God and he shall be one of My sons. But as for cowards and the unfaithful, and the polluted, and murderers, fornicators, and those who practice magic or worship idols, and all liars—the portion allotted to them shall be in the Lake which burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death.”

Then there came one of the seven angels who were carrying the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues. “Come with me,” he said, “and I will show you the Bride, the Lamb’s wife.” So in the Spirit he carried me to the top of a vast, lofty mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, and bringing with it the glory of God. It shone with a radiance like that of a very precious stone—such as a jasper, bright and transparent. It has a wall, massive and high, with twelve large gates, and in charge of the gates were twelve angels. And overhead, above the gates, names were inscribed which are those of the twelve tribes of the descendants of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and engraved upon them were twelve names—the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

Now he who was speaking to me had a measuring-rod of gold, with which to measure the city and its gates and its wall. The plan of the city is a square, the length being the same as the breadth; and he measured the city furlong by furlong, with his measuring rod—it is twelve hundred miles long, and the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall of it—a wall of a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to human measure, which was also that of the angel. The solid fabric of the wall was jasper; and the city itself was made of gold, resembling transparent glass. As for the foundation-stones of the city wall, which were beautified with various kinds of precious stones, the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprased, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each of them consisting of a single pearl. And the main street of the city was made of pure gold, resembling transparent glass.

I saw no sanctuary in the city, for the Lord God, the Ruler of all, is its Sanctuary, and so is the Lamb. Nor has the city any need of the sun or of the moon, to give it light; for the glory of God has shone upon it and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will live their lives by its light; and the kings of the earth are to bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there will be no night there) the gates will never be closed; and the glory and honor of the nations shall be brought into it. And no unclean thing shall ever enter it, nor any one who is guilty of base conduct or tells lies, but only they whose names stand recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

Revelation 22 v. 1 – 5

Then he showed me the river of the Water of Life, bright as crystal, issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river, midway between it and the main street of the city, was the Tree of Life. It produced twelve kinds of fruit, yielding

a fresh crop month by month, and the leaves of the tree served as medicine for the nations. "In future there will be no curse," he said, "but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in that city. And His servants will render Him holy service and will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no night there; and they have no need of lamplight or sunlight, for the Lord God will shine upon them, and they will be kings until the Ages of the Ages."

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Revelation 21 Commentary

v. 1 And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth; for the first Heaven and the first earth were gone, and the sea no longer exists. The old creation will someday be destroyed by fire in order for a glorious new order of creation to take its place, one that will be worthy of the New Jerusalem.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2Pet. 3:10-13

The question of whether the new earth is created at the beginning of the seventh millennium or at the end of it cannot be resolved with absolute certainty, because God does not reveal all the details of his salvation plan to us. Peter states that on the day of the Lord the *heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat*. This verse may only beg the question, as one may apply the verse "*a day with the lord is as a thousand years*" to include the entire Millennium in the "Day" of the Lord. Does this great conflagration occur at the beginning of the Day or at its end? In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul seems to be stating that a purifying fire occurs when Jesus returns with his angels to be glorified in his saints. However, this language may be symbolic, describing the battle of good versus evil and the judgment that follows. Rabbinic writings hold that the new heavens and earth will be created at the end of the seventh millennium rather than at its beginning. The statement that there will be no more sea may in fact be symbolic, meaning that there will no longer be a 'Gentile world' living without the knowledge of God. During the Millennium, the whole world will know that the earth belongs to the Lord and to his Christ.

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Hab. 2:14 We were saved with this hope in mind. If we hope for something we already see, it's not really hope. Who hopes for what can be seen? But if we hope for what we don't see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Rom. 8:24-25 God's Word

v. 2-4 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God and made ready like a bride attired to meet her husband. And I heard a loud voice, which came from the throne, say, "God's dwelling place is among men and He will dwell among them and they shall be His peoples. Yes, God Himself will be among them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death shall be no more; nor sorrow, nor wail of woe, nor pain; for the first things have passed away."

