

# **RAPTURE REALITIES**

## **The Bride's Timely Ascent**

**Jeffrey Horton**



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Published by Chronos Ministries, Inc.  
Bradenton, Florida  
Cover design by Kristen Miller Artworks  
[Kristenmillerartworks.com](http://Kristenmillerartworks.com)

Printed in the United States of America  
ISBN 978-1-71651-262-9

All scripture references are taken from  
The New King James Version  
unless otherwise stated.



I dedicate this book to the Body of Christ. May we all come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.



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## Preface

During the year in which this manuscript was written, my mother suffered a stroke from which she did not recover. Even though the stroke occurred in January of 2011, she did not pass away until the 14<sup>th</sup> of June in the same year. The stroke seriously affected her short-term memory such that, occasionally, she would forget who my wife and I were. Nevertheless, God blessed us immeasurably by allowing her to stay in our home for her final three months.

One Sunday morning, about a month before her passing, she was in her room lying on her bed, when the house seemed to be filled with a reverential presence. The television was not on and the house was peacefully quiet. There was a holy hush in the house, so much so that my wife and I both wondered if this might be her last day. It seemed like she was edging close to the other side that morning.

As I peeked into her room to check on her, her eyes brightened, and she playfully asked, “So watcha doing?” I casually replied, “Oh, nothing much.” She pondered my reply for a moment, and then abruptly responded, “You should write a book!”

The Lord had dealt with me several years earlier about writing a three-book series about His return. I had already finished the first book originally called, *The Chronos Agenda*, but I was sure that she didn’t remember ever reading it due to the stroke. I was already in the middle of this present work.

Startled, I asked her, “What in the world made you say that?” With a quizzical look on her face, she said, “I don’t know. It just popped into my head to say it.” I told her that I was actually in the process of writing a book, but that it wasn’t finished yet. Again, she thought for a moment, and sounding something like Shirley Temple, chirped back, “Then I will read it when I get to Heaven!”

That brief exchange affected me profoundly. The poise of her spirit and the tone of her voice that day did not remind me of

my mother. There was something unusual about the way she spoke. There was a child-like joy in her voice that was disarming. Later, I wondered, “Is such a thing even possible? Do people up there actually read the works of believers from this realm?”

Then I reasoned within myself, “If such a thing is even remotely possible, I better make sure that this book contains no ill thoughts or earthly contaminations. My policy should be: if it cannot be said up there, then it should not be said down here either. I pray that I have not strayed from that policy in the pages before you.

*Rapture Realities* is my second offering in the three-book series on the *chronos* of the Lord’s return. Its underlying objective is to bring the Church into the unity of the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ, specifically as it pertains to the subject of end-time prophecy.

There is a special grant of revelation in this hour with respect to His coming, similar to what the two disciples experienced on the road to Emmaus. It was as they walked and reasoned together that the resurrected Christ, though unbeknown to them at the time, joined them and proceeded to open their minds to all that the Scriptures said about Him. I believe that this Emmaus-bound Stranger is doing the same thing today, only with respect to end-time prophecy.

A final word regarding my mother (and my father who preceded her to Heaven): years ago, they acquired a work of art depicting Christ with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The picture hung on our living room wall throughout my childhood and remained as a standard feature of their décor until my mother’s passing.

Honestly, I never gave the picture much thought throughout all those years until just recently; for as I set my hand to write these books, it seemed that my wife and I were joined by another Stranger along the way. And His insightful presence has changed everything. As for the picture, we had it reframed. It now hangs in a prominent place in our home. I think you will see why when you read the pages that follow!



O God, You have taught me from my youth;  
And to this day I declare your wondrous works.  
Now also when I am old and gray headed,  
O God, do not forsake me,  
Until I declare your strength to this generation,  
your power to everyone who is to come.  
(Psalm 71:17-18)

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## Chapter 1

# First Light

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There is a restorative work of the Spirit concerning the end times in the wind. It is blowing even now, and in this hour. It is the Spirit of restoration predicted by Malachi, when the hearts of fathers and children would be turned;<sup>1</sup> it is a final time of refreshing before Jesus returns;<sup>2</sup> and it is a revelatory increase of knowledge as it concerns God's plans and purposes.

Every major move of God must have a message. Quite appropriately, this last great move before Jesus returns concerns "last things." Thus, the message borne by this Heavenly Wind is a proclamation of the time of the end.

This Wind cancels out all "lesser winds"—those teachings that only tossed us to and fro, preventing us from walking together in the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son.<sup>3</sup> This timely Wind is a "Peace, be still" to all other winds. It is a healing balm for our eyes. It brings repair to the desolations of former generations. It is a message of great comfort, enduring hope, and profound victory.

Its lofty currents bid us to spread our wings in preparation of rapturous ascent, for it is now time to "wait upon the Lord," expecting to receive the impartation of a strength that never wearies or faints—a sudden exchange that allows us to mount up

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<sup>1</sup> Malachi 4:5-6

<sup>2</sup> Acts 3:19-21

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:11-15

with the promised strength of immortality.<sup>4</sup> The event we now refer to as the rapture is paramount on God's agenda.

This Wind speaks, "The end is at hand; and with it, a new Day—the Day that the Lord has made, when He alone will be exalted, and Jerusalem becomes a praise in all the earth."

The momentum of this Wind cannot be stopped, slowed, or stifled. It will increase to gale-force strength—a Heavenly storm attended by flashes of lightning, loud thunder, and drenching rains.

These rains will alter the spiritual demeanor of the Bride and prepare her for her final days on the earth. Her impassioned desire for the appearance of her Groom will facilitate an exchange of kingdoms—the kingdoms of this world for the Kingdom of God's Christ. It will provide her with the rite of passage to the heavenly Mount via chariots of fire. The Capstone of the Temple will be brought forth with shouts of grace and the mountain of the Lord's House will be exalted on the top of all other mountains.

To her it will be granted to be clothed in fine linen, clean and bright, as she makes her appearance before the King and touches the golden scepter. Haman's plot will be foiled as every enemy is subsequently put underfoot.<sup>5</sup>

Her destiny in this hour was prophetically foretold in ancient times in the "Song of songs." The refrains of that old tune are beginning to be heard throughout the land, a tantalizing melody to those who have ears to hear. Soon, many will join in the chorus of this unchained melody until they join their angelic partners in the mystery of the "Mahanaim Dance" (dance of the two camps).<sup>6</sup> Together these two camps, one angelic and one redeemed, will dance in celebration of a timely deliverance—a pricey redemption purchased with the treasured blood of the Lamb.

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 40:31

<sup>5</sup> See the book of Esther

<sup>6</sup> Song of Solomon 6:13

## Lessons Gained

*Rapture Realities* is the second offering of a three-part series on the *chronos* (set time) of the Lord's return. The first offering, *God's Prophetic Agenda*, taught us to view "the last Days" from the lofty realm of the Eternal One, "for in His sight, a thousand years are as one Day."<sup>7</sup> These last Days are not common, for they are thousand-year Days. They were initiated when Jesus began His ministry and the early disciples experienced a last-Days outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The truth that we are still living in the last Days is evident by the fact that God is still pouring out His Spirit today.

What has been nearly two thousand years to us has been but a two-Day outpouring to Him. Thus, the last Days are better understood as being the final three Days of God's great Week of Redemption: four Days (4,000 years) from Adam to Christ, two Days (2,000 years) until He returns, and a seventh Day in which Christ will reign for a thousand years.

The fifth great Day began with the anointed ministry of Jesus, the Messiah. His anointing has continued in the earth now for nearly two Days via the Body of Christ. These two Days of Messianic ministry are nearly finished. Jesus said, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures Today and Tomorrow, and the third Day I shall be perfected."<sup>8</sup> We now stand on the threshold of the third Day, when counting from Christ. From Adam's perspective, this is also the seventh Day; this Millennial Sabbath that will usher in true rest for the earth. This last Day will complete God's great Week, thus fulfilling Daniel's "end of the Days."<sup>9</sup>

By speaking to us through the prophetic mechanism of thousand-year Days, God has marked the generation that will witness Christ's return. It will be the generation living upon the earth at the end of the sixth great Day from Adam. God declared the *chronos* of the end from the very beginning—in the first

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Peter 3:8-9

<sup>8</sup> Luke 13:32

<sup>9</sup> Daniel 12:13

chapter of Genesis, wherein He impregnated our hearts with the prophetic seed of a six-day work followed by a seventh-day rest.

The significance of this third, seventh, or last Day, as viewed from either Christ or Adam, is also affirmed by the Jubilee-cycles associated with “the acceptable year of the Lord.” These fifty-year cycles were instituted at the famous battle of Jericho, which God unmistakably marked as the first Jubilee. Jesus was anointed as the Messiah twenty-nine Jubilees later, on the thirtieth Jubilee, Himself being 30 years of age. The wilderness passing of another forty Jubilees brings us to the seventieth Jubilee. **The seventieth Jubilee just so happens to coincide with the dawn of the seventh great Day!**

These then, are the Days of Man: six days of work followed by a millennial Sabbath when the government will be mantled by the Man ordained to judge (rule) the world in righteousness.

The *chronos* for this great plan has not been hidden from mankind, for it is alluded to throughout the Bible by various *chronos* types and shadows. The following are some famous quotes (emphases added) from the One who has declared the end from the beginning:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, **but the seventh day** is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.”(Exodus 20:8)

“Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them **be ready for the third day**. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.” (Exodus 19:10-11)

“Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, **and the third day** I shall be perfected.” (Luke 13:32)

“Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. **And on the seventh day** He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.” (Exodus 24:16)

“After two days He will revive us; **on the third day** He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.”(Hosea 6:2)

“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up **at the last day.**” (John 6:40)

“And the Lord said to Joshua . . . You shall march around the city . . . six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets . . . **but the seventh day** you shall march around the city seven times . . . and it shall come to pass . . . that the wall of the city will fall down flat.” (Joshua 6:2-5)

“So Joash (the true king) was hidden in the house of the Lord for six years, while Athaliah (who usurped the throne) reigned over the land. **In the seventh year** Jehoiada . . . showed them (the faithful captains) the king’s son . . . so all the people rejoiced . . . for they had slain Athaliah with the sword . . . **Joash was seven years old when he became king.**” (2 Kings 11)

“King Ahasuerus . . . **in the third year** of his reign . . . showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty.” (Esther 1:2-4)

“So Esther (who would become Queen) was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, . . . **in the seventh year** of his reign.”(Esther 2:16)

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to their works . . . **now after six days** Jesus took Peter, James, and John, led them up on a high mountain . . . and was transfigured before them.” (Matthew 16:27-17:2)

“**On the third day** there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee . . . now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.” (John 2:1)

“So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; **and He stayed there two days**. And many more believed because of His own word . . . **now after two days** He departed from there and went to Galilee.” (John 4:40-43)

“Now Enoch, **the seventh from Adam**, prophesied . . . saying, ‘The Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints.’ (Jude 14)

“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, **sealed with seven seals**.” (Revelation 5:1)

Many believe that God has hidden the time of the end from mankind; quite to the contrary, He has gone to great lengths to reveal it. This *chronos*-voice can be heard throughout God’s Word, once we understand His language. The *chronos* (set length of time) and the *kairos* (signs that will appear during that time) give us the same awareness as that of a pregnant woman. An expectant mother knows that there are generally nine months from conception to birth. This nine-month period is the *chronos* of her pregnancy. She is also familiar with the attendant signs of one who is “with child.” These signs are the *kairos* of her pregnancy. Any speculation as to when the birth will occur **apart from** the *chronos* (nine months) and the *kairos* (signs of pregnancy) is useless. Similarly, God has given us **both the *chronos* and the *kairos*** of the end of this age so that we cannot be deceived by premature speculations.

## Those Who Climbed Mount Olivet

Unfortunately, we have misinterpreted the comments that Jesus made on the Mount of Olives when His disciples asked Him when the end would come. It was commonly reported as fact that God passed down a set of stone tablets in which we were forbidden to know the time of His return. But these stony “Thou shalt not know” commandments turned out to be the mere reasoning’s of men instead. They were not written by the finger

of God. Those who read the first offering in this series can tell you that these supposed Olivet objections were overruled once all of the testimony was considered.

The unknown Day and hour turned out to be none other than the **eternal time** of future glory, of which only the Father knows. Jesus referred to this unknown time of glory in response to their pressing question, “When will these things be?” They wanted to know about the *chronos* and the *kairos* of His return. And even though He had already spoken to them about the *chronos* throughout His ministry, they would not see that aspect of His return until sometime after His resurrection.

Nevertheless, Jesus’ carefully crafted His response on the Mount of Olives to lead them into a working knowledge of God’s *chronos* agenda. In essence, He told them that they had not yet perceived (*oida*) the time of His return, but that one day they would. It would be at an hour they were presently not expecting. Since they were expecting a soon-coming Kingdom, and not a late-coming Lord, their end-time perspectives would have to change.

He also advised them to stay alert and to consider Noah, for Noah was not surprised by the flood. He not only knew that the flood was coming, but when it was coming as well. Thus, Jesus admonished them to be watchful, for His coming would be like the days of the *chronos*-knowing Noah.

The early Church eventually understood that Christ would return on the seventh great thousand-year Day from Adam. They understood the relationship between thousand-year Days and the *chronos* of the Lord’s return. The Holy Spirit was faithful to teach them God’s prophetic language. He is offering that class again today, to any who would care to enroll.

God’s agenda calls for a restoration of our *chronos*-sight in this hour, for the dawn of the seventh Day is looming on the horizon. It is imperative that the Bride issue a merciful warning to this generation. They must be warned that the end is upon them, just as Noah warned his generation. Also, the realization that this is the “eleventh hour of harvest” provides us with certain “harvest incentives,” enabling us to become “peculiarly anointed reapers” in this hour. This Gospel must be preached with a demonstration of His Spirit and His power.

It is almost time for the prophecies concerning the Son's return to be fulfilled. The two great Days of prophetic ministry, beginning with the start of Jesus' ministry around 30 A.D., will end somewhere between 2026 and 2030 A.D. We have until then to finish our gospel-preaching assignment and prepare for His return.

Accordingly, God is recruiting the watchmen to man their respective posts upon the watchtower, bidding them to not be silent until all is accomplished. It is time for the Bride to blend her voice with the Spirit in saying, "Even so; Come, Lord Jesus!"

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## Chapter 2

# The Emmaus Road Encounter

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**W**ill the Bride truly speak of the Lord's coming with one voice at the time of the end? Will we stand together on the same watchtower? Will we unite in one vision? Let me try to put things in perspective. The end of all things is at hand. The rebellion associated with the angelic conspiracy initiated by Lucifer is rapidly advancing towards its conclusion. The Bridegroom is preparing His Bride for these final events. It is imperative that she be fully apprised of the "times and seasons."

The Church initiated her preaching assignment as she emerged from an upper room, spiritually empowered for the task at hand. Most significantly, the believers were all in one accord. Our next assignment—that which consists of ruling and reigning with Christ as He takes possession of the earth—will also require a state of unity among the brethren.

Until now, the second coming of Christ has been an issue of division within His own Body. Our doctrinal perceptions of how and when He will return have been a source of confusion and divisiveness among the brethren. Each "tribe" has their own flag, their unique view of the end-time tabernacle, so to speak, and their unique interpretation of what the prophecies say. We can ill-afford to approach the days that lie ahead clinging to our separate end-time banners, while remaining in a state of disunity concerning the Lord's return. We need another Emmaus-road encounter, only this time, with respect to His second coming.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is working towards this end in this present hour with respect to the end times: “until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> This work is already underway. It will only gain momentum as His return draws nearer. It is a repeat of the mission that the Master undertook on the day of His resurrection, when two bewildered disciples made the lonely trek from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus.

### **When Eyes are Restrained in Order to See**

Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

And He said to them, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?”<sup>2</sup>

It had been a rough week for His disciples. They had been under the impression that the Kingdom of God would immediately appear (see Luke 19:11). His recent arrest, trial, and crucifixion shattered their dreams of a Messianic Kingdom, and so they all fled. One of them even denied knowing Him. It was now the third day. When asked about their conversation, these two on the road confided, “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.”

Their kind of conversation was not unlike the kind we have had along our modern trek to understand the end times. Like them, our journey has been filled with perplexing questions, and at times, heated debates. Prior to Christ’s resurrection, the early disciples found it difficult to reconcile a cross with a promised

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:13

<sup>2</sup> Luke 24:13-17

throne. The Messianic prophecies were difficult to piece together, especially in view of His recent crucifixion.

Our day is no different. We have trudged mile after mile, debating whether the rapture has any scriptural basis or not. For those who believe it does, we have different views as to when it will take place. Some see a pre-tribulation rapture, while others take a mid-tribulation or post-tribulation stance. Still others embrace a pre-wrath view. Many, reluctant to adhere to any view, just call themselves “pan-tribbers,” believing that everything will just “pan out” all right in the end!

Still other tribes stake their camp around other end-time banners. There is the “preterist camp”—those who view “the last days” and the “end-times” as being fulfilled for the most part during the time of the first century church. Others camp under the banner of “kingdom now theology”—thinking that we will take the world for Jesus and transform its cultural institutions before He returns. There is no shortage of flags posted around this end-time tabernacle-encampment, for we have pre-millennial, a-millennial, and post-millennial banners as well. Each tribe contends that theirs is the best place to camp.

The fact that there are so many diverse opinions concerning the end times is difficult to explain when we consider that all these views are held by sincere and dedicated disciples, all studying the same Book. Or is it?

The Emmaus-bound disciples could not see the need for the cross **until it was time to be seen**. Nor could the other disciples. It was a part of the Plan that had remained sealed until the appropriate time. For the first century Church, that time had now come. Their newly evolving mission to preach the Gospel required a complete and thorough revelation of the cross and what it meant to humanity. This was their calling. It was time for the prophetic word to be opened to their understanding.

It was at this point that the risen Master joined the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. God restrained their eyes, however, so that they did not recognize Him. This restraint was necessary, for it was important that they behold Him in the writings of the Law, the Psalms, and in the Prophets before they recognized His bodily form along the road.

To that end, Jesus said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”<sup>3</sup> **And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.** This Emmaus-bound revelation brought an end to their confusion. It ended their debate. The prophecies suddenly made sense. By the journey’s end, their kind of conversation yielded to a heart-burning revelation from an unknown Stranger.

Our generation stands at a similar turning point in the divine mystery of the ages—a critical moment in the plans and purposes of Almighty God. We are nearing the end of a six-Day work that began with Adam. The dawn of the seventh Day is nearly upon us. As with the early disciples, the new mission that lies before us requires a complete and thorough comprehension of what the Scriptures say about His return. And like those before us, it is necessary that we behold Him in prophecy before we see Him in His Kingly glory.

To that end, the Holy Spirit, that “other Helper,” is repeating the process initiated by the Stranger on the road nearly two thousand years ago. It is the Spirit’s assignment to open the Scriptures until our hearts are ignited with a burning revelation of the Lord’s return.

This Emmaus-road visitation is to ready us for the mission at hand: that we may be **a voice** in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord. It is time once again to make “a straight path in the desert, a highway for our God.” It is time for end-time valleys to be exalted, end-time mountains to be brought low, the crooked places made straight, and the rough places smooth; for we are nearing the hour when “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.”<sup>4</sup>

## **Blessing the Bread of Prophecy**

The Emmaus-road narrative continues, “Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him saying,

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 24:26

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 40:3-5

‘Abide with us, for it is **toward evening, and the day is far spent.**’ And He went in to stay with them.” As He sat at the table with them, He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the scriptures to us?”

The account goes on to relate how they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. Upon finding the other disciples, “they told them about the things that had happened on the road and how He was known to them in the breaking of the bread.” No sooner had they said these things, when suddenly Jesus reappeared and stood in their midst. The audience now included “the eleven, and those who were gathered with them.” With the core of the Church assembled together, Jesus proceeded to say,

These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.

The next verse reads, **“And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the scriptures.”** The Emmaus-road encounter was now complete. By the end of the day, the disciples not only believed, but were in one accord as to what the Scriptures said about His work on the cross. The seemingly vague prophecies that only befuddled them were now comprehensible and clear.

It is now time to constrain the Master once again to stay and sup with us. When we do, we can count on Him to take the bread of prophecy, “bless it, break it, and give it to us” that our eyes may be opened.

It is significant that the eyes of the Emmaus-bound travelers were fully opened when they came to the end of their journey, “toward evening,” and when the day was “far spent.” Could it be that this Emmaus-road encounter was worded specifically with

our generation in mind? Is this a prophetic call to a future generation of believers to meet Him on the road—those who have corporately come to the end of their journey, toward the evening of this age, and with the Day far spent? Is this our cue to constrain the Master to “abide with us” that we might feast on the blessed bread of end-time prophecy? Does He intend to “open our eyes” with respect to “the end” in this hour? Emmaus means “hot springs” in the Greek. Can there be any doubt that things are heating up in the world today?

The sudden and rapid increase of knowledge is a recent phenomenon of the last hundred years or so. The twentieth century opened with the horse and buggy, but before it was over, we had flown to the moon and back. Since then our twenty-first century base of knowledge is expanding exponentially, such that it even dwarfs the experience of the previous century.

While Daniel predicted that men would “run to and fro” and that “knowledge would increase,” the Amplified translation captures the fuller intent of his prophecy:

But you, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the Book, until the time of the end. (Then) many shall run to and fro and search anxiously (through the Book), and knowledge (of God’s purposes as revealed by His prophets) shall be increased and become great.<sup>5</sup>

It is now time for the knowledge of all Messianic prophecy to increase and become great, including the prophecies concerning His return. It is time to "run to and fro" through the Book until the knowledge of God's end-time purposes has been fully revealed. The Bride must learn to speak with one voice and proclaim one straight, smooth highway. We have come to that place on the road to Emmaus where it is time to let the Stranger enlighten us!

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel 12:4

### Chapter 3

# A Tried Stone...A Sure Foundation

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Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.<sup>1</sup>

**T**he Emmaus-road encounter with the unperceived Stranger dispelled the confusion surrounding the cross and ignited the Church with a heart-burning flame of revelation concerning the first part of Christ's mission. By the end of the day, the disciples' understanding had been opened to comprehend prophecy. His timely appearance ended their debate, stilled their doubts, and clarified their mission. He opened their eyes when He broke open the bread.

Just such an encounter is on the agenda for this hour: the bread of end-time prophecy is being blessed and broken so that our eyes may be opened to comprehend the **second** part of His mission. Accordingly, it is time to sup once again with the Master. This supper will no doubt also conclude with another "vanishing!"

The cry of the first book in this series, *God's Prophetic Agenda*, delivered a message of merciful warning to our generation, like the cry heard in the days of Noah. It was also meant to inspire the Church with the harvest incentive of a last great move of God before Jesus returns. It was intended to contribute to the timely posting of the watchmen—those who will not hold their peace day or night until Jerusalem becomes a

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 28:16

source of praise throughout the earth.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the message was designed to move the Shulamite to “rise up and seek the One she loves,” for her timely and impassioned desire entices the Groom to “come to His garden.”<sup>3</sup>

The revelation of the *chronos* provided even more, for it laid a sure foundation upon which to build a line-by-line, precept-upon-precept understanding of the end times. Apart from this “tried stone,” any end-time structure stands on shifting sand. Such a structure is doomed to fall when the rains descend, the floods come, and the winds blow. It is time to move our end-time house to a more secure location, back to the rock-hewn foundation that once stood in former times—a foundation that is tried and sure. The bedrock of this foundation supports an extended view of the last days or end times.

## The Extended View of the Last Days

*God’s Prophetic Agenda* taught us that the last Days are not common, but great Days in the sight of God. As thousand-year Days, they comprise the final three Days of God’s great Week of redemption: four Days from Adam to Christ’s ministry, two Days ministering to other lost sheep (Gentiles), and a millennial Day of completion, when the heavenly rule of Christ brings Sabbath rest to the earth.

Even though the last Days began at the time of the early Church, they did not end there. The realized promise of a last-Days outpouring of God’s Spirit by distant generations, “those who are far off,” assures us that the last Days have continued uninterrupted since the Day of Pentecost. **The last Days are a long program in the mystery of God’s plan, encompassing the entire time of the Church, and extending into Christ’s millennial reign.**

The appearance of the Messiah in the fullness of the time set the Days of the Messiah in motion. His appearance at the end of the ages to put away sin by His sacrificial offering on the cross

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 62:6-7

<sup>3</sup> Song of Solomon 4:12-16

started a new chapter in the scheme of God—the time of the end.<sup>4</sup> As confirmation of this reality, Peter’s inspired Pentecostal announcement that “this is that” heralded the truth that the last Days were upon us. John would later write:

Little children, it is the last hour (time); and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, **by which we know it is the last hour.**<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, Daniel’s pre-cross prophecies, hitherto sealed until the time of the end, could now be unsealed. And so the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ came to us with the following command: “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, **for the time is at hand.**”<sup>6</sup>

This foundational view—that the end times began with the anointed ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and extend to this present hour—was carefully laid by both apostles and prophets. It is a sure foundation, a tried stone upon which the prophetic word was spoken.

The apostle Peter taught us to dispel the notion of tardiness by reminding ourselves that, “with the Lord one Day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one Day.”<sup>7</sup> Luke, the detailed-oriented physician, was faithful to record that, “all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold **these Days.**”<sup>8</sup> The Master Himself, the chief cornerstone of this foundation, affirmed this extended view when He uttered His cryptic statement about being perfected after the fulfillment of a prophetic Today and Tomorrow.

The revelation of the *chronos* agenda not only reveals when the Capstone (Christ) will come but provides the sure foundation upon which our end-time structure (view) must be built. The sandy foundation that the last days began and ended with the first century Church is too small. It does not stand the test when

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<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 9:25-26

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 2:18, emphasis added

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 22:10

<sup>7</sup> 2 Peter 3:8

<sup>8</sup> Acts 3:24, emphasis added

“tried” against Scripture. Likewise, the popular notion that the last days are a recent development in the program of God also fails the test.

We have defined the last Days too narrowly, either as a brief period of time that only concerned the early Church, or as a rather recent thing leading up to Christ’s return. The true foundation of the end-times is broad enough to support the truth that the last Days are thousand-year Days—the final three Days of God’s great Week. They began with the first appearance of the Messiah, when Jesus was sent forth into ministry. They also include His second appearance, for the last Day is none other than His millennial reign.

Now it shall come to pass **in the latter Days** that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.<sup>9</sup>

By now it should be clear that the last Days comprise the three latter Days of God’s great Week. They span the time allotted to both Christ’s first and second coming, including the time in between. These three last Days conclude the great Week. The Scriptures call this “the end of the Days,” in Daniel 12:13. During that Day, Christ will reign with His Church from His Heavenly throne until He has put every enemy underfoot. Then He will deliver the Kingdom to the Father.<sup>10</sup>

Until now, we have failed to view the last 1,900 years as having any connection to the end times. It was all we could see at the time. Consumed with the business at hand (the commission to preach and make disciples), there was no great need for finely-tuned perceptions of the end times. Our vague observations of the darkened landscape did not hinder us from completing the task of preaching the Gospel to all nations.

The nearness of our next assignment, however, changes everything. Soon, we will be called upon to reign with Him by putting an end to all rule and authority. This kind of reigning

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<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 2:2, emphasis added

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

requires that we be clothed with the garment of immortality. Consequently, our rapturous change is soon approaching. We need to know about it, anticipate it, and expect it.

The two disciples who traveled the road to Emmaus many years ago learned that prior perceptions changed fast on that seven-mile trek. Their views were suddenly and unexpectedly altered as they lent their ear to the Stranger. Though His sudden appearance may have seemed strange, His words brought timely revelation. With each passing mile things became clearer. And so it is today. We are being readied for seventh-Day realities and for our long-awaited time of intimacy with the Bridegroom in His secret chamber.

Like Esther, we have been called to the Kingdom for such a time as this. Like John the Baptist, we have been called to prepare the way of the Lord, to make a straight and level way in the wilderness for His return. The world needs this “prepared way.” To that end, this book has been written.

The first part provides the unsealed version of Daniel’s seventieth week, wherein the first half of the week was fulfilled by Christ’s first coming and the second half will be fulfilled after the rapture.

In the second part, we will examine how Jesus lifted the veil to reveal the signs of this age via His end-time lesson from Mount Olivet.

In the third part, we will see how Jesus also unveiled the rapture during this teaching. We will acquaint ourselves with the terms and concepts associated with this glorious event, as well as where it fits in the end-time scenario of events. You will not want to miss that.

The fourth part reveals how the seven seals in the book of Revelation confirm what Jesus taught in His Olivet Discourse about the events leading up to His return.

The fifth and final part examines the mystery of birth pains and how we will be conformed to the image of Christ’s third-day resurrection and mid-seventieth week ascension. This mystery was divinely designed to reveal exactly how the rapture relates to the sequence of end-time events.

We should keep in mind that, while there is a special grant of revelation in this hour, we are not more special than those who

have gone before us. Our only claim is that we happen to be living, through no choice of our own, in a day and hour in which the light of that soon approaching Day is brightening the landscape all around us. As every early-morning riser knows, the increase of morning light results in greater vision. Shadowy objects, previously indistinct and undistinguishable, now appear crisp and clear.

Our own eyes are not any keener than those who have gone before us. Yet **they are becoming keener**, but only because the available light is so much brighter. What we thought we saw during the times of shadows, but of which we were mistaken, was no fault of our own. It was merely the want of greater light. That light is now dawning. Can our eyes not help but see?

**Part 1**  
**Daniel's 70th Week**  
**Unsealed**



## Chapter 4

# These Weeks are Not That Week

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And he [the angel Gabriel] informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand . . . for you are greatly beloved, therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision: Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city. . ."<sup>1</sup>

**T**he *chronos*-prophecy of the seventy weeks is one of the most significant end-time prophecies in the Bible. It not only predicted **when the Messiah would first appear, it enables us to understand when He will return as well.** Since the prophecy concerns both His first and second coming, it provides a unique overview of the end times. Therefore, the prophecy is crucial if we are to understand the end-time scenario of events.

If you have never heard of the "seventy weeks," or if the prophecy is vague and confusing to you, just take a deep breath and relax. The Holy Spirit wants to bring about a great calm to the Body of Christ with respect to this awesome prophecy.

First, it is important to differentiate between "God's great Week" and the "Seventy Weeks." The fact that the word "week" appears in both titles does not mean that they are one and the same. The great Week spans the time allotted to the entire plan of redemption or the mystery of God. Each Day of the Week, as you should readily know by now, lasts a thousand years. Therefore, this Week equals seven thousand years of our time.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:22-23

In contrast, the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks concerns a much smaller time period. Each day in the seventy weeks equals a year as we count time. Therefore, the seventy weeks encompass a mere 490 years as compared to the 7,000 years of the great Week.

## Understanding the Background

We refer to the prophecy as Daniel's seventy weeks only because it appears in the book of Daniel, in the ninth chapter to be exact. The prophecy, however, was not given **by** Daniel, but **to him**. He received the message from the angel Gabriel while praying for His people to return from their captivity in Babylon.

Jeremiah predicted that the Jewish people would be allowed to return to their land and rebuild after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Daniel became aware of this *chronos* prophecy just as the seventy years were ending. The ninth chapter begins, "In the first year of Darius, I understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." The specific prophecy in Jeremiah stated,

For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, **I will visit you and perform My good word toward you and cause you to return to this place.** For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, **to give you a future and a hope.** Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.<sup>2</sup>

**A *chronos*-specific prophecy will always give you direction as to what to do once it is time for the prophecy to be fulfilled.** In Daniel's case, this meant "go and pray." God promised that He would hear their prayers, visit His people, and perform His good word. Daniel did not realize that such a

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 29:10-12, emphases added

visitation would result in a literal visit from one of God's elect angels.

While Daniel was still praying, the angel Gabriel **flew swiftly from heaven** and appeared to him about the time of the evening offering. (Daniel was praying, "Lord, listen and act! Do not delay . . ." Consequently, God responded by sending Gabriel with the instructions to "fly as fast as he could" to let Daniel know that his prayer had been answered. Gabriel arrived before Daniel could even say, "Amen!")

Gabriel informed Daniel that the command to return and rebuild was a done deal. "At the beginning of your supplications **the command went out**, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved." God had performed His good word just as He promised. The time had come for them to return to Jerusalem.

But Gabriel was not finished. He had also been sent to deliver a new *chronos*-specific prophecy—a **prophecy that revealed when the Messiah would come!** The prophecy began by stating (emphasis added):

Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, **that from the going forth of the command [word]** to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem, until the coming of Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks; the street [broad place] shall be built again, and the wall [rampart], even in the distress of the times.

The prophecy in Jeremiah not only promised that God would keep His word, but that He would also **visit them** to "give them a future and a hope." The prophecy of the seventy weeks was intended to do just that.

In the Hebrew, the word "weeks" is *shabua*, or "sevens." Just as a decade means ten years in our language, *shabua* could be understood to mean a "week of years" to the Hebrews. Daniel,

therefore, would have understood each *shabua* to mean a period of seven years. Seventy weeks would equal 490 years (7 years to a week times 70 weeks for a total of 490 years). In essence, the *chronos*-prophecy meant that 490 years had been set aside by God to fulfill the objectives of the prophecy.

## The Code to the Prophecy

The prophecy meant that the Messiah would appear after a combined period of 7 weeks plus 62 weeks, or 69 weeks. These 69 weeks calculate to be 483 years (69 x 7). The first seven weeks of the prophecy (49 years) involved the rebuilding of the Temple and the City of Jerusalem in Daniel's time. Once these were rebuilt, the remaining 62 weeks were spent waiting for their Messiah. It was a classic rendition of "If you build it, He will come!" Thus, the first seven weeks were allotted for **rebuilding** while the remaining sixty-two weeks were assigned to **waiting**.

We can now decode the *chronos*-aspect of the prophecy as follows:

- "Seven weeks" were designated for rebuilding. These seven weeks equal 49 years (7 x 7).
- "Sixty-two weeks" were designated for expecting. These sixty-two weeks equal 434 years (62 x 7).
- "One week" was designated in order to fulfill the objectives of the prophecy. The seventieth week equals 7 years.

Altogether, the entire prophecy spans a total of 490 pre-determined years. The visit from Gabriel meant that a new *chronos*-specific prophecy had just been started. The set time was pre-determined to involve seventy weeks of years. The time allotted to the prophecy would start counting down with the "going forth of the command to rebuild," and Gabriel had just come to inform Daniel that the command had been issued when he began to pray. The prophecy-clock was already ticking. The

command had just been declared in Heaven. King Cyrus would declare it on the earth that same year just as the prophet Isaiah predicted (see Isaiah 44:26 through 45:1-4 and Ezra 1:1-5) The seventy years of captivity had ended; and a new prophecy had begun—one that involved a coming Messiah.

In essence, the prophecy of the seventy weeks was geared around the coming of their Messiah. He would become their future and their hope. But there was just one problem. No one knew at the time that their Messiah would come twice. So how did the prophecy allow for a two-fold appearance, especially since He would not appear until the first sixty-nine weeks had already been spent?

From our twenty-first century perspective, we now know that the mystery of the Messiah involves both His first and second coming. Not only that, but we are keenly aware that nearly two thousand years have come and gone since His ministry began at age thirty. Herein is a great mystery: How is it that both the first and second coming of Christ can be confined to a prophecy limited to a span of just seven years?

Since Daniel was instructed to seal up the words of his prophecy until the time of the end, the great mystery contained within the seventieth week would not be revealed until Jesus had been crucified and resurrected. We now know that His three and one-half years of ministry set the last Days in motion. In Scripture, this is referred to as “the time of the end,” that is, the end-part of God’s great Week. This marks the time when Daniel’s prophecies would be unsealed, and the knowledge of God’s plans and purposes would increase.

This increase of knowledge was bestowed upon the foundational apostles of the first century by the able ministry of another Comforter—the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. In later centuries, we forfeited that increase. Today, the Spirit is restoring what we lost. They lived in a time of increased knowledge. Today we are living in a time of restoration. Either way, it is the same light.

Eventually, the founding apostles understood the great mystery contained in the seventieth week: the mystery that the first half of the week was fulfilled by His first coming, and that the second half of the week would be fulfilled after He returns to

take His Bride to Heaven. The Divine pause in the middle of the seventieth week provided the stage for several other mysteries to play out. So, in essence, the prophecy of the seventieth week holds the key to understanding the end times—that unique time when the Gospel of the Kingdom would be preached throughout the world in preparation for Christ’s return.

## When a Veil Fell Over the Prophecy

In the early days of the Church, the founding apostles understood the message from Gabriel. But a veil of darkness fell over the prophecy as the centuries rolled on. In time, two alternate interpretations were propagated resulting in much of the confusion over end-time prophecy that exists today.

