

I respectfully dedicate this book to the memory of my mother, Hazel Marion Bailie. She began her life on this earth as the second-born daughter of Leota Kidd Marquis and Jesse Mae Hayes Marquis on March 30, 1911, in Berthoud, Colorado. She came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior in Colorado at the age of twelve. Mother believed that she would be alive at the second coming of our Lord. If my assessments of prophetic time are accurate, she almost made it. Nevertheless her earthly journey ended on February 10, 2008, forty-nine days short of her ninety-seventh birthday. The Lord received her into His Presence through the veil of death rather than the call of the trumpet. There she resides in a body He had gone to prepare for her until the day of the resurrection. This veil has received all believers who have gone on before, and it will receive us as well if the Lord delays His coming. Even so that trumpet will sound for all believers of all ages when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. *[B]ut we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is* (I John 3:2).

Dale Andre, Eugene, Oregon

# Table of Contents

Prophetic Overview Chart	vii
Introduction	ix
Key to the Prophetic Scriptures	1
Nebuchadnezzar's Dream	12
The Seventy Weeks of Daniel	21
The Seven Feasts of the Jews	31
Three Major Peaks of Prophecy	41
A New Testament Overview	51
The Revelation of the Antichrist	61
The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand	73
The Opening of the Seventh Seal	93
The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book	103
The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse	117
The Olivet Discourse	127
The Mystery of God	159
A Clear Perspective	175
Mystery Babylon the Great	199
The Spirit of the Prophecy	221
Where Do They Fit?	241
The Bride of Christ	263
Events Associated with the Second Coming	281
The Millennial Kingdom	299

Note: All Scriptural references are from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible.

# Prophetic Overviews

454 BC	4/5 BC	29 AD	70 AD	May 14 1948	Rapture	Mid-Point	Second Coming
Decree of Cyrus	Birth	Death	70 X 7 Years Minus the Church Age = 490 Years of Daniel's Prophecy			Tribulation Period Seventieth Week of Daniel (7 years)	
Sixty-nine weeks of Daniel (483 years)		*****					
Burial Resurrection		Destruction of Jerusalem		Israel Resurrected as a Nation		Abomination of Desolation Jews are to Flee Jerusalem	
Treasure Hid in the Field							
Verses 1-5	Ascension	Revelation Chapter Twelve			Verses 6-17		
*****							
First Advent of Christ	New Testament Church Age Seven Parables of Matthew Chapter Thirteen				Second Advent of Christ		
Unleavened Bread Passover Firstfruits		Seven Feasts of the Jew in Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three Pentecost				Trumpets Day of Atonement Tabernacles	

## Introduction

# THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

The study of the prophetic Scriptures is a rewarding study. It is rewarding whether one is viewing the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures that pointed to the first advent of our Lord Jesus Christ; or whether one is viewing the Scriptures that point to the events that will bring about the second advent of our Lord, to establish His Kingdom upon this earth.

All that was prophetic in the Old Testament Scriptures, regarding our Lord's first advent upon this earth, began to be historic with His birth in 4 or 5 B.C., and by the time of His ascension into heaven they had all been fulfilled. Even so much of the Old Testament, as well as vast portions of the New Testament, prophesy of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and His second advent. One day these prophecies will also be historic. *God cannot lie.*

Prophecy is not an easy subject. Before prophecy is fulfilled, many of the events prophesied may seem to be contradictory. It may seem that all of the events prophesied cannot possibly occur as prophesied. There are many mysteries. This facet of prophecy puzzled the

## Introduction to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

rabbinical scholars, who lived before our Lord's first advent, as well as many who lived at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry. They simply could not put the events prophesied in terms that they could understand. The lesson for us to learn from this is, despite their difficulties, every prophecy of the first advent of our Lord was fulfilled completely and perfectly. This should strengthen our trust in the absolute truth of the Scriptures and expand our view of God's prophetic Word.