The New Jerusalem will be a city, the physical location of God's Presence on earth and the source of all spiritual and earthly blessings. As a city takes its character not just from its ruler but from the people who live there, New Jerusalem is also the bride of Christ, having come down from heaven with him. Although many in the church believe this city is created just for Christians, it was originally promised to Abraham and his spiritual descendants through Isaac and Jacob. (Heb. 11:8-10) Paul warns the elect against pride in this matter. The church shares in this promised inheritance only through the Mystery of God, the grafting in of the Gentiles to the tree of salvation to receive the spiritual inheritance of Abraham through Christ. Scripture is clear that the Jews will also be grafted back onto this tree. (Rom. 11:24)

v. 5-8 Then He who was seated on the throne said, "I am re-creating all things." And He added, "Write down these words, for they are trustworthy and true." He also said, "They have now been fulfilled. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To those who are thirsty I will give the privilege of drinking from the well of the Water of Life without payment. All this shall be the heritage of him who overcomes, and I will be his God and he shall be one of My sons. But as for cowards and the unfaithful, and the polluted, and murderers, fornicators, and those who practice magic or worship idols, and all liars—the portion allotted to them shall be in the Lake which burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death." For the first time, the One on the throne is identified as Christ, the Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end of God's salvation plan are fulfilled in him. The fact that Jesus has revealed his plan to the church assures that it will come to pass as it is written, because it is given in the spirit of prophecy. He reminds his listeners of the same message he gave at the beginning, that the full rewards described here are given those who overcome the world to serve him.

v. 9-14 Then there came one of the seven angels who were carrying the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues. "Come with me," he said, "and I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's wife." So in the Spirit he carried me to the top of a vast, lofty mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, and bringing with it the glory of God. It shone with a radiance like that of a very precious stone—such as a jasper, bright and transparent. It has a wall, massive and high, with twelve large gates, and in charge of the gates were twelve angels. And overhead, above the gates, names were inscribed which are those of the twelve tribes of the descendants of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and engraved upon them were twelve names—the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

John is given a closer look at the heavenly city of New Jerusalem from which the Lord will rule over the earth for eternity. Its physical features reflect spiritual reality. It shines with the

glorious light of God's Presence, and its 12 gates are placed in the same geometric manner as the 12 tribes of Israel were arranged around the tabernacle in the desert. Representing the saints of the Old Testament church, the names of the 12 tribes are written above the gates. The New Testament church is represented in the foundations stones of New Jerusalem, one for each of the 12 apostles. The redeemed will no longer recognize the barrier between Gentile and Jew for there will not be one, and those who lived thousands of years and miles and cultures apart will be together as one family.

v. 15-21 Now he who was speaking to me had a measuring-rod of gold, with which to measure the city and its gates and its wall. The plan of the city is a square, the length being the same as the breadth; and he measured the city furlong by furlong, with his measuring rod—it is twelve hundred miles long, and the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall of it—a wall of a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to human measure, which was also that of the angel. The solid fabric of the wall was jasper; and the city itself was made of gold, resembling transparent glass.

As for the foundation-stones of the city wall, which were beautified with various kinds of precious stones, the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each of them consisting of a single pearl. And the main street of the city was made of pure gold, resembling transparent glass.

The angel measures the city of New Jerusalem, which is laid out “as a square, the length being the same as the breadth.” In the original Greek, the measurements are given in stadia, the distance of the elliptical racetrack in a Greek stadium, just over a tenth of a mile. The length and width of New Jerusalem in the original Greek as 12,000 stadia is symbolic, the number being a thousand times twelve. This extraordinary number is probably indicative of the great number of people from the time of Adam saved by faith in the promised Redeemer. The height of the New Jerusalem of 12,000 stadia has another symbolic dimension. The word height here (Gr: *hypsos*) is applied in every other instance in the New Testament as relating to power, for example to the dwelling of God *on high*, or the *height* and breadth of Christ's love for us. In its literal application, when this word is applied to elevation it is translated as sky. This is applied to the power of a city rather than its actual physical height, and is encountered in Jeremiah's warning to Babylon: “Even if Babylon reaches the sky and fortifies her lofty stronghold, I will send destroyers against her.” (Jer. 51:53)