One view taught that even though the Seventieth Week was all about Christ, it only depicted His first coming. Therefore, it had nothing to do with His second coming. According to this view, the Seventieth Week was **entirely fulfilled** at the time of Christ’s first appearance. I call this the “all is past view.”

This view objected to there being any delay or pause in the prophecy. Therefore, those who hold to this view would contend that the Seventieth Week holds no relevance for us today.

Another view offered a radical reinterpretation of the Seventieth Week altogether. Rather than depicting Christ, it was believed that these last seven years of the prophecy would not be fulfilled until a future Antichrist comes on the scene near the end of this age. This meant that the events portrayed in the Seventieth Week were all about a future Antichrist, not Messiah the Prince. I call this the “all is still future view.”

Many today do not realize that a future seven-year period called “the Tribulation,” was devised solely from this fateful twist to the prophecy. They are unaware that it is completely unscriptural. Yet many have built their end-time scenario of events, including the timing of the rapture, entirely on this flawed foundation.

Since this has become today’s dominant view, most believers are unaware **that any other interpretation of the Seventieth**

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**Week even exists**, let alone the fact that the one they now hold is in error.

Unfortunately, this view corrupted the true meaning of many key end-time terms such as **the beginning of sorrows**, **the abomination of desolation**, and **the tribulation of those days**, all to accommodate a Seventieth Week focused entirely on the Antichrist. This resulted in untold confusion for those seeking to understand end-time prophecy and the Lord's return.

Just for the record, let me state that I also taught this view at one time. Therefore, it is not my intent to criticize the views of others or devalue their ministries. Quite the contrary, I highly esteem those who have labored in the Body of Christ, regardless of their end-time view.

Since our generation did not invent either of these alternate views, but only inherited them, I challenge you to take a fresh new look at this prophecy. We owe it to our generation to rediscover the truth.



## Chapter 5

# Until Messiah the Prince

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Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city...Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command [word] to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem, **until the coming of Messiah the Prince**, there shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks;<sup>1</sup>

**S**o far, the prophecy of the seventy weeks has accounted for all but the last week. The first sixty-nine weeks were subdivided into two periods—seven weeks for rebuilding and sixty-two weeks for expecting. The countdown began with the command to return and rebuild. Gabriel’s speedy mission was to assure Daniel that his *chronos*-prayer of “do it now Lord” had been answered.

Many who have studied this prophecy have struggled to understand just when the command to restore and rebuild went forth. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah mention four different decrees that were issued during the span of several years: in the first year of Cyrus, in the second year of Darius, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, and in his twentieth year as well. The question is easily resolved once we understand the purpose of Gabriel’s timely mission. He came just as God promised—to affirm that God had “performed His good word” and to give them “a future and a hope.”

The angel did not rush just to tell Daniel that a command would be issued someday. He came to tell Daniel that the command had already been issued. The “going forth of the

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:24-25, emphasis added

command” was a joint effort between Heaven and earth. The passage in Isaiah 44 states:

Thus says the Lord your Redeemer . . . Who says to Jerusalem, “You shall be inhabited,” to the cities of Judah, “You shall be built” . . . Who says of Cyrus, “He is My shepherd; and he shall perform **all** My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,” and to the Temple, “Your foundations shall be laid.”

Gabriel’s timely message meant that the first week of the prophecy had just begun. It had been decreed by the Lord in Heaven. His Spirit would stir Cyrus, the king of Persia, to decree the same word at that time and, thus, perform all the Lord’s pleasure. The Messiah would appear after sixty-nine “sevens” (or 483 years).

The seventieth week is the pivotal week of the prophecy. The prior sixty-nine weeks were merely spent in anticipation of His appearance. The foundational apostles understood this. They knew that the seventieth week was all about Christ, both His first and second coming. This is the unsealed version of the prophecy. Unfortunately, our generation inherited two faulty interpretations of the seventieth week from prior generations: (1) that the seventieth week was entirely fulfilled by Christ’s first coming alone, and (2) that the seventieth week is a prophecy about the coming Antichrist.

The event that triggers the start of the seventieth week is critical to the prophecy, for it establishes the identity of “the Prince” and “the people” involved in the activities being described throughout this last week. The seventieth week begins just as Gabriel announced, with the appearance of Messiah the Prince.

The title, Messiah the Prince, is the key. In the Hebrew, Messiah means “the anointed one.” Its counterpart in the Greek is Christ. Our English expression “to christen” was derived from this concept. **It is extremely significant that the title Messiah appears nowhere in the Old Testament except in this seventy-week prophecy.** God used this title to ensure that we would be able to mark the event that starts the seventieth week, for the

prophecy indicated that the anointed One would appear after sixty-nine weeks of years. In other words, an “anointing” would set the seventieth week in motion.

The Holy Spirit took great care to mark the moment that this anointing occurred. The way-preparing ministry of John the Baptist was ordained particularly with this purpose in mind—to officially preside over the anointing of Jesus so that we would know when the seventieth week began.

And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”<sup>2</sup>

The gospel of Matthew reveals that John was initially reluctant to baptize Jesus, but the Lord constrained him to do so. Why did Jesus deem it so important to be baptized by John? He certainly did not need to repent of any sins like the others. Why did He do it? **It was done in order to officially record the moment of anointing so that we would know that Daniel’s seventieth week had just begun.**

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and You are coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, **“Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”**

Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John 1:32-33

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 3:13-17, emphasis added

Jesus knew that the prophecy “until Messiah the Prince” was being fulfilled in that moment. From that time on Jesus preached that He was the anointed One and John officially presented Him to Israel as such. The gospel of Luke recounts how Jesus preached in the synagogue from Isaiah 61.

And when Jesus opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me . . .” Then He closed the book and said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”<sup>4</sup>

Several years later Peter acknowledged the importance of this event when he spoke to the household of Cornelius, saying, “. . . that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: **how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power**, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with Him.”<sup>5</sup>

Why do you suppose that the Holy Spirit placed so much emphasis on the anointing of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament record? While several reasons could be cited, one of the chief reasons was so that we would recognize the start of Daniel’s seventieth week.

The prophecy specifically stated that the Messiah (anointed One) would appear after sixty-nine sevens. The sixty-nine weeks did not bring us to His birth, for His anointing did not occur until thirty years later. And they certainly did not bring us to His crucifixion, for His anointing occurred 3½ years earlier. The anointing was in manifestation throughout His ministry. Nor would the week begin with a paltry peace treaty from some imposter (the Antichrist, as some suppose).

Let’s get it right. The week began just as Gabriel indicated, with a Messianic anointing. God reserved the title of Messiah exclusively for this prophecy so that we could recognize the

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 4:17-20

<sup>5</sup> Acts 10:37-38, emphasis added

event that begins the seventieth week—and, ultimately, the identity of the Prince who occupies the seventieth week.

### A Half Week of Miracle Ministry

The Holy Spirit also saw to it that the gospel writers noted the number of times that Jesus attended the annual Feasts of Israel during His ministry. Because of this, we know that Jesus' ministry spanned a period of three and one-half years.

Gabriel's message revealed that the seventieth week would commence with the appearance of the Anointed One. At first, the testimony of John the Baptist was the only proof that Jesus was the Messiah. The only ones who actually saw the descent of the Spirit that day were John and Jesus Himself. No one else among the crowd saw it. Since anyone could claim to be the Messiah, how would anyone know that the seventieth week had begun? How would they know if Daniel's prophecy was for real?

Again, the key word is **Messiah**. The anointing would be made manifest once people **saw it in action**. Then they would know. So for the next several years Jesus performed one miracle after another. Daniel's prophecy required proof and Jesus had plenty to offer. The anointing produced miracles. Those miracles were His credentials that He was indeed the Anointed One.

The proof of the anointing even consoled John the Baptist when faced with the gruesome fate of his own impending death. He saw the vision of the descending Spirit with his own eyes, and yet, we find the following account in the Gospel of Matthew:

And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or should we look for another?"

Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel

preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”<sup>6</sup>

Even though John witnessed Jesus’ anointing firsthand, it was the “things which the people heard and saw” that ultimately convinced him. At one point in Jesus’ ministry, during the Feast of Dedication, many unbelieving Jews surrounded Him saying, “How long do you keep us in doubt? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” To this, Jesus responded, “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him.”<sup>7</sup>

Since the ministry of Jesus occupied a period of 3½ years, the anointing that Gabriel referred to was in evidence throughout the first half of Daniel’s seventieth week. John ended his gospel account by saying, “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

## **The Fullness of the Time**

As the Old Testament era was drawing to a close, Zacharias (the father of John the Baptist) prophesied that “the Dayspring from on high would visit us.”<sup>8</sup>

The word “Dayspring” refers to the rising of the sun, signaling that a new day has begun. Since this prophecy obviously referred to the coming of the Messiah, it linked His appearance with the dawning of a new Day.

This Dayspring metaphor is significant, for the Bible teaches that God counts a thousand years of our time as being “a prophetic Day in His sight.” There are seven prophetic Days in all, beginning with the creation of Adam and ending with the millennial rule of Christ over the earth.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 11:2-6

<sup>7</sup> John 10:24 and 37-38

<sup>8</sup> Luke 1:78

Those who have read the first book in this series, *God's Prophetic Agenda*, might remember that from the perspective of God's great Week, the start of Jesus' ministry coincided with the dawning of the fifth prophetic Day.

With four Days spent, the last Days of God's great Week were set in motion by Jesus' ministry. Jesus prophetically termed these three last Days a prophetic "Today," "Tomorrow," and "third Day" (see Luke 13:31-33).

At the same time, the sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy were also ending. **This means that God strategically timed these things so that the start of the seventieth week would coincide with the dawning of the fifth prophetic Day.**

For the nation of Israel, it was the "time of their visitation,"<sup>9</sup> and the apostle John would later write, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the fifth great Day dawned with grace. The ministry of the "Dayspring from on high" brightened the horizon with the light of truth; and the seventieth week commenced with the christening of the Prince to inaugurate a visitation of signs, miracles, and wonders. Truly, God sent forth His Son to minister when the "fullness of the time had come."<sup>11</sup>

We began with the question, "Is the seventieth week about Christ or the Antichrist?" The answer is critical, for it determines whether the seventieth week is about a Messianic Prince or a diabolical devil.

The word Messiah is critical to the prophecy. It was intentionally inserted by God to positively mark the final seven years of Daniel's prophecy.

Therefore, the seventieth week will not begin with a false peace treaty between Israel and the Antichrist. Instead, it began when the Messiah unveiled what would become a prevailing covenant of peace—a covenant fitly confirmed with miracles, signs, and wonders for a full half-week.

Later, it would be cut in blood, ratified, and called "new" when this anointed Prince would hang on an old rugged cross—in

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 19:43-44

<sup>10</sup> John 1:17

<sup>11</sup> Galatians 4:4

the middle between two thieves—**and in the middle of the seventieth week.**

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## Chapter 6

# A Sabbath End to Sacrificial Offerings

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**T**he prophecy of the seventy weeks was intended to reveal the first and second coming of Christ, not a future Antichrist. The details concerning the Antichrist were relegated to other important prophecies, but not this one. The message of the seventy weeks was designed around the mystery of Christ: around His anointed mission to give the world a future and a hope. Since the seventy weeks were determined “to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,” this next part of the prophecy highlights the wondrous fulfillment of these objectives.

And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself . . . and He shall confirm the covenant with many—one week; and in the middle of the week He will cause sacrifice and oblation to cease.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that the Hebrew language does not use upper- and lower-case letters. Therefore, the choice as to which words throughout the Old Testament writings should be capitalized must be decided by the context. Even though the words themselves are inspired, the use of capitalization employed by any given translator can be suspect.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:27

Deciding which words should be capitalized and which words should not becomes a critical issue in this prophecy, especially when we consider the phrase, “in the middle of the week He will cause sacrifice and oblation to cease.” The question is whether the pronoun “he” should be capitalized or not. In other words, is the prophecy still referring to the Messiah, or to someone else? The answer can be found in one word: *shabath*. In the Hebrew, it is pronounced *shaw-bath*.

### ***Shabath and Shabbath***

The prophecy states that He will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. The Hebrew verb translated “to cease” in the passage above is *shabath*. It means “to bring to a restful or completed end.” The same word appears in Genesis 2:2-3, “By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He **rested** (*shabath*) from all His work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he **rested** (*shabath*) from all His work of creating that He had done.”

The verb *shabath* is the root of the word *shabbath*. The word Sabbath is the English equivalent of *shabbath*. In Genesis, God’s labor ceased, meaning, it came to a restful or Sabbath end. He did not quit working simply because He was weary and needed a break. He didn’t say, “I’m tired. I need a day off. I’ll get back to the work of creating next week after I’ve rested a bit.” No, His labor ceased because there was no more work to be done! It was finished. The work of creation was complete and required no further labor.

It is also worth noting that no one forced God to quit working. His work was not interrupted or suspended by some outside force. The cessation of His work was due to one reason and one reason only—because it was finished. Therefore, the prophecy in Daniel meant that the Messiah would bring sacrifice and offerings to a *shabath*—a restful and completed end. The passage could be translated, “He will bring sacrifice and offering to a restful Sabbath end.” Unfortunately, our English translations fail to capture the thought that the “end of sacrificial offerings” means that no further work will ever be required.

As the first half of Daniel's week was drawing to a close, Jesus gathered His disciples together for one last supper.

When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, **I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**"<sup>2</sup>

The fulfillment of the Passover is the critical revelation of the seventieth week: "But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end [*shabath*] to sacrifice and offering." The apostle Paul would later write, "For indeed, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."<sup>3</sup> Gabriel's message predicted that the sacrificial system, which included the Passover, would be brought to a restful and completed end in the middle of the seventieth week.

Consequently, the seventieth week began with His anointed ministry. This miracle ministry lasted for three and one-half years. The first half of the week came to a close with the Passover Lamb hanging on a cross and breathing out His final words, "It is finished."<sup>4</sup> He did not say, "I am finished," but, "It is finished." He knew that He had brought the work of sacrifice and offering to an official end. From then on, the work was finished.

In that fateful moment, the Passover was "fulfilled in the kingdom of God." With the first half of Daniel's seventieth week now complete, Christ arose from the dead and ascended to Heaven. It should be obvious that only Christ could bring such a Sabbath end to sacrifice and offering. This is undoubtedly where Paul got the revelation in which he revealed, ". . . so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many."<sup>5</sup> In the next chapter Paul revealed:

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 22:14-16, emphasis added

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:7

<sup>4</sup> John 19:30

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 9:28

with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. **For then would they not have ceased to be offered?**

The sacrificial offerings under the Law were merely a shadow of the good things to come. They had to be offered repeatedly since they could only cover sin temporarily. They could not actually take it away. They could not permanently remove sin from the human race. If they had been able to do so, these offerings would have eventually ceased.

So where did Paul get this incredible revelation? It should be obvious that he saw it in the prophecy of the seventy weeks. The Messiah would cause sacrifice and oblation to permanently cease.

Later in the same chapter, Paul wrote, “Now where there is remission of these [sins and lawless deeds], there is no longer an offering for sin.” As a Hebrew scholar, Paul understood the meaning of *shabbath*. He understood that Gabriel’s message was about the finished work of Jesus Christ. In verse 12, he explained:

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God**, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.<sup>6</sup>

The priests of the Old Testament “stood daily” because their work was never done. In contrast, Christ “sat down” because the work was finished. He entered His Sabbath (*shabbath*) rest by causing all sacrificial work to cease (*shabbath*). This is the “future and hope” that God sent Gabriel to reveal.

It is wrong to dismiss Christ from such a critical part of the seventieth week, to completely ignore the Hebrew verbiage of Sabbath rest built into the prophecy, and to reinterpret the prophecy to mean that a future Antichrist will force a physical halt to the sacrifices. Quite the contrary, the revelation from

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<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 10:1-2, and 11-14, emphases added

Gabriel meant that there would be no future need for sacrifices **because of the work of the Messiah.**

### **Shabath versus Sur-Sur and Rum**

Does this cancel out the prophecies about other events affecting the daily sacrifices? Absolutely not! Other prophecies revealed that the daily offerings would fail during the siege of the Romans in 70 A.D. They referred to this event as the **abomination of desolation**. They also reveal that a future Antichrist will force Israel to halt their sacrifices once they are reinstated in a future rebuilt temple. This event is termed the **transgression of desolation**. Though the terms are somewhat similar, they are separate and distinct events.

The failure of the daily sacrifice in connection with the Romans appears in Daniel 12:11. It says, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is **taken away** and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.” This same word appears in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11 also.

The Hebrew for “taken away” is *sur-sur*, (pronounced soor, soor). It can have a variety of meanings, such as “to remove, take away, stop, turn off, leave undone, to decline, fail, or to put down.” The word describes the physical act of removing or of **failing to offer** the daily sacrifices. It does not convey the idea of Sabbath completion like we see in the word *Shabath*.

With respect to the damage that the Antichrist will inflict against the daily offerings in a future rebuilt Temple, a different word is used: the Hebrew word *rum* (pronounced like room). This word conveys the thought that the Antichrist will “rise up against and cast down the daily offerings.” The prophecy in Daniel 8 concerns this event. Verse 11 states:

He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away [rum] and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.

Verse 13 calls this the transgression of desolation, not the abomination of desolation. By using different Hebrew words

exclusively for each of these three events, the Holy Spirit enabled us to distinguish between: (1) the Sabbath end of sacrifices by the Messiah; (2) the failure of the sacrifices in the Roman siege of Jerusalem; and (3) the desecration of the daily sacrifices by a future Antichrist. The fact that these distinctions are carefully maintained throughout the prophecies further confirms the truth that Christ is the subject of Daniel's seventieth week.

Therefore, we can sum it up like this: In the abomination of desolation, unbelieving and riotous men (the Jews) allowed the sacrifice to fail (*sur-sur*) in 70 AD. In the transgression of desolation, a devilish man will rise up to physically remove (*rum*) the Temple offerings in a time yet to come. But praise be to God, for in the middle of the seventieth week Jesus Christ took our place on the cross, forever cancelled our sins, and brought the need for any further sacrifice to a restful (*Shabath*) completed end! Because of that, we now have a hope-filled future to look forward to for all eternity.

Once we approach the prophecy from this perspective, it becomes clear just how wonderfully the mystery of salvation is revealed **when we allow Christ His rightful place in the seventieth week!**

## Chapter 7

# A Prevailing Covenant

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Since the Antichrist is not the one “breaking the covenant” by bringing the sacrifices to an end, then he is not the one “confirming” the covenant in the first place. There is nothing in the prophecy to suggest that the covenant would be broken. In fact, Gabriel’s message conveyed just the opposite, for the prophecy stated that He would cause the covenant to prevail. This becomes clear once we examine this part of the prophecy as it appears in the Hebrew language.

The prophecy revealed that after a total of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, the Messiah would be cut off. The word for “after” (pronounced *akh-ar* in the Hebrew) should be understood to mean “sometime following the sixty-two weeks,” not necessarily “at the very end of the sixty-two weeks.”

The prophecy was clear that the seventieth week would begin with the anointing of the Prince. Since Jesus ministered with this heavenly anointing for 3½ years, this would place Christ’s crucifixion in the middle of the week. This is when He brought a restful end to the need for sacrifice by His sacrificial death on the cross.

Since the prophecy stated that He would be cut off “after” (or following) the sixty-two-week segment, we now know that “after” meant “in the middle of the week.” This confirms Gabriel’s message that the middle of the week would be marked by the sacrificial “cutting” of a covenant.

## Cutting the Covenant

When the seventieth week is properly unsealed, the cross becomes the central feature of the seventieth week, explaining how the Messiah would make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

The Berkeley translation provides a more literal rendering of this part of the prophecy by saying, “In a week He shall make the covenant to prevail for many.” Most translations indicate that this covenant will be made **for one week**, but the Hebrew text literally reads, “And He has strengthened a covenant with many – one week.” According to Hebrew scholars, the preposition “for” **does not** appear in the Hebrew text, nor is there anything in the prophecy to imply that it should be there. The implication is that once this prophetic week has been completed, the covenant will have prevailed for many.

The Hebrew word for “confirm” is *gaw-bar*, meaning to be strong, and by implication, to prevail, be mighty or great. Again, the thought is not that the covenant will only last **for a week** but that, by the end of the week, the covenant **will have prevailed** for many. It means that all the objectives mentioned by Gabriel at the beginning of the prophecy will have been accomplished.

The Hebrew word for “covenant” is *bereeth*. It is the same word used in Genesis 15 when God cut a covenant with Abraham, commanding him to take a heifer, a goat, and a ram, and cut them in two. Then God caused Abraham to fall into a deep sleep while a burning torch passed between the pieces—that is, through the blood. In this way God cut a blood covenant with Abraham.

The truth that a blood covenant is the focus of this part of the prophecy can be understood by the phrase, “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.” Here again, each chosen word contributes to the flow of the prophecy. In this case, it is *karath*. It means “to cut (off, down, or asunder); by implication to destroy or consume; specifically to covenant (that is, make an alliance or bargain, originally by cutting flesh and passing between the pieces).” God chose this word **because it associates the Messiah’s death with the cutting of a covenant**. His was no

ordinary kind of death. Instead, it was a covenantal cutting. This unique phrase joins the death of the Messiah in verse 26 with the prevailing covenant in verse 27.

The word is similar in meaning to the word used in Isaiah 53:8, “For He was **cut off** from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people was He stricken” (emphasis added). Verse 10 says:

When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

Again, Paul underscored the Sabbatical nature of this offering in Hebrews 10:5-10 by describing it as a once-and-for-all offering.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said, “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for Me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings You were not pleased.” Then I said, “Here I am—it is written about Me in the scroll—I have come to do Your will, O God.”

And by that will, we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

There is no need to substitute a seven-year peace pact such that it cancels out the very purpose for which the Messiah appears in the prophecy. He came to fulfill God’s will: to cut a new blood-covenant by offering both body and soul to be cut off in a ritual slaying. It had been written that He would do this “in the scroll.” The scroll of Isaiah revealed that Christ would lay down His life as an offering. The scroll of Daniel revealed that this offering would be made once and for all.

## **The Paradox**

The hope-filled future of Gabriel’s message from Heaven takes on an even brighter glow once we glimpse another critical aspect of the prophecy: the prediction that the Messiah would rise

from the dead. The prophecy poses a subtle paradox in that He would “make the covenant to prevail for many” in spite of being “cut off.” How then can the terms of the covenant be made to prevail when the One who initiated it is cut off in death?

The same paradox appears in the great prophecy found in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah:

For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken; and they made His grave with the wicked . . . yet, it pleased the Lord to crush Him . . . **for when You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.**<sup>1</sup>

The paradox that God’s righteous Servant would see His seed (offspring) after being sacrificially cut off in death, **can only be accomplished by resurrection.** Though in the grave, God would prolong His days. Likewise, the only way a “cut off Messiah” could “cause the covenant to prevail” is by being raised from the dead.

The prophecy of the seventieth week and the prophecy in Isaiah are adjoining puzzle pieces. They are inter-related prophecies that fit together in God’s grand prophetic puzzle. Both speak of His being “cut off in sacrificial death.” Both speak of His soul being made “an offering for sin.” And both contain the subtle allusion to His resurrection.

Isaiah 53:12 goes on to say, “Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death . . . and made intercession for the transgressors.” **Through resurrection, the Messiah would cause the covenant to prevail for many.**

Isaiah prophesied, “I the Lord have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.”<sup>2</sup> Notice the dual nature of the covenant. It was a

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 53:8-10, emphasis added

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 42:6

covenant **for the people** and a **light for the Gentiles**, that is, for both Jew and Gentile.

As you can see, the decision as to whether to use capital P's and H's changes everything. The sudden introduction of a second prince disturbs the entire flow of the seventieth week. We were told that the seventieth week would begin with the anointed ministry of the Messiah. The gospel accounts confirm the fact that this anointing was evident for the 3½ years of Jesus' miracle ministry.

The failure to stick with the original Prince allows "another prince" to confiscate the week. Suddenly, the week no longer begins with an anointing, but with this other prince offering a fake peace treaty instead.

This would mean that the true Prince would not actually appear at the end of sixty-nine weeks as originally predicted, but several years earlier. His early arrival would be required in order to fulfill 3½ years of miracle ministry **and be cut off before the seventieth week even begins**. So what happened to the part of the passage that reads, "there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks until Messiah the Prince?"

Furthermore, what would happen to the Messiah once He was cut off? **Together with His resurrection, this is the defining moment in the whole of the Bible**. Is this other prince so vitally important that this great prophecy from Heaven should suddenly shift gears and pick up with the story of an imposter instead? Do his actions really trump those of a redeeming Messiah-Prince? Are not the other prophecies about the coming man of sin sufficient?

The seventy-week prophecy began with, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city." The identity of both "the Prince" and "the people" remains constant throughout the course of the entire prophecy. Their identity only becomes confusing when we alter the prophecy such that it no longer applies to Christ.

God carefully chose each word in the prophecy to guard against such an unwarranted interpretation: words such as *Messiah* (anointed), *karath* (cut off), *gabar* (prevail), *bereeth* (covenant) and *shabath* (rest). He took every precaution so that

we could avoid the awful confusion that results when we exchange the coming Prince for “another prince.”

## Chapter 8

# The People of the Prince

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But after the sixty-two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and **the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary**; its end shall come overwhelmingly [as a flood], and till the end there shall be warfare; desolations are determined.

And He shall confirm the covenant with many – one week; and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that which has been determined shall have been poured upon the desolate.<sup>1</sup>

In the past people have struggled to understand the identity of both the people and the prince in this part of the prophecy. The prophecy reveals that these people would be connected in some way to “the prince who would come” and that they would be responsible for the destruction of the Jewish Temple and the city of Jerusalem. As noted earlier, since the Hebrew language does not distinguish between upper- and lower-case letters, the decision to capitalize any given word must be decided by the context. So the question becomes, should we understand the prophecy to mean “the people of the prince” or “the people of the Prince?”

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:25-26, emphasis added

Since it is an historical fact that the Roman army besieged Jerusalem until it fell in 70 A.D., we might jump to the hasty conclusion that the Romans were the destructive people to which the prophecy referred. Thus, many took this to mean that “the people of the coming prince” was a veiled reference to the future “man of sin,” also called the Antichrist. This altered the entire meaning of the prophecy as it concerned the seventieth week, for the introduction of “another prince” would mean that he is the one who would “confirm a covenant,” who would “bring a Sabbath end to sacrifice and offering,” and who would “make the Temple desolate.”

This is because the personal pronouns in “he shall confirm,” “he shall cause,” and “he shall make” all link back to whoever this prince is. It was a no-brainer that “prince” should be capitalized in the phrase “Messiah the Prince” back in verse 25, for this was an obvious reference to Christ. But what about the “prince” in verse 26?

Once modern translators took the liberty to make it “prince” and not “Prince;” Christ was out of the prophecy and the Antichrist was in. Thus, Christ was no longer viewed as being the subject of the seventieth week. The capitalization of just one letter left us with a “cut off” Messiah in verse 26. And, sadly, it effectively cut Him out of the rest of the prophecy as well.

The prophecy became difficult to understand. Did “the people of the coming prince” refer to the people who made up the Roman army? And if so, how could the soldiers of 70 A.D. relate to a future Antichrist? If the Antichrist is the coming “prince,” how do we identify “his people?” Many theories were proposed over the years to explain the strange wording.

## **The Coming Prince**

As important as the word **Messiah** is in determining the start of the seventieth week, so is the word **Prince** for determining what happens during the rest of the week. The full title is **Messiah the Prince**. Both words refer to one Person and to one Person alone. In terms of capital letters, the prophecy should read, “And the people of the Prince who is to come shall destroy

the city and the sanctuary.” Gabriel did not have two different princes in mind. The Messiah is the Prince who would come in both verses.

After all, He is the One who would be anointed to start the seventieth week; He is the One who would be cut off in the middle of the week such that the blood of bulls and goats would no longer be required; and He is the One who would cause a New Covenant to prevail for many by the week’s end. And as we will see shortly, He is also the One who would speak against the Jewish Temple, saying, “Behold, your House is left to you desolate.”

Since the personal pronouns in “He shall confirm,” “He shall cause,” and “He shall make” relate grammatically to “the prince” in verse 26, and since they all point to the work of the Messiah, the word “Prince” must be capitalized as well. In other words, the Prince of verse 26 is the same Messiah-Prince that we encountered in verse 25. Gabriel did not switch princes on us just as the prophecy was getting good. If you remember, he was sent to reveal how the Messiah-Prince would accomplish and fulfill each of the objectives in the prophecy.

Once the prophecy is unsealed, the confusing and awkward notion that the people who would destroy Jerusalem would somehow belong to a future Antichrist is easily resolved. The phrase “the people of the coming Prince” refers to the Jewish people of Jesus’ time, to His own generation. The gospel of Matthew opens with, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” Since the genealogy of Jesus, according to the flesh, traced back to David and Abraham, the Jews were His people. The connection is obvious.

This seems to present us with a problem, though, for it would mean that the prophecy lays the blame for the destruction of both the city and the Temple at the feet of the Jewish people, not the Romans.

## **Who Crucified Jesus?**

The solution to the problem becomes apparent when we ask ourselves, “Who crucified Jesus, the Jews or the Romans?” On

the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and said, “**Men of Israel**, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, **you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death** . . . therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, **whom you crucified**, both Lord and Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Who crucified Jesus? Peter, speaking by the inspiration of the Spirit, did not blame the Romans, even though they carried out the physical act. Instead, he blamed the men of Israel. The passage in Isaiah 53:8, as it appears in The Amplified Version of the Bible, states:

By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who among them considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living [stricken to His death] for the transgression of my [Isaiah's] people, **to whom the stroke was due?**

Notice the last phrase, “to whom the stroke was due.” The Romans were reluctant participants in both His crucifixion and in the destruction of the city. Pontius Pilate sought to release Jesus, but the angry mob chose Barabbas instead. Likewise, the Roman General, Titus, offered the besieged Jews clemency if they would but lay down their arms. He sought to spare the city. But they refused.

Jesus told Pilate, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been granted you from above. **Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.**”<sup>3</sup> From then on Pilate sought to release Jesus, but the Jews cried out against Him.

The message from Gabriel revealed that even though the destruction of Jerusalem would be carried out by a foreign enemy, **the people of the Prince to come were charged with**

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 2:22-23, 36, emphases added

<sup>3</sup> John 19:10-12

**the “greater sin.”** Therefore, they were ultimately blamed for the destruction of their own city and Temple.

In fact, history bears this out. The Roman legions were only sent because the nation of Israel revolted against Rome. The riotous factions in Israel were so intent on fighting with each other that Rome was forced to respond in order to quell the violence.

The eye-witness account of the Jewish historian, Josephus, confirms Gabriel’s prophecy—the fact that “the Jewish people” of Jesus’ time were the ones who brought about their own destruction. Josephus was a Jewish general who had been captured by Titus prior to the siege. He was taken prisoner and forced to remain with Titus throughout its entirety.

Commenting on Josephus’ account of the siege, Philip Mauro, in his book, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, wrote:

“The distresses of those [Jews] who were hemmed in by the sudden appearance of the Roman armies were peculiar in this respect, namely, that what they endured was mainly self-inflicted. That is to say, they suffered far more from the cruelties and tortures inflicted upon one another, than from the common enemy outside the walls.”<sup>4</sup>

Josephus’ own account describes how “the sedition” [the warring factions among the Jews] were the cause of the destruction:

“For they returned to their former madness, and separated one from another, and fought it out; and they did everything that the besiegers [the Romans] could desire them to do. For they never suffered from the Romans anything worse than what they made each other suffer; nor was there any misery endured by the city which, after what these men did, could be esteemed new. It was most of all unhappy before it was overthrown; and those that took it did it a kindness. For I venture to say that the sedition destroyed the city, and the Romans destroyed the sedition. This

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<sup>4</sup> *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, page 217

was a much harder thing to do than to destroy the walls; So that we may justly ascribe our misfortunes to our own people.”<sup>5</sup>

Did you get that? According to the eyewitness testimony of one of their own leaders, “the Jewish sedition destroyed the city and the Romans destroyed the sedition.” Josephus blamed his own people for the destruction of Jerusalem.

Make no mistake about it, the nation of Israel crucified their own Prince and destroyed their own Temple. Jesus Himself lamented over Jerusalem near the end of His ministry. Luke 19:41-44 states (emphasis added):

Now as Jesus drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, **because you did not know the time of your visitation.**”

Jesus did not wish these things upon the Jews. On His final approach to Jerusalem, He stood overlooking the city and wept. He wanted to gather them and protect them, just as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But the people were not willing. When He stretched out His arms in a posture to gather, they simply nailed His outstretched hands to a cross. Thus, they chose to be scattered instead.

In Luke 21:23-24 (emphasis added), Jesus stated that “there would be great distress in the land and wrath upon **this people.**” He continued, “For they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

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<sup>5</sup> The Wars of the Jews; V. 6. 2)

Knowing that He was about to be crucified, Jesus issued a final warning to His generation of the consequences of what they were about to do:

...so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, **all these things will come upon this generation.**<sup>6</sup>

We can now make sense of Gabriel's message. The phrase "the people of the Prince who is to come" did not merely refer to the Jewish people at large, for he was earmarking a specific generation: the generation of Jews that would belong to the time of Messiah the Prince. The prophecy loses nearly all its prophetic value when we assume that some other prince is in view.

When we rightly interpret Christ as being the Prince, the prophecy not only reveals who would destroy the city, but who would cut off the Messiah as well. He would be wounded in the house of His friends. The prophecy in Zechariah 13:6-9 refers to these events:

And one will say to Him, "What are these wounds between your arms?" Then He will answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends."

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 23:35-36, emphasis added



## Chapter 9

# “He Shall” Times Three

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Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”<sup>1</sup>

See! Your house is left to you desolate.<sup>2</sup>

**I**t can be a challenge to capture the exact meaning of a passage when translating the Hebrew text into English. This is especially true when dealing with prophecy, since the translators must sometimes make a judgment call on what they think the prophecy means.

Perhaps nowhere is this difficulty more pronounced than in the prophecy of Daniel’s seventy weeks. Those who have ever examined this prophecy in various translations know that the translators often take great liberties in slanting the prophecy towards their personal bias.

We have already seen, for example, how the decision on which words to capitalize can turn one Prince into two and alter the entire meaning of the prophecy. So if you have ever struggled to understand this prophecy, don’t feel bad. Daniel heard the prophecy in his native tongue and still needed an angel to explain it!

Aside from the issue of capitalization, the variation of a pronoun can also influence how we understand the prophecy. For example, this is how verse twenty-seven appears in the New King James translation:

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 11:20-21

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 23:38

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate...

Notice that the first pronoun (he shall confirm) is not capitalized, whereas they chose to capitalize the second (He shall bring an end). To make matters worse, they altered the last part to read, "...shall be one who makes desolate."

In the Hebrew, the same pronoun is used throughout the entire verse. It never changes. It literally says, "he shall confirm," "he shall cause," and "he shall make." Therefore, the Old King James Version faithfully translated the pronouns like this:

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate.

Obviously, the New King James translators took the position that the Antichrist would confirm a covenant (he shall) but that Christ would bring an end to sacrifice (He shall). Since they believed that the Antichrist would make the Temple desolate, they decided to change the third pronoun from "he shall" to "...shall be one who makes desolate." Obviously, even the scholars can become confused.

Should all three pronouns be capitalized? According to the rules of grammar, the third pronoun relates to the same Person as the other two—the Prince who is to come. Therefore, if it is proper to capitalize the first two, then the third pronoun **must be capitalized as well**.

Since the work of "confirming the covenant" and "bringing sacrificial offerings to a restful end" clearly belongs to Christ, we have no other choice but to concede that the third pronoun refers to Him also. **This can only mean that the Messiah would make Daniel's people desolate.**

This unanticipated difficulty no doubt accounts for the fact that able scholars and translators have struggled to understand the

prophecy, including the proper treatment of the pronouns. They sought to avoid the unkind thought that upon confirming a covenant and bringing sacrificial offerings to a finished end, this same Messiah would then make His own people desolate.

Our western minds balk at such a thought, even though Daniel was quite familiar with the concept. He had been making similar statements in his prayer when Gabriel appeared to give him this prophecy. The prayer is recorded in Daniel 9:4-19. Since it is one of the longest prayers recorded in the Bible, I will just offer the following highlights to make my point:

O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against you.

Daniel would not have balked at the thought that their Messiah would make them desolate, for he acknowledged that God drove them into Babylonian captivity because of their previous unfaithfulness. His prayer keyed in on the heart of the matter when he acknowledged that they had not listened to the words of Moses:

All Israel has transgressed Your law and turned away, refusing to obey You. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us because we have sinned against You . . . therefore the Lord has watched upon the evil and brought it upon us.