The Scriptures declare, *The just shall live by faith*. They also say, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. Faith is believing *that what God has promised, He is able also to perform*. This makes the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ a primary focus for all believers, along with their judicial standing before the Lord, as well as their heavenly inheritance.

Paul wrote Timothy, *But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing* (II Timothy 4:5-8).

This text shows us believers should live their lives in the expectancy of our Lord's soon return. There is *a crown of righteousness* for all believers who desire that day. Does this mean we all understand the sequence of events that will lead to His coming? No. It means that when the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the establishment of His Kingdom shall have

## Introduction to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

taken place, what may have been unclear to us with our imperfect prophetic vision (yet believed by us), will find its perfect and complete fulfillment exactly as prophesied.

As we approach the wonderful subject of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must prepare ourselves for the study. There can be no question in our minds about the authority of the prophecies. This is of primary importance. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God...* Thus the source of prophetic utterance is not in the prophet, nor is it in Christian tradition, but in the Holy Spirit of God, Who cannot lie! So when we come across prophecies that seem to be contradictory, we must remember, it is impossible for God to lie. The problem is not with the prophecy, but with our lack of understanding or lack of sufficient information to be able to understand. God's Word is true whether we understand it or not. (Incidentally, this applies to the study of all Scripture, not just prophecy.)

In our study of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the first chapters of this book will not deal specifically with the second coming. They will provide us with information that is absolutely essential to a proper approach to the subject. They will provide lessons on the structure of prophetic utterance; lessons on the many prophetic overviews recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures; and lessons on some basic rules of interpretation, which include God's revelation of Himself. These overviews, through the mysteries of the Scriptures, project the entire prophetic scene to those who can discern them.

One such overview is found in the twenty-third chapter of the book of Leviticus. It speaks of the Sabbath and of seven feasts of the Jews, most of which were observed as Sabbaths. The feasts span events from the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord, through the church

## Introduction to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

age to the first resurrection, the second coming of our Lord, and the establishment of His Kingdom upon this earth.

Another important overview is in the vision of the seventy weeks of Daniel. This vision supplies us with an important time frame for the first advent of our Lord as well as the second advent of our Lord. Within the framework of this vision is God's prophetic clock of events, which span the period of time known in Scripture as the *times of the Gentiles*.

This time began with the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century before Christ. It extended through seventy years of captivity in Babylon until the first year of the reign of Cyrus. This was the starting point for the vision of the seventy weeks. Thus, with the decree of Cyrus, the seventy weeks began to unfold unto the crucifixion of Christ.

Then, interestingly, the last week of the sequence was delayed unto the time of the first resurrection, when *the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...* This will be followed immediately by the revelation of the antichrist; the beginning of the great tribulation period; and the culmination of these events with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to destroy the fourth world empire. After which, He will establish His Kingdom upon this earth.

We make no claim to understand all of the prophecies relating to the second coming of Jesus Christ. However if we learn the structure of prophetic Scripture and recognize the major prophetic events, and apply all of the rules for the interpretation of Scripture as well as specific rules for the prophetic Scriptures, we will become as well informed as it is possible to be about

## Introduction to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

events that are promised, but have not yet been fulfilled.

Throughout a lifetime of studying the Word of God, my understanding of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ has come from many sources. Some of these I can remember and some of them I do not remember. Consequently throughout this study I will document sources to the best of my ability; but at seventy-five years of age, and over fifty-four years of studying the Word of God, commentators, theologians, and expositors, I possess knowledge from sources that have long since been forgotten. When I make a direct quotation, I will cite the source. However when I deal with information that has been gleaned over a period of time, no attempt will be made to document it, apart from its Scriptural veracity. This is as it should be. Remember, Paul wrote to Timothy ... *the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

At the close of this Introduction, I would like to thank Megan Nolan for editing the book for me. I would also like to thank my wife, Jo Ann, for her patience. The only place I have taken her in the two years that it has taken to write this book is a speedy trip to California to visit my mother before her death.