In Scripture, all actual measurements of God's dwelling and its surrounding districts are given in cubits, so the measurement of the wall is probably literal, although even the number 144 is the square of twelve, the number representing foundation. This is confirmed by the notation that the 144 cubits is “according to human measure,” indicating that the other measurements, given in stadia, are in fact symbolic. The precious stones appear to be the Greek equivalent of the gems that were set in the high priest's breastplate. While nine of them match exactly, the discrepancy in the other three is likely due to language or cultural differences. The appearance of the gates as a single pearl presents an image of an unbroken, shimmering surface. The golden city and streets of New Jerusalem are transparent because in its purest form, gold is transparent. It is the miniscule impurities man is unable to remove that give gold its opaque appearance.

v. 22-27 I saw no sanctuary [temple] in the city, for the Lord God, the Ruler of all, is its Sanctuary, and so is the Lamb. Nor has the city any need of the sun or of the moon, to give it light; for the glory of God has shone upon it and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will live their lives by its light; and the kings of the earth are to bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there will be no night there) the gates will never be closed; and the glory and honor of the nations shall be brought into it. And no unclean thing shall ever enter it, nor any one who is guilty of base conduct or tells lies, but only they whose names stand recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life.

In Old Testament worship, the tabernacle was patterned after God's temple in heaven. The visible Presence of God's glory in the Holy of Holies was the fulfillment of his promise to Israel to dwell with them as their God. In the New Covenant, God is present with us spiritually, his Holy Spirit indwelling every believer. In the seventh millennium and throughout eternity, God is present both physically and spiritually, as spiritual truths take on physical reality. There is therefore no need for a temple, since the whole earth belongs to God, physically dwelling on earth.

The fact that the city of New Jerusalem has no need of any light source does not mean that the new heavens and earth are without a sun, but that the light of God's glory shines as bright as or brighter than sunlight both day and night. The statement that the nations will live by this light is a reference to God's standard of righteousness extending out from Jerusalem to the whole earth. The gates, though standing always open, also prohibit entry to those "whose names are not recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life." The intended meaning appears to be that they are always open to those who can pass through them, or those who are allowed in by the angels standing guard. The tribute of the nations coming into Jerusalem may be some form of tithe for the administration of Christ's government. This is an indication that nations will continue during the Millennium, especially in light of the next two verses.

Revelation 22: v. 1-2 Then he showed me the river of the Water of Life, bright as crystal, issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river, midway between it and the main street of the city, was the Tree of Life. It produced twelve kinds of fruit, yielding a fresh crop month by month, and the leaves of the tree served as medicine for the nations.

The Water of Life is not symbolic, but a physical and spiritual reality. The water has the appearance of liquid crystal, similar to the solid crystal sea in front of God's throne (Rev. 4), testifying to its purity. The description of Ezekiel's temple (chapters 40-48) mentions this stream issuing from under the temple foundation and growing deeper as it proceeds into the Jordan valley until it becomes a stream emptying into the Dead Sea. This enables the sea to once again support life and even become a fertile fishing ground. What water does for physical thirst, this water will do for spirit, soul, and body.

Ezekiel states that there will be many trees lining both sides of the river. This may indicate that the Tree of Life mentioned here is not limited to just one tree, as New Jerusalem's main street is likely to be rather long. Like the Water of Life, the fruit of the Tree of Life provides life giving spiritual and physical nourishment, and its leaves have healing properties. Verse 2 may imply that the fruit is reserved for those who have access to the city of New Jerusalem, i.e., those with glorified bodies, while the leaves may be taken out of the city and

distributed to the nations. (Those with resurrected bodies would not need to be healed of anything.) The healing properties of the leaves would make them highly prized, with nations willingly paying tribute to obtain them.

Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine. Ezek. 47:12

v. 3-5 “In future there will be no curse,” he said, “but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in that city. And His servants will render Him holy service and will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no night there; and they have no need of lamplight or sunlight, for the Lord God will shine upon them, and they will be kings until the Ages of the Ages.” This passage continues to relate the details of New Jerusalem and the joyous state of God’s servants, confirming the promises made to overcomers in Revelation 2 & 3. The NTMS translation of “will be kings until the ages of the ages” is better rendered in the KJV and NIV as “they shall reign for ever and ever,” confirming Christ’s promise to overcomers of sharing in his rule. This era of the Lord’s rule from Jerusalem was prophesied long ago to include both Jew and Gentile.

“Shout and be glad, O daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you.” Declares the Lord. “Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem.” Zech. 2:10-12

Epilogue

An epilogue is defined as a short speech that an actor addresses directly to the audience at the end of a play. The prologue was written by John to introduce Jesus and his message to the seven churches. In these final verses, John testifies that he actually saw and heard all these things himself. Jesus, the true author of Revelation, closes with some words of advice to the churches, and in fact to anyone who hears or reads the words of this book.

Revelation 22: 6-21

And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the Prophets, sent His angel to make known to His servants the things which must soon happen. I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who is mindful of the predictions contained in this book.”

I John heard and saw these things; and when I had heard and seen them, I fell at the feet of the angel who was showing me them—to worship him. But he said to me, “Oh, do not do that. I am a fellow bondservant of yours, and a fellow bondservant of

your brethren the Prophets and of those who are mindful of the teachings of this book. Worship God.”

“Make no secret,” he added, “of the meaning of the predictions contained in this book; for the time for their fulfillment is now close at hand. Let the dishonest man act dishonestly still; let the filthy make himself filthy still; let the righteous practice righteousness still; and let the holy be made holy still. I am coming quickly; and My reward is with Me, that I may requite every man in accordance with what his conduct has been. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

“Blessed are those who wash their robes clean, that they may have a right to the Tree of Life, and may go through the gates into the city. The unclean are shut out, and so are all who practice magic, all fornicators, all murderers, and those who worship idols, and every one who loves falsehood and tells lies. I Jesus have sent My angel for him solemnly to declare these things to you among the Churches. I am the Root and the offspring of David, the bright Morning Star. The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come;’ and whoever hears, let him say, ‘Come;’ and let those who are thirsty come. Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life, without payment.”

“I solemnly declare to every one who hears the words of the prophecy contained in this book, that if any one adds to those words, God will add to him the plagues spoken of in this book; and that if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take from him his share in the Tree of Life and in the holy city—the things described in this book.”

He who solemnly declares all this says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people.

.....

Revelation 22: 6-21 Commentary

v. 6-7 And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the Prophets, sent His angel to make known to His servants the things which must soon happen. ‘I am coming quickly.’ Blessed is he who is mindful of the predictions contained in this book.” The remainder of this chapter forms an epilogue to the central drama of the book of Revelation, complementing and completing the prologue of chapters 1-3. Just as the first three verses of the prologue contained a statement that the vision would soon come to pass, the epilogue begins with the same statement. The complete message in both cases is nearly identical, having the same three components.

The three parts of the message are: 1) the events are true: *These words are trustworthy and true*; 2) An assurance that the events of Revelation will not be unduly delayed: *to make known to His servants the things which must soon happen*; and 3) There is a blessing involved for taking it seriously and responding in obedience: *Blessed is he who is mindful of the predictions contained in this book*. The point is the same as it was in the Prologue: Heed the message. Since the church is living in the last days, Jesus could return at any time. From Christ’s point of view the time of his return is near, and the need for motivation to keep our eternal

destiny in mind is great. We are too often caught up in the worries and desires of this world, neglecting our salvation and our relationship with Christ and the Father. We are in the last days, and one of the salient characteristics of the last days is that it is an indefinite period that can end at any time. The times of the Gentiles end when the last Gentile comes to a saving faith in Christ. Even the name, *The Last Days*, denotes that the end of the ages is near.