As Christians, we often struggle to reconcile such passages with a God known for His abounding grace, unending mercy, and constant goodness. Can the end-time concepts of judgment and wrath be understood in the context of a Gospel of grace? I submit that they can be. In fact, they must be. We need to get a handle on these things if we are going to effectively reach this generation with the message of grace while preaching that He is also coming to judge the world.

Hosea prophesied, “Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two Days He will revive us; on the third Day He will raise us up that we may live in His sight.”<sup>3</sup>

Would anyone dare change the pronouns in this passage? Would it be proper to teach that they were torn and stricken by the Romans, but healed and bandaged by the Lord? Of course not, the prophecy should be understood to say, “The Lord has torn, but the Lord will heal us; the Lord has stricken, but the Lord will bind us up.” Why then do we feel the need to change them in the seventieth week?

## Dancing with the Devil

It is important to understand the dynamics involved when we encounter such statements. First, the statements do not mean that God is directly causing the calamities to happen, even though they appear to be written that way.

For example, when Daniel noted that the Lord brought evil upon them, this does not mean that God actually brought the evil. And He certainly did not hire the Devil to do it. The Devil does not perform side jobs for God after hours.

It only means that God **permitted** the evil to come. It was His decision or judgment to allow Israel to follow the course they had chosen, even though He had warned them in advance of the consequences.

God gave them the choice between life and death, the blessing or the curse. He pleaded with them to choose life. Choosing life was His will for their lives (Deuteronomy 30:19). Nevertheless, God’s righteousness required that their choices be respected, even though it pained Him to do so.

The unfortunate presence of the Thief (the Devil) on this planet means that there is plenty of death to go around. The acts of stealing, killing, and destroying are his specialty. God knew this, and lovingly warned them that if they were to choose these things, they would suffer the consequences. He would have no choice but to allow this and honor their free-will decisions.

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<sup>3</sup> Hosea 6:1-2

If God had His way, all men would receive His goodness. In fact, Jesus suffered and laid down His life on the cross to make that possible. He chose to be cursed and to die in our place. He restored God's right to intervene on our behalf if we would but turn to Him.

God did this because He loved the world **so much** that He offered His only begotten Son to die in our place on the cross. We could even say that, through Jesus, God was romancing every single one of us.

However, there are times when, despite all His overtures of love, He cannot get that goodness to us. We refuse it and turn away. Since God is not a spiritual kidnapper or rapist, He must allow us the freedom to choose "other lovers."

Unfortunately, these other lovers are not lovers at all. To them, we are just objects to satisfy their desire to steal, kill, and destroy. We are nothing but a one-night stand to the Devil. He will throw us away as soon as he is done with us.

God tells it like it is because He wants us to know what we're getting into when the Devil walks up and says, "May I have this dance?" God, on the other hand, is always pleading with open arms, saying, "If you turn back, I can help you. I really love you. No one will ever love you as much as I do."

So when we read the passage in Daniel, ". . . and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate," we need to understand that God is merely permitting the desolation, not directly causing it to happen.

Someone might ask, "Why then is it written as if God is causing it to happen?" The reason is this: Since God is sovereign and all-powerful, nothing can happen without His permission. Therefore, the Hebrew verbs, in acknowledging His sovereignty, are expressed as if He is performing the action, when really He is merely permitting it. In other words, He did not cause it, but He did not prevent it either. In other words, He has the power to stop it, **but not the right**.

Such expressions maintain God's sovereignty. They also remind us that if we stray, **He still retains His power when we repent and turn back**. That's good news, because it means that the devil cannot have the last dance should we turn back to God.

The people of Jesus' time committed many abominations. For one thing, they crucified their own Messiah. Then they began to persecute His Church. With these abominations in mind, Jesus announced that their house would be left desolate.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to her, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not!

Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, you shall not see Me from now on until you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."<sup>4</sup>

The ill-fated interpretation that the seventieth week is about the Antichrist diminishes the candid truth of Daniel's prophecy. It disregards one of the primary themes of the Old Testament—that the children of Israel would be torn and stricken because they rejected their Messiah. In the end, they chose the curse.

It was for this reason that Daniel and his people had previously been carried off to Babylon. It was for this reason that Daniel was so fervently confessing the sins of his people when Gabriel showed up.

There was, though, this hope: As surely as they would become desolate, **they would also be revived**; but only on God's terms: not until they confess, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

## Is God Judging America?

The question often comes up, "Is God judging America?" If by judging you mean is He causing earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and any other kind of evil to happen, the answer is certainly not. If by judging you mean is He deciding between situations in which He has the right to intervene and exercise His saving power on our behalf, the answer is decidedly yes! "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 23:37-39

show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.”<sup>5</sup>

If we do not understand the concept of judgment, we will give people the wrong impression of God. We will misrepresent Him to be a cruel disciplinarian and be found preaching “another gospel.” There is only one Gospel and it is the Gospel of grace. The apostle Paul reiterated our message in the following passage:

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Technically, God is not imputing the world’s trespasses against them, even though people often make it sound like He is. They make it appear that God is angry with the world. Did Jesus display any anger when He hung on the cross? No, instead He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Then why does God consign people to hell? The answer is, He doesn’t. The Devil does. According to Jesus, eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels, not man. It is not God’s desire for any man or woman to spend eternity in that awful place. It was not specifically prepared for us.

Then why are people consigned to eternal fire? Well, even though He loves us, God is not a thief. If He were, He would be no better than Satan. And all would be lost. Therefore, God cannot take that which does not belong to Him. He is not a spiritual kidnapper. So if you do not belong to His family at the end of your life, God does not have the authority to bring you to His Heaven any more than you have the authority to go into your neighbor’s house and steal their kids.

I can assure you that it breaks Jesus’ heart to lose people. He did everything within His legal power to get them to Heaven. The saddest part is that anyone can avoid an eternity in the Devil’s lake of fire by just breathing a simple heart-felt prayer to invite Jesus into their heart.

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Chronicles 16:9

## What about God's Wrath?

There is a Day of wrath that is coming. This wrath will be intense, but very brief. Since it will occur when God evicts Satan from our realm and casts him into the Abyss, God is not dispensing that wrath at this time. In Romans 2:5 (emphasis added), Paul wrote, "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are **treasuring up for yourself** wrath in the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

His wrath will be poured out against the nations when they come up against Jerusalem at the end of this age. At that time, God's fury will flash in His face.

It would be like us, looking out our window and seeing a bunch of teen-aged bullies surrounding our little child with rocks and baseball bats. Your child is screaming. These older bullies are threatening to kill your child. Wouldn't your face flush with fury? Wouldn't you tear out of the house to save your child? What if these bullies were then to turn against you as well? You would do **whatever it takes** to preserve the life of your child. I think you get the point.

The next couple of chapters explain why the third pronoun in "He shall make desolate" should be capitalized. They should be read in the light of what has been discussed in this chapter.

## Chapter 10

# An End to the Desolation

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...and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, [or, on the Temple shall be the abomination of desolations] and at the end of the time an end shall be put to the desolation.<sup>1</sup>

**I**n Mark 11, Jesus cursed a fig tree for lack of fruit. The next day, His disciples noted that the tree had withered from its roots overnight. Was Jesus simply in a bad mood that day and just so happened to take it out on a poor defenseless fig tree? Or was His decisive act that day a prophetic lesson for the benefit of His disciples and the nation at large? Did His lesson enable them to understand the forthcoming events involving His crucifixion and the destruction of Jerusalem?

Once we understand the identities of both “the people” and “the Prince” in Daniel’s seventieth week, we can also understand the enormity of the events that have transpired since that time. We can make sense of what has been nearly two thousand years of affliction and tribulation, especially for the Jewish people. The unsealed version of Daniel’s prophecy now reads:

But after the sixty-two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; its end shall come overwhelmingly [as a flood], and till the end there shall be warfare; desolations are determined.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:27 (Septuagint)

And He shall confirm the covenant with many—one week; and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, [or, on the Temple shall be the abomination of desolations] and at the end of the time an end shall be put to the desolation.

In Deuteronomy 28, Moses offered the children of Israel a choice between life and death, the blessing or the curse. He prophesied that their failure to choose life would result in the following calamity:

The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand . . . they shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down.<sup>2</sup>

Isaiah echoed the same refrain by prophesying, “Behold, the Lord makes the land empty and makes it waste [desolate], distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants.” This was fulfilled in 70 A.D., just as Jesus predicted when He said, “. . . and they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all the nations.”

Jesus’ declaration of “See, your house is left to you desolate” was a withering word of rebuke to the nation. He had come to Jerusalem with open arms longing to gather, but the tree displayed no fruit. Instead, the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees sought to trip Him up and belittle Him in the eyes of the people. All the while, the chief priests were seeking a way to kill Him without starting a riot. Prior to this, Jesus referred to the Temple as being “His Father’s house;” but they chose to make it “their house” instead. The Temple had become a den of thieves. It was a lucrative business.

As the time of His crucifixion drew near, Jesus offered the Jewish leaders a last chance to turn around and run back into His sheltering arms. His words were direct and to the point because

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 28:49-52

their time was running out. We can see this in the parable that Jesus devised for the benefit of the Pharisees and Scribes who challenged His authority in those closing moments. The parable is found in its entirety in Luke 20:1-19.

In the parable, Jesus spoke of a certain man who planted a vineyard [Israel], leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time. At vintage-time, the owner sent various servants [the prophets] to collect some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers mistreated the owner's servants and refused to pay him his due. Finally, the owner decided to send his own son, saying, "Surely they will respect him when they see him." But instead, the vinedressers killed him.

In the parable, Jesus then asked, "Therefore, what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others." And when the Pharisees heard this, they replied, "Certainly not!" They perceived that Jesus had spoken this parable **against them and that they were the vinedressers in the parable**. Then Jesus looked them in the eyes and said:

Why then is it written, "The Stone that the builders rejected has become the chief capstone?" Whoever falls [or stumbles] on that Stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.

We now know how to interpret the last part of Daniel's prophecy: ". . . and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate." The phrase "He shall make" should be understood to mean, "He shall allow it to become desolate." It is no wonder that when Simeon saw the infant Jesus that he prophesied these words to Mary:

Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against, yes a sword will pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Note that Jesus was destined for **their fall**, not just their rising. Gabriel's message indicated that the same One who would

confirm the covenant by bringing about a restful end to sacrificial work would also allow their desolation.

The following prophecy in Ezekiel bears out this important feature of the seventieth week:

Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds . . . therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they defiled it. So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds."<sup>3</sup>

The people of the coming Prince brought about their own destruction when they rejected the sheltering arms of the Messiah. Even though He still retained the power to stop it, He no longer retained the right to prevent it. God destroyed them in the sense that He did not intervene even though He had the power to do so. He did not prevent it because His righteousness would not allow the loss of their right to choose their own way.

He had created them in His own image with the freedom of choice. He could not violate that creative act, lest He deprive them of all that makes them human; lest they become mere objects, incapable of both giving and receiving love. You may love your smart phone, but the device can never know it or love you back.

## **Michael the Guardian**

Until this time, God had set Michael the archangel to be the great prince who stands watch [guard] over the sons of Daniel's people. Michael and his angels had been positioned to be a hedge of protection for the people of Israel. Their nation could not be destroyed, or scattered, as long as Michael stood in the way. The Lord, though, had spoken the following words over Jerusalem and its Temple: "You are desolate." And Michael took note of what the Lord had declared.

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<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 36:16-28

Daniel 12:1 says, “At that time [during the last Days] Michael shall stand up . . . and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.” The phrase, “Michael shall stand up” in the Hebrew means to step aside, to be still, or to be silent.

The prophecy referred to the time when the Lord would utter His judgment (decision) of the situation as it concerned Jerusalem. In effect, the rendered judgment meant, **they have removed themselves from God’s hedge of protection. They can no longer be defended. I must permit them to be scattered even though I had longed to gather them.** Since God’s angels always heed the voice of the Lord, Michael had no choice but to stand still and watch.

If this seems unfair, remember that the judgment of a nation does not mean that any given individual of that nation must partake of that judgment. Anyone at that time could have believed in Christ, as did the early disciples, to become the blessed and favored “children of God.” Everyone had their own choice.

With Michael no longer restraining, the fall of Israel was inevitable. The message from Gabriel revealed that a prolonged period of desolations was determined upon Israel. According to Hosea the prophet, they would be torn and stricken for the remainder of two great Days, what Jesus called a “Today and Tomorrow.” Daniel’s other visions also revealed that this period of desolation would eventually culminate in the appearance of the future man of sin.

But the message did not end on a negative note, for it also revealed that the desolations would ultimately be brought to a pre-determined end. “At the end of the time” [the sixth great Day] God will bring their desolations to an end and pour out His Spirit on the nation of Israel. Likewise, the prophecy in Ezekiel continues:

For I will take you from among the nations; gather you out of all countries; and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean . . . I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you . . . I will put My Spirit within you . . . then you

shall dwell in the land that I gave your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

The message from Gabriel assured them that their transgression would be finished by the end of the seventieth week. As long as Daniel's prophecies remained sealed, the "determined consummation" would remain hidden also. But once Jesus was resurrected, the unsealing could begin, including a full revelation of the pre-determined consummation of the prophecy.

## **Our Resurrection—Their Acceptance**

Since the first half of the week was fulfilled by the Messiah's first coming, this could only mean that He would return a second time to finish the prophecy. But when would this happen? When would He return? The prophecy in Hosea provided the answer.

Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up.<sup>4</sup>

Since a prophecy concerning a mere 48 hours of backsliding makes no sense whatsoever, we were meant to understand the prophecy from Heaven's perspective, wherein a Day in His sight equates to a thousand years of our time. We now know that the seventieth week began with the anointed ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. We also know that His Messianic ministry coincided with the start of the fifth great Day of God's Week.

With four Days spent and only three remaining, the last Days began at that time. **Therefore, the start of Jesus' ministry, the start of the last Days, and the start of the seventieth week, all converged at that singular moment in time: the day that Jesus was anointed for ministry.**

Furthermore, Jesus revealed that His anointed ministry would continue for the remainder of two great Days, which He referred to as a Today and Tomorrow. The extended length of this ministry would be made possible through the anointing that

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<sup>4</sup> Hosea 6:1-2

would be passed on to the Church, and hence the term, the Body of Christ, the anointed One. These two thousand years, beginning with His personal ministry, would reach its completion (or perfection) on the third great Day.

Quite interestingly, the prophecy in Hosea assigns two important prophetic events to the arrival of the third Day—a reviving and a resurrection. “After two Days He will revive us; on the third Day He will raise us up.” This meant that the resurrection of those who are Christ’s at His coming on the third Day **would be followed by the reviving of the Jewish people.**

When Jesus comes in that Day, our rapturous ascent will trigger a third-Day revival within the nation of Israel. As they “bless the Lord,” God will put His Spirit within them. He will sprinkle them with clean water and give them a new-born spirit.

Paul referred to this as being a **mystery** that every believer should understand: “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”<sup>5</sup>

Paul also understood that this period of blindness was only temporary. It was not a permanent condition. He knew that their sight would return. How did he know this? Obviously, he understood the connection in Hosea’s prophecy between Israel’s third-Day revival and our third-Day resurrection. In Romans 11:11-15, he insightfully wrote:

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 11:25

This last sentence reveals how thoroughly Paul understood the mystery. Note the contrast: Because of their fall, we got salvation; because of their failure, we became rich. When they were cast away, we were reconciled. When we follow his logic through to its conclusion, we discover an amazing revelation: **when they get accepted, we get resurrected!**

The unsealed version of the seventieth week enables us to understand the mystery of Christ—the fact that He would be rejected by His own people. The nation of Israel would be “broken off the vine” and “cast away” during a two-Day time-out for the benefit of the Gentile nations. Most importantly, it enables us to understand the predetermined consummation of the prophecy—the truth that Jesus will return on the third Day to finish the week **and bring an end to Israel’s transgression**. Once they confess, “Blessed is He,” the following prophecy will be fulfilled:

It shall be in that Day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. **And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication**; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

In that Day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.<sup>6</sup>

And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel . . . they shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions . . . then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Zechariah 12:9-10 and 13:1, emphasis added

<sup>7</sup> Ezekiel 37:22-23

## Chapter 11

# When the Sacrifices Failed

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**W**hile the phrase **abomination of desolation** can be found in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11, the first time these words appear together is back in the ninth chapter of Daniel:

. . . and the people of the Prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and till the end there shall be warfare; desolations [ruins] are determined . . . and on the Temple shall be the abomination of desolations, and at the end of the time an end shall be put to the desolation.

In the Bible, the first time a prophetic concept is mentioned becomes significant. Its first occurrence provides its basic meaning. The message from Gabriel made it clear that both Jerusalem **and the Temple that they would return to rebuild** would be destroyed because of the abundance of their abominations. This is the Temple that existed at the time of Jesus. The Hebrew word for abominations is *shik-koots*, *shik-koots*. It means a plurality of disgusting, filthy, idolatrous, or detestable things. They would not suffer for just a few mistakes, but because they had filled the land with their abominations. The end would come overwhelmingly, with the strength of a flood, and the people of the Prince would be swept away.

The prophecy also revealed that a prolonged period of desolations had been foreseen (or determined upon them) “until the end of the warfare or conflict.” This did not refer to the end of a specific battle, but to the end of their captivity, the time when they would return to Christ so that **God’s face could shine on them once again**. We know this because these desolations had been clearly predicted in the prophecies of Moses and Ezekiel.

Since most Christians are not as familiar with these prophecies as they are with other parts of the Bible, an unscriptural definition of the abomination of desolation arose. Today it is quite common for people to associate the abomination of desolation with the coming of the Antichrist. But once we get the scriptural definition of the term, it becomes quite clear that it refers to the events that culminated in the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD.

**It is critically important that we understand this prophetic term and all that it entails, for it dramatically affects our view of the end times.** The reason that the abomination of desolation is so critical is that Jesus said it would trigger a period of great and unequalled tribulation, something that the world had never seen before or would ever see again.

So when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet . . . then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains . . . for in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.<sup>1</sup>

Once we locate the abomination of desolation in terms of the end-time scenario of events, we will also know where to place the time of great tribulation as well. If the abomination of desolation refers to the actions of a future Antichrist, then the period of great tribulation also remains in our future. On the other hand, if the abomination of desolation referred to the destruction of the Temple following the days of Jesus, then the period of unequalled tribulation started back then. It’s just that simple.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 13:14 and 19

We can even take this a step further, for if the prophecies that refer to the abomination of desolation also depict a prolonged period of afflictions for the Jewish people, then this period of tribulation **did not end back then, but has continued throughout Jesus' Today and Tomorrow**. This agrees with the prophecy in Hosea in which they would be torn and stricken during the two Days preceding their third-Day revival. In other words, the great tribulation started back then, and it is still going on today.

But how can we be certain that the abomination of desolation happened back in Jesus' time? It is quite simple. The prophecy of the seventy weeks gave us the basic meaning of the term as used by Daniel in his subsequent writings.

The concept was this: "The sum of the abominations of your descendants will result in a time of prolonged ruin, conflict, and desolations. Jerusalem will be destroyed along with the Temple you are returning from Babylon to rebuild. The generation of the Messiah will be swept away as if by a flood until all the desolations that have been predicted have come upon them."

At the time of the end, when Israel's confession lines up with His Word and they turn back to the Messiah, then God's face will shine upon them once again. He will pour out His Spirit upon them, deliver them, and their transgressions will end.

## **A Near and Impending Event**

The events that would result in the fulfillment of Daniel's abomination of desolation were in the forefront of Jesus' mind as the cross drew near. This explains why He wept and lamented over Jerusalem. They had failed to recognize the time of their visitation and Jesus was painfully aware of the tragedies that would soon befall them.

These tragedies were clearly foretold in the writings of both Moses and Ezekiel. Their prophecies appear in Deuteronomy 28:47-68, Leviticus 26:27-46, and Ezekiel 5:5-17. (I urge you to take the time to read them in their entirety since space only permits quoting select parts in this chapter.)

These prophecies described the desolations that God knew would come upon them by refusing to choose life over death. Those who are acquainted with history and who are familiar with these prophecies should have no trouble in associating the abomination of desolation with the events surrounding 70 A.D., when Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish people were dispersed among the nations.

Jesus referred to these predictions during His final days in Jerusalem when He sat with His disciples on the Mount of Olives. In essence, He gave them a quick review of what Moses and Ezekiel had predicted concerning Israel.

The term abomination of desolation became a prophetic code word that linked the desolations of Daniel's seventieth week with the prophecies of Moses and Ezekiel. Therefore, both Matthew and Mark quote Jesus as saying, "So when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet . . . then let those in Judea flee."

Since the Jewish people were all too familiar with the warnings in the books of Moses, having suffered seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the mere mention of the term abomination of desolation was more than sufficient. They knew exactly what it meant. Gentile readers, on the other hand, were not as familiar with the ancient writings of the Jewish prophets, so the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write it a bit differently.

As Paul's protégé, missionary companion, and close friend, Luke was no doubt privy to Paul's exceptional knowledge concerning Christ's first and second coming. Since theirs was mainly a Gentile audience, Luke must have sensed the need to clarify this event for those not acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures. So rather than merely cite the term "abomination of desolation" and refer his readers to the book of Daniel, as both Matthew and Mark had done, he chose to clarify the matter by writing:

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of

vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.<sup>2</sup>

Luke's account is nearly identical to those of Matthew and Mark, except that he provides some necessary clarification. We could consider it to be nothing less than Paul's commentary on the abomination of desolation and the great tribulation to follow.

Because of this Spirit-inspired account we can now connect the things that Jesus, Moses, and Ezekiel said with the events that happened in the siege of Jerusalem that lasted from 66 to 70 A.D. For it was then that God made Israel desolate because of their abominations. Therefore, we now know to place it in the past, not in the future. Jesus further described this event by saying:

For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."<sup>3</sup>

History records that those who took these words to heart were able to escape at that time and save themselves. They "got out of Dodge" when they saw the approach of the Roman Legions. Those who did not were penned up inside for the entire length of the siege. Moses also prophesied about this siege in Deuteronomy 28:49-52, which reads in part:

The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies . . . they shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls in which you trust, come down throughout all your land.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 21:20-24

<sup>3</sup> Luke 19:43-44

In connection with these events, Jesus said, “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days . . . for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

Did you ever wonder why Jesus pronounced a special woe on pregnant women and on those nursing babies in connection with the abomination of desolation? Did you think that it had something to do with avoiding the Antichrist? Think again. In Leviticus, Moses wrote:

I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.

His prophecy in Deuteronomy devotes five full verses to this. I will not quote all of it because some parts are a bit gruesome.

You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you . . . the tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness . . . will eat the children whom she bears secretly for lack of everything in the siege.

Jesus knew that during the siege the people inside would eat their own children for want of food. Can you imagine the horror of a nursing mother as her baby is forcibly ripped from her arms to be eaten by others? Yet, this is what happened during the siege of Jerusalem. No wonder Jesus pronounced a special woe on pregnant women in connection with this time.

Both Jesus and Ezekiel associated these horrific events with a time of great and unequalled tribulation. Ezekiel wrote:

“Therefore,” thus says the Lord God: “Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. And I will do among

you what I have never done before, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations [detestable things].”

“Therefore, fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds.”

“Therefore, as I live,” says the Lord God, “surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things [shik-koots, shik-koots] and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity.”

According to the eyewitness account of Josephus, the Roman armies first approached Jerusalem in November, 66 A.D. The siege lasted three years and part of a fourth. With their food supply completely cut off, the famine within the city became so desperate that some of the people eventually resorted to cannibalism.

Josephus also recorded the exact date that the Temple sacrifice failed, noting that “on the seventeenth day of Panemus the daily sacrifice had failed, and had not been offered to God for want of men to offer it; and that the people were grievously troubled at it” (Wars, VI. 2.1).

This date corresponds to July, 70 A.D. These events fulfilled the prophecy in Daniel 12:11-12 concerning the length of the siege and the 1,290 days until the failure of the daily sacrifice. The extra 45 days (to make 1,335 days) marked the end of the siege, when Titus gained possession of the last stronghold. Those who endured to the end were blessed because Titus immediately extended clemency to those who had survived. In Leviticus, Moses referred to the end of Temple-offerings when he wrote:

I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas.

The parallel between the words of Jesus and those of Moses and Ezekiel is unmistakable. Ezekiel prophesied, “Thus shall My

anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and **I will be avenged.**” Jesus said, “For these are the **days of vengeance**, that all things written may be fulfilled.”

In Leviticus, Moses wrote, “I will **scatter you among the nations** and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbath as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies land.” Jesus said, “And they will fall by the edge of the sword **and be led away captive into all nations.**”

I think we can now understand why Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He saw the abomination of desolation as a near and impending event. It was something that all would recognize. The sum of their abominations would result in the destruction of their city, the destruction of their Temple, and the removal of their sacrifices. Those who did not die by famine, disease, and the sword, would be removed from the land and scattered into the nations for the next 1,900 years.

Like Daniel, they would live as captives in a foreign land. It had happened before in Daniel’s time, and it would happen once again. Daniel’s people had come up out of Egypt, only to eventually wind up in Babylon. The prophecy of the seventy weeks revealed that the cycle would be repeated. They would leave Babylon, only to wind up as captives in the nations.

God was always careful to note the length of their successive captivities: four hundred years of affliction in Egypt, seventy years of captivity in Babylon, and a Today and Tomorrow (2,000 years) in the nations.<sup>4</sup>

But there was a third-Day hope. The latter half of Daniel’s seventieth week meant that things would be different the next time around. After two Days they would be healed, bandaged, and revived. On the third Day the Messiah would come a second time to finish what He started. **After that, they would never be desolate again!**

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<sup>4</sup> Genesis 15:13, Jeremiah 29:10, and Hosea 6:1-2

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## Chapter 12

# A Sign and a Wonder

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Therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision: Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, **to finish the transgression . . .**<sup>1</sup>

**D**aniel was acutely familiar with Israel's failings and their tendency to backslide. He had spent the last seventy years of his life in Babylon because his people had turned away from God. He saw the judgment of God firsthand. And yet, as an individual, he had remained faithful to God. Because of this, God protected, prospered, and promoted him in the land of Babylon. He must have wondered though, "When will my people cease from their repeated backslidings?"

The message from Gabriel answered this question: "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your city, **to finish the transgression.**" Throughout their history, Israel had repeatedly transgressed before the Lord. The phrase "to finish the transgression" meant that the time would come when their transgressions would permanently cease. It spoke of a time when they would follow the Lord, never to backslide again. When would this happen? The prophecy provided the answer. **Their transgression would be finished by the end of the seventieth week.**

The message from Gabriel offered them a future and a hope. We now know that this future hope extends to the Gentile world as well. It was not the exclusive property of Israel alone. The latter part of the prophecy revealed how this hope would eventually spread throughout the entire world. As we shall see

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:23-24, emphasis added

later, it is in this critical part of the prophecy that the full mystery of Christ would play out.

In essence, the prophecy revealed that Israel would experience a protracted time of desolations. The people (or generation) of the Prince to come would destroy the city and the Temple. They would fall by the edge of the sword and be dispersed among the nations. “So where’s the hope in this?” you might ask. The hope comes into view once we realize that through their fall, the message of Christ would go forth to the Gentiles. The apostle Paul revealed this aspect of the mystery when he wrote:

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall [completely]? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. <sup>2</sup>

Moses predicted that Israel’s desolations would be “for a sign and a wonder.”<sup>3</sup> What did the Holy Spirit mean by that? How could their calamity be interpreted as being a sign? A sign to whom?

## **There’s Your Sign**

**The sign or lesson to be gained from Israel is that apart from Christ, we are all desolate.** There is none righteous, not even one. Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, each one, to his own way; but the Lord has laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all.”

Like Israel, we all have the propensity to turn from God and go our own way. We are all doomed to an eternity of desolation without Christ. We may have untold riches in this world, but without Him, we are spiritual paupers. We may have great intellects, but apart from His wisdom we are prone to foolishness. Whatever we build on our own is often torn down. Whatever else we trust in will most likely fail us in the end.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 11:11

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 28:46

We must seek the shelter of Messiah the Prince. He bore our judgment so that we could share in His glory. He took our desolation and, in exchange, offers us His Life of eternal destiny. As in the Passover, the destruction passes us by when we mark the doorposts of our heart with the blood of the Lamb (see Exodus 12:1-13).

The lesson of the people of the Prince also teaches us that it is futile to turn back to God **apart from Christ**. We may embrace some form of religion or spirituality; we may even reach out to a “Higher Power.” It is all of no effect unless we embrace Jesus Christ. Any religious system, including Judaism, that measures our acceptance with God based on our own works, is futile in the end. It is not a matter of being religious. The world is filled with religious people, all seeking some form of “God.” **The Psalmist declared that we must “kiss the Son” instead.**

Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.<sup>4</sup>

Israel boasted that they were close to God, but without the Messiah, theirs was a desolate house. Their only hope was to confess, “**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.**” This is the sign that the world was meant to consider.

And as it was for the Jews, so it is with every individual today. Your future and hope lie in the confession of “Blessed is He.” Jesus taught that He is the door to God’s sheepfold, saying, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”<sup>5</sup> In another place, He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through Me.**”<sup>6</sup>

The foundational apostles understood this, for the apostle Peter declared, “This [Jesus Christ] is the Stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief Capstone.

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 2:10-12

<sup>5</sup> John 10:9

<sup>6</sup> John 14:6

**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”<sup>7</sup>**

The Israelites’ tragic lesson of desolation served a greater redemptive purpose for all mankind. **They became a sign and a wonder for the rest of the world.** The consequences of “smiting the Son” left the Owner of the vineyard with no other option but to remove them from the vineyard. God is pleading with the nations in this hour to recognize the signs of the times, lest we suffer the same fate of those who did not know the time of their visitation.

To this end the prophecy of the seventy weeks was borne upon angel’s wings. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,” says the Lord, “thoughts of peace and not evil, to give you a future and a hope.”<sup>8</sup> Truly, this is the hour to kiss the Son.

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 4:11-12, emphasis added

<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah 29:11

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## Chapter 13

# Press “Play” on the Remote

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Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.<sup>1</sup>

**T**he truth that there is a pause in the prophecy of the seventy weeks is one of the most controversial aspects of the vision. As you may recall, the prophecy is structured around three major divisions: seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one last week. The first seven weeks were designated for the purpose of rebuilding. The next sixty-two weeks were designated as a period of Messianic expectation. Since the Messiah would not appear until the first sixty-nine weeks had been spent, this meant that the prophecy’s objectives would not be accomplished until the seventieth week. These objectives are listed at the beginning of the prophecy:

1. To finish the transgression
2. To make an end of sins
3. To make reconciliation for iniquity
4. To bring in everlasting righteousness
5. To seal up vision and prophecy
6. To anoint the Most Holy

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 3:16

The question naturally arises, “Do the seventy weeks run consecutively from start to finish or is there a pause at any point in the prophecy?” The concept of a pause means that the prophecy is put on hold at some point.

In other words, if you think of the seventieth week as being a DVD movie, pressing the play button on your remote would start the movie. Let’s say that in the middle of the movie, the telephone rings. Since it could be an important call, you don’t want to miss it. But you don’t want to miss any of the movie either. What do you do? Thanks to our technology, you simply press the pause button on your remote. Instantly, the movie freezes on the screen while you attend to the phone call. Once the call is finished, you return to the couch and press “play” to resume the movie right where it left off. **This is the concept of the prophetic pause in the seventieth week.**

So the question remains, “Was there such an interruption that forced the prophecy to pause at any point? And if so, what interrupted the prophecy? How long will the interruption last? And finally, what event will trigger the prophecy to resume?”

Those who contend that the prophecy should be viewed from start to finish without a pause have a major obstacle to explain, for the prophecy states that all six objectives would be fulfilled by the end of the seventieth week. The first objective listed is “to finish the transgression.” Since the vision came on the heels of a prior judgment, that is, Israel’s seventy-year captivity in Babylon, it is clear that the first objective concerned a final termination of their transgressions.

The prophecy promised that one day their tendency to backslide would end. The prophecy also put a time limit on this objective, indicating that by the end of the seventieth week, their transgression would be finished. The future and **permanent** restoration of Israel was a common theme in the prophecies of the Old Testament. The prophecy in Ezekiel 37:21-24 is just one of many examples that could be cited (emphases added). It states:

Then say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations wherever they have gone and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land . . . **they**

**shall not defile themselves anymore** with their idols, nor with their detestable things, **nor with any of their transgressions**; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people and I will be their God.”

When would this prophecy be fulfilled? Was it fulfilled in our past or is it yet in our future? The answer is found in the next verse of the prophecy:

David My Servant shall be King over them, and they shall all have one Shepherd; they shall walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land forever and **My Servant David shall be their Prince** forever.

It should be obvious that this is a Messianic prophecy. The Messianic title of “David, the Prince who reigns forever” can be none other than Jesus Christ. Therefore the prophecy states explicitly that Israel will not defile themselves anymore with their transgression once their nation receives Messiah the Prince as their Shepherd-King.

Now let me pose the question once again? Has this prophecy ever been fulfilled? The answer is decidedly, “No.” They rejected their Messiah-Prince when He appeared the first time. Jesus appeared after sixty-nine weeks just as Gabriel predicted. He ministered as the Christ, or anointed One for three and one-half years, that is, for the first half of the seventieth week. It was at this point that the people committed their worst transgression of all by crucifying their Messiah. As a result, their house was left desolate and they were scattered among the nations for a prolonged period of desolations.

Now herein lies the mystery: Since nothing happened in the three and one-half years following Jesus’ resurrection to end their transgression, the second half of the seventieth week was not fulfilled. Their transgressions did not end after the Messiah’s first appearance. In fact, their most severe judgments had just begun. Their city and temple were destroyed nearly forty years later.

In effect, the Devil dialed their phone number, and they pressed the pause button to answer his call. They left the movie (prophecy) frozen after the first half of the seventieth week. And the movie has been paused, frozen in time, ever since. **We are forced to accept a pause in the prophecy since certain objectives were not fulfilled, namely, the end of their transgressions.** The last half of the week was put on hold. The movie-prophecy will not resume until they return and press “play.”

How will they do this? By confessing, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Jesus did not say that they would **never** see Him again. Instead, He told them that they would not see Him **until** they confessed Him as the Christ. He is the only One who can finish their transgression. The prophecy will not resume until they decide to make Him their Shepherd-King. It is just that simple.

The time of Jacob’s trouble, or the “days of vengeance,” began when they took the Devil’s call and chose Barabbas over Christ. The sum of their abominations initiated a prolonged period of affliction that they would endure among the nations. Moses prophesied of this by saying:

Then the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other . . . and among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place, but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul.

Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, “Oh, that it were evening!” And at evening you shall say, “Oh, that it were morning!” because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see.<sup>2</sup>

Can anyone deny the relevance of this prophecy as it pertains to the sufferings of the Jewish people over the last nineteen hundred years? Does it not accurately portray the horrors that

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 28:64-67

they suffered, especially under the regimes of Stalin and Hitler. Ezekiel prophesied, “The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hands of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword.”<sup>3</sup> But this is not the end of the prophecy, for the prophecy continues in verses 28-29, by promising:

“Then they [the house of Israel] shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer.

And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” says the Lord God.

### **The Mysterious Pause**

When Israel turned their backs on God’s face, others turned their gaze towards Him—a “called out” group to be known as the Church and Bride of Christ. Just as King Xerxes shunned his former wife, Vashti, and issued a call for a new virgin to fill her place, the Messiah would spend the two-Day pause in search of a new wife—Esther.

The *chronos* of the mystery of Christ, including the building of His Temple, the completion of His Body, and the selection of His Bride, would occupy the remainder of the two great Days. These third-Day mysteries will be completed by the time that Israel decides to press “play” on her remote.

The frame in their prophetic movie was frozen with the picture of Jesus’ third-day resurrection and His mid-week ascension to Heaven. The DVD was paused with half a week remaining. Yet the New Testament reveals that there is a great mystery being accomplished during this Divine pause—in this prophetic “time in between” so unique to the prophecy.

Supposedly, the frame in the movie has remained completely still and unchanged. But has it?

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<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 39:23

The essence of the mystery is that the seventieth week will not resume until His Body (the Church) also experiences a third-Day resurrection and a mid-seventieth-week ascension. This explains why the following passage in 1 Timothy 3:16, **seems to be out of order when really it is not.**

And great and important and weighty, we confess, is the hidden truth (the mystic secret) of godliness. He [God] was made visible in human flesh, justified and vindicated in the [Holy] Spirit, was seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, [and] taken up in glory. (Amplified Version)

At first glance the entire passage **appears** to be speaking of Jesus alone, including His singular ascension from the Mount of Olives just forty days after He arose from the dead. But if that were so, the passage would not make sense. A closer examination reveals that one of these items is out of order. Consider the order of events as they appear in the passage:

1. Jesus was made visible in the flesh
2. He was justified in the Spirit (by being raised from the dead)
3. He was seen by angels
4. He was preached among the nations
5. He was believed on in the world, and
6. He was taken up in glory

The mystery comes into view once we consider the last item. At what point was Jesus taken up in glory? Was it before He was preached among the nations and believed on in the world or after?

The book of Acts reveals that He was taken up from their sight while the disciples stood on the Mount of Olives, only forty days after His resurrection. They did not begin to preach until the Day of Pentecost, ten days later. Even then, it was some time before He was proclaimed among the Gentile nations. And most certainly, it has taken centuries of preaching to enable men throughout the world to believe on Him.

It would therefore seem that item #6, “taken up in glory,” is out of place. It should appear in between item #3 and item #4, for Jesus’ ascension occurred before the Church began to preach. Did the apostle Paul make a mistake?

No, Paul understood the mystery of Christ. **Christ’s ascension into glory was mentioned last on purpose.** It is right where it should be whenever a discussion of the “mystery of God-likeness” is being considered. The mystery is not that Christ (alone) ascended to heaven. **The mystery is that a new Man, with Christ as the Head and the Church as His Body, will one day be taken up into glory!** Paul had the rapture of the Church in view when he wrote this passage. The rapture will not occur until after Christ has been preached among the nations and believed on throughout the world.

The apostle was giving us an insight into the mystery of Christ, or the mystery of godliness, by listing His being taken up into glory as the last item on the agenda. This mystery-ascension not only includes Jesus (who is the Head) but the Church (His Body) together with Him. He understood that Christ’s Body (the fullness of Him) would not be received up in glory until the Gospel has been preached among the Gentiles. Thus, the pause in the seventieth week is given over to this mystery.

Once the seventieth week recommences, the mystery that Paul alluded to in the passage above will have been fulfilled. As you might remember, he noted this when he indicated that Israel’s acceptance would coincide with the resurrection of the Church. The rapture is the event that will spark a revival among the Jewish people. Our resurrection will initiate their acceptance and being grafted back into the Vine.

From a *chronos* perspective, the pause in the middle of the seventieth week concerns the mystery of Christ. This means that His Body will be completed and gathered to be with Him in glory just before the last half of the seventieth week begins. The prophetic movie, so to speak, froze with the frame depicting Jesus ascending to Heaven. The prophecy will resume with the same movie frame.

Quite mysteriously, though, the still shot of the ascending Christ will have changed even though the picture appeared to be frozen in time. It no longer depicts the singular ascension of Jesus

alone, **but the ascension of a new Man**, with Christ as the Head, and the Church as His Body—those gathered from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue.

And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.<sup>4</sup>

And even though the frame still depicts the ascension of but one Man, a great mystery has occurred. Paul called it the mystery of godliness. The subtle discrepancy in the movie frame will become apparent to the viewers once she (Israel) hangs up the phone and picks up her remote!

She will be convinced to hang up the phone when she realizes that the party on the other end has deceived her and is bent on her utter and complete destruction.

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<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 1:22-23

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## Chapter 14

# Apostasy and the Mystery of Lawlessness

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**M**any people think that the Antichrist will portray himself as being a great Messianic figure sent from God. But think again. He will not claim to be sent **from** God, **but that he is a god instead**. The Scriptures clearly reveal that he will have no taste for religion at all. The following passage in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 makes this noticeably clear:

Let no one deceive you by any means, for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Paul wrote that the Antichrist will not only **exalt himself “above all that is called God or that is worshiped,”** but that he will **oppose all that is worshiped as well**. This means that he will openly oppose all forms of religion, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

The prophecy in Daniel 11:36-37 states that he will “exalt and magnify himself above **every** god,” that he will “blaspheme the God of gods,” and that “he will not regard the God of his

fathers.” It goes on to say that he will “not regard **any** god; for he will **exalt himself above them all**” (emphases added).

Jesus said it like this: “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes **in his own name, him you will receive.**”<sup>1</sup> Clearly, this man of lawlessness will come in his own name. He will not claim to be the Messiah of either the Jews or the Muslims, for he will not acknowledge any god, or any religion. In fact, he will openly oppose all that has been previously worshiped as God.

The truth that this man will oppose all religious systems raises an important question. How is it that he will gain the support of so many nations, particularly those in the Middle East when he refuses to even honor their religion? The answer can be found in the biblical phrase “the falling away.”

Paul revealed that the Day of Christ would not come unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin is revealed. In the Greek, “falling away” is *apostasia*, from which we get the word “apostasy.” It signifies a religious defection, a revolt, or a departure from God’s truth. **Today, we would call it secular humanism.** Back in Paul’s time, he called it **the mystery of lawlessness.**

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed.

The phrase “revealed in his own time” is a reference to the end of the third great Day from Christ. Also, when we examine Paul’s statements, we can easily see that the falling away is the same as the mystery of lawlessness, **for both lead to the revelation of the Antichrist.**

. . . unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin is revealed.

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<sup>1</sup> John 5:43

. . . for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work . . .  
and then the lawless one will be revealed.

We can understand what Paul meant by these phrases once we realize that the Antichrist will openly oppose all that is called God or that is worshiped. Since he will not regard any god, it is obvious that he will not honor any form of religion that has been worshiped by men in the past. In other words, he will only acknowledge himself.

Since the Greek word *apostasia* signifies a defection from truth or a revolt against religion, its association with the Antichrist **means that many in the world will share his worldview.**

The voices touting such an apostate view have been amped up in recent centuries. Their message can be heard in the brazen slogan, “God is dead,” and in the twentieth century cliché, “Religion is the opiate of the people.” Such a statement conveys the blasphemous thought that religious beliefs are as harmful and addicting as a dangerous narcotic.

The apostasy gained even more momentum with the theory of evolution. Since this became the staple of the modern-day classroom, many no longer believe in a Creator. Instead, it is taught that we evolved on our own. And if **we** evolved, surely in such a vast universe, other forms of intelligent life must have evolved also. Anyone who thinks otherwise is now thought to be either extremely naïve or stubbornly arrogant.

The falling away progressed even further with the advance of the UFO phenomenon and the best-selling book, *Chariots of the Gods*. Because of these things many now believe that the people in ancient times foolishly thought they were interacting with God and His angels, when all the while they were actually being visited by aliens from other star systems.

Elijah, for example, did not ascend into Heaven in a chariot of fire from God. Don’t be ridiculous. Everyone knows that he was abducted by a UFO!

Because of these deceptions, the truth of the Creator was exchanged for the lie of evolution. The reality of God became nothing more than a close encounter of the third kind. With such a mindset, it is not difficult to imagine how people will be

deceived into thinking that the return of Jesus Christ is actually an alien invasion.

As the world unshackles itself from its bond to God, they opt to make their own laws, ones that cater to their own desires. God's moral, social, and financial laws are no longer relevant to a society deeply imbedded in the mystery of lawlessness.

The new religion is no religion. And the refrains of their new anthem can be heard in the alluring melody conjured up by John Lennon in his song, *Imagine*.

Imagine there's no heaven; it's easy if you try.  
No hell below us, above us only sky.  
Imagine all the people living for today.  
Imagine there's no countries; it isn't hard to do;  
Nothing to kill or die for, and no religion too.  
Imagine all the people living life in peace.  
You, you may say I'm a dreamer,  
But I'm not the only one.  
I hope someday you'll join us,  
And the world will be as one.

This brings us to the final stage of the apostasy: the view that the world would be better off without any form of religion. With terrorism and violence on the rise like never before, those who have exchanged the truth of God for the lie will be willing to follow a man who opposes all that has been worshiped in order to achieve peace and safety. Psalm 2:1-3 states:

Why do the nations make a tumult and the people devise an empty scheme? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers consult together against the Lord and His Anointed, saying, "Let us tear their restraining bands apart, and let us cast their shackles from us." (Berkeley Version)

Paul understood these things from the perspective of God's great Week. His message is simple and logical once we share his perspective. In essence, he told us that the falling away must come first, then the man of sin, and then the Coming of the Lord to gather us in that Day.

He told the believers of his time that none of these things could happen yet, for one simple reason—**because it was not yet time for them to happen**. These things would be restrained or withheld until we approach the third Day.

And even though the mystery of lawlessness was already at work in their time, it would not reach its full conclusion until the Day of Christ draws near. Therefore, Paul wrote, “And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed **in his own time**.”<sup>2</sup>

## **Daniel’s Vision of the Transgressors**

Paul received much of his revelation about the apostasy and the man of sin from the eighth chapter of the book of Daniel. In the vision, Daniel saw the rise of the Antichrist, and once again, Gabriel was there to give him skill and understanding. Gabriel’s explanation of the vision appears in verses 23 through 26. As we read it, notice the parallel between this passage and what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. Gabriel began by saying:

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features; who understands sinister schemes.

The Hebrew word translated as **transgressors** is *paw-shah*. It means to break away (from just authority), that is, trespass, apostatize, rebel, and revolt. **It carries the same meaning as *apostasia* in the Greek**. From this, Paul understood that even though the mystery of lawlessness was already at work in his time, the man of sin would not arise until the transgressors (or apostates) have “reached their fullness.” Therefore, he recognized that the falling away would not be complete until the latter time, which in the Hebrew meant, the last or end.

Gabriel continued in the next verse by saying, “His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power.” Therefore, back in 2 Thessalonians, Paul wrote, “The coming of the lawless one is

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:6, emphasis added

according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.”

Earlier, we wondered how the Antichrist could convince people, regardless of their religious persuasions, to abandon their beliefs. Now we know. He will accomplish this through signs and lying wonders. What will these people do when the man of sin opposes all forms of religion saying, “I am god, and to prove it, I’ll call fire down from heaven right before your very eyes.” (If this sounds preposterous, just read Revelation 13:13.)

In verse 25, Gabriel explained,

Through his cunning, he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule, and he shall exalt himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many.

Paul echoed these same sentiments by continuing, “and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie.”

Gabriel said that “by peace he shall destroy many.” The Hebrew for the word peace means security, either genuine or false. Thus, in his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul wrote, “For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them.”

Gabriel also revealed: “He [the Antichrist] shall even rise against the Prince of princes, but he shall be broken without human means.” Accordingly, Paul wrote in Thessalonians, “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” I would call that “being broken without the aid of human means,” wouldn’t you?

We are nearing the time when the transgressors will soon reach their fullness. The third Day is nearly upon us. Those who love God’s Word and who follow His Spirit have absolutely nothing to fear. Such cannot be deceived. His super-abounding grace is more than sufficient. And His joy is their strength!

## Chapter 15

# Casting Down the Daily Offerings

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**W**e now know that the eighth chapter of Daniel is a vision concerning the coming man of lawlessness. I purposely reserved the last part of Gabriel's explanation in Daniel 8:26 for this chapter so that we could adequately deal with the revelation it contains. In verse 26, Gabriel explained that "the vision of the evenings and mornings was true" and advised Daniel to "seal up the vision," for it referred to "many days in the future."

The vision of the "evenings and mornings" reveals the length of time in which the Antichrist will successfully halt the daily sacrifices in a rebuilt Jewish Temple. Daniel recorded this part of the vision as follows (emphases added). I have added Gabriel's explanation to key words in brackets to help us understand:

He [**the king or Antichrist**] even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host [**Prince of princes or Jesus Christ**], and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression an army was given over to the horn [**the Antichrist**] to oppose the daily sacrifice and cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.

Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled, concerning the daily sacrifices and the

transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host [the Temple and the Jewish people] to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings, then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

The vision revealed that the daily sacrifices (one offered each morning, and one each night) would be halted 2,300 times, or for 2,300 evenings and mornings. Since there were two offerings per day, that meant a total of 1,150 days. This vision occurred in the third year of King Belshazzar of Babylon.

If you remember, Daniel received a subsequent vision many years later, in the third year of Cyrus, King of Persia, in which a specific number of days were also mentioned in connection with the cessation of the daily sacrifices. The time period specified in that vision, however, was 1,290 days, not 1,150. Why the difference? And why were the specific number of days given in the first place?

### **Abomination Versus Transgression**

The specific number of days was given in each instance so that we could differentiate between the two events. The 1,290 days in Daniel 12:11 were connected to the **abomination of desolation** that was fulfilled in 70 AD. This is the event that triggered the great tribulation. Shortly after the priests failed to offer the daily sacrifices, the Temple was destroyed. As of the date of this writing, they have not been offered since.

In contrast, the 1,150 days in Daniel 8:14 are connected to the removal of the daily sacrifices by the Antichrist in a future rebuilt Temple. After the 1,150 days, the Temple is not destroyed, **but cleansed**. Can you see the difference? These are two separate and distinct events, and God gave us the specific number of days involved with each event so that we could tell them apart.

In confirmation of this, the event associated with the Antichrist in Daniel 8 is not called the **abomination** of desolation, but the **transgression** of desolation. The Hebrew word translated transgression is *peh-shah*, meaning a revolt or

rebellion. It is derived from the same root word that Gabriel used when he explained that a king shall arise once the transgressors (*paw-shah*) have reached their fullness.

We can now see the parallel in Daniel 8:12 with the things that Paul wrote in Thessalonians. The passage in Daniel reveals that “because of transgression [the apostasy or the falling away] an army will be given over to the Antichrist **to oppose** the daily sacrifices and **cast truth down to the ground.**”

When will this happen? Gabriel explained that it would happen **at the end**, when **the transgressors** (or apostates) have reached their fullness. This makes it clear that the removal of the daily sacrifices in Daniel 8 is connected to the falling away or apostasy that Paul noted would precede the Lord’s return as the Day of the Lord begins.

The Scriptures always use the word abomination in connection with the desolation that occurred to the Temple in the first century, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. The Hebrew for abominations means “detestable and filthy things.” It appears in Daniel 9:27, “on the Temple shall be the abomination of desolation;” in Daniel 11:31, “they shall defile the sanctuary fortress, take away the daily sacrifice, and bring forth the abomination of desolation;” and in Daniel 12:11, where “the abomination of desolation” is mentioned in connection with the 1,290 days.

Perhaps most significantly, the same verbiage appears in the following two passages in Ezekiel:

And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of your abominations.<sup>1</sup>

. . . because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you.<sup>2</sup>

Since all these passages refer to the events surrounding 70 A.D., we can see that the term abomination of desolation is

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<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 5:9

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 5:11

always used in connection with the generation that crucified Jesus.

In Daniel 8, however, the word for abominations is noticeably absent. Instead, we find, “when the transgressors have reached their fullness,” and “because of transgression, an army was given to oppose,” and “the transgression of desolation.”

The Holy Spirit deliberately chose these words to inform us that these events are connected to the end-time apostasy of the Antichrist. In verse 19, Gabriel informed Daniel, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation [wrath of God], for at the appointed time the end shall be.”

Understanding the difference between these two events is critical to end-time prophecy. One occurred in 70 A.D. in connection with the abominations of the people of Jesus’ time. The other event will occur in our near future, when the transgressors linked with a future Antichrist have reached their fullness.

Unfortunately, our generation is living in the time when the transgressors are reaching their fullness. It is now time for the fiercely featured king with sinister schemes to arise.

## Chapter 16

# When the Prophecy Resumes

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And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son; and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.<sup>1</sup>

**N**ow we can see that the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy is all about Christ, not the Antichrist. By choosing the latter, the term abomination of desolation was corrupted to mean a forthcoming and future event connected with the Antichrist. We were taught that it would occur in the middle of a future seven-year period called "the tribulation," and that a time of "great tribulation" would mark the final 3½ years.

Once this view became firmly established, the Church tried to figure out where to place the rapture in this new end-time scenario. Would it be a pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, or post-tribulation rapture?

The foundational apostles never spoke of a future tribulation. Instead, they spoke of "treasuring up wrath in the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."<sup>2</sup> To them it was simple: the Lord would come to gather us in that Day. There was no pre-, mid-, or post-tribulation confusion at that time, for

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<sup>1</sup> Zechariah 12:10

<sup>2</sup> Romans 2:5

they understood that the Lord's ministry began with the fifth great Day. They also understood that this marked the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week. They knew that the seventieth week did not end with His first coming, but that He would come again once the end-time transgressors had reached their fullness. The Lord would return to finish or bring an end to the transgression.

Paul was faithful to teach that the coming of the Lord to gather us in that Day would not come until the falling away comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed. He cautioned us not to be deceived concerning this. He knew that "that Day" was the seventh Day of Adam, as well as the third Day of Christ. Therefore, the man of sin would not be revealed until that Day draws near.

The unsealing of this great prophecy also grants us greater clarity as to the events that would transpire during the two great Days that commenced with Jesus' ministry. These events would constitute the signs of the Today and Tomorrow of this age. These events would culminate in Christ's third-Day return.

**Since the first coming of Christ used up the first half of the week, His second coming will initiate the start of the second half.** This explains why we find so many end-time prophecies concerning a prophetic period lasting 3½ years related to a future Antichrist. There are at least eight separate and distinct prophecies referencing this unique period of time.

For example, Daniel 7:25 refers to a "little horn" that will speak pompous words against the Most High and who will persecute God's people for "a time, times, and half a time." This is simply a Hebraic expression denoting 3½ years. This same period is mentioned again in Daniel 12:7 in connection with the final fulfillment of Israel's deliverance.

In Revelation 12:6 and 12:14, "the woman" flees from the serpent-empowered Antichrist for a period expressed alternately as being "1,260 days" and "a time, times, and half a time." As we will see later, the woman typifies those in Israel who will be converted to Christ after the rapture and who will be nourished and fed by God during this same period.

Revelation 11:2 refers to a Gentile treading of Jerusalem that will span 42 months, while the third verse assigns this same period to the ministry of "the two witnesses," Moses and Elijah.

The duration of their prophetic ministry in Jerusalem is stated using the alternate expression of 1,260 days.

As their testimony begins, they will preach about the glories of the risen Christ. They were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. They will lead their people back to their glorious Messiah. They will preach the Prince. They will also have the authority to strike the kingdom of the Beast with plagues as often as they desire.

Revelation 13:5 assures us that the blasphemous Beast will not be allowed to continue beyond this 42-month period. Finally, Daniel 8:14 notes that the daily sacrifices, one each morning, and one each night, will be disrupted for a slightly shorter period of 1,150 days. The vision in Daniel 8 was the text that Paul referred to when he wrote about the coming man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-13.

The context in which these references are stated reveals that they all mark the same three-and-one-half year period. **In other words, they all denote the last half of Daniel's seventieth week.** The prophetic truth that the second half of the week will commence with Christ's return and the rapture at the dawning of the third Day is highlighted in an incident that occurred in the life of Jacob—the night he wrestled with God as recorded in Genesis 32:24-31.

## **The Blessing at Daybreak**

In the Hebrew language, Jacob means “heel catcher,” or “one who supplants.” He instinctively grabbed the heel of his twin brother as the two were being born. He sought to be first. Later in life, he stole the blessing of his firstborn brother by trickery. As such, Jacob's name represents the defective nature of those who try to get things their own way rather than God's way. In other words, he was just like you and me!

So when the Scriptures use the term “Jacob's trouble,” it refers to the struggles that the people of Israel brought upon themselves by rejecting Christ and by seeking God's acceptance through their own efforts or works. The Law of Moses said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your

soul, and with all your strength.” Do you know of anyone among us who has ever truly accomplished this insurmountable task? Of course not, for with men it is impossible. This was the whole point of the law—you cannot do it—therefore, you need a Savior.

This is what the Bible is all about. All systems of religion are contrived around what **we must do to get to God**. Christianity on the other hand, reveals what **God in the form of man [Jesus] did to get to us**. The passage in 1 John 4:10 says, “This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.” (NLT)

God loved the world so deeply that He gave His only Son for us. He loves everyone that way, including the religious, the humanists, and the transgressors. In essence, Jesus became our goat or sacrificial lamb. Our sins were transferred to this unblemished Lamb and He was slain on our behalf. In exchange, we receive the innocence that the Lamb possessed. Those who take God up on this bargain are forever accepted in His sight.

Christianity was not meant to be a religion. It is a blood-bought relationship between you and God. We receive His blessing of favor when we come to the end of our vain struggle to get it our way. This is what happened in the life of Jacob.

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as he wrestled with Him.

And He said, “Let Me go, for the day breaks.” But he said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” So He said to him, “What is your name?” He said, “Jacob.” And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

Then Jacob asked, saying, “Tell me your name, I pray.” And He said, “Why is it that you ask about My name [do you really need to ask; don’t you already know by now]?” And He blessed him there. So Jacob called the name of the place Penuel [face of God]: “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Just

as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

This entire incident prophetically foreshadows the nation of Israel as the dawn of the third Day breaks upon the horizon. Their long night of struggling with God (the time of Jacob's trouble) will end with a blessing at Daybreak. Their name will be changed from Jacob (the heel catcher) to Israel, meaning, "he who came to the end of his struggle and prevailed with God to receive His blessing." The significance of the limp means that the people of Israel will no longer trust in their own stride, but on the ever-shining face of God instead.

### **The Last Half of the Week**

The fact that this occurred just as a new day was breaking should not be overlooked. It is a significant part of the story. It prophetically foreshadows the truth that the last half of the seventieth week will resume at Daybreak, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to gather those that are His in the rapture.

The Scriptures reveal that the rapture will spark a worldwide revival among the Jewish people who were "left behind." It will not be a secret event. Every eye will see Him when He comes. Those who were looking by faith, or "waiting on the Lord" as Isaiah described it, shall receive an exchange of strength (immortality) and will mount up with wings like eagles.<sup>3</sup>

For everyone else, there will be an encore performance of Pontius Pilate's famous line, "Who do you want, Barabbas or Jesus?" The nation of Israel will have a chance to pick up right where they left off when the prophecy was paused. Only this time, they will make the right choice. They will choose Jesus and thumb their nose at the Antichrist! They will slam down the phone in utter and complete disgust.

This eye-opening confession of faith will reinstate them in Daniel's prophecy and trigger the last half of the seventieth week to resume. Even though the Antichrist will be allowed to continue for the first 3½ years of Christ's thousand-year reign from above,

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 40:31

he will get nothing but “trumpets and bowls.” He will get a double portion of God’s seven-fold wrath reserved for Christ’s Day of battle (see Revelation 13:5 and Zechariah 14:3-4).

Do we really think that this is the time of Jacob’s trouble? It sounds like it’s the time of the Antichrist’s trouble and Israel’s deliverance to me. Zechariah 12:4 says that God will “open His eyes on the house of Judah.” Verse eight says, “In that Day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that Day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the Lord before them. It shall be in that Day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Israel.”

During this time, the Beast will attempt to mark those that belong to him. And though the heavens and the earth will shake, the prophet Joel revealed that “the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Gabriel’s message will have been fulfilled. By the end of the seventieth week: the transgression will be finished; the times of the Gentiles will have come to an end; the kingdom will have been restored to Israel; she will be the earthly head and not the tail; God’s covenant will have prevailed; and Israel’s Shepherd-King will be on the Heavenly Throne for the remainder of that Day until every enemy has been thoroughly put underfoot—even death itself!

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<sup>4</sup> Joel 3:16

## Chapter 17

# The Orion Star Prophecy

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I find it ironic that Daniel's prophecy of the seventieth week has become a source of such confusion in the Church today, especially since it was God's intent that this particular prophecy should stand out above the rest as a master guideline of the end times. It was meant to give us a panoramic view of the last Days. But instead, our generation inherited two different and opposing interpretations, both of which mar that view considerably.

But as we have seen, there is a third option, one that was viewed in the heavens above nearly 2,500 hundred years before Moses first set God's Word to parchment. In this view the seventieth week becomes one of the premier prophecies of the entire Old Testament, for it provides a complete picture of the Messiah, including both His first and second coming. It reveals what He would accomplish on the cross through His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection during the first half of the week. It reveals how He would accomplish the remaining objectives of the prophecy when He returns to fulfill the second half of the week.

When properly viewed, the prophecy of the seventy weeks becomes one of the most significant prophecies in the Word of God, both in its hand-written form and in its heavenly form. For those who are not familiar with the heavenly form of God's Word, here is a quick starter course.

## The Witness of the Stars

Long before God's prophetic Word was inscribed upon books it was displayed in the heavens for all to read. He accomplished this when He created the heavens and the earth. He set the stars in their assigned positions in the heavens such that they would form various constellations when viewed from the surface of our planet. Then He gave a specific name to each star.

Adam was charged with the task of naming the creatures here below, but God named the stars above. Men had nothing to do with it. Psalm 147:4 states, "He counts the number of the stars. He calls them all by name." In Isaiah 40:26 we find:

Lift up your eyes on high, and see Who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number, Who calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one is missing.

These star-names conveyed a particular meaning in the original language of mankind before their tongues were confused at Babel. Just as the name Abraham means the father of a multitude, so the name of each star conveyed a particular meaning.

Further still, the names of the stars assigned to each constellation also framed a specific story, or a prophetic truth that each constellation was ordained to tell. Together, the twelve major constellations, along with their decans [sub-constellations], told one grand story: The Gospel in the Stars.

**These were the heavenly tablets, a prophecy in the heavens**—a Bible if you will, displayed in the sky each night for all men to read. These star-prophecies benefited mankind until His Word could be written down in the form of the Old Testament, beginning with the time of Moses. Psalm 19:1-4 refers to this starry witness by saying:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not

heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world.

This nightly broadcast of speech and knowledge explains how ancient patriarchs, such as Enoch, the seventh from Adam, knew to proclaim, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints.” Men such as these spoke by God’s Spirit, and their utterances were confirmed by the heavenly witness above.

As time passed, Satan corrupted this starry witness into the perverse and destructive counterfeit that we now call astrology. This is a cheap imitation and a dangerous lure for those who are unenlightened to God’s truth.

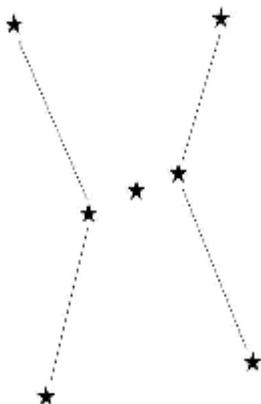
This does not mean, however, that we should shun the original testimony that God so miraculously placed in the heavens above. I never refuse twenty-dollar bills just because some crook makes a counterfeit. The Devil does not want you to discover the true meaning of the Zodiac, for it confirms all that we read in the hand-held form of God’s Word.

Despite the confusion that resulted at the Tower of Babel, the original root language with which Adam and the patriarchs communicated with God was not completely lost. Because of this, a great majority of the original meanings that God assigned to each of the stars has been preserved.

So how does this starry witness relate to the prophecy in Daniel concerning the seventy weeks? Is there anything above that confirms what has been written below concerning this great prophecy?

The answer is emphatically, yes! In fact, God chose one of the most easily recognized and well-known constellations in the sky above to confirm the true interpretation of Daniel’s seventieth week—that the prophecy speaks of both the first and second coming of Christ.

For those who might not be familiar with the constellation of Orion, it is composed of seven stars, two at the top, two at the bottom, and three “belt stars,” or “the golden band,” crossing in the middle. The constellation looks something like this:



The Old Testament specifically mentions Orion three times, in Job 9:9, Job 38:31, and Amos 5:8. The Hebrew root word for Orion means **dayspring, dawning, or He who is coming forth as light**. In Luke 1:78, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied of the coming of Christ by saying, “through the tender mercies of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.”

Essentially, Zacharias was referring to the passage in Amos 5:8 wherein we find the mention of Orion. Amos prophesied, “Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning” (KJV).

In the Gospel of the stars, Jesus is foreshadowed in the constellation of Orion as the Dayspring from on high who would visit us, give the light of grace and truth to those who sit in darkness, and who would turn the shadow of death into the morning—that is, He would destroy death. In Revelation 1:13-18, John’s vision of Jesus in His glorified form signifies the constellation of Orion.

And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band . . . He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was

like the sun shining in its strength . . . and He has the keys of Hades and Death.

The ancient visual representation of Orion was that of a Prince with a sword girded on his side, and His foot on the head of the Serpent. The original names that God assigned to the seven stars of Orion also confirm the prophetic value of this constellation and its identification with Jesus Christ.

Starting at the top of the constellation, the name that God assigned to the star on the left means **the coming of the Branch**. Thus, the Bible refers to Jesus as the root and offspring of David. Isaiah prophesied “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse. And a Branch shall grow out of his roots . . . righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.”<sup>1</sup>

Verse 2 of the passage provides another allusion to Orion, for it describes His seven attributes: the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of might, of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.

Moving down the constellation, the bottom left star means **bruised in the heel**. It is the same phrase that God used in the Garden when He cursed the serpent, saying, “He shall crush your head and you shall bruise His heel.”<sup>2</sup> As we can see, the two stars on the left side of the constellation allude to the first coming of Christ—the Branch that would come to be bruised in the heel on the cross.

The two right hand stars of the constellation allude to Christ’s second coming. The star at the top means **swiftly coming**, as in Revelation 22:7, “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

The star at the bottom right means **the foot that treads underfoot and crushes**. Isaiah prophesied, “I have trodden the winepress alone . . . for I have trodden them in My anger and trampled them in My fury.”<sup>3</sup> Paul affirmed that Christ will reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. Thus, the star-

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 11:1 and 5

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:15

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 63:3

message as it relates to His second coming reveals that He will come swiftly upon His enemies to tread them underfoot.

Since the four corner stars refer to His first and second coming, what names were assigned to the three belt stars that cross through the middle? And what revelation do they provide? The left-hand star in the belt means **wounded**. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and that the chastisement of our peace would be upon Him.<sup>4</sup>

The right-hand star in the belt means **dividing**. Isaiah further prophesied, “Therefore, I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors.”<sup>5</sup>

This leaves one last star. It is the seventh and appears in the middle of the belt. It is the central star upon which the entire constellation hangs. God called this star **the Prince**. He is the Messiah-Prince of Daniel’s seventy-week prophecy, the One prefigured by the entire constellation as the coming Dayspring and Daystar.

His two-fold coming is prophetically described by the individual names of the other six stars. He is the Branch that would come to be bruised in the heel. And though wounded unto death, this Prince would come again to swiftly tread His enemies underfoot and divide the spoil with the strong. His foot would crush the head of the Serpent, strip him of the keys to Hades and death, and shine as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings.

The seven stars that He holds in His right hand, represented by the constellation of the Pleiades in Amos 5:8, are the seven Churches in the book of Revelation. They represent the entire worldwide Church and the fullness of His body.

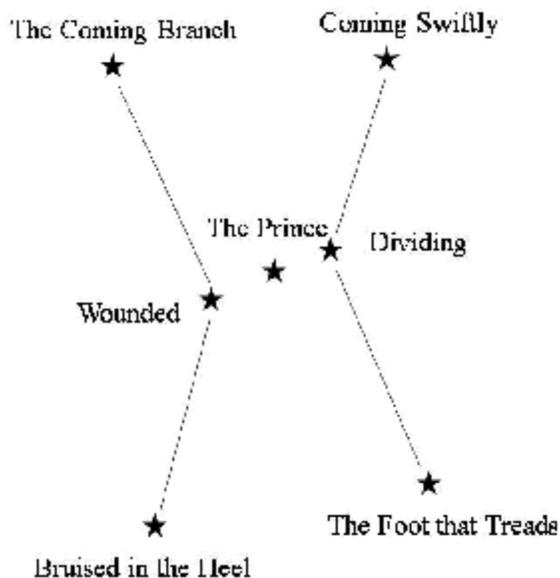
In Daniel 12, the prophet was told that in the resurrection of the dead, “those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness, like

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 53:5

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 53:12

the stars forever and ever.” The star-names of Orion are positioned like this:



The heavenly witness of Orion alludes to both the first and second coming of Messiah the Prince. So does its counterpart prophecy down below as written in the ninth chapter of Daniel. God provided this starry witness so that we would rightly interpret the prophecy of the seventy weeks so that the prophecy would be as easy to recognize as its counterpart above.

If we were to draw a vertical line through the length of the constellation so that it intersects the star of the Prince, the constellation would be neatly divided in half. The stars in the left half speak of Christ’s first coming, while the stars in the other half speak of His return. Now watch what happens as we read the star-names, beginning with those that make up the belt. The heavenly version of the star-prophecy reads as follows:

The wounding of the Prince in the middle of the constellation divides the constellation into two equal parts—between the coming of the Branch to be bruised, and the swift-coming Treader.

The prophecy of the seventy weeks is Orion's earthly counterpart. The entire constellation depicts the Messiah. The central star of Orion is called the Prince. Likewise, the title, Messiah the Prince, appears in no other passage in the Bible, except for the seventy-week prophecy in Daniel. Orion is composed of seven stars, while the seventieth week contains seven years. The ancient wisdom teaches us to observe the following principle: As above, so below.

Therefore, the star-prophecy of Orion teaches us to interpret its earthly counterpart in the book of Daniel as follows:

The wounding of Messiah the Prince in the middle of the seventieth week divides the week into two equal parts—between the coming of the Branch to be bruised, and the swift-coming Treader.

**Part 2**  
**The Signs of this Age**



## Chapter 18

# The Great Tribulation – Then and Now

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**I**n the unsealed version of Gabriel’s message, the seventieth week depicts both the first and second coming of Christ. Unfortunately, our generation inherited two other views of the seventieth week. One view holds that the seventieth week only depicts Christ’s first coming. According to this view, the events associated with the seventieth week were entirely fulfilled back then.

Another view holds that the seventieth week depicts the future activities of the Antichrist. Therefore, the events associated with the week all remain in our future. As a result, those who have studied end-time prophecy tend to gravitate to either end of the spectrum when it comes to the end times, either “all is past” or “all is still future.”

Quite ironically, the uncompromised version of the seventieth week—the one that depicts both His first and second coming—says, “some is past, and some is still future.” The two extreme views of the seventieth week led to the corruption of nearly all our end-time terms and concepts.

For example, some would say that the time of great tribulation started, but came to an end, during the first century of the Church, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Thus, they confine the end times to the past. Others believe that the great tribulation has not yet begun and, therefore, still awaits us during a future seven-year period. Thus, they relegate end-time events to our future.

The next few sections of this book will endeavor to show that the unsealed version of the seventieth week results in the restoration of end-time terms and concepts such that they resemble the views of the founding apostles. They understood that the first half of the seventieth week was fulfilled by the Messiah's first appearance. They also realized that the second half would not be fulfilled until this same Prince returns to escort His Bride to Heaven.

Since they understood these things in the context of thousand-year Days and God's great Week, they associated the end times with Jesus' "Today and Tomorrow" of anointed ministry. Together, they anticipated His return on the third great Day.

We now know that the abomination of desolation was fulfilled by the siege of Jerusalem from 66 to 70 A.D. This event triggered a time of great and unequalled tribulation in which the Jewish people were led away captive into the nations. For nearly two great Days, the people of Israel would experience a prolonged period of desolations. As we have seen, Hosea's prophecy revealed that they would be torn and stricken until their third-Day revival. This can only mean that the great tribulation is a long event. It spans the better part of what Jesus called a Today and Tomorrow, or two thousand years.

## The Time of the End

It is important to understand what the Scriptures mean by the phrase "the time of the end." As an Old Covenant prophet, Daniel was told to shut up the words of his prophecy and **to seal the book until the time of the end**. In contrast, John, a New Covenant apostle, was told **not to seal the words of the prophecy** found in the book of Revelation, **since the time was at hand**.

Since this prophetically designated time refers to the latter part of God's great Week, it spans the period from Jesus' ministry to His return on the seventh Day. Therefore, the end times include all the things that Jesus said we would see in between His departure to Heaven and His return in the rapture.

The seventieth week of Gabriel's prophecy opened with Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. Having been officially introduced as the long-awaited Messiah by His forerunner, John the Baptist, His three and one-half years of anointed ministry commenced at that time. Those who began to follow Him were sure they had found the Messiah-King, soon to ascend to the throne of David. The Baptist, however, saw a Lamb soon to be slain. When John saw Jesus coming toward him, he proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

No one understood at the time that Jesus had come to cut a new blood covenant, which, in a week of prophetic years, would be made to prevail over the earth. The first half of that week was being finalized then. The time had come for the Messiah to be "cut off," thus bringing an end to the need for the sacrificial blood of bulls and goats.