v. 8-9 I John heard and saw these things; and when I had heard and seen them, I fell at the feet of the angel who was showing me them—to worship him. But he said to me, “Oh, do not do that. I am a fellow bondservant of yours, and a fellow bondservant of your brethren the Prophets and of those who are mindful of the teachings of this book. Worship God.” For the second time, John’s sense of reverence is so strong that he is overcome, and he responds by attempting to worship his angelic guide. John realizes that the apocalyptic vision is over, perhaps because the New Jerusalem fades from sight as the angel attests to the truth of the vision. The angel once again corrects him and redirects his worship towards God.

v. 10-11 And he saith unto me, “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Having dealt with John’s interruption, the angel continues with his remarks. He instructs John to reveal the vision to others, because the time is at hand, confirming the message to take its words to heart. The angel’s advice to continue in one’s current spiritual state confirms that the primary purpose of Revelation is not to evangelize. It was given by Jesus Christ “*to his servants.*” (Rev 1:1) Therefore the angel does not show an interest in converting the unjust. His message is to the saints, to continue walking in holiness.

v. 12-13 “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” (KJV) This passage might be a little confusing as the narrator is suddenly no longer the angel but Jesus. He confirms this by asserting his identity as Alpha and Omega. These are the very first words of Jesus in the Prologue, identifying its true author, and the first words spoken by Jesus when he addresses John directly in Rev. 1: 8. He is the Creator of the first earth and the last one. He is the author of our salvation (Heb. 5:9, 12:2) and the one who brings our salvation to completeness (Phil. 1:6). Jesus is not just the first and last letters of the alphabet, he is all the letters in between, helping us work out our salvation on a daily basis. “*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” (Phil. 2: 13 KJV)

We were saved in large measure so that through obedience to God’s will we could fulfill two great commissions, one in this life, and the other in the next. The first is to be the hands and feet of Christ to the nations, testifying to the Gospel in word and deed. The second commission proceeds from the first. We are being prepared by the trial of our faith to reign with Christ in the Resurrection, to take up the crown of spiritual dominion over the earth lost by Adam through disobedience. Our faithfulness in fulfilling the first commission determines the manner in which we will fulfill the second. Because the essence of judgment is reaping consequences for our actions, judgment for believers at the end of the age is a matter of blessing and reward, not punishment. Having given up our lives to serve God, the only question is how much blessing we will receive. The larger our heart, the more it will be filled with God’s glory. The parable of the

talents (Mt. 25) teaches that our millennial estate will be based on our faithfulness to do what Jesus has asked us to do in this life.

v. 14-15 Blessed are those who wash their robes clean, that they may have a right to the Tree of Life, and may go through the gates into the city. The unclean are shut out, and so are all who practice magic, all fornicators, all murderers, and those who worship idols, and every one who loves falsehood and tells lies. Only those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, i.e., come to a saving faith in Christ through his atoning sacrifice, will be redeemed from sin and death. Only these will be able to enter New Jerusalem to eat from the Tree of Life. The saga that began in the Garden of Eden will come full circle to completion; mankind and the earth will finally be restored to the glorious state of spiritual and physical life that existed before the Fall.

v. 16 “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star. (KJV) As he did in Revelation 1: 1, Jesus identifies the angel that spoke to John as his messenger, validating the truth of the vision and indicating that it is to be given to the churches. Jesus again confirms that he is the one speaking by identifying himself as the root and the offspring of David (the Eternal Kinsman), and the Morning Star (of Hope) promised to overcomers.

v. 17 The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come;’ and whoever hears, let him say, ‘Come;’ and let those who are thirsty come. Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life, without payment. Although Revelation is written to the servants of God, the offer of salvation is still available to all men. As the Alpha and Omega of salvation, Jesus reiterates this point. The Spirit, whose ministry it is to draw men to Jesus; and the Bride of Christ, many of whom were in heaven when this was written, send this invitation in their earnest desire that all men everywhere come to saving faith in Christ.

He who believes in me, from within him—as the Scripture has said—rivers of living water shall flow.” He referred to the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive... Jn. 7:38-39

v. 18-19 “I solemnly declare to every one who hears the words of the prophecy contained in this book, that if any one adds to those words, God will add to him the plagues spoken of in this book; and that if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take from him his share in the Tree of Life and in the holy city—the things described in this book. This note appears to be directed to those entrusted with copying the Revelation scroll. Since so much of it is symbolic, the temptation to change the wording to make it more understandable must have been great. The penalty for violation of this injunction is severe: denial of entry into the city of New Jerusalem is equated with the loss of Eternal Life. The warning seems to have had its intended effect. The only issue raised about its textual integrity seems to be the variant reading of 616 for the 666 of the beast’s mark.

v. 20-21 He who solemnly declares all this says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people.

Endnotes

1. Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple*, Eerdmans Publishing Grand Rapids MI 1982, p. 296
2. Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, Presbyterian and reformed Publishing Co. Phillipsburg NJ. 1947, p.215)
3. Edersheim, op. cit., p 269
4. A three and a half year end times' tribulation is still the interpretation of the traditional Pre-millennial position. According to Dwight Pentecost in *Things To Come* (Zondervan Pub. Grand Rapids MI 1958, revised 1976 p. 391), the belief in a literal three and a half year tribulation was held with unanimity by the early church. Numerous Jewish and shared Jewish-Christian non-canonical texts, such as *Enoch*, *4 Esdras*, *Assumption of Moses*, *Ascension of Isaiah*, *Psalms of Solomon*, and *Baruch* confirm this. This view again became dominant with the return of the literal method of interpretation arising out of the Protestant Reformation. Although Daniel 9 is often cited as supporting a seven-year tribulation, critical analysis of this passage does not support this conclusion. (See <http://www.thefirsttrumpet.com/Revdownload.html>)
5. Daniel 12 indicates that the end times' tribulation period will consist of 1290 days rather than the 1260 ascribed to the two witnesses here. This is likely due to the inclusion of an (extra) intercalary month required every third year to rectify the discrepancy between the shorter lunar calendar and the 365 day solar calendar. Daniel 12 also describes an extra 45 days past the 1290 days (1335 days) that can be attributed to the kingdom of the beast. This extra time appears to coincide with the celebration of the feast of Purim, and may reflect the time required for Jesus to completely eradicate the beast's followers from the nations.
6. Edersheim, op. cit., p. 296
7. <http://www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?ID=1029>
8. Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr and Ayatollah Muratda Mutahhari, *The Awaited Savior* (Karachi, Islamic Seminary Publications), p. 4-5
9. "France prepares 5000 riot police.php Paul Belien, *Brussels Journal* <http://politicscentral.com/2006/10/25/> REDIRECT BELOW
10. "The Smoking Gun on the Muslim Brotherhood's Agenda" by Douglas Farah Aug. 2, 2007 http://www.counterterrorismblog.org/2007/08/the_smoking_gun_on_the_muslim.php
11. "Global Banks Adopting Islam" Patrick Wood, <http://www.newswithviews.com/Wood/patrick29.htm>
12. Bruce Bawer, *While Europe Slept; How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* by Random House, NY, NY 2006 p. 21, 23
13. Ibid. p. 26
14. Mark Steyn, *America Alone*, Regnery Publishing, Washington DC 2006 p. 85-86
15. Ibid. p. 87
16. Muhammad ibn Izzat, Muhammad 'Arif, *Al Mahdi and the End of Time*, (London, Dar Al-Taqla, 1997), p. 16ff.
17. Question 5, <http://www.answering-christianity.com/que5.htm>
18. "In The Name of God, Most Gracious Most Merciful," <http://www.66619.org/thequran.htm> REDIRECT BELOW
19. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, Penguin Books, Baltimore MD, 1961 p. 8

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If you got all the way through to the end, congratulations! Feel free to pass it on. I hope you got as much reading this book as I did researching it. It has helped keep me on the straight and narrow path in my walk, in the knowledge that everything we do for the kingdom of God we actually *can* take with us. Looking forward to seeing you there someday... To download the books: *Fulfillment of the Feasts in Discipleship* and *Worship In Spirit and In Truth*, or for more information on the Feasts of Israel, Covenants, the kingdom of God, and articles on Revelation go to: <http://www.thefirsttrumpet.com>

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FOOTNOTE REDIRECTS

The following two footnotes, #9 and #18 are no longer on the web. The following pages are copies of the relevant pages of those websites.