So as the shadow of the cross fell upon Jesus' soul, and as the time drew near, Jesus began to prepare His disciples to embrace the concept of a second coming. It was at this time that four of His disciples approached Him privately with questions about His return and the end of the age. Specifically, they wanted to know when these things would happen and what signs they should look for.

The comments that Jesus offered that day on Mount Olivet pulled back the veil and revealed what would take place during the pause in the seventieth week. The Old Testament prophets had done their part. Each had contributed an assortment of individual prophecy-pieces with which to build the prophetic puzzle. The problem was that no one knew how all these pieces fit together. They could not understand **what person or time** the Spirit was prophesying about.

**Jesus' Olivet response represented the initial unveiling of the prophetic period soon to unfold.** His comments were brief and to the point. In fact, the entire discourse can be read in a matter of minutes. And yet, before He was through, He had successfully assembled the end-time puzzle sufficiently enough to remove the veil that had hidden this "time in-between" from both prophets and angels alike.

This lifting of the veil was of such significance that the Holy Spirit inspired it to be recorded by each of the four gospel writers. You will find Matthew's account in chapter twenty-four of his gospel, Mark's account in chapter thirteen of his book, and Luke's version in the twenty-first chapter of his book. John's account does not appear in his gospel. Instead, the Holy Spirit reserved it for its rightful place of prominence in the last book of the Bible.

A comparison of the three gospel accounts reveals that Matthew's account is virtually identical with that of Mark, except for a few sentences that each adds to his own presentation. Much of what appears in Luke's account can also be found word for word in the other two. Luke, however, adds some additional details at key points in the discourse.

These amplifications help shed light on the overall message that Jesus taught. No one account was meant to stand alone. The Holy Spirit inspired all three to be written so that each account would complement the others. The full teaching emerges only when all three accounts are combined and read as one.

Since every sentence in Mark's account appears in one of the other two, we can use Mark's as our base, needing only to note the additional thoughts that appear in Matthew and Luke as the discourse progresses.

### **This Age Will Not Pass Away Until**

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" **[Matthew's account reads, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"]** And Jesus, answering them, began to say...

Matthew's account begins with a strategic contribution. He tells us that the disciples were seeking to understand the events or signs that would lead up to Jesus' return and the end of the age,

not just those events that were about to occur in their near future concerning the Temple.

This is significant, for later in the discourse Jesus would say, “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away until **all these things take place.**” Strong’s Dictionary states that the Greek word *genea* (translated “generation”) can have various meanings depending on the context in which it is used. It can mean a generation, a nation, a time, and by implication, **an age.**

It is obvious that no one generation could possibly live long enough to see all the events that would occur in between Christ’s first and second coming. The generation that witnessed the abomination of desolation for example, would not live to see His return nearly two thousand years later. Nor did Jesus infer that the nation of Israel would one day pass away and be no more, once everything was fulfilled.

Matthew enables us to understand the simplicity of Jesus’ statement. He used *genea* in the sense of an age. The disciples asked, “What are the signs of the end of the age?” Upon giving them the signs to look for, He then assured them that “this age [*genea*] would not end or pass away until all these things take place.”

## A Time of Sorrows

Jesus began His response with the following remarks. I have inserted the variations that appear in Matthew and Luke’s accounts in bold parentheses.

Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, “I am He” (“**the Christ,**”) (“**The time has drawn near,**”) and will deceive many. (**Therefore do not go after them.**) But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet (**will not come immediately.**)

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various

places, and there will be famines and troubles (**pestilences**) (**and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven**). All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Jesus referred to these things as the beginning of sorrows, or birth pains, as it literally appears in the Greek. Jesus revealed that this two-Day pause in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week would be characterized as a time of labor and travail, not only for the world at large, but especially for the nation of Israel. The term emphasizes the trials that will be experienced while the earth awaits the manifestation [or birthing] of the sons of God.

### **A Time of Persecution**

Thus far, the Olivet revelation reveals that the birth pains associated with this present age represent a time of upheaval marked by false religions, wars, racial violence, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. These sorrows are not future events waiting to happen, for they were already in evidence during the first century of the Church. **They will continue to increase in intensity and frequency of occurrence until Jesus returns.**

Next, Jesus revealed that **His followers** would also experience great persecution during this time. Mark's gospel continues:

But watch out for yourselves, for then they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My name's sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by

all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Matthew's account adds, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many, and because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold . . . and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come."

Up to this point, each of the three gospel accounts has described a time of sorrows (birth pains) and a period marked by the persecution of believers. Matthew describes the birth pains in verses 4-8 and the persecution that they would endure in verses 9-13. He ends this segment by acknowledging that the Gospel will be preached throughout the world, "and then the end will come."

Mark deals with the birth pains in verses 5-8, and the subject of persecution in verses 9-13. His segment ends with the statement, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

Luke spends verses 8-11 on the sorrows and begins verse 12 by saying, "But before all these things, they will lay hands on you and persecute you." Since the disciples were persecuted from the very onset of their testimony, Luke's account makes it clear that the persecution of the Church would pre-date these other sorrows. Luke ends his discussion of persecution in verse 19.

**This ends the first segment of Jesus' teaching.** Basically, He summarized the time leading up to His return at the end of this age as being a time marked by religious deception, intense warfare, racial unrest, ethnic violence, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, persecution, lawlessness, cold-hearted people, and Gospel preaching. If we were to describe the last nineteen hundred years, I think that pretty well sums it up, don't you? I cannot think of any other form of tribulation that would not fall into one of the above categories. In other words, Jesus just described "the great tribulation."

We were taken on a scenic bus tour of the sorrows that would characterize Today and Tomorrow. We hopped on board just in time to see the persecution that would mark the beginning

of our end-time route and were dropped off once we reached the end of the ride. Matthew's account terms this period "the tribulation of those Days." Luke used the term "the days of vengeance." Mark simply called it "those days."

As the Lord's discourse continues, it will become very evident that this time of sorrow, persecution, and affliction, is none other than the time of great tribulation. The great tribulation is not a separate event. These sorrows and age-enduring persecutions **are the great tribulation.**

The great tribulation is not a separate item reserved for the last half of a supposed seven-year tribulation. Such misguided thoughts were merely the result of thinking that the seventieth week was all about the Antichrist. Once we allow Christ His rightful place in the seventieth week, the unsealing can begin. The apostle John was quite familiar with the unsealed version, thus, he introduced himself in Revelation 1:9 as being "their companion **in the tribulation** and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

Need I remind you that each of the twelve foundational apostles suffered a martyr's death, save for John, who they attempted to boil in oil while he was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos. Peter was crucified upside down, Stephen was stoned to death, and James was killed by the sword at the hands of Herod. Paul was placed under house arrest in Rome during the final time of his ministry until he was eventually beheaded.

The annals of history record how the streets of Rome were lined with crosses, as crucified believers were set on fire and made to become human torches to provide light for the city. Others became the featured sporting event of the week, the equivalent of NFL Sunday pitting the Lions against the Christians.

Those who are well acquainted with history can affirm that each successive century has been stained with the blood of Christian martyrs. It is naïve to speak of great tribulation as if it were an event yet to come, something reserved for a mere three and one-half years. Those of us in America tend to embrace this view simply because we have been blessed to live in a nation that was established on Christian principles. While we were living the

“American Dream,” our fellow believers around the world were experiencing bitter and intense persecution.

As Western Bible teachers, we stood up in our pulpits and declared that the Great Tribulation would come someday. We debated whether we as believers would escape or endure. Meanwhile, in other parts of the world, believers were rotting in Communist prisons. They were tortured for their faith and murdered. Their property was confiscated. Their families were torn asunder. And they were forced to meet underground, risking their lives every time they secretly met for church. The death toll of Christian martyrs during the twentieth century alone tallies in the millions.

These birth pains do not define a so-called “seven-year tribulation” off in the distant future. **They define the entire history of the Church.** They define this present moment as well. The Church has always endured great tribulation. The early Church grew and thrived under intense persecution. Any attempt to stomp out that fire just caused it to spread even further.

## Disconnected

By now it should be clear that the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. triggered a prolonged and unique period of great tribulation in which we still find ourselves today. Since then, the world has endured false prophets, false religions, world wars, cold wars, atomic bombs, the threat of nuclear annihilation, racial violence, ethnic cleansings, mass genocide, the use of chemical weapons on innocent women and children, concentrations camps, world-wide terrorist attacks, severe earthquakes, flooding tsunamis, third-world famines, devastating pestilences, and the unrelenting persecution of Christians throughout the world. The list could go on and on.

If you were to go back in time to 30 A.D. and show a video of these events to the people of that time, they would probably turn pale at the sight of such great and unparalleled tribulation. Their heart would no doubt break while watching all the horrific tragedies unfold before their eyes.

We have become accustomed to it in our day. We can watch starving children on one channel, with flies all over their faces, their skeleton frames, and their bloated bellies, and then turn the channel to catch the game of the week. We open our Bibles and deny the prophetic relevance of the last two millennia, teaching, “If you think that this has been bad, just wait until the Tribulation comes!”

Such a view is naïve and deceptive. We disconnect the past nineteen hundred years of history from our prophetic understanding of the Scriptures and promote an inaccurate view of the future. We should not be telling people that the Tribulation is coming. Instead, we should be warning them that the wrath of that Day is coming.<sup>1</sup>

You need not fear the great tribulation or wonder what it will be like. Just turn on your evening news. While I was writing this chapter, the news reported that 29,000 children five years old and younger starved to death in Somalia. Another three million were projected to die unless help arrived. This, however, was not the lead story of the day. Nor could the telecast devote more than but a few minutes to the dreadful plight of these children. There were just too many other calamities that needed to be covered during that night’s broadcast.

These are the images of birth pains and great tribulation. We have watched these events unfold nearly every day on our television sets. We can read about them in our history books and watch black and white newsreels of these sorrows on the History Channel. Believe it or not, you have lived out your entire life in the heat of great tribulation! Like the apostle John, we are all companions in it.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 2:5

## Chapter 19

# The Olivet Scenario

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So far, Jesus' Olivet Discourse has provided a general overview of the end times in which the world would experience many sorrows and the Church would suffer persecution. He ended His overview with the assurance that He would not return until the Gospel has been preached throughout the world. He did not say, ". . . until everyone is saved" but "until it has been preached." The sophistication of our technology now makes this possible.

Once this part of the discourse concluded, Jesus began a new segment of His teaching. In the next segment, He would return to the beginning and provide an end-time scenario of the main events of this age, starting with the abomination of desolation and ending with His return in the rapture. Consequently, the next verse in each of the three Gospel narratives begins with the abomination of desolation. The gospel of Mark continues by saying:

So when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will

be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

Matthew's account is virtually identical except that he uses the term "great tribulation." Both accounts refer to the prophecies of Daniel concerning the abomination of desolation, but offer no explanation of the term, opting instead to add a parenthetical thought to "let each reader understand."

Until this point, Luke's account has not really contributed anything that we cannot already find in the other two accounts. He has merely repeated the verbiage of either Matthew or Mark. From here on, though, Luke makes several important contributions, particularly with respect to the abomination of desolation and the gathering of the saints (the rapture).

Luke was a Gentile by birth, well educated in Greek culture, and a physician by profession. Most importantly, he was a dear friend of the apostle Paul (Col. 4:14), his fellow worker (Philemon 24), and a ministry companion with Paul at various times, from Paul's second missionary trip to his first imprisonment in Rome. Luke was the loyal friend who remained with Paul after all the others had deserted him (2 Tim. 4:11).

The fact that Luke spent a considerable amount of time under the tutelage of the apostle is an important point worth noting. This is especially so when we consider the fact that the Holy Spirit thought it necessary to add a third account of the Olivet Discourse—one commissioned to be written by Paul's protégé. Luke also wrote the book of Acts, in part as an eyewitness as he accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys.

Of all the early apostles, none were probably better equipped to understand what the Law and the Prophets revealed about the end times than Paul. His two letters to the Thessalonians reveal how keenly he perceived such end-time themes as the coming of the Lord, that Day, our being gathered together to Him in the rapture, the future man of lawlessness, and so on. His letter to the Corinthians also reveals the depth of his knowledge concerning the great theme of resurrection.

There can be no doubt that Paul passed on the revelations he had received concerning the end times to Luke during the time they were together. This becomes evident when the rest of Luke's account is compared to those of Matthew and Mark. Since Paul did not pen his own gospel, the additional insights that Luke contributes with respect to the Olivet Discourse most surely reflect Paul's own commentary on what Jesus taught. So in a sense, we could consider Luke's account of the Olivet Discourse to be Paul's account also.

There can also be no doubt that Luke shared Paul's commitment to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. It should not surprise us, then, that at this point in the Olivet Discourse Luke deemed it necessary to provide an explanation to his Gentile readers concerning the abomination of desolation. A Jewish reader, well versed in the Old Testament, might be content with "let the reader understand," but not a Gentile.

Therefore, rather than merely duplicating what was said in the other two accounts, Luke clarified this part of the discourse by quoting Jesus as saying, "**But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation is near.**" This alternate expression confirms what we learned about the abomination of desolation from Daniel's seventieth week—the truth that this event was associated with Jerusalem's destruction in 70 A.D.

Not only that, it confirms the truth that this singular event inaugurated a unique time of great and unparalleled tribulation, never to be repeated. This time of unequalled tribulation started back then and has been going on ever since. It will continue until God turns out the lights.

Once Luke clarified this strategic event, his narrative reverts to the textual sequence of events noted in the other two accounts, namely, the warning for those to flee Jerusalem and the special woe pronounced against those who would be pregnant or nursing babies during that time. This assures us that Luke's account was still tracking the same scenario of events as those found in Matthew and Mark.

More importantly, the reverse is also true. Luke's strict faithfulness to the same narrative means that the accounts of Matthew and Mark **are also describing the events that**

**occurred in the first century siege of Jerusalem.** In other words, they were not describing a different time supposedly devoted to a future Antichrist during a seven-year tribulation as so many prophecy teachers lead people to believe. Or to put it as bluntly as possible, we are not reading about the final years of the Antichrist in the accounts of Matthew or Mark.

Instead, Jesus was giving his disciples a synopsis of key events that would transpire from the destruction of the Jewish Temple until His return to gather His elect to His Father's House. This becomes even clearer as He completes this last segment of His teaching.

## Chapter 20

# When Darkness is the Sign

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All three gospel accounts next describe the signs in the sun, moon, and stars that immediately follow the tribulation of those days. Mark's account continues:

Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, He is there!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Luke ended his account of the destruction of Jerusalem by saying, "For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. The very next verse in his account states, "And there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars."

The truth that the great tribulation began with the siege of Jerusalem and will continue until Christ returns in the rapture was verified by the Master Himself. The key that proves this can be

reduced to two words: “before” and “after.” In Acts 1:20, Peter quoted the prophet Joel, saying:

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the Lord.

Notice that the signs of darkness in the sun, moon, and stars, come **before the great and awesome Day of the Lord**. Jesus mentioned these same celestial signs, but in a slightly different context, for in Matthew 24:29 we find:

Immediately after the tribulation of those Days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

The key phrase in this passage is **immediately after**. When we combine these two “before” and “after” statements, we get this: **Immediately after the tribulation of those Days, but before the Day of the Lord, the sun, moon, and stars will be darkened**. In other words, these celestial signs of darkness in the heavens will herald the **end** of the tribulation of those Days and the **advent** of the Day of the Lord.

This is important, for these celestial signs divide **those Days** from **that Day**. Since “those Days” refer to Days five and six in God’s great Week, these celestial signs effectively announce the arrival of the seventh Day. The expression “that Day” is simply an abbreviated form of the Day of the Lord or the seventh Day.

Now let me ask a question. Have we seen the signs in the sun, moon, and stars yet? No? Then according to Jesus, the tribulation of those Days is still going on, for these celestial signs occur immediately after. Since these same signs signal the coming of the Day of the Lord, this means that the great tribulation will not end until Jesus returns to gather us in that Day.

Since the founding apostles understood that the seventieth week was all about Christ, they never spoke of a pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, or post-tribulation rapture. Such terms were not in their vocabulary. This explains why you cannot find them in

the Bible. Instead, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, “. . . when He comes **in that Day** to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe.”<sup>1</sup>

These men knew when the tribulation began and when it would end. They knew that it would continue until the celestial signs announce the arrival of that Day. No doubt this explains why Luke, Paul’s understudy, recorded Jesus as teaching the following order of events: (1) the abomination of desolation, then (2) a time of great tribulation followed by, (3) the celestial signs of darkness.

Verse 27 depicts the Lord’s return in that Day, once it has been heralded by the signs in the sun, moon, and stars: “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Since our resurrection has been predetermined for the dawn of **that Day**, verse 27 is followed by, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

The expression “your redemption” refers to the rapture. Those who are already in Heaven will not need to look up, but those who are still on the earth will. When is it that we should look up in anticipation of our redemption? The answer is, “when you see these things begin to happen.” What things? Certainly not the abomination of desolation or the destruction of Jerusalem, for those things happened back in the first century. We would all have a collective neck ache if we started looking up back then.

No, the “things that would begin to happen” refer to the signs in the sun, moon, and stars connected with the shaking of the powers of the heavens. These signs will notify us that the Day of the Lord is about to begin, and hence, that the rapture is about to occur.

All three gospel accounts place the appearance of the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory right after the signs in the sun, moon, and stars. Matthew’s account reads:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:10

stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven**, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

So that there could be no confusion, Luke's account makes it clear that these celestial signs are our cue to look up in anticipation of our redemption. [As we will see, this places the destruction of the Antichrist 3½ years later—at the end of Daniel's seventieth week.]

To review, in the first segment of His teaching, Jesus gave us a detailed description of the various sorrows and forms of persecution that would characterize this time of great and unequalled tribulation. Once that was finished, His next segment was designed to lay out the order of events that would lead to His coming. He told us that the approach of the Roman Legions would result in the fulfillment of the abomination of desolation and that this would set in motion a time of great and unparalleled tribulation.

This time of tribulation would continue uninterrupted until the sudden appearance of darkness in the sun, moon, and stars. These celestial signs would mark the advent of His appearance in the Day of the Lord. Thus, the tribulation of those Days will be cut short by the wrath of that Day. Since He promised watchful believers that we will escape the wrath of that Day, the final item that appears in His end-time scenario of events should come as no surprise—the gathering of His elect from the four winds.

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## Chapter 21

# Gathered by Angels

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All three gospel accounts stress the truth that the celestial signs in the heavens above, involving the sun, moon, and stars, will signal the appearance of the Son of Man. The accounts of Matthew and Mark both warn us not to be deceived by premature predictions of the Lord's return or by anyone who claims to be the Messiah **prior to the appearance of these celestial signs**. If the world had only heeded these words, the tragedies of recent times involving false dates and suicidal cults could have been entirely averted.

Jesus closed this segment of His discourse by describing what would happen once the world sees Him coming in the clouds with power and great glory. Mark's gospel states:

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

Matthew's account is nearly similar. Upon telling us that the celestial signs will be witnessed "immediately after" the tribulation of those days, his account continues:

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

For those who are familiar with other rapture passages in the Bible, the truth that “His elect” refers to “His Church” in this passage should be obvious. The fact that this holy gathering is accomplished by angels sent from Heaven, that it is attended with the great sound of a trumpet, and that the elect are gathered from **both** Heaven and earth, should be—pardon the pun—a dead giveaway.

This becomes even more apparent when we note that this gathering occurs in connection with His coming in a cloud-like manifestation of Heaven’s glory. But just in case there should be any confusion regarding this matter, the Holy Spirit tapped Luke on the shoulder once again, saying, “Make sure they get this part right.”

### **Luke—An Inspired Commentary**

It is commonly accepted that Luke’s gospel was written sometime after the gospels of Matthew and Mark were already in circulation. Furthermore, it is evident that Luke wrote his gospel after having accompanied the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. This means that Luke had the benefit of hearing Paul’s exceptional end-time insights firsthand. There is no doubt in my mind that the Holy Spirit took advantage of Luke’s special relationship with the apostle in order to bring further clarification to what Jesus taught years earlier on Mount Olivet.

Since Luke’s account of the discourse carefully follows the accounts of Matthew and Mark, at times almost word for word, the additional remarks offered by Luke serve to further enlighten us concerning what was said by the Master. It is almost as if we

are getting an inspired commentary on the Olivet Discourse as seen through the eyes of the apostle Paul.

Luke, for example, was not content merely to tell his readers to search the book of Daniel in order to understand the abomination of desolation. Instead, he was impressed to pass on Paul's insight into what this end-time term encompassed. As a result, the Holy Spirit was able to teach us to view the abomination of desolation as a past event associated with the destruction of Jerusalem as opposed to a future event associated with the Antichrist.

It is as if the Holy Spirit anticipated the confusion that would creep into our end-time theology, and added Luke's account to keep us straight. So instead of linking the great tribulation to the final three and one-half years of the Antichrist, the Spirit prompted Luke to associate this time of tribulation with the immediate fall of Israel and the centuries of captivity that would follow. This allowed us to properly view the great tribulation as being a long affair, continuing even to this present hour.

A pattern then begins to emerge when we compare Luke's account to the other two. The additional comments that Luke provides at parallel points in the discourse clarify what is recorded in Matthew and Mark. This becomes strategically helpful towards the end of the discourse, for Luke makes it perfectly clear that the "gathering of the elect from the four winds" is indeed the rapture of the Church.

At the precise point in the narrative where Matthew and Mark refer to the four-winds-gathering, Luke inserts instead (emphasis added):

And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars . . . then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.**

So rather than repeat Matthew's statement that the Lord will send out His angels and gather together His elect from the four winds, Luke says essentially, "Look up and expect to be gathered!"

To ensure that we would understand this gathering to be the rapture, Luke was then inspired to add the following to his account:

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life; and that Day come on you unexpectedly; For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

We can now see the harmony of the Scriptures as they unfold. Since the start of the Day of the Lord coincides with His coming, both are preceded and heralded by the celestial signs of darkness. There is no such thing in Scripture as a secret, signless, or any-moment coming. All three gospel accounts link His coming and our being gathered to the coming of the Day of the Lord. And since that Day will be preceded by the celestial signs in the sun, moon, and stars, it will not be time to “look up” in anticipation of bodily redemption (immortality) until these heavenly signs appear first.

Since the redemption of our physical bodies will occur at His coming, Luke’s exhortation to look up affirms the truth that the gathering of His elect from the four winds can only be the rapture. Revelation 20:5 reveals that the rest of the dead will not be resurrected until the thousand years are finished. Accordingly, the promise of being **delivered from the wrath to come**, a promise emphasized in Paul’s writings, clearly involves an instantaneous change and “catching away” of believers (His elect). This heavenly gathering enables us to **escape the snare of that Day** and to **stand before the Son of Man**. We could therefore refer to the rapture as an event in which we “escape to stand.”

The gathering of His elect from the four winds is a prominent end-time theme in Scripture. Recent generations have adopted the familiar term “rapture” to refer to this event. Even

though the term is useful, it often requires an explanation in that it is often understood in the context of some very inferior notions.

In Scripture, this event is most often described as “being gathered together” or “caught up.” Paul, for example, referred to the rapture as “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and **our gathering together to Him**” in Second Thessalonians 2:1. In verse three he simply called it “that Day.” Such a substitution of terms is entirely permissible since “His coming” and “that Day” **both begin at the same time.**

In the fourth chapter of First Thessalonians, he described it by saying, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven . . . and we who are alive and remain **shall be caught up together.**” The degree of importance that God attaches to this event is evident in that the Holy Spirit prompted Paul to preface his remarks by saying, “**For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord.**”

## **Now that the Veil has been Removed**

Now that the veil has been removed, we can understand the structure of Jesus’ Olivet teaching. In His first segment, He described the perils associated with a period of great tribulation that would span the time in between His ascent to Heaven and His return at the end of this age.

In His second segment, He gave us the specific order of events spanning that same period. Quite simply, the scenario went like this: (1) the abomination of desolation and the dispersion of the Jewish people into the nations; (2) a prolonged time of great and unparalleled tribulation; (3) the sign of darkness in the sun, moon, and stars; (4) His world-wide appearance as He comes in the clouds with power and glory; and (5) the rapture of the Church.

If you are wondering where the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week fits in the above scenario, the answer is, “It doesn’t.”

This age ends with the rapture. In other words, the seventieth week will not resume until the Lord returns and removes His Bride to the safety of His Father’s House. Only then, with His

Bride properly seated with Him at His Father's right hand, can the last half-week of Gabriel's prophecy be fulfilled.

This means that the last half of the seventieth week will not begin until the start of the seventh great Day, a.k.a., the Day of the Lord. This explains why these events are not featured in the Olivet Discourse. Instead, they are reserved for the book that contains all the necessary revelation we need concerning seventh-Day events, including the last half of Daniel's seventieth week. The book occupies the final chapters of the Christian Bible and is appropriately entitled, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

While the book of Revelation is certainly beyond the scope of this book, I will give you a brief outline of its structure. The first section (chapters 1-7) provides a review and a heavenly perspective of what Jesus taught in His Olivet Discourse. It traces the signs of this age and ends with the rapture, as His completed Church stands before the Throne in Heaven.

The second section (chapters 8-20) provides a series of repetitive visions concerning the wrath of the Day of the Lord and the final 3½ years of the Antichrist. This section details all the critical events that take place during the last half of Daniel's seventieth week. It takes us from the rapture to the destruction of the Antichrist and his beastly armies at the supper of the great God. Chapter 20 concludes this section with a revelation of the final events that occur in that last and seventh Day.

The third and final section (chapters 21-22) provides what can be known about the Perfect and Eternal Day, known only to the Father, in a new heavens and a new earth.

**Part 3**  
**The Purpose of**  
**His Coming**



## Chapter 22

# Unveiling the Rapture

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**A**s we can see, properly identifying the abomination of desolation is critical to Jesus' Olivet Discourse. It determines whether Jesus was talking about the coming of the Son of Man, or the coming of the son of perdition. **The fact that Daniel's prophecies associate this term with first-century events effectively eliminates any direct mention of the Antichrist from Jesus' discourse.**

Even though Jesus spoke of a plurality of "false christs" and "false prophets," He made no direct mention of the Antichrist himself. Why did Jesus fail to mention him if His teaching was supposedly about the Antichrist's final years?

In fact, when the entire discourse is considered, we find that Jesus said nothing about the mark of the Beast, the image of the Beast, the False Prophet, or the Two Witnesses anywhere in His teaching. Other events are noticeably absent as well, such as the fall of Babylon, the seven trumpets and bowls of God's wrath, and perhaps most significantly, the destruction of the Beast and his armies at the supper of the great God.

Our failure to understand that Jesus was teaching about the rapture in His Olivet Discourse and not the final years of the Antichrist, made the Lord's second coming difficult to understand. End-time prophecy teachers, including myself at one time, saw the terms abomination of desolation and great tribulation and were convinced that we were reading about the last half of a future seven-year tribulation.

We did not realize that this age (the sixth great Day) would end with the rapture, nor that the treading of the beastly nations

would be reserved for the Day of the Lord (the seventh great Day). Because of these inferior notions, we lost much of what Jesus taught about His coming, particularly as it relates to the rapture.

Eventually, the rapture devolved into a secret and signless event, such that we were left with two future “comings,” one secret and one visible. And once His visible return was detached from the rapture, its purpose became clouded.

We thought that He was coming to be down here with us, rather than coming to take us up there to be with Him. All because we deemed the Antichrist to be so powerful that Jesus would need to come down and fight him face to face, when in truth, it will only take a double-edged-word spoken from high above to properly slay this ill-fated Beast.

Having studied what the Bible says about the Lord’s return for all of my adult life, I am convinced that the New Testament writers linked the rapture with Christ’s second coming. They understood that there was only one second coming, and that He was coming again so that His Bride might be present with Him in Heaven.

Today, we have made the second coming to be all about a singular battle, incorrectly dubbed “the battle of Armageddon.” In short, we have confused “His coming” with “His treading.” His coming simply describes how He gets His Bride to Heaven. In contrast, His treading describes all that we do as we reign with Him from God’s Throne during this thousand-year reign.

Jesus’ reign over the nations could have begun the moment He ascended into Heaven nearly two thousand years ago. The only reason it didn’t is because He is waiting for His co-ruling Bride to fully join Him at His Father’s right hand—literally. Only then can His iron-rod rule over the nations begin.

## **The Purpose Behind His Parousia**

The truth that there is only one second coming can be understood by noting the various Greek words used to describe His coming in Scripture. These words, together with their meanings, are as follows:

*parousia* - present with  
*erchomai* – the act of coming or going  
*apokalupsis* – revealing  
*epiphaneia* – appearing  
*phaneroo* - manifestation  
*optomai* - to be seen

**It should be noted that all these Greek words are used in passages that clearly depict the rapture.** For example, Paul wrote, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.”<sup>1</sup>

*Parousia* is a compound word that means “being with” or “presence.” Jesus will come so that His Bride can be there with Him, not so that He can be here with us.

Jesus used the same word in His Olivet Discourse when He compared His visible return with the flashing of lightning, saying, “So also will the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of Man be.”

A few verses later, He used the words *erchomai* (the act of coming or going) and *optomai* (to see) when He said, “then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see [*optomai*] the Son of Man coming [*erchomai*] on the clouds of Heaven.” Therefore, the word *parousia* is used to describe the rapture and His visible return. **This is because it is all one event.**

The word *apokalupsis* means “unveiling” and “revealing.” In I Corinthians 1:7, Paul wrote to believers saying, “. . . so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation [*apokalupsis*] of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Peter added, “. . . and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation [*apokalupsis*] of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when Jesus comes in His *parousia* He will also be revealed.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:15

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 1:13

The word *epiphaneia* means “appearing” and “to shine forth.” In 1 Timothy 6:14, Paul charged Timothy to “keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing [*epiphaneia*]. Paul was not charging believers like Timothy to “keep this commandment” until a supposed future battle at Armageddon, but until the rapture.

Likewise, in Titus 2:13, he exhorted believers to be “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing [*epiphaneia*] of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

The word *phaneroo* simply means “to render apparent, to be manifested.” In Colossians 3:4, we find, “When Christ who is our life appears [*phaneroo*], then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

In 1 John 3:2, the disciple whom Jesus loved added, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed [*phaneroo*], we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Finally, the word *optomai* is used in Hebrews 9:28, “to those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear [*optomai*] a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

When Jesus physically returns, He will appear, shine forth, be seen, be revealed, and be manifested. Above all, He will catch us up **to be with Him**. Clearly, all these words are used in passages that describe the Lord’s coming in the rapture. And they are all written to His Bride.

This is because **the rapture is the second coming**. Once His Bride has been gathered, it can be said that the Lord has come. It can also be said that the Day of the Lord has come. After that, any future dealings with the nations, including the process of ending the times of the Gentiles and restoring the kingdom to Israel, can be attributed to Him “reigning,” not “coming.”

Therefore, the purpose behind His *parousia* is so that His Bride might be with Him in Heaven. The reason this is so vital is that He gave us His word that we would rule with Him. **Therefore, His reign over the nations cannot begin until those who will reign with Him are fully present and accounted for at His Throne!**

Once His Bride has been fully gathered and seated with Him in His Father’s Throne, only then can the treading begin. This

“treading” will span 3½ years—the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week. It will continue for the remainder of the thousand years until even death has been destroyed.

## **The Questions No One Thought to Ask**

Knowing that the Olivet Discourse is not about the final years of the Antichrist puts a whole new slant on Jesus’ teaching. **It means that His teaching was directed to those who would be looking for His return, not those who would be left behind once He comes.**

This is the key to understanding the remainder of His teaching, for the idea of a second coming was a mystery that had been hidden from the eyes of men in Old Testament times.

No one anticipated that the long-awaited Messiah would come, only to be rejected, crucified, and raised from the dead. Nor did anyone anticipate that He would then ascend into Heaven, only to come again after another lengthy wait.

It is therefore helpful to consider how much the disciples **did not know** as they sat with Jesus that day on the Mount. It is obvious that they were still struggling to understand why He had to leave, much less “how” and “when” He would come back.

Therefore, the notion of a second coming created a whole new set of questions—questions that none of them had even thought to ask. For one thing, how would Jesus come back? Would He just suddenly appear somewhere out in the wilderness or perhaps in the Temple? Would He come as a newborn child as He did the first time?

How long would He be gone? If His absence were lengthy enough, what would happen to the believers who would die while He was away? Since He promised to raise the dead at His return, how would that affect those still living? Would they miss out on the regeneration? After all, how can you take those who are still alive and raise them from the dead?

These were questions that none of His disciples even thought to ask at the time of Jesus’ Olivet teaching. Today we know the answers, but only because we have the New Testament letters

written by men like Paul. **But where did they get the answers, if not here in this teaching?**

Jesus knew that these would become important concerns after His departure. So the remainder of Jesus' teaching was geared to not only answer their immediate questions concerning the end of this age, but those they did not even know to ask.

As His lesson continued, He began to teach them about His return. He taught them what it would be like, how it would happen, and just as importantly, how He would gather all those who had believed on Him to Himself, both the living and the dead.

By entrusting them to the revelatory ministry of the Helper to come (the Holy Spirit), the Church would have a sure and certain hope for the future. The concept of His coming in the rapture would not only stand upon a rock-solid foundation but would receive the appropriate status of being a word from the Lord as well.

**Therefore, the Olivet Discourse marks the first formal teaching on the rapture.** And even though various elements of the teaching can be traced back to Old Testament shadows once we know what to look for, we will not find a clearer or more thorough presentation of the rapture except here in this teaching.

It would, however, be faithfully repeated by the apostles in their New Testament letters.

## Chapter 23

# The Lost Days of Enoch

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**F**rom here on in the Discourse, Jesus began to teach His disciples about an aspect of His return that no one had ever anticipated. Today we call it the rapture, but back then they often called it the gathering.

Following His description of the tribulation of those days, Mark's account records Jesus as saying, "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days."

The Greek word translated shortened literally means to cut off or amputate. The word was used in the Greek translation of 2 Samuel 4:12 when David's men cut off the hands and feet of the men who murdered Ishbosheth (Yikes)! The word conveys the idea of the sudden abbreviation or removal of something that would normally have remained.

We know that for the nation of Israel, the tribulation of those days will run their full course—two Days of being torn and stricken until their revival on the third Day. We also know that Jesus will reign for a full thousand years and that the last half-week of Daniel will still encompass 3 ½ years. Therefore, we are assured that there will not be a "shortening" of the length of any predicted end-time period that appears in Scripture.

This can only mean that the shortening of days pertains to the elect themselves, not to the length of a given prophetic period already stated in His Word.

## What is Meant by the Elect?

If you think that the elect refers to the Jewish people during the final years of the Antichrist, you will miss much of what Jesus taught throughout His Discourse. In doing so, you will have to ignore all that the New Testament says about the elect.

In the Greek New Testament, the word is used as an adjective, a noun, and a verb. As an adjective, *eklektos* means selected, chosen, and picked out. As a noun, *ekloge* means that which is chosen. And as a verb, *eklego* means to choose. Mark's account captures the fuller meaning by writing, "but for the elect's [*eklektos*] sake, whom He has chosen [*eklego*], He shortened the days."

The New Testament epistles were written to believers. These letters leave us no doubt as to the identity of the elect. In Romans 8:32-33 we find:

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

According to Paul, the elect are those who have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. To the Colossians, Paul wrote, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering."<sup>1</sup> In 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4, the elect are his beloved brethren in the Lord for whom he gave thanks and prayed for continually.

. . . remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

In Romans 11:5-7, the apostle made a distinction between the Jewish believers who have received Christ and the unbelieving nation at large by saying, "Even so then, at this

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 3:12

present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” In verse 7, he concluded, “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”

The unbelieving nation of Israel is never called the elect under the New Covenant. Instead, it is a term that is reserved for the Church—those who have obtained God’s grace by faith. In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter addressed his letter to the believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, saying:

. . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

In his second epistle, Peter wrote to “those who have obtained like precious faith with us,” saying, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.”<sup>2</sup>

Mark noted that the elect are “those whom the Lord has chosen.” Therefore, in John 15:16, Jesus said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

Jesus’ statement was not limited to His twelve disciples. His “choosing” refers to every believer, whether Jew or Gentile, who makes up the Body of Christ. Therefore, Peter wrote, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, in Ephesians 1:4, Paul revealed “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Finally, Revelation 17:14 states:

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter 1:10

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

kings; and those who are with Him are called “chosen and faithful.”

According to the New Testament, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, if you have obtained like precious faith with the apostles, then you are justified in God’s sight. You are beloved, holy, blameless, called, selected, picked out, and chosen by God. **You are His elect!**

For your sake, the Lord Himself will “shorten the days.” He will literally cut them off. Do you see it yet? Let me paraphrase it to make it a bit clearer. He will cut off the days of the elect for their sake. Now do you see it?