9. "France_prepares_5000_riot_police.php Paul Belien, *Brussels Journal* <http://politicscentral.com/2006/10/25/>

18. "In The Name of God, Most Gracious Most Merciful," <http://www.66619.org/thequran.htm>



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Found in: ARTICLE ; EUROPE ; ISSUES CENTRAL ; WAR ON TERROR October 25, 2006 12:54 PM

FRANCE PREPARES 50,000 RIOT POLICE FOR MUSLIM ATTACKS

EXCLUSIVE TO PJM By Paul Belien from
Brussels Journal

As America prepares for Halloween, France is girding for a wave of attacks from Muslim youths—a reprise of the deadly French riots of last year.

A leaked French intelligence report warns that during the first week of November, a school holiday (Nov. 1 or All Saint's Day), Muslim riots could convulse the country.

On Monday, *Le Figaro*, the leading center-right newspaper in the country, quoted **a confidential report** written by the Renseignements Généraux (RG), the French equivalent of the FBI. The 17-page RG report, dated 11 October, states that the **root causes of last year's riots** are still in place. The authorities are especially concerned with All Saints Day when "many urban youths are left to their own and have more time to cause unrest."

Not that France has been a peace since last year's riots. In the past few weeks alone, several policemen were ambushed by youths who seemed intent on killing them. In response, **the French Interior Ministry** asked the police to keep a low profile and not to show themselves in the Muslim suburbs in order to avoid tension.

Since appeasement alone is not a strategy. French authorities are keeping a force of some 50,000 riot police in permanent stand-by. A ministry spokesman said it is important to find "the good balance: not overreact to the situation, but at the same time, not underestimate it either."

A local prefect (a provincial governor) added: "In case of trouble, we will have to be able to control events for a prolonged period without running out of forces."

Last year's intifada lasted three weeks. It petered out when the authorities asked the media to stop **devoting attention to the riots**.

The situation, however, never returned to normal. Unless one considers (as some French officials seem to do) the current situation as "normal." In the first six months of this year there were 50,000 acts of urban violence by Muslims. On average 15 police officers, fire fighters or other public officials are attacked per day and 100 cars are set alight per night.



Gangs of immigrant vandals operate in a paramilitary fashion. A spokesman for the French police officers union, himself a policeman, has that France is in the midst of a "civil war."

Interestingly, no public official said the union was exaggerating.

The RG report, cited by Le Figaro, however, says that there is no evidence that the gangs coordinate their attacks across different suburbs.

The latest serious incident was a pitched battle between rioters and policemen in Grande-Borne, a suburb of Paris, on Sunday afternoon after youths had torched a city bus. Shortly after 2 PM immigrant youths stopped the vehicle, **ordered the driver and the passengers to get out and set it afire.**

In fact, some blame the media have for reporting the bus attack, thereby, "adding to the tensions." Blaming the messenger is about all France can do these days.

All of this is now considered to be a "normal" incident in contemporary France. It is the abnormal violence, perhaps coming on November 1 that has the French really worried.

Paul Belien is the editor of the **Brussels Journal** and an adjunct fellow at the Hudson Institute.

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COMMENTS (38)

ras :

"It is the abnormal violence, perhaps coming on November 1 that has the French really worried."

No problem. They'll just **redefine** what's normal one more time.

Oct 25, 2006 01:45 PM

Martin L. Shoemaker :

What's French for "ostrich"?

Oct 25, 2006 02:05 PM

minero :

If they can keep 50,000 riot police at the ready on the threat of violence, why doesn't the UN insist France sent 10,000 riot police to Lebanon instead of 200 troops? They would probably be better equipped for the job anyway.