Since the cutting off of these days happens when the celestial signs announce the end of the great tribulation and the advent of that Day, this links the “shortening of days for the elect’s sake” with the coming of the Son of Man!

**In other words, our days on the earth will be cut off, abbreviated, and our lifetimes will be shortened when Jesus comes in the rapture.** He will seize you from this planet to join Him in clouds of glory.

When that happens, your days here will end. If you are forty years old when He comes, you will not live to be eighty. If the day after the rapture would have been your birthday, it will never be celebrated. Your days will no longer be measured in terms of this earthly realm. Instead, you will be quickened to live with Him in glory forever.

Jesus said that He will do this for **your sake**. Why is that? It is so you can escape the snare of that Day, “the hour of trial that will come upon the whole world.”

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.<sup>4</sup>

In His great mercy, God will cut short your days on planet earth and remove you to His Father’s House. Therefore, Paul

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<sup>4</sup> Revelation 3:10

knew to write, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

Once the great tribulation comes to an end, the wrath of that Day will fall upon the nations. If you are a believer, it will not fall upon you. If you are “waiting for His Son from Heaven” then Jesus will “deliver you from the wrath to come.”<sup>6</sup>

He will not shorten the days of the great tribulation, nor will He shorten the remaining years of the Antichrist, **but He will shorten yours!** He will do this because you are His chosen Bride.

### Enoch’s Translation

The passage in Genesis 5:23-24 is brief, but loaded with insights. It says, “So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

Enoch is a type of those of us whose days on the earth will be shortened or cut off. While many of the other early patriarchs lived much longer, men such as Adam (930 years) and Methuselah (969 years), Enoch’s lifetime was shortened to a mere 365 years. His days on the earth were cut off, for God took him. Enoch lost those years forever. I doubt however that he entertained any regrets along the way. The fleeting years he forfeited could never be measured against the unspeakable glory he gained when he left this world behind! And so it will be for us.

Since he was not the only one in their time to “walk with God,” why did God decide to suddenly take him in such an unusual way? Why not wait until he had lived a full life? Did God want us to ponder a time in the future when those of us who also walk with God will suddenly find our days on earth cut short in exchange for the incredible glory of a heavenly realm?

A parallel passage in Hebrews 11:5 is worth pondering, for it says:

By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:9

<sup>6</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:10

him;” for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Enoch was transported to Heaven because he had God-pleasing faith. He never experienced death. God took him and his days were cut off. According to Jesus, God will do it again, but on a much grander scale!

As the elect, we have believed on the Lord even though we have not seen Him. Therefore, our days on the earth will be shortened. He will “receive us to Himself” when He comes.

Conversely, the unbelieving nation of Israel will also believe on Him, **but not until after they have seen Him**. Even though they will be redeemed, and even though their “earthly calling” remains intact on account of their forefathers, they will have missed out on the “heavenly calling.” They will miss out on being part of God’s immortal government that will rule for eternity. (I wanted to say, “rule to infinity and beyond,” but that was already taken.)

I realize that this “take” on the Olivet Discourse may be new to most, but this is how men like Paul understood it. Eventually, the New Testament apostles realized that Jesus’ Olivet teaching introduced a mystery that had never been seen before—how some would be taken and others left when He comes in His Day.

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## Chapter 24

# The Taking of the Bride

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Jesus revealed the first hint of the rapture when He taught that He would shorten the days for the sake of His elect. After His departure, another Helper (the Holy Spirit) would come and teach them what that meant.

Jesus continued to expand this revelation for the remainder of His Discourse. By doing so, He answered the questions they didn't think to ask. So in the next segment, He makes it clear **just how He will return.**

Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Therefore, if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!" Do not go out; or "Look, He is in the inner rooms [of the Temple]!" Do not believe it.

For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus was not describing the final years of the Antichrist. He was describing what the Church would see up until the end of this age. Who can deny that the world has seen the rise of false

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 24:23-28

christ, false prophets, and false religions over the past two millennia?

We have not only witnessed premature announcements as to the time of the Lord's return, but those who have deceived people by proclaiming themselves to be a great prophet or some sort of Messianic figure. Sadly, some of these cults resulted in mass suicides. Even more, some of these people were former believers as well.

**Jesus made it clear that His return will not be a secret event.** It will be as visible and jolting as lightning that flashes across the sky. A few verses later He makes this point even clearer by noting that He will come on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.

But before that, Matthew's account interjects the strange statement (emphasis added), "For wherever the **carcass** is, there the eagles will be gathered together." The Greek word translated carcass means a lifeless body or corpse. It is derived from a word that means ruined or corrupted. What did Jesus mean by this?

Once again, Luke's gospel provides some valuable insights. His parallel passage appears in chapter 17, verses 22-37. It begins with, "Then Jesus said to the disciples:"

The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man and you will not see it. And they will say to you, "Look here!" or "Look there!" Do not go after them or follow them.

For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His Day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

The fact that Jesus said this to His disciples makes it clear that He was not referring to the Jews during the final years of the Antichrist. He was referring to the time when believers would long to see the Lord during His absence.

He warned them not to fall for false announcements of His arrival or the notion that His return would be a secretive affair.

Instead, they were to expect Him to come as lightning flashing across the sky, an event visible to all below.

Next, Jesus used the examples of Noah's deliverance from the flood and Lot's escape from the destruction of Sodom to teach His disciples about another forthcoming escape—when some would be taken and others left behind.

I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed; the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two will be grinding together; the one will be taken and the other left. Two will be in the field; the one will be taken and the other left.

At the time, Jesus' disciples didn't quite understand, so they asked, "Where Lord?" From the context, "being taken" was the equivalent of "Noah entering the Ark" and "Lot departing from Sodom." They must have been wondering, "Since it will be like Noah and Lot when you come like lightning to deliver us, where will we be taken? For sure, we won't be taken to another Ark, or to a nearby city, so where?" Jesus answered, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

As we will see, His enigmatic statement contained a great truth about the rapture, one that would be clearly explained later in His teaching and elaborated by the apostle Paul.

But before that, there is a valuable revelation to be gained by examining the word "taken." Our English translations do not bring out the full meaning of the word. Therefore, we do not necessarily hear what the disciples heard when Jesus made this statement.

In the Greek, the word is *paralambano*. Besides meaning "to receive, it also means to take to or with oneself. It was commonly used of taking or receiving a wife, or of taking a person or persons along with you.

Jesus used the word in His bridal promise, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive [*paralambano*] you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Therefore, in the rapture, Jesus will come and take us to His Father's House that we may remain with Him from then on.

The word appears again in Matthew 17:1: “Now after six days Jesus took [*paralambano*] Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves and He was transfigured before them. . .” It is worthy to note that they were taken to this high mountain **on the seventh day**, six days following Jesus’ announcement that “the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels.”

Jesus said and did these things knowing that His disciples would not make all the prophetic connections prior to the cross. This explains why He placed so much emphasis on the future ministry of the promised Spirit. The Holy Spirit would bring these things to their remembrance and lead and guide them into all truth.

Eventually, they would understand that the strange scenario of the ones taken, and the ones left, meant that Jesus will come and receive us to Himself as His eternal Bride. We will be taken to His Father’s House of many mansions, the place specifically prepared for His adoring Bride.

They realized that the time would come when He would take all of His disciples to a future mountain of transfiguration, the heavenly Mount Zion, where “our faces will shine like the sun and our garments become white as the light.” There, we will hear the Father speak to us corporately, saying, “You are My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

As we can see, brick by brick and line upon line, Jesus’ teaching began to piece together the rapture. Eventually, His disciples realized that the days of His elect on planet earth would be cut off when He appears like lightning and takes us to be with Him in Heaven.

We will be received as a glorious Bride. We will be transfigured to share in His glory. It will happen when the celestial signs signal the end of the great tribulation and the coming of the Day of the Lord, for it is His Day.

It will be a worldwide event, happening simultaneously all around the world. For some, it will be nighttime, when two are in one bed sleeping. For others, it will be daytime, when two are at work grinding in the mill or at work in the fields.

As far as the day and hour on the calendar and the clock, it will be a different day and a different hour, depending on your

specific location on this planet. In such a global scenario, how could it be restricted to a single day or hour? I don't know, do you? In any event, our days will be shortened and our lifetimes here on earth will be cut off.

The disciples wished to know *where* they would be taken. But Jesus had already told them that part. The Spirit would remind them of that later. The question they didn't think to ask was, **“By whom will we be taken?”**

## A Gathering of Eagles

The Greek word for eagles is *aetos*. It refers to godly angelic beings. In contrast, the passages in Revelation 19:17 and 21 use the word *orneon* to refer to “all the unclean fowls” or “birds of prey” that will feast on the slain bodies when the Beast and his armies are destroyed at the supper of the great God.

The word *aetos* (eagle) appears in Revelation 4:7 to describe the fourth living being guarding God's throne—and “and the fourth living being was like a flying eagle.” It appears again in Revelation 8:13 when John heard an *eagle* (*aetos* in the Greek, but translated “angel”) flying through the midst of Heaven, saying “woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth.”

In Revelation 12:14, the revived nation of Israel (represented by the woman) “was given two wings of a great eagle (*aetos*), that she might fly into the wilderness” to escape the serpent.

In Matthew's Olivet account, Jesus said that the eagles will be gathered to where the “dead, ruined, and corrupted bodies” (*ptoma*) can be found. In Luke's account, Jesus said “to where the “living and soundly whole bodies” (*soma*) can be found. The Spirit made sure to include both the dead in Christ, and those who are still alive when He comes.

Either way, whether dead or alive, Jesus is coming to get you! He will come again to take those that are His at His coming. For those of us who wait upon the Lord, we will find that our mortal strength will be instantly exchanged for His immortal strength, only to “mount up with wings as eagles!”



## Chapter 25

# The Eagles Will Seek You Out

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**A**s previously noted, Jesus introduced His disciples to an aspect of His coming that no one had ever heard of before: the truth that some will be taken while others are left behind. Hearing this, His disciples asked, “Where Lord?” In Luke’s account, Jesus responded:

Wherever the body [*soma* or living body] is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

The Holy Spirit influenced Luke to write it that way so that we would get the full revelation, for Matthew recorded it a bit differently.

Wherever the carcass [*ptoma* or lifeless body] is, there the eagles will be gathered.

When both statements are read together, we can understand that the eagles will be gathered **to both** the living bodies of believers as well as the lifeless bodies of departed saints. This enabled Paul to understand that “the dead in Christ will rise first,” then “those that are alive and remain” will be changed and caught up together with them (1 Thess. 4:14-17).

But how did this answer the disciple’s question? They asked “where,” not “who.”

A good teacher knows to ask the right questions in order to lead his students on the path of discovery. Asking the right question will enable them to see things they didn't even think to ask. In this case, the real question was "who," not just "where." Once you understand "who will do the gathering," the answer to the question of where becomes obviously apparent.

Later, Jesus clarified the truth that His angels will do the gathering by saying, "And the Son of Man will send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and **they will gather together His elect** from the four winds." But this raises a question: Why didn't He say angels the first time? Why did He say eagles instead?

What other truth did He want us to see besides the idea that we will be gathered by angels? Was there something about eagles in the Old Testament that He wanted us to connect with the rapture?

### **Expect Overcoming Strength**

Apparently there was, and who else but Paul and Luke to pick up on it. This becomes evident when we consider that Luke's account makes another worthy contribution by adding something not found in the accounts of Matthew and Mark. Where their accounts end, Luke's continues by saying:

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life; and that Day come on you unexpectedly; for it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

First, it is important to note that Luke's account connects our time to look up **with the coming of that Day**, when every eye will see the Lord descend with power and great glory. Therefore, in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, the Holy Spirit warned us not to be deceived by disconnecting "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him," from the coming of "the Day of Christ."

This means that the rapture will not be a secret event, nor will it be devoid of any signs as is often taught. So that's the first thing. But there's more. It only becomes apparent, though, when we delve into the Greek words that Luke employed in the passage above. Luke's account continues:

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.

To begin with, the word for pray is *deomai*. The word does not necessarily refer to a formal prayer request but can also mean to earnestly desire or long for. This *deomai*-prayer is an earnest longing or desire within our hearts for Jesus to come. This part of the passage could be translated as always desiring or keep desiring.

The part about being "counted worthy" needs some clarification as well, for it refers not to a worthiness that we can earn, but rather to a receiving of His strength.

The New Testament clearly teaches that we are saved by grace through faith. Every blessing and inherited promise comes to us because He exchanged His worthiness for our unworthiness on the cross.

Since the promise to "escape and stand" is just one aspect of the package of salvation, this promise belongs **to anyone and everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ**. In short, our faith in His blood qualifies all of us to receive this promise. It is not based on our past, present, or future works, but on His finished work!

The Greek literally reads, "so that you may be able to escape." *The Berkeley Version* says, "so that you may have ability to escape." In my view, *The Amplified Bible* says it best, "so that you may have the full strength and ability" to escape and stand.

In the Greek, this ability or strength is the word *katischuo*. It means to be thoroughly strong or to thoroughly prevail. In the book of Revelation, it links with the phrase "those who overcome." It refers to Christ's believing Church who will

overcome death through the prevailing power of resurrection, just as Jesus overcame death to sit at His Father's right hand.<sup>1</sup>

So the full thought of what Jesus said was this: "Be attentive; set your desire on receiving the prevailing resurrection-strength to escape all these things." This same thought is expressed in Hebrews 9:28: "To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

But how does our earnest desire to receive this prevailing strength relate to eagles?

### **Strength to Those Who Wait**

A prophecy in the book of Isaiah links our earnest desire to receive His prevailing strength with the notion of mounting up with wings as eagles.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength.<sup>2</sup>

In the Hebrew language, the words translated power, might, and strength can also mean vigor, force, capacity, as well as the means and the ability. They convey the same thought that Jesus conveyed when He spoke of *katischuo*, the prevailing strength needed to escape and stand in His presence.

Isaiah prophesied about the time when the One who never faints or grows weary **will pass on His immortal strength to those who are weak** (who remain in their mortal bodies), **and to those who have no strength at all** (the bodies of departed believers).

Those of us who are weak will receive the means and ability to be clothed with His immortal strength. For those bodies that are dead He will increase "powerfulness, and abundant strength."

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 3:21

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 40:28-29

The passage continues that, “even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. **They shall mount up with wings like eagles.** They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (emphasis added).

Although we have commonly read this passage as a promise of fortitude to soar above life’s problems, Isaiah was primarily prophesying about the rapture. The prophecy reveals how our mortal weaknesses will be exchanged for an immortal strength that never faints.

The word renewed in our English translations does not fully capture the thought being expressed in the Hebrew. It literally means to hasten away, slide by, pass on and be altered or changed. *Young’s Literal Translation* reads, “But those expecting Jehovah **pass to power.**”

Isaiah prophesied that our mortal weaknesses would hasten away. We will be changed. In an instant of time, we will receive an impartation of His “ability, capacity, strength and might.”

Finally, the word in the Hebrew translated as wait is *kaw-vaw*. It can mean to bind together, collect, gather together, expect, wait, or look for. Therefore, the passage could also be translated, “But those that gather together unto the Lord shall pass on to His power.” If that doesn’t describe the rapture, I don’t know what does!

So should the verse be translated wait or gather? Personally, I’m not taking any chances, so I’m just going to wait and be gathered!

Paul understood all these things. He made the connection between being gathered by angels and the eagles gathering to the bodies of the elect. Therefore, he wrote the following so that a great mystery could be passed on to others:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Who will be counted worthy to receive this kind of impartation? Jesus already gave us the answer: all who make up His elect!

Jesus mentioned the angels so that we would be comforted as to who would do the gathering. He spoke of eagles so that we would be sure to connect with Isaiah's great prophecy and expect this overcoming strength when we see the stars fall from the sky, and the moon has turned red over One Tree Hill.

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## Chapter 26

# They All Knew the Day

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Jesus revealed much about the rapture in His Olivet Discourse. He revealed how the days of the elect will be cut off to escape the snare of that Day. He revealed how every eye will see Him, how His elect will be taken, while others are left behind, how the eagles will be gathered to our living and dead bodies, and that He will send forth His angels to gather us from both Heaven and earth.

Because of His teaching, our eyes are now opened to see various allusions to the rapture in the Old Testament. These types and shadows not only confirm all the truths that Jesus taught, but provide additional insights as well.

### Elijah and the Chariot of Fire

We do not know **how** Enoch was taken, but we do in the case of Elijah.

Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up in a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more.<sup>1</sup>

Even though Elijah was nearing the end of his days, God didn't wait for him to die. He decided to take him up to Heaven

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 2:11-12

in a whirlwind instead. Since God always has a purpose in what He does, He wants us to glean some valuable insights about the rapture from this incident as well.

Apparently, we will not just disappear or shoot up in the air like bottle rockets when the rapture happens. Quite the contrary, for Jesus promised that He would send out His angels to personally gather and escort us into His Presence. Like Elijah, we will be gathered by angelic charioteers in royal chariots of fire. We could call it God's limousine service!

Isaiah 66:15 says that the Lord will come with fire "and with chariots, like a whirlwind." This Spirit-empowered wind will resurrect, change, and transport us in the "chariots of God." If Elijah was worthy of such a chariot, are not God's blood-bought saints worthy of such heavenly transport as well?

I gather that each one of us will have our own chariot and angelic charioteer. If you are concerned whether there will be enough chariots to go around, you need not worry. Psalm 68:17 tells us that "the chariots of God are tens of thousands, and thousands of thousands."

And while we're on the subject, did you know that Elijah was not surprised when his chariot appeared? In fact, He knew that it was coming that very day. And if you really want to disturb your end-time theology, others knew it too!

## **Knowing the Day**

The second chapter of second Kings describes the day "when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into Heaven by a whirlwind." Throughout that day, his faithful servant Elisha refused to leave Elijah's side. Elisha also knew that this was the day, and he was not about to let his master out of his sight until the time of his departure. In fact, he saw him go up!

So when Elijah said that he was going to Bethel, Elisha said, "Then I'm going too." The chapter continues that upon arriving in Bethel:

The sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord

will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know, keep silent."

Bethel, by the way, means "House of God." Next, Elijah decided to depart from Bethel to the city of Jericho. So Elisha repacked his suitcase.

Upon arriving at Jericho, the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know, keep silent." In the Hebrew language, Jericho means "a fragrance carried by the wind."

From Jericho, Elijah was led to go down to the Jordan River. Jordan means to descend in Hebrew. His chariot of fire appeared once they had crossed the River Jordan on dry ground.

Therefore, the shadow cast by this ancient account suggests the following message: When that Day comes, Jesus will descend (Jordan) to escort His household (Bethel) exhibiting the wind-blown fragrance of desire (Jericho) to Heaven in chariots of fire.

Wind is often a type of the Holy Spirit. This fragrant desire permeates Heaven whenever the Spirit and the Bride say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

But there is another important truth to glean before leaving this story: Everyone in the account knew that this was the day! Elijah knew it; his servant Elisha knew it; and all the sons of the prophets knew it as well.

Now here's the question: Why did God give us an account of a prophet ascending to Heaven in a chariot of fire with such a deliberate emphasis on the fact **that they all knew the day?** Ascending to Heaven in a fiery chariot made for a fine story in and of itself. The fact that they all knew when it would happen adds something that we were not expecting, even if they were. It is a significant part of the account.

Could it be that this incident forms a prophetic end-time shadow that our generation was also meant to ponder? Could it be that God is saying, "Your generation can know the Day, just like they knew the day?"

According to Jesus' Olivet scenario, that Day need not come upon anyone by surprise. He said, "Take heed to yourselves . . . lest that Day come on you unexpectedly."

He exhorted us to watch and observe the fig-tree signs so that we could know when “summer is near, even at the door.” He gave us the major signs leading up to His coming and told us “now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” Like Elijah, Elisha, and all the sons of the prophets, we too can know the Day. If we don’t know the Day, it will be our fault, not His.

Obviously, there is no need to set calendar dates for His return. Every pregnant woman who has come near the end of her nine-month wait and is experiencing the end-signs of her pregnancy, has all the information she needs to be prepared for the birth of her child. At that point, a calendar and a clock are of little concern to her.

In confirmation of this, Jesus said that His coming would be like the days of Noah. Unlike the flood victims of his generation, Noah and his family not only knew that the flood was coming, **but when it was coming as well.**

Speaking of signs, all three gospel accounts include Jesus’ parable of the fig tree immediately following the angelic gathering of His elect to Heaven.

Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!<sup>2</sup>

This was no arbitrary choice on His part. He was directing us to the following passage in the Song of Solomon:

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the [spring] rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth . . . the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 24:32-33

The Song of Solomon appears in the Old Testament. Its actual title is *Solomon's Song of Songs*, as in the greatest love song ever written. It is written as a dialogue between the Beloved, a Shulamite Maiden, and the Daughters of Jerusalem.

The *NIV Study Bible* provides an interesting footnote concerning the Beloved's maiden, for the word translated *Shulamite* is a feminine form of the name "Solomon," meaning, "Solomon's girl!"

Since King Solomon is speaking as the beloved throughout the song, he typifies Jesus as both Bridegroom and King. It is also clear that this Shulamite maiden that has captured the King's heart depicts the Bride of Christ—the royal girl spoken for by the King. As believers, we are **Solomon's girl**.

Therefore, this prophetic love song depicts the intimacy between Christ and His Church **at the end of this age**. No doubt, this explains why Jesus pointed us to this book in His Olivet Discourse. It is not surprising then to find allusions to His return in the rapture throughout the Song.

The sixth chapter begins with the Daughters of Jerusalem asking, "Where has your Beloved gone, O fairest among women?" The Shulamite responds that he has gone to his garden (a type of God's paradise in Heaven).

Verses eleven through thirteen connect with Jesus' parable of the fig tree and the Beloved's call for His fair one to "rise up and come away." The Shulamite recounts:

I went down to see the nut garden, to see the green plants of the valley; to see whether the vines already had budded, and the pomegranates had put forth their bloom. Ere I was aware, my soul's fancy seated me in a princely chariot of my people. (Berkeley Version)

Jesus predicted that our end-time observation of the budding fig tree would yield a "knowing" that His return was right at the door. And as with the Shulamite above, many today are being compelled to "go down to the valley to see whether the vines are budding."

The Shulamite's timely awareness that the vines were all in bloom led to a most extraordinary event. The *NIV Study Bible*

states, “Before I realized it, my desire set me among the royal chariots of my people.” The *New King James Version* reads, “Before I was even aware, my soul made me as the chariots of my noble people.” One moment she was walking in the valley, and before she realized it or before she was even aware, she was in a chariot!

It reminds us of Paul’s mysterious statement about being changed in a moment and in the twinkling of an eye. Solomon’s girl may have entered that valley on foot, but she left that valley behind in a princely chariot of fire!

### My Soul’s Fancy

Note how she gained access to the chariot. *The New King James* says, “**my soul had made me** as the chariots of my noble people.” The *NIV Study Bible* renders it, “**my desire set me among** the royal chariots of my people.” The *Berkeley Version* poetically says, “**my soul’s fancy seated me in a princely chariot of my people.**”

The peculiar idea that her soul, her desire, or her soul’s fancy were responsible for her sudden appearance in the chariot, explains why scholars call this the most obscure verse in the Song. The paradox is that her desire caused her to be placed in this chariot before “she was even aware!”

By now we should be able to comprehend why the Holy Spirit chose these exact words, for Jesus taught us to earnestly desire the prevailing strength to escape the snare of that Day. Solomon’s prophetic Song confirms how **that desire** will cause your chariot of fire to appear.

Notice that the idea is to escape, not endure. A fiery chariot is not necessary if you plan on “lingering in the valley, hoping to endure.” Such chariots are quite handy though when it comes time to exit the valley altogether and “stand before the Son of Man” in Heaven.

As the Shulamite departs in her royal chariot, the passage continues with the Daughters of Jerusalem exclaiming:

Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you.

As the King descends, these “Daughters of Jerusalem” will finally recognize this lowly Shulamite as being the Messiah’s special love. Isaiah prophesied, “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” (This is the same chapter that ends with “mounting up with wings as eagles.”)

Their persistent calls for her to return or turn around so that she might be gazed upon elicit the following response from the Shulamite:

Why would you gaze on the Shulamite? What is it you wish to see?

The Daughters reply, We want to see the dance of the Mahanaim!

The Hebrew word *mahanaim* means two hosts, or two camps. It comes from Genesis 32:1-2:

So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is God’s camp.” And he called the name of that place Mahanaim [the double camp].

A double camp occurs whenever God’s camp joins our camp; that is, whenever His angels encamp together with us. Thus, the Song of Solomon reveals that your assigned angelic charioteer will show up with your personal chariot of fire, just in time to escort you to the heavenly Dance above!

The glorious sight of Solomon’s girl dancing and rejoicing with the angels of God will spark Israel’s third-Day revival. They will react like Elisha when he saw Elijah being caught up in a whirlwind.

And Elisha saw it, and cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!”

We have been taught that the rapture will be a secret affair and that believers will just suddenly disappear without a trace. Yet these shadows say otherwise. Elisha saw the chariot of fire. He watched as his mentor was caught up in a whirlwind.

Likewise, the daughters of Jerusalem saw Solomon's girl go up in a royal chariot. Like Elisha, they were enthralled by the spectacle of the dance of the two camps.

Jesus Himself taught that all the tribes of the earth would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the heavens with power and great glory. Some will see and mourn. Others, such as the daughters of Jerusalem, **will see and believe**. It is only logical to conclude **that if they see Him coming, they will also see us leaving!**

**Part 4**  
**Olivet Viewed from**  
**Above**



## Chapter 27

# The Fourth Account

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**I**n His Olivet teaching Jesus pulled back the veil and revealed the things that the Church would see leading up to the end of this age. In His opening segment, He described the tribulation of the days to come as being a time of birth pains and persecution, during which the Gospel would be preached throughout the world.

In His next segment, He gave us the principal signs leading up to the rapture at the end of this age. We found that God's decision to give us three separate accounts of the same teaching was extremely helpful. The subtle variations between these accounts provided a Spirit-inspired commentary on Jesus' teaching.

There is, however, a fourth account. It was recorded when John the apostle witnessed the opening of the Scroll and its seven seals in the book of Revelation (chapters 5-7). The prophetic message found in John's account provides a view of this age from the perspective of God's heavenly realm.

The breaking of each seal yields a vision, a "come and see," in which the things that Jesus told His Church on the Mount of Olives are both repeated and confirmed—only this time, as the One who lives and was dead, but is alive forevermore.

It is commonly assumed that the events described by the first four seals (the four horsemen of the apocalypse) depict the rise of the Antichrist during the first half of a supposed seven-year tribulation. We now know to look for a loftier view, a view that harmonizes with both the scriptural view of Daniel's seventieth week and Jesus' Olivet Discourse.

We have given the Antichrist much more attention than what the Scriptures allow him. He does not belong in the prophecy of Daniel's seventieth week. Nor does he belong in Jesus' Olivet Discourse. And most certainly he is not the focus of the first six seals of the book of Revelation.

We know this because the events portrayed in the sixth seal **are an exact match** of what Jesus taught about His coming in the Olivet Discourse. The seal begins with the celestial sign of darkness in the sun, moon, and stars, announcing the end of the tribulation of those days and the advent of the Day of the Lord.

Once the sun, moon, and stars are darkened, the seal depicts Christ's visible return as the heavens unfold and the inhabitants of the earth mourn.

The seal concludes with the gathering of His elect from the four winds—those who were “counted worthy” to escape the snare of that Day to stand before the Son of Man.

As the true Israel of God, this innumerable multitude gathered out of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, are shown standing before the throne of God and praising Him for their recent salvation.

With His Bride having been safely removed to Heaven in the rapture, the seventh seal in the book of Revelation depicts God's wrath upon the nations via the seven angelic trumpeters of judgment.

Thus, Jesus' prior teaching from “down below” enables us to understand His revelation from “up above.” By comparing both teachings, we have a definitive marker in that the sixth seal depicts Christ's return at the end of this present age. **It therefore divides *this age* from the age to come.**

Using the prophetic terms associated with God's great Week, the sixth seal marks the end of the sixth great Day and the start of the seventh—the great and awesome Day of the Lord.

Since the sixth seal marks Christ's return at the end of this age, we can only conclude that the prior five seals all relate to this present age as well—the period of birth pains, sorrows, tribulation, and persecution with which we are all so familiar.

And since this present age will end with the sixth seal, the seventh seal must relate to the age to come. Therefore, the things depicted once this seventh seal has been opened must be seventh-

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Day events that transpire during Christ's millennial reign during which He is seated at the Father's right hand.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.<sup>1</sup>

These seventh-Day events include: the wrath of God released by the seven trumpets, the ministry of the two witnesses in Jerusalem, Israel's third-Day revival predicted by Hosea, the image set up by the False Prophet, the infamous mark of the Beast, the final seven bowls of God's wrath, the destruction of the mysterious "Babylon the Great," and finally, the ultimate demise of Israel's enemies at the supper of the great God depicted in Revelation 19.

These are all events consigned to the age to come. They were not depicted in Jesus' Olivet Discourse since His teaching was restricted to only the events that mark this present age. Therefore, they are not depicted in the book of Revelation **until after the sixth seal has been removed and the Church has been caught up to God's throne in Heaven.**

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:12-13 (KJV)



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## Chapter 28

# This Age Unsealed

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Since the sixth seal depicts Christ's return in the rapture at the end of this age, the prior five seals must complement what Jesus taught about the signs while He was with His disciples on the Mount of Olives. Therefore, these five seals give us a heavenly perspective of the birth pains, the period of tribulation and persecution that we would see until He comes again.

As the first four seals are opened (Rev. 6:1-8), each of the four "living beings" that attend God's throne invite us to "come and see" what they see. The first living being is like a lion; the second is like a calf; the third has a face like a man; and the fourth is like a flying eagle. Each living being has six wings and is "full of eyes around and within."<sup>1</sup>

This means that they see everything! Nothing escapes their attention. They not only see everything that happens all around, in both the seen and unseen realms, but every inner motive as well.

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the four living beings saying with a loud voice like thunder, "Come and see."

And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 4:7-8

These spiritual horsemen are, as Paul described them, “the rulers of the darkness of this age” and “the wicked spirits in the heavens.”<sup>2</sup> Since the fourth rider is a spirit of death, working in tandem with Hades, it follows that the other horsemen are wicked spirits as well.

Therefore, the white-horse rider is a ruling spirit of darkness promoting false religions, false christs, and false prophets. He is a deceiving angel of light, charged by Satan to sow deception throughout the earth. This spirit stands in sharp contrast to Jesus, the One who is called Faithful and True, who also appears on a white horse later in Revelation 19:11:

And behold, a white horse; and He who sat on Him was called Faithful and True.

In His Olivet teaching, Jesus said, “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”

Notice that Jesus said many will come. Since this deceiving spirit has been blinding men and women throughout the course of this present age, it is incorrect to teach that this seal **merely depicts the Antichrist**.

Bear in mind that we are not viewing a future seven-year tribulation. Instead, the vision relates to what has been nearly two great Days (2,000 years) worth of events.

With respect to the beginning of sorrows, Jesus said, “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, **but the end is not yet**. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” Likewise, the second seal reveals:

When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living being saying, “Come and see.”

Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

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<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 6:12

This red-horse rider is a spirit promoting warfare and racial violence. This spirit instigates hatred among humanity such that nations and ethnic groups clash with one another. He promotes racial injustice such that men hate one another simply because the color of their skin is a few shades darker or lighter. His grant of power comes from Satan, not God.

The combination of the first two seals also reveals another critical feature of this present age: The combination of a false religion bent on conquering the world with a great sword has sponsored many of the wars that have occurred over the past two millennia. The terror of this false religion is still being felt around the world today.

When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living being say, "Come and see."

I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living beings saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius [a full day's pay], and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus continued His discourse on the coming sorrows, saying, "And there will be famines." The spirit who rides the black horse is a spirit of poverty. He is charged with bringing lack and economic ruin upon the earth, whether by famine, drought, hyperinflation, currency devaluation, greed, stock market crashes, and so forth.

Poverty always follows religious deception; and warfare always creates refugees, economic ruin, and the lack of essential human needs among the populations who suffer in the line of fire. These things are not coming someday, **for they have characterized the entire course of this age**. The existence of third-world famines spanning decade after decade is a case in point.

Jesus concluded his discussion on the beginning of birth pains by saying, "And there will be pestilences and earthquakes

in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.” Similarly, the fourth seal reveals:

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living being saying, “Come and see.”

I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

This spirit promotes all forms of death and destruction, whether by sickness, disease, pestilence, violence, or natural calamity.

These birth pains began shortly after Jesus’ time and have continued to gain momentum such that our generation now stands on the brink of global disaster from every front. The good news for believers is that the increasing severity of these birthing pains can only signal one thing, **the realization that the birth (revealing) of the sons of God is drawing near.**

Like the apostle Paul, we can say, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, for the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, keep your eyes on the Prize, and trust Him to keep you “in all of your ways.” Know that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” For believers, physical death is nothing more than stepping into the realm of His eternal glory!

Jesus concluded this segment of His Olivet teaching by saying, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My Name’s sake.” Since the seals parallel His teaching, the fifth seal reveals:

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:18

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they, was completed.

### **The First Five Seals**

Revelation 19:10 states, "For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." When Jesus ascended and received the seven-sealed scroll, the breaking of each seal released the Spirit of prophecy to complete the testimony of His revelation.

The first five seals verified that His earthly testimony was faithful and true—this age would be characterized by the beginning of sorrows, great tribulation, and persecution until the end.

The first four seals revealed that the four horsemen of the apocalypse, those loathsome emissaries commissioned by the Thief himself, would fill the world with religious deceptions, wars and rumors of wars, poverty, economic ruin, pestilence, and calamities of death.

Their colorful steeds only seduced mankind as to their true intentions. Their mission was Satan's mission--to steal, kill, and destroy. **The unenlightened would presume that their hoof beats have not yet been heard all around the world.** The martyrs of the fifth seal, however, would protest otherwise. They were clad in white and told to rest a bit longer, until their fateful number had been completed.

And thus, those sorrowful birth pains that Jesus predicted had begun. Up above, the Head of a new Man was now seated at His Father's right hand. Down below, His faithful Bride awaited the promise of her returning Bridegroom. Soon, on the third Day, the two would become one flesh in the mystery of resurrection.

And as each “living stone” was carefully cemented to another, and as each member was fitly fashioned and framed together, His Temple grew and His body formed. Only two Days were allotted to this effort, but it would seem like a lifetime to each individual believer that had been called out.

Though the Bridegroom was away, He did not fail to leave a dowry behind—**the seal of His Spirit**. His dowry **guaranteed** that He would come back and, just as importantly, that His Bride **would share in His likeness**. Therefore Paul, one of the stewards of the mysteries, was compelled to write:

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.<sup>4</sup>

His Bride was encouraged not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, for by Him she had been “sealed for the Day of Redemption.”<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, His Spirit would “continue His good work in her until the Day of Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup> Until then, she would await the coming of that third great Day.

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<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 1:13-14

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 4:30

<sup>6</sup> Philippians 1:6

## Chapter 29

# Breaking the Sixth Seal

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**A**ccording to Jesus, this age would be characterized by birth pains and great tribulation. As for the nation of Israel, her time of trouble would begin with the abomination of desolation, when she would be scattered to the nations.

He also revealed that the coming of the seventh great Day would be heralded by certain signs in the sun, moon, and stars. These signs would appear **immediately after the tribulation of those Days, and just before the advent of His Day**. These signs would be our cue to “lift up our heads and look up” in anticipation of our redemption.

The mystery of the great Week cancels out the inferior notion of an any-moment coming, for He will not come until the seventh great Day, after the previous six have all been fulfilled.

Likewise, the scenario of events in His Olivet lesson on the end of this age cancels out the inferior notion of a sign-less coming, for the coming Day of the Lord has plenty of signs.

Other Scriptures reveal that these signs include: the restoration of the Jews to their ancient homeland, a rebuilt Temple, the reinstatement of the daily offerings, the rise of the “little horn” to oppose the sacrifices, and last but not least, the worldwide phenomenon of celestial darkness with a black sun, a blood-red moon, and the diminishment of all starlight.

This final Olivet-sign of darkness is confirmed in the sixth seal. It occupies the portion of Scripture beginning in Revelation 6:12 and continuing through chapter seven.

Here, the remaining items of Jesus' Olivet teaching are all seen: the celestial signs of darkness, the appearance of the Son of Man as the heavens are rent, His descent in the Day of the Lord, and the gathering of His elect from the four winds. The sixth seal begins:

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

In Scripture, the celestial signs noted above are always mentioned in the context of God shaking the powers of the heavens. The passage in Hebrews 12:26 states, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also the heavens." Joel prophesied:

The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The Lord will roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

These same themes are repeated in other passages, such as Isaiah 13:9-13.

Behold, the Day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.

I will punish the world for its evil . . . therefore, I will shake the heavens and the earth will move out of her place in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the Day of His fierce anger.

Unlike solar and lunar eclipses that have occurred periodically at various times in the past, this sign of darkness will

be attributable to the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars **simultaneously**. As a result, the entire heavens will grow dark. Psalm 82:5 says:

They do not know, nor understand; they walk about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are unstable.

## **Signs or Wonders?**

The truth that these celestial signs will not appear until God shakes the heavens differentiates them from the regular cycles of solar and lunar eclipses that have occurred at various times in conjunction with Jewish Feasts.

Even though past occurrences of solar eclipses and blood moons **were important omens**, we should not confuse them with the sign of darkness that Jesus referred to in His Olivet Discourse.

For one thing, nothing happened to the stars during such eclipses. Nor were all heavenly lights darkened together all at once. Furthermore, **these eclipses and blood moons did not signal the end of the great tribulation.**

We need to ask ourselves, “Did the tribulation of those days immediately end when any of these blood-moon eclipses appeared? Did the heavens shake? Did the stars appear to be falling from the night sky? Did the heavens above grow completely dark all over the world? Of course not.

Does this mean that blood-moons and solar eclipses have no relevance to prophecy? No, it means they serve an important prophetic purpose **in warning people that His coming is getting closer**. In contrast, the singular sign of darkness will tell us **that His coming is at hand**.

The phenomenon known as blood-moons can be found in a prophecy from Joel. Peter quoted this strategic prophecy on the Day of Pentecost. It appears in the second chapter of Acts. Verse nineteen states:

And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath.

The Greek word translated as wonders is *tarata*, the plural form of *taras*. It means an omen or a wonder. Since Peter was quoting the prophet Joel, the corresponding Hebrew word is *mopheth*, meaning, something conspicuous, a token, or an omen.

The “wonders in heaven above” refers to the uncanny connections we have observed between solar and lunar eclipses, Jewish Feast-days, and the fulfillment of important events with respect to Israel. As omens or harbingers, they tell us that we are getting closer and closer to Christ’s return.

In contrast, the singular sign of darkness in the sun, moon, and stars will signal the advent of the Day of the Lord. This sign appears in the next verse of Joel’s prophecy:

The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the Lord.

Once the celestial signs in the sixth seal have heralded the advent of that Day, the next verse says:

Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

For the great Day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

The sixth seal reveals that His coming in that Day will not be a secret event. It will begin with the rending of the veil that separates this natural realm from the unseen realm. Once the sky rolls up like a scroll, Heaven’s throne will be exposed for all to see. At this point the sign of the Son of Man will appear.

## Sitting, then Coming

In Matthew's Olivet account, Jesus revealed that the celestial signs would be followed by "the sign of the Son of Man appearing in Heaven." There is a subtle distinction between His "appearing in Heaven" and His "visible descent in the clouds with power and great glory."

The reason for this distinction is important. The Jewish leaders arrested and tried Jesus in secret. But His heavenly Father will declare His vindication openly.

At His trial, the Lamb spoke like a King, saying, "Hereafter, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One, and coming on the clouds of heaven." **Note the order – first sitting, then coming.**

The Father wants the world to know that this same Jesus, crucified by both Jews and Gentiles alike, is not only alive, but has been given a name above every other name. At His appearing, the Father will officially present Him to the world as being both Lord and Christ.

Though He was despised and rejected of men, the Father honored Him as the rightful Heir to sit at His right hand of power. Therefore, the world will be given a solemn moment of reflection to behold the awesome majesty of Jesus Christ—the Son of the living God and the risen Son of Man. He will be gloriously unveiled in His seated position of honor and glory for all to see.

Once He appears, everyone will witness the Lord's descent in the clouds of the heavens with power and great glory. Then, all the tribes (or peoples) of the earth will mourn.<sup>1</sup>

Revelation 1:7 states, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him." Isaiah 40:5 adds, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh will see it together."

The appearance of the throne of God will cause those who are ashamed to run and hide, just as Adam and Eve hid when the Lord came looking for them. They will cry out, "Hide us from the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 24:30

face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

Because of this, the apostle John admonished his little children to “abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”<sup>2</sup>

It is important to have confidence and not be ashamed when He appears. To that end, the Spirit has been preparing His Bride for that Day with messages of His abundant grace. He is teaching us about the love of the Father so that all fear and dread of His presence can be cast out. The apostle John also wrote (emphasis added), “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the **Day of Judgment**, because as He is, so are we in this world.”<sup>3</sup> God wants all people to know His love.

With the heavens opened and His Son properly introduced, the holy entourage will begin. The participants in this heavenly parade will consist of archangels, angelic charioteers, the departed saints in Christ, and finally, the Lord Himself. It will be glorious.

The prophet Ezekiel witnessed a preview of this coming attraction and recorded the vision in the first chapter of his book. It is worth taking the time to read for it reveals how the Lord will be “admired among all who believe when He comes in that Day.”

Even though our change to immortality will happen instantly, His coming will not be an instant affair. First, He will descend to the Mount of Olives and roar so loud that the Mount splits in two. Then He will command the dead bodies of His returning saints to “arise.” Each will be clothed with a glorified body like unto His.

Since we who are alive and remain until His coming will not precede those who have fallen asleep, He will then command the rest of us “to shine.” As the Lord begins to ascend back into that glory, we will all be caught up together to meet Him in the air.

It is nothing less than a reenactment of His ascension nearly two thousand years ago. **Only this time, His Body (the true Church) will accompany Him as He ascends.**

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<sup>2</sup> 1 John 2:28

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 4:17

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## Chapter 30

# Numbering Those Without Number

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**T**he revelation of the great Week teaches us that Christ will return at the dawning of the seventh great Day. In conjunction with this, Jesus' Olivet lesson enables us to understand the signs of this age—the scenario of prophetic events leading up to His return in that Day.

On Mount Olivet, Jesus gave us the following order of events: (1) the abomination of desolation; (2) the great tribulation; (3) the celestial signs of darkness; (4) the appearance of the Son of Man in Heaven; (5) His descent in power and glory; and (6) the angelic gathering of His elect from the four winds.

The sixth seal maintains this same order of events, for it began with the celestial signs of darkness, followed by the rending of the heavens to reveal His throne, and then Christ's descent in the Day of the Lord. The sixth chapter concluded with the exclamation, "For the great Day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

**We would therefore expect to see the gathering of His elect from the four winds next.** In other words, unless Jesus was negligent in finishing His earthly testimony, or even worse, mistaken in the proper sequence of events, **the rapture must appear next!**

Since chapter seven is still talking about the sixth seal, we can be assured that Jesus was not negligent in finishing His earthly account. Nor was He mistaken as to the proper sequence of events, for chapter seven provides an incredibly unique

depiction of the rapture, one that reveals the glorious gathering of His elect.

Not only does it highlight the major New Testament themes concerning His Bride, **but it also settles the issue as to whether she will be here during the mark of the Beast.**

## Sealed for the Day of Redemption

The seventh chapter begins with four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. They are restraining the four winds of God's wrath until the process of sealing the servants of God has been completed.

The apostle Paul already explained the purpose of being sealed. Whenever we believe on the Lord, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. He is our guarantee that we will receive a glorified body just like Christ's when He returns.

This sealing process has been going on now for nearly two Days (or two thousand years). It will continue during the last moments of darkness until the heavens are suddenly rent and the Son of Man appears.

The apostle Peter revealed the length of time in which these winds of destruction would be restrained when he wrote (emphases added), "But the heavens and the earth **which are now preserved** by the same word, are reserved for fire **until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**"<sup>1</sup>

The coming of that Day will inaugurate the wrath of God and the release of these harmful winds upon the earth. This explains why His Bride is presently being sealed for the Day of Redemption—the time when she will be removed from the planet and taken to His Father's House. "These contrary winds" will bring a snare upon all those who remain to dwell upon the face of the whole earth.

Once that Day comes, the seal (or escrow deposit) guaranteeing our full redemption **will be released.** The transaction will have been closed and the sons of God will have been manifested. The promise of future glory will have become

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter 3:7

the reality of the purchased possession. In other words, we will have received a body like unto His glorious body.

The release of the seal does not mean that His Spirit will leave us. It simply means that He no longer needs to guarantee that which **we have finally obtained**. This is what the first part of chapter seven is all about. **It depicts the release of the seal in the Day of Redemption.**

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousands (plural) of the children of Israel were sealed . . .

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"<sup>2</sup>

The numbering of those who were sealed was not meant to confuse us, but to enlighten us. Apart from the mysteries, though, the profound significance of the symbolism will escape you. Without a revelation from above, you will fail to recognize this innumerable multitude, just as those in Jesus' time mistook him for Elijah or for John the Baptist raised from the dead.

As to their number, the Greek text uses the word *chiliades*, meaning "thousands," instead of *chilioi*, the singular for thousand. **The plural form is used in every instance**, including 12 thousands (*chiliades*) from each of the twelve tribes.

If the 144 thousands (*chiliades*) were meant to mean a specific number, the Spirit would have used the same Greek word used when Jesus fed the five thousand (*chilioi*).

In fact, the Greek language follows the same rules of grammar as does the English for distinguishing between definite and indefinite numbers. For instance, in English, we use the singular form to express a definite number, such as "He fed five thousand people." Here, the word thousand is singular. We would

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<sup>2</sup> Revelation 7:4 and 9-10

not say “He fed five thousands people.” In contrast, we use the plural form to express an indefinite or unspecified number, such as “there were thousands at the parade.”

The unusual aspect of the passages in the book Revelation (chapters 7 and 14) that refer to the 144 thousands, however, **break the rules of grammar**. These passages, without exception, combine a specific number (144) with the plural form of the word for thousand, to get 144 thousands. Why would God do this? Obviously, the translators did not know what to do with this, so they just performed an “auto correct” as our modern-day devices do. So what was God’s intent in such an obvious “blunder?”

It was because He wanted to prophetically link “an innumerable multitude” with “a specific number” to establish the mystical and symbolic importance of this unique group. Therefore, the term “thousands of the 144” is the official symbolic number of the Bride of Christ—those called out to form His Church.

The fact that there are 144 thousands (an indefinite number), and not 144,000 (a definite number), symbolizes an innumerable multitude. So even though this multitude is without number, **they do have a number!**

Twelve is the number of God’s people (twelve tribes). It is also the number associated with delegated authority (twelve apostles). When multiplied, we get 144, **symbolizing those from among God’s people who will have authority to reign with Christ in that Day.**

Therefore, **the 144 thousands is the official numerical designation of the Bride of Christ.** This symbolic number was not meant to confuse us, but to enlighten us. It speaks to the mystery of Christ, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male or female, bond or free, but a new creation in Christ.

His Father’s House of many mansions was prepared specifically with Christ’s Bride in mind. After all, the Bridegroom promised that **He would go and prepare a place for her.** Thus, this prepared place is based on multiples of the number 12. And its wall just so happens to measure 144 cubits.

Then one of the seven angels . . . came to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

And she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb . . . and he measured the city with the reed—twelve thousand furlongs . . . then he measured its wall—one hundred and forty-four cubits.

Now we can understand that the sealing of the 144 thousands depicts the spiritual sealing of Christ’s Bride over the last two millennia. **This is the true Israel of God, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but one new man in Christ.**

The apostle Paul affirmed this new covenant truth when he wrote, “For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” The Amplified Version reads, “For it is not everybody who is a descendant of Jacob [Israel] who belongs to [the true] Israel.”

The flip side is also true. There are those who are not the physical descendants of Jacob who belong to the true Israel of God. In the light of new covenant realities, the true Israel of God consists of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul went on to say:

Nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham . . . that is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 9:6-8

In other words, the Israel of God is a “faith thing,” not just a “natural thing.” It is not limited to biological descent. Instead, it has everything to do with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**This does not diminish the promises made to the natural descendants of Abraham.** The land of Israel is **their land**. And the nation of Israel will stand at the head of the natural nations in that seventh great Day. But by then, they will have been born of His Spirit just as His Bride was prior to that Day.

God will never revert to an old obsolete covenant that has served its purpose. It has been superseded forever by the New Covenant of the Lamb. Remember Gabriel’s prophecy? For in one week this Covenant will have prevailed for many. The events revealed by the breaking of the sixth seal depict these new covenant realities.

So that we would be sure to recognize this innumerable multitude as “those who escaped to stand in that Day,” an elder approached John and posed the following question to him:

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

And I said, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

The intriguing conversation between John and one of the elders was intentionally inserted to confirm a very important truth—the **truth that the time of great tribulation has spanned the entire Church age**, dating back to the first century of the Church.

Therefore, the seals confirm the end-time scenario that Jesus presented on the Mount of Olives. First, great tribulation (seals 1-5), then the celestial sign of darkness announcing the Lord’s return (the sixth seal), followed by the gathering of His elect once the great tribulation has been cut short by the wrath of that Day (the seventh seal).

Since those who previously died in the faith down through the last two millennia are most certainly part of this gathered multitude in chapter seven, the statement that “they all came out of great tribulation” applies to them as well. **This confirms the extended nature of the great tribulation as attested to in other passages.**

The combination of Jesus’ Olivet teaching, coupled with the revelation of the elder, serve to identify this great multitude as those who have been gathered, not just those who have been martyred. This explains why we see them standing before the throne shouting His salvation, not under the altar crying out for vengeance as in the fifth seal.

By the time this great multitude appears in Heaven, their time of great tribulation is over. When we let Scripture interpret Scripture—when we let Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John speak with one voice—then the veil that has shrouded our minds concerning this last time is lifted away.

Now we can understand that those who believed throughout the two Days of Church-building, who were sealed with the Holy Spirit for the Day of Redemption, and who cashed in their seals for the purchased possession, all came out of the great tribulation. Thus, the earthly testimony of the Son of Man was confirmed by the One who now holds the opened Scroll. This age will not pass away until all these things have been accomplished.

The sixth chapter ended with the question, “For the great Day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” We now know the answer to this question: The untold thousands of the 144—this multitude that only God could number—will stand before His throne.

They will be dressed in white. They will be given palm branches as a sign of their simultaneous victory. And they will be shouting with all their might, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” The following refrain was heard from the portals of Heaven:

Release the seal that they may stand,  
first fruits here above.  
Blood-washed in the blood of the Lamb,  
gifts of His infinite love.

The question for all to ponder is, “What will you do when that Day comes, and the heavens are rent asunder? Will you run and hide? Or will you escape and stand?”

## Chapter 31

# Missing the Mark

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**O**ur introduction to the 144 thousands in the sixth seal was orchestrated in such a way so that we would be sure to recognize them as the raptured saints.

These are the elect of God. They were gathered by His holy angels from the four winds, from both Heaven and earth. They escaped the snare of that Day to stand before the Son of Man and His throne in Heaven.

Their unique identification enables us to understand that their reappearance in Revelation 14 is another vision of the rapture. The book of Revelation often gives us an “instant replay” of crucial events so that we can learn the finer details.

This may come as a surprise to those who have endeavored to understand the book as one continuous chain of events. While some portions are, some portions are not. We must remember that it is a book of prophecy. In prophecy, all is rarely told all at once. Each retelling provides insights that could not be told before. Otherwise, the main story would get lost in the details. Chapter 14 begins:

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him 144 thousands, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder.

And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne . . .

and no one could learn that song except the 144 thousands who were redeemed from the earth.

Once again, the Greek word is *chiliades* (thousands), even though the translators chose to render it as though it were a definite number. The fact that His Father's name is written on their foreheads identifies them as being His overcoming Church, the ones who would be "kept from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth." The promise in Revelation 3:10-12 continues:

He who overcomes . . . I will write on him the name of My God and the city of My God, the New Jerusalem.

Their identity is further confirmed by the fact that they are depicted as **standing before the Lamb on Mount Zion**. We are meant to understand that the rapture has just taken place and they have secured the promise to escape and stand before the Son of Man. "But you have come to Mount Zion and **to the city of the living God**, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn" (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup>

The words to the new song that only the 144 thousands can learn appear in Revelation 5:9-10.

And they sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals; for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

While we already know the words, we will have to wait to learn the tune once we are there. Since anyone can learn to sing the simple words of a tune, "learning the song" conveys the idea of **those who have been granted the authoritative rights expressed in the song**. Accordingly, only His Bride, those from

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 12:22-23

among the redeemed that have been made kings and priests to reign with the Lamb have the right to sing this song.

The description of the 144 thousands continues with:

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

The symbolism employed in describing the 144 thousands **emphasizes the work of Christ, not the works of men.** We are without fault before His throne only because we stand by faith in His eternal gift of righteousness. Ephesians 1:4 reads, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

As far as our spiritual virginity is concerned, Paul wrote, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy; for I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

In God’s eyes, we are all undefiled, chaste virgins, in whose mouths there is no deceit. We all stand humbly before His presence without any fault, as though we had never sinned. All because of what Christ has done! It is no wonder then that Paul exclaimed, “. . . to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” Who else should “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” but His faithful and adoring Bride?

Finally, the designation of being first fruits to God and the Lamb **is a term reserved exclusively for resurrection.** Concerning the resurrection, Paul wrote, “But each one in his own order [or company]: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end [of the thousand years] when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father.”

For now, Christ is the only One who can claim the title of first fruits, for He is the only One that has been raised to

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:1-2

immortality. At the rapture however, the Church of the Firstborn will be conformed to His image. As is the Head, so is His Body. If the Head (Jesus) is a first fruits gleanings of resurrection, then His Body (the Church) is a first fruits gleanings as well.

Finally, with their seals released, this innumerable multitude from every tribe, tongue, and nation is pictured once again as standing before God's throne in Heaven, just as we saw earlier in chapter seven. The question becomes, "Why were they shown again?" Why did the Spirit use such unique symbolism so that we could positively ID this assembly as being the gathered elect? What was it that He wanted us to know concerning the rapture?

The answer can be found by what happens next in the vision. Chapter 14 continues:

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth . . . saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come."

This is the first of three angelic proclamations that follow the gathering of His elect to Heaven. The first angel warns those who have been left behind that the Day of God's wrath has come. The message affirms the truth that His Church will be caught away **before God's wrath**. The passage continues:

And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

This angelic proclamation reveals that the city referred to as Babylon the Great will not fall **until after the rapture**. The passage continues with the third proclamation:

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the Beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God. . . . 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 ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the Beast, and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

This third proclamation is extremely significant. It reveals that the infamous mark of the Beast, together with his idolatrous image, **will not be imposed upon mankind until after the rapture.**

For it to be a true warning, it must precede the possibility of taking the mark in the first place. That means the warning must come first. Otherwise, you run the risk that someone might take the mark before being adequately warned. That would be cruel. By the time they heard the warning, it would have already been too late.

Therefore, this prophetic maneuver of revisiting the rapture was designed by God to comfort the Church in knowing that we will be caught up to Heaven **before** these things happen. He went to great lengths to affirm that we will miss the hour of His judgment, the fall of Babylon, and especially, the mark of the Beast.

If you are a believer looking for Christ’s return, you will not need to stock up on “tribulation food,” or wonder how your family will make it when no one can buy or sell without the mark. You will not need to hide out in the hills or hone your survivor skills. All you need to do is expect your salvation to appear when Christ appears at the dawn of the seventh Day.

The Psalmist declared, “The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands.”<sup>3</sup> Trust me, yours will show up in the nick of time, even if the first 144,000 are already spoken for.

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 68:17 (NIV)



## Chapter 32

# The Look from Afar

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Someone might ask, “But if everyone sees the Lord when He comes in that Day, how is it that people will miss out on the rapture?” The answer can be found in the prophetic shadow cast by Christ’s crucifixion.

The similarity of the crucifixion account in Matthew 27:45-55, with the events portrayed in the sixth seal, is too uncanny to be a coincidence. The sixth seal begins with a great earthquake in conjunction with the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars.

Similarly, Matthew’s account of the crucifixion states, “Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over the land.” Verse 51 also tells us that the earth quaked and that the rocks were split.

At this point, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The rending of the veil, separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple, exposed that which had previously been hidden for all to see.

Likewise, the veil that separates this natural realm from the realm of the unseen will be “torn in two from top to bottom” as that Day begins. Every eye will see the heavenly Holy of Holies.

The next verse in Matthew states, “. . . and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves, appeared to many.” In like fashion, the sixth seal portrays Christ’s return in which the dead in Christ will come up out of their graves and appear.

The parallel between the two accounts was an intentional act of God. The opening of the graves during the crucifixion was a

preview of what to expect once the celestial signs of the sixth seal appear.

This cancels out the concept of a secret coming. It will in fact be just the opposite. Every eye will see Him. It will be a veil-rending event that captures the attention of everyone on the planet. It will be like lightning flashing from the east to the west on a dark night—you cannot help but see it.

The gospel of Matthew states that when the soldiers who were guarding the cross “saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, ‘Truly this was the Son of God.’ ” Similarly, the sixth seal reveals that men will hide themselves “in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains for fear.”

When the Lord returns, the sight of the heavenly realm unfolding before men’s eyes and the view of His resplendent glory will be overwhelming. Our natural instinct upon encountering such glory is to run and hide or faint in fear. Therefore, do not let your own heart deceive you on this matter. If you have not invited Christ into your heart by the time He appears, you will instinctively turn away in shame at the presence of His glory. You will be left behind.

On the other hand, if you turn to Him now and eagerly look for His return, just as a bride eagerly anticipates the day of her wedding, His love will cast out all fear and His Spirit will rise up within you at that moment with a holy boldness.

This truth is foreshadowed as the account of the crucifixion continues in verse 55 (emphasis added):

And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, **were there looking from afar**, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

**It is noteworthy that the passage only mentions women.** I believe that the Holy Spirit recorded it this way so that we might view these women as a type of the Bride of Christ.

The passage also says that they were “looking from afar.” This is significant. Just as the women were looking from a

distance in terms of geography, Christ's Bride is looking from a distance **in terms of time**.

True Biblical faith sees from a distance what others can only see close up. The world says, "I'll believe it when I see it." In contrast, those of faith have a pleasing habit of saying, "I'll see it **because I believe it.**"

Therefore, just like these faithful women, the Bride of Christ has been looking from afar for His return. Fixing our gaze from such a distance guarantees that we will have boldness in that Day.

The passage in Isaiah 40:29-31 assures us that those who wait on the Lord will mount up with wings as eagles. The shadow formed around Christ's crucifixion projects this same truth, for it tells us that "the women followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him."

The Hebrew phrase "to wait on the Lord" can have a variety of meanings. In one sense, it can simply mean to be in a posture of faith and expectation, or looking if you will. This is what ministers to the Lord. It is a faith thing, not a works thing. Such bold-hearted ones will escape the snare of that Day to stand before the Son of Man in Heaven.

Those who miss the gathering (rapture) however, will still have an opportunity to confess along with the Centurion, who said, "Surely, this was the Son of God." I believe that many from around the world will ultimately receive Christ after He has appeared. The Bible reveals that the remnant of the nation of Israel will turn to Him at that time, confessing "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." (This is where the parable of the ten virgins applies.)

Others will no doubt dismiss what they have seen and reinterpret the event after their initial panic subsides. This is where the deception of the Antichrist comes in. He will no doubt spin the event and cause some people to believe a lie.

Could this explain the recent popularity of the chariots of the gods, ancient aliens, and the UFO phenomenon? Will this be part of the deception promoted by the Antichrist? Will he attempt to rally the world over the thought that we need to defend our planet from an alien invasion?

In any event, the unfortunate idea that the rapture will be a secret affair, happening at any unexpected moment, and with no

prior signs, has greatly distorted our understanding of the Lord's return. Because of this, the rapture is often ridiculed as being a destructive event in which the disappearance of believers will cause the death of thousands of people as cars collide and planes drop from the sky.

It is my personal conviction that the Holy Spirit will stir our hearts when it is time to look up with an undeniable witness that can only be attributed to two hearts beating as one and sensing the nearness of the other's love.

So let us return to a New Testament view of His coming in that Day. Soon, the realm of the unseen will become fully visible. It is important for those who wish to escape and stand to see it now, from afar. The passage in Hebrews 9:28 states:

So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

The question is not whether He will appear to you personally, for every eye will see Him when He comes. The question is whether He will appear to you **for the full salvation that the sealing of the Spirit so wonderfully guaranteed!**

**Part 5**  
**Birthing the Sons of**  
**God**



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## Chapter 33

# Lessons from a Pregnant Woman

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**T**he analogy of a pregnant woman giving birth is a central feature of end-time prophecy. It was designed to help us understand the scenario of events between Christ's first and second coming. It enables us to relate these events to God's great Week, especially the final three Days. It also complements the prophecy of Daniel's seventieth week by explaining what would occur during the prophetic pause that divides the week in the middle.

We learned several things from Daniel's prophecy. We saw how the seventieth week would begin with the anointed appearance of the Prince; how He would cut a New Covenant through His sacrificial death; and how this ritual slaying would bring a Sabbath end to the legal need for any further sacrifices.

We saw that Israel's rejection of their Messiah would not only result in the destruction of Jerusalem, but in a prolonged season of desolations as well. The people of the Prince were to become captives among the nations just as Daniel had been exiled to Babylon.

Even so, the prophecy offered an enduring hope, for by the end of the week this Covenant would prevail by breaking the cycle of transgression, judgment, and captivity. The seventieth week would end with the Son of David seated upon His eternal throne. But how were these things to be accomplished? How would this coming Prince fulfill the remaining objectives of the prophecy once He was cut off?

This is where the analogy of the pregnant woman comes in. It picks up where the first half of the seventieth week left off and fills in the details. It explains the great mystery of Christ contained within the mid-week pause, and how the last half of the week will be fulfilled by the Messiah's reappearance.

There are three prophetic components that make up this metaphor: (1) the pregnant woman, (2) her birth pains, and (3) the birth of her male child.

The various components of this metaphor appear in key prophecies, such as those found in Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jesus' Olivet Discourse, Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, and finally, in the book of Revelation.

In the analogy, the pregnant woman represents *Jacob*, the nation that rejected Jesus as their Messiah and has been struggling ever since to obtain favor with God.

The woman's birth pains represent Jacob's trouble—their time of affliction and tribulation during the two Days of being torn and stricken. These birthing pains can be divided into two stages: the "beginning of sorrows" and her "time of transition."

The first stage is the beginning of sorrows—the stage in a woman's pregnancy when her discomforts begin and spanning the time until her baby's birth draws near. In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus introduced us to this phrase and gave us the definition of the term.

The second stage is marked by a woman's time of transition in normal childbearing. This is the final stage—when the woman's pains are most severe and when she must push with all her strength to be delivered.

In keeping with the analogy, the fact that the woman (Israel) is still experiencing birth pains today can only mean one thing—the mystery concerning the birth of her child is not finished.

So if you think that the essence of this mysterious analogy refers to the rebirth of the Jewish nation, think again. The official establishment of the nation of Israel occurred in 1948, yet her birth pains have continued to increase, even to this present hour. Clearly this is not the birth being depicted in the analogy, for her pains should have subsided at that time.

The central revelation afforded by this analogy keys in on the mysterious events that will transpire as we approach the end

of this age. This is because the prophets indicated that the nation of Israel would be invaded by the Antichrist (her pains of transition) just as the Day of the Lord draws near. In her final moments of travail, and as the third Day begins to dawn, her womb will open, and her offspring will come forth. Only then will her pains subside.

The substance of the mystery is this: the woman first gives birth to a male child **apart from any pain**. Next, she gives birth to an identical child **in the final moments of her pain**. To further heighten the mystery, **these two are one Child**. Finally, she gives birth to her “many children” once her male child has been caught up to heaven. How’s that for a mystery? Don’t worry, it all becomes very clear once we follow the trail of the metaphor throughout the Scriptures. I just wanted to clue you in on what to look for as we proceed!

## The Beginning of Birth Pains

Jesus confirmed the importance of this analogy when He taught His disciples about end-time things on the Mount of Olives. He not only affirmed its importance, but made it clear when these birth pains would begin:

Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, “I am the Christ,” and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows [birth pains].<sup>1</sup>

The Greek word for sorrows is *odin*. It means pains, sorrows, and travail, especially in the sense of childbirth. It is significant that Jesus used the phrase birth pains to describe calamities that were commonly experienced even back in ancient times. It was

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 24:4-8

an unusual expression. It would startle us today to turn on the world news and hear the commentator say, "And now for the birth pains happening around the world."

So why did Jesus use this peculiar expression? He did this to alert us to the existence of the analogy. He was prodding us to examine the Scriptures for other passages using this same metaphor.

He knew that such a study would enable us to piece together the prophetic puzzle and understand the end times. Not only that, He wanted us to know that **these birth pains had not yet begun prior to His resurrection.**

He therefore alerted us to the fact that from a prophetic standpoint, these sorrows were things that were about to come upon the earth after His time.

We know that these pains did not begin while Jesus was still on the earth, for He assigned them to their immediate future by saying, "many **will come**," "you **will hear**," "nations **will rise**," and "there **will be famines**, pestilences, and earthquakes."

The fact that He spoke of these things in the future tense meant that any previous wars, famines, or earthquakes that mankind may have experienced in the past were not to be labeled as birth pains.

A woman may experience pain from a variety of causes, but only a pregnant woman can suffer from birth pains. Therefore, "the woman" would not become pregnant until Jesus had sowed Himself as the Seed of what would become a new Man.

We should also note that Jesus called these things the **beginning** of birth pains. Since it takes time for nation to rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and for famines, pestilences, and earthquakes to appear in various places around the world, it was implied that these sorrows would be in evidence for a prolonged period of time. Thus, their initial appearance would not signal the immediate end of the age.

Who among us can deny that these sorrows have been evident in the world since the first century of the Church? They have been increasing in severity and frequency of occurrence ever since. Yet, many prophecy teachers still assign these birth pains to the future, to the first half of a supposed seven-year tribulation. Go figure.

Therefore, these preliminary birth pains began sometime after Jesus' resurrection and have continued to this very hour. But the metaphor also reveals that Jacob's birth pains (her time of transition) will come suddenly as well, "as labor pains upon a pregnant woman." This will not occur until they rely upon a false guarantee of peace and security. Paul linked this aspect of her birthing pains with the approach of the Day of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3



## Chapter 34

# Like a Woman in Labor

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**W**e have seen how the beginning of birth pains would span the better part of two thousand years. Yet from God's perspective, these birthing pains have been going on **for less than two Days**. It is therefore helpful to view this two-Day period as a whole, even though we have witnessed nearly two thousand years' worth of events. This is because the Scriptures characterize the events associated with this unique time as being unequalled and unparalleled to any other time, either before or after.

Therefore, the siege of Jerusalem was an unequalled time of tribulation, for the people resorted to cannibalism. But so were the Nazi concentration camps. Some six million Jews were herded into the gas chambers and horribly put to death. Similarly, the famines people endured in ancient times cannot be compared to the modern famines we have witnessed in third world countries today.

I say this because the future invasion of Israel by the Antichrist **as this age nears its end** is also described in terms of being "unequalled" and "unparalleled" as well. For example, this is how the prophet Joel described the invasion:

Blow the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in My holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the Day of the Lord is coming . . . a people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been, nor will

there ever be any such after them . . . before them the people writhe in pain and all faces are drained of color.<sup>1</sup>

The prophecy is set in the context of the coming Day of the Lord—meaning, as this age (the sixth Day) comes to an end. It does not refer to the siege of Jerusalem back in the first century. Still, the Scriptures place emphasis on the unequalled severity of both events.

When we dismiss God’s perspective of prophetic time, we fail to understand that these emphatic expressions **can be applied to any event occurring within this two-Day time span**. These events cannot be condensed to fit the narrow confines of a seven-year tribulation. Instead, they belong to the time of birth pains. And “that time” spans some two thousand years.

The prophet Jeremiah also predicted the future invasion of Israel by the Antichrist using the metaphor of birth pains.

For thus says the Lord: “We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? “Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.”<sup>2</sup>

The Hebrew word translated as trouble is *tsaw-raw*. It is a feminine form of a root word meaning tightness. It should be understood to mean feminine distress or birth pains. The unusual aspect of this prophecy is that it links the birthing pains normally associated with a woman with Jacob, a male name.

This paradox is easily resolved once we understand that the phrase pertains to the house of Jacob—the nation struggling to win God’s approval. Jeremiah’s prophecy continues in the next verse by saying:

“For it shall come to pass in that Day,” says the Lord of hosts, “that I will break his yoke from your neck and will

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<sup>1</sup> Joel 2:1, 2, and 6

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 30:5-7

burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve David their King, whom I will raise up for them.”<sup>3</sup>

As the seventh prophetic Day approaches, the nation of Israel will experience her final moments of pain, for her Child is destined to be born on this last great Day. In the Scriptures, this seventh Day is also called the Day of the Lord.

When that Day breaks, Jacob’s night of struggle will end. Messiah the Prince will return to finish the seventieth week. First, He will gather His Church, Body, and Bride to Heaven in the rapture. With His “Heavenly Esther” seated with Him in His heavenly throne, His thousand-year reign will begin. It will begin by “breaking the yoke” of the Antichrist such that Israel is never enslaved again. Instead, they will serve “David their King.”

The apostle Paul used the metaphor of birthing pains when he wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the coming of the Lord. Unlike so many in our time, he linked the rapture with the coming Day of the Lord.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.<sup>4</sup>

Paul, however, was not finished with his “word of the Lord” concerning Christ’s return. The fact that there is a chapter break at this point does not mean that Paul moved on to another subject.

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<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 30:7-9

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

Paul continued his revelation about the coming of the Lord in the next verse by saying:

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

For when they [Jacob] say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape [in the rapture].

In chapter four, Paul told us **how the Lord will come**. In chapter five, he affirms **when He will come**. He will come like a thief in the night in the Day of the Lord. Whether you call it the seventh Day from Adam, the third Day of Christ, or the last Day of God’s great Week, they all mean that final thousand-year Day.

That Day will dawn with the armies of the “little horn” invading Israel to oppose the daily sacrifices in a rebuilt Jewish Temple. It will come with sudden destruction and with the severity of a pregnant woman’s contractions during her final moments of delivery.

In the following verses, Paul went on to say, “But you brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the Day . . . for God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

The salvation Paul was referring to concerns the redemption of our mortal bodies. As **sons of the Day**, we will be “birthed from death” just as Jesus was. **In other words, the Day of the Lord marks the “birth-Day” of our glorified bodies!**

Jesus was birthed from death (resurrected) on the third day. Since the Day of the Lord can also be called the third Day, our birth will also be linked to a third day—the third prophetic Day of Hosea’s prophecy. And once Jacob makes his “Blessed is He” confession of faith, Israel’s third-Day revival will begin.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 and 9

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## Chapter 35

# The “*harpazo*” Child

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Those things that we thought we saw so well under the shroud of night now appear quite different in the ever increasing light of that Day. We can shout, “Amen,” or moan, “Oh me,” but the truth remains—we are standing at the dawn of a new Day and our eyes cannot help but see the ever-brightening landscape before us.

In the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelation, John envisions the final moments of the woman’s birth pains as the Antichrist invades her land. **The vision is critical to end-time prophecy, for this invasion is linked to the birth of a male Child that is caught up to heaven.** The vision begins with:

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

The recurring metaphor of birth pains throughout Scripture, whether Jesus’ beginning of sorrows, Daniel’s time of Jacob’s trouble, or Jeremiah’s men in labor, should leave us no doubt as to the identity of this pregnant lady.

To ensure that we would not miss this important point, the symbolic features of her being clothed with the sun, with the

moon under her feet, and with her wearing a garland of twelve stars were meant to seal the deal.

The symbolism is an obvious reference to Joseph's dream in which the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to him. This dream enraged his brothers, as well as his father Jacob, who replied, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother [the moon] and I [the sun] and your brothers [the eleven stars] indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"<sup>1</sup>

Can it be any clearer? The travailing woman in this vision represents the Jewish people when "sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman."

The next part of the vision affirms that we are viewing the end of this age, for the symbol of the seven-headed dragon, complete with ten horns, depicts the Antichrist and his armies.

And another sign appeared in heaven—behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

Jesus is not careless with His revelation. He does not provide symbols and then abandon us to any interpretation that comes along. He either explains the symbolism within the passage itself, or He intends for us to find the same symbolism elsewhere in the Scriptures where the explanation is given.

The vision reveals that the dragon will deceive and draw a third of the stars with his tail to follow him. He will then cast these "stars" down to the earth. We do not need to speculate as to what this means, for it was previously explained by Gabriel in Daniel 8.