Oct 25, 2006 02:27 PM

southsalem :

The french were so afraid of having a MacDonald's on every corner, they wound up with a mosque on every corner. Serves them right.

Oct 25, 2006 02:33 PM

Da Bear :

100 cars a day X 365 days a year X USD \$18,000 = \$657,000,00 or about 2/3's of a BILLION dollars of damage. That's very scary!

Oct 25, 2006 02:35 PM

Don :

I'm not buying this. I think it is all a staged gambit by Mark Steyn to sell

In the Name of GOD, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

666

At the very beginning of the Last Millennium in Human history,
by GOD's will, I did count the Letter Qaf which is the first letter of the Quran.
Apply.
After research, I witnessed the number 666 (11:17) and witnessed the awesome
Message :
"ALLAH, Lailaheillallah" , (66 , 165) , "GOD, There is no other God beside
GOD"

Only one letter can easily destroy the disbelievers, hypocrites and idol worshipers
and increase their sadness.
Only one letter can easily guide the sincere and intelligent one in the right path
by GOD's will.

The number 666 is highly publicized all over the world and it is associated with
evil and danger.
However, it is not what it seems. It was a Satanic trick.
The trick was to prevent the people approaching the 666.
Satan knew that the 666 is the book of GOD and the people should be kept away
from it.
According to his plan, he placed a bad image to the number 666.

He did the same plan to the number 19 which is the mathematical code of the
book of GOD.
He associated his religion, Bahaism with the number 19 in order to mislead the
people from the truth.

Satan's mission is to make tricks and
to hypnotise the people in order to capture as many souls as he can till the End of
the world.

With his agents, he changed and added verses to Torah,
invented new books as Talmud ; Mishnah and Gemara beside Torah,
made his own religion, Jerusalem centered Judaism.

With his agents, he changed and added verses to Gospel, destroyed the source,
the original Gospel.
Today's Gospel is Greek while the language of Jesus was Hebrew.
The name of Jesus (isa) was changed in to Christ. Agent Paul worked for

Christianity.

Therefore, he made the Church his Temple and made his own religion, Vatican centered Christianity.

With his agents, he added verses to the Quran after Muhammad's death.

He added verses of 128 and 129 in to Sura 9. He invented new books, Hadith and Sunna beside the Quran.

He tried to do the same plan to Islam.

He used his agent Marwan ibn al Hakam (died 65 AH/684 AD) to destroy the original written by Muhammad.

He did hide the mathematical code, the proof of the Quran, the number 19.

He made his own religion, Mecca centered so called islam.

GOD knows what Satan plans and HE plans the best. All plans are in the hand of GOD.

GOD is sending His Messengers to purify His Religion, Islam and His Book, The Quran.

GOD's religion, Islam shall dominate all other religions. GOD and His Messengers shall win.

Internet , www , which enables connecting people with each other and sharing any information

play an important role to deliver The Message of GOD, The Book of GOD, The Quran, 666 and its Proof, 19.

The letter w is in Arabic Vav and its Gv is 6. Therefore, www becomes 666.

www , World Wide Web is a gift from GOD to humanity that they can talk, watch, read, share, listen anything.

666 , The Quran is a gift from GOD to humanity that it guides to the right path which leads to Heaven.

The proofs shall be the evidences that this Quran is the 666 that

Satan, his religions, his temples especially the Church are afraid of.

The Quran is the 666 and GOD preserves the 666 with the number 19.

6 is the first perfect number in mathematics. It is the only number that the sum of its factors and

also the product of its factors equal to the number itself.

$$1 + 2 + 3 = 6 \quad 1 \times 2 \times 3 = 6$$

We read in the Quran that GOD created the Heavens and the Earth and all in between in 6 days.

The creation of biological life on this earth is based on Carbon. Carbon has 6 electrons.

Carbon is the 6th element in the Periodic table.

The First pair of consecutive primes that differ by 6 are 23 and 29.

23 is 9 th prime no and 29 is 10 th prime no : $9 + 10 = 19$