In the vision, Daniel watched as the "little horn" (the Antichrist) "grew up to the host of heaven," whereupon he "cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground and trampled them."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 37:9-10

<sup>2</sup> Daniel 8:10

When Gabriel was told to make Daniel understand the vision (verse 16), the angelic messenger explained what the “casting down of the stars” meant. Gabriel explained it like this: “His power [the Antichrist] shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy [do damage to] the mighty and holy people [the people of Israel].”

According to Gabriel, the stars represented the Jewish people. This is a consistent theme in Scripture, for God told Abraham to count the stars in the sky, saying, “So shall your descendants be.”

It is commonly believed that the Devil drew a third of the angels of Heaven with him when he fell. While he drew some, his rebellion was not as successful as he would like us to think. These stars refer to the people of Israel, not the angels of Heaven.

The fact that the Antichrist is symbolized as a red dragon affirms that the coming of the lawless one will be “according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.” The dragon will be the real power behind this son of perdition.

Thus, the vision reveals that the tail of the dragon will deceive some of those in Israel with the alluring tale of peace and security as the Day of the Lord draws near. This dream will be shattered when the report comes that the Antichrist is amassing a great coalition of forces to come against Israel. They will swiftly descend upon the land in order to oppose the daily sacrifice.

Note also that the woman is depicted as “crying out in labor and in pain to give birth” when this happens. This is extremely significant. **It links the subsequent birth of her male Child with the end-time invasion of Israel by the Antichrist.**

In the natural progression of a woman’s labor, she experiences a time of transition, when her pains are the most severe and when she must push with all her might if she is to give birth. It is apparent in John’s vision that the “woman” is straining in this final stage of delivery.

What John sees next confirms that her time of delivery has come:

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Once her Child is caught up to God's throne in Heaven, the "woman" flees into the wilderness for a period lasting 1,260 days. Using the prophetic measure of thirty days per month, **this period equals three and one-half years.**

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Is it just a coincidence that this period equals the last half of Daniel's seventieth week?

### **Who Does the Male Child Represent?**

The catching up of the male Child is commonly thought to symbolize the personal resurrection and ascension of Christ, an event that predates the other events in this vision by nearly two thousand years. This begs the question, "Why would we be shown a vision of the past when all the other events relate to the future—specifically, the last three and one-half years of the Antichrist?"

Did we need to take a nostalgic stroll down memory lane right at the climax of the story? Are we that negligent that we needed to be reminded that Christ rose from the dead?

Or could it be, instead, that the unique symbolism of the male Child contains a great mystery that the Stranger on the road to Emmaus is bidding us to see?

Again, why do we find what appears to be an allusion to Christ's ascension just as the last half of Daniel's seventieth week begins? It seems out of place with the rest of the events. On the other hand, if it does not represent Jesus' ascension, who then is this male Child that is caught up to Heaven?

The vision does not leave us guessing for it provides an invaluable clue. The Greek word for caught up is the same word

that Paul used in his letter to the Thessalonians when he wrote about the rapture.

The word is *harpazo*. It means to be forcefully seized or snatched away. The passage literally reads, “And she bore a male son, who is about to shepherd all the nations with an iron staff, and her child was seized [*harpazo*] to God and to His throne.”

Compare this with the passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that we referred to earlier: “. . . then we, the remaining living ones, together with them shall be seized [*harpazo*] in clouds to a meeting of the Lord in the air.”

Did you know that the Bible never says that Jesus was ever seized to Heaven? The first chapter of the book of Acts uses several different words in describing Jesus’ ascension, but the word *harpazo* is noticeably missing.

Verse nine states that He was “taken up [*epairo*] and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” *Epairo* means to raise, lift, or take up. Verse ten says, “He went up.” Here the word is *poreuomai*, which means to travel or go up. Verse eleven says He was “taken up” [*analambano*] which means to take up or be received. None of these words convey the idea of being snatched away or forcibly seized.

Why would John’s vision use *harpazo*, a word that implies being plucked up in the nick of time, when it could have used any of these other words instead?

Or to put it another way, does the vision really show us Christ’s ascension? **Or rather, does it depict the catching away of the Church at His coming?**



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## Chapter 36

# When Two Births Yield One Child

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**T**he prophetic analogy of a woman giving birth complements the prophecy of Daniel's seventieth week. It confirms the pause in the middle of the week, the truth that there would be a prolonged period of desolations, and that Israel's transgressions would be finished by the week's end. The covenant, cut in the blood of the coming Prince, would prevail just as Gabriel had promised. In the end, the prophecy gave them (and the world) a future and a hope.

The Holy Spirit sponsored this prophetic analogy so that we could understand how the Lord's coming relates to the final 3½ years of Daniel's seventieth week. But the metaphor provides something else, for it also highlights the mystery of the new "Man," wherein Christ is the Head and the Church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all things. **Once we trace the analogy of the pregnant woman through to its completion, the debate as to the timing of the rapture is settled once and for all.**

This following prophecy from Isaiah reveals the full import of the metaphor concerning birth pains, but only when it is viewed in conjunction with the vision of the male Child in Revelation 12. The prophecy states:

Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male Child. Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the

earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children.<sup>1</sup>

When Isaiah's prediction is carefully considered, we find that it speaks of three miraculous births: (1) the pain-free birth of a male Child, (2) the earth being made to give birth in one day as a nation is born all at once, and (3) the birth of Zion's children.

But when we compare Isaiah's prophecy with the vision in Revelation 12, we find that there is a discrepancy between birth #1, the pain-free birth of the male Child in Isaiah, and the birth of the child described in Revelation. In Isaiah, the male Child is born **apart from any pain or labor on the part of the woman.**

Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male Child.

In contrast, the birth of the male Child in John's vision occurs **during the final moments of her pain.**

And being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth . . . she bore a male Child . . . and her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Isaiah predicted that the male Child would be born before Zion travailed, while John noted that the child was born and caught up at the most severe point of her travail. Furthermore, John also noted that "this child" was destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Immediately we rush to conclude that this must be Jesus. **But then, how do we reconcile both the painless and the painful birth of the same child?**

The answer is that the combined prophecies reveal the mystery of Christ, the truth that Jesus stands as the Head of a new Man, with the Church making up His body. The apostle Paul understood the prophetic implications of this mystery, including its Day-code connections with Israel's time of travail. Therefore, in Colossians 1:18, he wrote:

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 66:7-9

And He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

The peculiar expression, **the firstborn from the dead**, reveals the kind of “birth” associated with the male Child in both prophecies. Jesus was the first man to be born from among the dead. While He was not the first to be raised from the dead, He **was** the first to be birthed from death.

In other words, He was the first man among us to be resurrected such that He would never die again. Being raised from the dead is not necessarily the same as being born from the dead. Those who were raised from the dead in the ministry of Jesus were not birthed. Instead, their spirits were merely reunited with the same body that they had before they died. **They were merely raised to die again.**

Jesus, on the other hand, was the first person to be resurrected **with a glorified immortal body**. The Scriptures refer to this as being “born from the dead.”

Paul further clued us in on the mystery, for Jesus is not only called the firstborn from the dead, but **the firstborn among many brethren**. In Romans 8:29, we find, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

In order to be conformed to His image, we will have to be born from the dead as well. This explains why His title changed from “the only begotten” to “the firstborn” after His resurrection. To be the firstborn, implies the birth of others to follow. Otherwise, He would have retained the title of the only begotten.

We can now reconcile what appeared to be a discrepancy concerning the birth of the male Child in the two prophecies. The prophecy in Isaiah predicted the singular and personal resurrection of Jesus Christ: “Before Zion travailed, she gave birth; before her pain came upon her, she delivered a male Child.”

This two-fold declaration by the Spirit forcibly emphasizes the truth that this birth would miraculously occur **in the absence of any labor pains on the part of the woman (Israel)**. This

miracle elicits the following exclamation: “Who has ever heard of such a thing?”

It is unheard of for a baby to be born apart from any travail on the part of the mother. A painless birth without any labor is uncommon in nature. Yet this is what we find concerning the resurrection and ascension of Christ. **He is the only man who was resurrected to immortality before Israel went into labor, and before her birth pains began.** This explains why Jesus assigned the beginning of sorrows (birth pains) to the future after His resurrection.

Isaiah’s prophecy continues by saying, “Who has ever seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born in a moment? As soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children.”

Paul realized that at the rapture, “the earth would be made to give birth in one day.” Genesis 3:19 describes the curse that resulted when death came into the world:

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to the dust you shall return.

Paul knew that the Day would come when the earth would have to give up its dust, that is, the bodies of those who previously died in Christ. Therefore, Isaiah prophesied that “the earth would be made to give birth in one day.” As with Jesus, this is the kind of birth that results in a glorified body—one that bears His image as being the last Adam, not the one who was formed from earthly elements.

Paul also understood that “a nation” would be “born in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” The birth of this nation cannot possibly refer to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, **for the nation was not caught up to God’s throne in order to escape the dragon.** The nation of Israel did not disappear once the U.N. resolution was passed.

The only nation that can be born from the dead all at once, and in one day, only to be caught up immediately to the throne of God, is the one Peter described in 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.”

The final reference to birth in this prophecy, “For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children,” refers to Israel’s third-Day revival following the rapture. It is then that their “Blessed is He” confession of faith will usher them as born-again believers into the Kingdom and family of God.

The false assumption that Revelation 12 depicts the singular resurrection of Christ is struck down by the fact that His birth (resurrection) occurred “before Zion travailed,” and “before her pain came upon her.”

In contrast, the woman in Revelation 12 is clearly in pain. Therefore, John’s vision of the male Child does not depict the past resurrection of Christ, **but the future resurrection of the Church**. This explains why the child is forcefully seized (*harpazo*) up into heaven and not merely taken up (*analambano*) as we saw with Jesus.

The combined prophecies were inspired to differentiate between the two births by noting either the absence or presence of birth pains. **The Holy Spirit provided these prophecies so that we would rightly discern Revelation 12 to be a vision of the rapture.**

The truth that the rapture is depicted in Revelation 12 changes the whole dynamics of the chapter. For one thing, it gives us a real-time view of the rapture as other events are taking place. It enables us to locate its timing as occurring just before Israel flees into the wilderness for the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week and the final 3½ years of the Antichrist.

The vision concerns the third Day, when Jesus said that He would be perfected or made full. The dual births and catching up of the male Child result in a new Man standing before the throne. It is at this time that Jesus will declare the contents of the seven-sealed scroll for the benefit of His fellow heirs. He will fulfill His promise as recorded in Revelation 2:26-27 (emphasis added), “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, **to him I will give power over the nations . . .** as I also have received from My Father.”

Thus, the male Child in John’s vision is destined “to rule all nations with a rod of iron,” for this child is a joint heir with Christ. Consequently, for all practical purposes, the Child in Isaiah and the child in John’s vision, while birthed at separate

times, will stand together as “one male Child” before the throne! By then, this Child will have matured to become “the perfect Man.”

. . . till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

We can now see the intent behind using the metaphor of a travailing woman throughout Scripture. Her birth pains would lead to the birth—resurrection—of those receiving glorified bodies just like Jesus!

**Therefore, John’s vision depicts the rapture of the Church as the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week resumes.**

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<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:13

## Chapter 37

# Splitting the Mount

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**T**he truth that the rapture is depicted in John’s vision changes the whole dynamics of the chapter. It gives us a “real-time” view of the rapture as other events are taking place. For one thing, it means that **the rapture will occur just before Israel flees into the wilderness for the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week.**

This becomes clear when we consider what happens after the male Child is caught up to Heaven. The vision continues in Revelation 12:6 by saying:

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared for her by God, that they should feed her there for 1,260 days [the Jewish equivalent of 3½ years].

This truth is emphasized again later in verse 14:

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

The Hebraic expression “time, times, and half a time” is the Jewish equivalent of 3½ years. The fact that the woman (the remnant of Israel) will flee and be nourished for 3½ years once the male Child has been caught up to heaven proves that the rapture will trigger the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week. And

since Christ's return is linked to the third Day, it will also begin Israel's third-Day revival.

We can even take this a step further, for since we are rapidly approaching the dawn of the third Day, **this means that our generation will see these things come to pass.**

These are not far off and distant prophecies. These things will become our news headlines shortly. I am sure that this explains why the Holy Spirit is emphasizing the importance of end-time prophecy in this hour. God is preparing this generation for the soon return of His Son.

### **Splitting the Mount**

As we have seen, God provided the analogy of birth pains to help us understand end-time prophecy. But there is still more to be gained. It also reveals that in the rapture **Jesus will first descend to the Mount of Olives before we all ascend together to our meeting in the air.**

This becomes evident when we compare the prophecy in Zechariah 14:3-5 with what we just saw in John's vision. Zechariah begins by alerting us as to when this prophecy will be fulfilled. Verse 1 says, "Behold, the Day of the Lord is coming." Verse 3 continues:

Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the Day of battle. And in that Day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley;

Half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal.

Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.

In John's vision, the woman fled to her prepared place in the wilderness for 3½ years after the male Child was caught up to Heaven (the rapture). Zechariah's prophecy reinforces this truth by telling us **how this flight will happen**.

In the Day of the Lord, as the armies begin their invasion of Jerusalem, Jesus will descend to the same Mount from which He ascended nearly two thousand years ago. His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem. He will part the mountain to make a way of escape for the people of Israel, just as Moses parted the Red Sea.

Just as Moses miraculously provided a way of escape from the Egyptian Pharaoh, Jesus will miraculously save Israel from the advancing armies of the Antichrist. The Mount will split in two just as the second half of Daniel's seventieth week begins.

How else can we explain Jesus standing on the Mount of Olives 3½ years **before the Antichrist is destroyed at the supper of the great God depicted in Ezekiel 39 and Revelation 19?**

## **Keener Ears Can Now Discern the Lion's Roar**

When the Lion of Judah returns to gather His elect in the rapture, He will descend to the Mount from where He first ascended. He will re-enact His previous ascension, only this time, with His full Body (the Church) now complete. Together, we will ascend as one new Man. This explains why Jesus said, "On the third Day I shall be perfected" [complete] in Luke 13:32.

Another prophecy, this one from Joel, sheds even more light:

The sun and moon will grow dark and the stars will diminish their brightness. The Lord also will roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem.

The heavens and the earth will shake, but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So you shall know that I am the Lord your God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joel 3:15-17

When Jesus descends, He will not only split the Mount of Olives, **but also roar so loud as to raise the dead.** The passage in Isaiah 60:1-2 reveals that He will roar out two great commands:

Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you and His glory will be seen upon you.

First, He will shout “Arise!” This command will force the earth to give up its dead. Thus, the dead in Christ will rise first. Next, He will roar “Shine!” Since living bodies cannot arise from the dust, this command will instantly clothe those that are His with immortality. And together, a nation shall be born at once and in a moment.

Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet [Feast of Trumpets, also called *Rosh HaShanah*].

For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

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## Chapter 38

# “Rule in the Midst of Your Enemies”

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**M**any assume that the millennial reign of Christ will not actually begin until the Antichrist has been defeated and removed from the planet. We tend to think that the Lord’s thousand-year rule will begin with peace and tranquility as we all rest on our thrones with our feet propped up on footstools. We think that the concept of reigning merely means governing and keeping the peace. **The New Testament revelation challenges these assumptions and presents a more accurate view of what it means to reign.**

Our prior assumptions begin to crumble once our knowledge of the end-time scenario conforms to that of the initial stewards of the mystery. For one thing, the founding apostles understood the timing of Christ’s first and second coming in the context of God’s great Week. They realized that the start of His ministry marked the dawn of the fifth great Day.

With the first four Days of the Week spent, His ministry set the last three Days of the Week in motion. Therefore, they anticipated that He would return on the third Day, after two Days of Gospel ministry have been completed. It is important to remember that the third Day of Christ is **also the seventh Day from Adam.**

Furthermore, the apostles also understood Christ’s first and second coming in the context of Daniel’s seventieth week. They understood that His ministry not only coincided with the start of the fifth great Day, but with the start of the seventieth week as

well. Since they were aware that the prophecy would be paused for the remainder of the Today and Tomorrow, they realized that the last half of the seventieth week **would not begin until the seventh Day begins.**

Since the last half of the seventieth week involves the wrath of that Day upon the beastly kingdom of the Antichrist, this can only mean that **the seventh Day begins while the Antichrist is still alive on the earth.** In fact, the first 3½ years of Christ's thousand-year reign are occupied with putting down the rule of these beastly Gentiles. In other words, the millennial reign will begin with Jesus and His Bride striking the nations with the rod of God's wrath.

### The Definition of Reigning

The heart of the matter concerns the Biblical definition of what it means to reign. When visions were dimmed it was understood that the Lord's millennial reign would not begin until **after** the defeat of the armies coming against Jerusalem.

The scenario went like this: Christ returns to the earth for a final battle, the Beast and the False Prophet are destroyed along with their armies, whereupon the King of kings remains on the earth to occupy the throne of David, His forefather, that He might rule from the earthly city of Jerusalem. At which point His millennial reign begins.

Greater light, however, reveals a more accurate view. The apostle Paul gave us the definition of reigning when he wrote:

Then comes the end, when He [Jesus] delivers the Kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and authority and power; **for He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.** The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.<sup>1</sup>

We have altered Paul's statement to read, "He will reign **after** He has put His enemies under His feet," but the Word says, "He must reign **until** He has put all enemies under His feet." The

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:24-25, emphasis added

Bible does not teach that Jesus' enemies must be destroyed **before He can reign**. It teaches just the opposite. His enemies are not destroyed **until after His reign begins**. He must continue to reign **until** every enemy has been destroyed.

We have reduced the act of reigning to merely governing and policing the planet once the wicked have been abolished. But according to Scripture, reigning **is the act of putting every enemy underfoot. It involves treading**. This treading underfoot begins with the wrath of that Day, just after believers have been caught up to God's throne to reign with Him.

### **Ruling from Above**

Hebrews 8:1 tells us that Jesus is presently seated at the right hand of God as our faithful High Priest and Intercessor. This priestly position was granted to Him when He rose from the dead nearly two thousand years ago. He has been seated ever since, faithfully administering His role as our Advocate and the High Priest of our confession.

The book of Hebrews also points out that the act of making His enemies His footstool will be thoroughly accomplished **from this seated position at God's right hand as well**.

But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. <sup>2</sup>

The passage above reveals that Jesus will remain seated in Heaven until His enemies have become His footstool. Therefore, Jesus does not require an earthly throne from which to do this, especially since the earth itself is God's footstool. His rightful place is the highest place of all, except for the Father Himself. No other throne is higher, not even the throne of David.

Since the Scriptures portray Jesus as the One who will put an end to all rule and authority, and that this process of "putting things asunder" will span a thousand years, it becomes clear that this activity will be administered from Heaven above, and not

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<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 10:12-13

from the earth below. God has reserved this earthly sphere to be ruled by the natural descendants of the nation of Israel instead, those to whom the promise of being the head and not the tail remains.

And since after the rapture the Bride will “always be with the Lord” and will “follow the Lamb wherever He goes,” we can be assured that we will also remain seated with Him up above, and not on the earth below, during this last prophetic Day. We will truly “dwell in the House of the Lord forever” just as our good Shepherd promised.

Once we get the right definition of what it means to reign, we can understand how Christ’s millennial reign can begin while the Antichrist is still on the earth. The Scriptures make it clear that death will be the last enemy to be destroyed. Since this will occur at the end of the thousand years, does the presence of death during the millennium mean that He is not reigning? Of course not, for the process of putting death underfoot is what reigning is all about.

The authority to rule the earth is bound up within the contents of the seven-sealed Scroll, which Jesus has already received. **The Scroll’s provisions will not be activated until all the heirs are present.** The activation of the Scroll means that it is time for the rebellion to end—time to put every enemy, including death, underfoot. Paul said that He must reign until He has “put an end to **all** rule and authority and power.” The last time I checked, “all” still means all. Obviously, this includes the Devil, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

### **The Psalm, the Scroll, and the Rod**

The second Psalm speaks of a time in the future when the “nations will rage, and the people will plot a vain thing.” As the end of the sixth Day draws near, the kings of the earth will set themselves against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.” The transgressors will have reached their fullness (666) as the sixth great Day draws to a close.

This vain plot, conceived long ago by a former anointed cherub (Satan), is what caused John to weep so profusely when no one was found worthy to open the Scroll of Inheritance and Authority from the Father (see Revelation 5). His weeping was quickly stilled though, for the futile search was merely intended to reveal the inexhaustible worthiness of the Lamb that stood before them.

The Psalmist next records how the haughty intent of the nations is met with thunderous peals of laughter from God's throne. "He who sits in the Heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision." The meager challenge of these nations is of no consequence to the Almighty. Their threats are empty and impotent. Their plot is in vain. They are mere vessels before the Potter who made them.

Verse six explains the occasion for such laughter: "**I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.**" This holy hill is the heavenly Mount Zion—the same one at which Jesus was depicted as standing with the 144 thousands.

At this point, the Firstborn Son already possesses the Scroll. The King has been set on God's holy hill for nearly two thousand years now. Next, the Psalmist reveals that this "Lion of the tribe of Judah" will roar and proclaim the contents of the Scroll out loud. He will not read the Scroll silently to Himself, but publicly and in the audience of the thousands of the 144 (His Bride), for the proclamation not only concerns Him personally, but applies to His joint heirs as well.

As we have seen, the Scroll is a decree from the Father authorizing His newly begotten Son to take possession of the nations for an inheritance. It is a grant of Divine power to smash the nations to pieces, bind the serpent of old, and cast him into the abyss.

The binding begins with Michael's heavenly battle wherein the Devil and his angels are cast down to the earth from their sphere of influence over the earth (Ephesians 6:23). The Scroll effectively becomes a "rod of iron" in the hands of God's anointed One. **Christ's thousand-year reign begins once He and His fellow heirs (His Body) have been officially seated together to exercise the provisions of the Scroll.**

Psalm 110:1-2 confirms the truth that Christ's reign will begin while the Antichrist is still present (emphasis added):

The Lord [the Father] said to my Lord [Jesus], "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The Lord [the Father] shall send the rod of Your strength [Jesus] out of Zion. **Rule in the midst of Your enemies.**

The Lord's iron-rod rule begins while His enemies are still "in the midst." He will be sent forth as God's rod of strength. The initial blows from this rod will come as "He begins to speak to them in His wrath."<sup>3</sup> This is the wrath reserved for the coming of that Day. The release of this wrath means that His reign has begun.

This wrath does not come all at once. Instead, it is administered incrementally upon the Beast while he is permitted to remain on the earth for 3½ more years. In God's great mercy, these incremental blows allow mankind time to repent and turn their hearts over to God. Accordingly, the wrath of that Day is portrayed in the Revelation by no less than seven trumpets and seven bowls.

During this three and one-half-year period (the last half of Daniel's seventieth week), the two witnesses (Moses and Elijah) will "have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they will have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire."<sup>4</sup>

Those of us who have overcome will not be found among the earthy pots as His rod comes down upon them. We will be with Him in Heaven, having obtained a timely deliverance from both God's wrath and the mark of the Beast. We will be wielding the rod along with our elder Brother as promised in Psalm 149.

**Sing to the Lord a new song**, and His praise in the assembly of saints...let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 2:5

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 11:6

execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment – **this honor have all His saints.** [emphases added]

## In the Days of These Kings

The truth that the Beast is permitted to continue for the first few years of the Millennium should not disturb us. How else can Christ “rule in the midst of His enemies?” How can He rule in their midst if they are already defeated and gone? According to Psalm 110, He rules while they are still present.

The succession of kingdoms that would make up the prophetic times of the Gentiles were revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, in a dream during the time of Daniel. In the dream the king saw an image with a head of gold, a chest of silver, thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of clay and iron. The image ultimately represented the kingdom of the Beast at the end of this age. Daniel explained the demise of this beastly kingdom by saying:

You watched while a stone was cut out without human hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces . . . and the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.<sup>5</sup>

Daniel interpreted the fatal strike to the image’s ten toes as meaning, “**In the days of these kings** the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . **it shall break in pieces and consume** all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (emphases added).

We have changed this to read that Christ’s millennial Kingdom will be set up **after the days of these kings**. But Daniel revealed otherwise. Christ will begin His reign in their midst while they are active on the earth, for He must reign until every enemy is destroyed.

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<sup>5</sup> See Daniel 2:31-35

Accordingly, Jesus is pictured in Revelation 19:12 as already crowned, and in Revelation 19:16 as already titled, before the Beast and his armies are ultimately destroyed in verses 20 and 21. Verse 12 reads, “His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns.” Verse 16 continues, “And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written—King of kings and Lord of lords.” Sounds to me like Someone who really knows how to reign!

## Sabbath Rest

Since the seventh Day is associated with Sabbath rest, how is it that Christ is actively engaged in making His enemies His footstool on that Day? The question can be answered once we realize that His treading brings rest to the righteous. Accordingly, in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8, Paul wrote:

Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, **and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed** from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire **taking vengeance** on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

During His earthly ministry, Jesus thought it proper to heal and bring deliverance to people on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees accused Him of breaking the Law by performing such acts. True Sabbath rest, however, will not come to the nation of Israel until the good Shepherd “prepares a table for them in the presence of their enemies” (Psalm 23).

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10, emphases added

## Chapter 39

# Conformed to His Image

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He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.<sup>1</sup>

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn of many brethren.<sup>2</sup>

**W**e noted earlier in the book that the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy was interrupted in the middle of the week by Israel's rejection of Christ. Gabriel's prophecy stated that the Messiah would first appear after sixty-nine weeks, that is, at the beginning of the seventieth week. After three and one-half years of anointed ministry, His being cut off at the cross brought an end to the need for any further sacrificial offerings.

It is worth noting that the first half of the seventieth week ended with the singular resurrection and ascension of Christ—the firstborn of many brethren. Since the nation of Israel at large did not recognize the time of their visitation, the seventieth week was put on hold. As a nation they would not see Him again until they confessed, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”

The prophet Hosea revealed that the people of Israel would be torn [from God's vine] and stricken [the days of vengeance],

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 1:15

<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:29

but that they would be revived after two Days. The fact that God has been re-gathering the Jewish people to their homeland in recent times after nearly 1,900 years of exile among the nations is of great significance. Hosea's two Days are nearly spent. The fig tree is putting forth its leaves and its branches are becoming tender.

There has also been a dramatic increase of Messianic Jews (those who have believed on Jesus as Messiah) in recent times. Their full-scale revival will restart the seventieth week at precisely the same point in which it was paused—right in the middle. The last three and one-half years of this week are prophetically termed “a time, times, and half a time.”

Thus, once the male Child is caught up to God (the rapture), the passages in Revelation 12:6 and 12:14 indicate that the woman will flee into the wilderness to be fed and nourished for 1,260 days, or “a time, times, and half a time.”

As we have seen, the vision of the male Child tells us that the rapture and the subsequent flight of Israel will cause Daniel's seventieth week to resume.

### A Mid-Week Ascension

The truth that the last half of the seventieth week will resume after the rapture creates a fascinating parallel between Christ's ascension and that of the Church. Jesus ascended into Heaven in the middle of the seventieth week, **when the first half ended**. Therefore, His earthly departure could be termed a **mid-week ascension**. Since His Church will also be caught up to Heaven **before the second half of the seventieth week resumes**, our earthly departure could technically be termed a mid-week ascension as well.

**Even though the two “births” and ascensions are separated by nearly two thousand years, both can be said to have occurred during the pause in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week!** If we were to diagram the two halves of the week, the first half would end with Christ's ascension and the second half would begin with ours. The diagram would depict:

At the end of the first half of the week—**He ascends.**

Then after two thousand years,

**We ascend**—and the second half of the week begins.

If we were able to fold time and dismiss the two-Day pause between the two ascensions, we would get:

First half of the week—**He ascends**

**We ascend**—Second half of the week

This would mean that His ascension and our ascension can both be ascribed to **the same point in prophetic time**. Or to say it another way, we are all taken to Heaven in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week. The truth that the seventieth week depicts both the first and second coming of Christ shatters the doctrine of a future seven-year tribulation. This means that our previous rapture designations of pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and post-tribulation **have no prophetic value at all**, for the simple reason that there will be no seven-year tribulation in the first place. What designation, then, should we use for the timing of the rapture?

Since the term mid-tribulation is deficient and misleading, I suppose that we could use the designation “mid-seventieth week” rapture instead. This term, however, is only meaningful when those who hear it know that the seventieth week was paused in the middle, not at the beginning. Otherwise, it would simply cause more confusion.

Since the foundational apostles understood the truths that I have merely reiterated in this book, this may explain why they simply expressed His coming to gather us in terms of the great Week: “when He comes in **that Day** to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe.”

Paul associated His coming to gather us with the coming **Day of Christ** in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. Once we realize that they assigned both of His appearances to the seventieth week, we can see why they were content to express His coming in terms of **that Day**. Therefore, in Hebrews 10:25, we are told that we can “**see the Day approaching.**”

## A Third-Day Resurrection

It is now apparent that this approaching Day can also be termed **the third Day** from the perspective of Christ. This truth forms another tantalizing parallel between the timing of Christ's resurrection and that of the Church. We can see this once we ask ourselves a few questions. On what day was Jesus resurrected? Nearly everyone knows that He was raised from the dead on the third day. When will the Body of Christ (His Church) be resurrected? Well, He promised to raise us up at the last Day. But since the last Day can also be called the third Day, ours can also be thought of as being **a third-Day resurrection**.

Thus, Jesus was raised on a third 24-hour day, while the Body of Christ will be raised on a third great Day. Thus, we will be conformed to His image in every way, including a resurrection linked with a third day.

Quite mysteriously, when the twin concepts of resurrection and ascension are viewed in terms of prophetic time, we find that whatever can be said of His resurrection and ascension can also be said of ours. Therefore, ours is both a third-day resurrection and a mid-seventieth-week ascension, just like His. The mystery of His Church, Temple, Body, and Bride means that we were predestined by God to be conformed to the image of His Son in every way possible.

## Chapter 40

# The Vision of the Forerunners

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The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”<sup>1</sup>

I received a vision from God in the fall of 2007, while lying awake on my bed around four o'clock in the morning. I awoke an hour earlier around three with a sense that the Lord had something for me, so I got up and spent some time meditating on the things of God. After about an hour of “fishing” and nothing to show for it except an empty net, I decided to return to bed.

I stretched out on the bed for a few moments, waiting to fall back asleep, when suddenly I was standing on what seemed to be a football field, only there were no gridlines, goalposts, or bleachers, just a level field of manicured green grass. Off in the distance I saw a tiny black speck approaching at a high rate of speed. As it got closer, I could see that it was a young man racing towards me. He was wearing a white shirt and a black vest.

I could tell by the speed at which he was running that he would collide with me in a matter of moments. But about thirty yards away, he veered just enough to plot a new course that would take him about a yard to my right to avoid a collision.

When he swerved to change course, I could see that there were three other runners following close behind him in single file. They had not been visible until he turned, for the other three

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 40:3

runners were only a step behind each other. They, too, were wearing white shirts and black vests.

Within moments, they whizzed by me with such speed and force that it took my breath away. I physically gasped out loud as they ran by. When I gasped, I realized that I was still lying on my bed. The vision ended as abruptly as it had started. I remember thinking to myself, “They ran by me with such speed and force that it literally took my breath away; almost like some kind of invisible force hit me as they passed by.” Eventually, I fell back asleep, wondering what had just happened.

The vision was still fresh in my mind when I woke up in the morning, but I did not understand what the vision meant or why it had been granted. Not long afterwards the Lord reminded me of that night and asked, “What did you see in the vision?” I gave Him a play by play of the entire vision, carefully rehearsing every last detail, and concluded by saying, “And when the four runners ran by me, the speed and strength with which they were running hit me like an invisible force and literally took my breath away.”

After a few moments, the Lord repeated the question a second time, saying, “What did you see in the vision?” In lieu of the fact that He is neither forgetful nor hard of hearing, I considerably abbreviated the account this time, and summed it up by saying, “Like I said, I saw four runners. It was like some invisible force hit me when they ran by.”

Then He asked a third time, “What did you see in the vision?”

With a tinge of agitation, I just skipped all the details, mustered what little patience I could find, and blurted, “I saw four runners,” and then halted. Suddenly, I realized what He wanted me to see. Like a light bulb turning on in my head, I said, **“Forerunners! The four runners were meant to mean forerunners.”**

At that point He explained the rest of the vision. “The four runners,” He said, “represented **the spirit of a forerunner**. That is why they all wore vests. They were vested with the anointing of a forerunner. That was the force that hit you when they ran by. They were anointed to impart the spirit of a forerunner. And far from taking your breath away, you gasped and breathed in deeply. Remember? That’s when the anointing was imparted.”

I now understand that the Spirit of God is currently vesting the Body of Christ with an anointing to proclaim the coming of the Lord to this generation. It is the spirit of a forerunner, like John the Baptist in Jesus' time; and like Elijah who is to come. It enables us to be a voice in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord in people's hearts. I pray that this holy flame will leap from the pages of this book and from the following prophetic poem to ignite your heart with just such a timely anointing. May you become a way-preparing "voice in the wilderness" for just such a time as this!

### **A Poem for the Forerunners**

A wilderness voice ordained for this hour,  
 To boldly declare His prophetic power.  
 Its mission to build a way straight and smooth,  
 A new path to tread and gladden our shoes.  
 A sure proclamation of what is to come,  
 That creation is yearning to bring forth her Sons.  
 A knowing Stranger bids us to ponder,  
 Mysteries of old, that our hearts may grow fonder.  
 That which was sealed but no longer hidden,  
 A timely lesson, from One who is risen.  
 A holy trek wherein all is revealed,  
 Where valleys and hills lose their appeal.  
 Foundations of sand—the breach to repair,  
 The light of that Day must now be declared.  
 The message from Gabe—when Messiah shall come,  
 Of all He would do before this Week is done.  
 An ancient rebellion—authority lost,  
 A new Seed proclaiming, "I'll pay the cost."  
 A seventieth Week—cut in the middle,  
 Full of suspense and timely riddles.  
 The first half is over, the offering is done,  
 Pause to examine just what has been won.  
 The notions we gained when visions were dimmed,

Must now give way to loftier whims.  
For when time is unsealed, the signs can be told,  
The truths of this age can begin to unfold.  
He breaks every seal, and brightens our path,  
He takes up the Scroll and dispenses God's wrath.  
But those who still look for the heavenly Man,  
Will escape all these things—before Him they'll stand.  
When heavenly signs say, "Time to look up,"  
Vessels of clay become immortal cups.  
A taste of new wine, from water and clay,  
A wedding reserved, to mark the third Day.  
The lights will go out, but your light will shine,  
You'll get a new body fashioned like Mine.  
I'll call with My trumpet, I'll shout with My voice,  
I'll send forth My angels and gather My choice.  
Charioteers—borne on the winds,  
Searching for those with immortal skins.  
As sons of the Day, you'll rejoice in My glory,  
For 'ere it was time, you believed in My story.  
A Kingdom appearing, as new sons are birthed,  
A first-fruit gleaned to rule all the earth.  
A birth minus labor—those born in pain,  
Together, one Child—bearing one name.  
The birth of many, just like the One,  
As out of the earth, you suddenly come.  
The sting of death—forever removed,  
A heavenly union is what I approved.  
Those who are risen, those who can shine,  
Those caught up in a moment of time.  
When time is folded and two halves are joined,  
The Head and the Body make for one coin.  
A throne with wheels, spitting out fire,  
A river of glory, for whirlwind desires.  
The heavens will part—a triumphant parade,  
The faithful depart from this mortal charade.  
When Bride and Groom share in one flesh,  
Immortal garments appear on your breast.

A heavenly counting—a number so vast,  
Twelve times twelve—a rod-ruling lass.  
Destined to rule, destined to reign,  
The one forty-four—the earth to reclaim.  
When those who are gathered arrive on the scene,  
Amidst angels and elders, and guardian beings.  
The heavenly choir will strike up the chorus,  
To teach us the role that now lies before us.  
A song that is learned, a song that is sung,  
The stamp of My name means the Day has begun.  
The heavenly band will sing of His reign,  
And during the song He'll pass us the flame.  
“You are My sons,” we'll hear Him say,  
Begotten from death on this very Day.  
Ask and I'll give you up to half of My kingdom,  
Share in My glory and take My dominion.  
Empowered to claim the rightful possession,  
To strike down all rule and cancel oppression.  
A city of praise, once battles are won,  
That all men may see that His glory has come.  
A city above based on twelve's,  
Her pillared presence—where His fullness dwells.  
So take up this rhyme and break forth with singing,  
Tis not just the end, but a brand-new beginning!



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