Dale Andre, D.D., 2008



## Chapter I

### A KEY TO THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES

Prophecy is history pre-written. Everything contained in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the first advent of our Lord Jesus Christ was prophetic at the time of its writing. Likewise there are vast portions of the Old Testament Scriptures, which are concerned with the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, that remain prophetic. These Scriptures, along with many portions of the New Testament, will provide the materials for our present study of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are certain events associated with the coming of our Lord that have been prophesied in both the Old and New Testaments. These events are yet to come. Eight of them immediately come to mind: the first resurrection; the revelation of the antichrist; the great tribulation; the second coming of our Lord; the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth; the millennial reign of Christ; the great white throne judgment; and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. If we rightly divide the word of truth, this will provide the prophetic key to move from one

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

of these events to another.

These events are much like looking at mountains in the distance. One can see the major peaks (the events), but cannot see the lesser mountains, hills, valleys, streams and other details that are in between the peaks -- until one gets a closer view. The partial fulfillment of a certain prophecy, some fifty-eight years ago, has provided us with a closer view of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. This event has enabled us to see and understand many things our Christian brethren in times past hoped for, but did not see in their lifetimes.

Specifically, this was the reconstitution of Israel as a nation, May 14, 1948, which was a partial fulfillment of the dry bones prophecy in the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Ezekiel. This partial fulfillment definitely puts us (prophetically speaking) in the latter part of the *latter days*.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 37:1-6)

Prior to Israel becoming a nation again in 1948, this portion of Scripture, along with a text in the twelfth chapter of Daniel, was used to teach a separate resurrection from the dead for the nation of Israel: a resurrection apart from the resurrection described in First Corinthians chapter fifteen. This theory was flawed for many reasons that were not immediately evident to those who held it; but once Israel was a nation again, back in her own land, it lost many of its adherents.

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

With Israel's restoration as a nation among the nations of the world, it became evident that our Lord had prophesied of Israel's burial among the Gentile nations of the world in His public ministry to them. He told the Jews, *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*. He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, and He cursed the fig tree while on His way into Jerusalem, the last week of His earthly life. The next day, while observing the withered fig tree, He told His disciples:

Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. (Matthew 21:21)

In the book of Daniel, mountains were used of God to represent kingdoms, and the sea was used to represent the Gentile nations of the world. These keys of understanding make the above statement a prophecy of Israel's judgment and destruction as a nation in 70 A.D., when the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem. During those terrible days many Jews were killed, others were starved to death and the remainder were scattered among the Gentile nations of the world.

In 1948, following the atrocities of World War II, Israel was resurrected (by a mandate of the United Nations) from among the Gentile nations of the world, where she had lain dead (as a nation) for nearly nineteen hundred years (*and, lo, [the bones] were very dry*). Ezekiel tells us specifically, *these bones are the whole house of Israel*.

Since her resurrection from the Gentile nations of the world, Israel has flourished, despite the Arabs attempts to destroy her. In the language of the prophet, the bones have taken on flesh and are once again upon the mountains of Israel; but God's Spirit is not yet in them, and will not be until they are redeemed as a nation, at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth.

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sin (Romans 11:26-27).*

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zechariah 12:9-10)

One would think that the salvation of the nation of Israel would bring extreme joy, rather than mourning, and it will; but the Jews' first reaction will be to mourn. They will mourn because they declared, at the first advent of our Lord, *We will not have this man to reign over us*. They also cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*. Their national rejection of Jesus as the Christ resulted in their alienation from God all of these years. It brought them into terrible judgment because of their self-invoked curse: *His blood be upon us, and on our children*.

Our Lord pointed us to this prophecy in Ezekiel, when He spoke of the last days, in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matthew 24:32-35)

This quotation directs us to the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel, which leads us directly to the dry-bones prophecy in the thirty-seventh chapter.

But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: and I will multiply men upon you,

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: and I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 36:8-11)

Prophecy is difficult to separate into its various component parts. This is because many things that are written together, like the flesh upon the bones and the breath within the bodies in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, are not fulfilled together. It would be easy to assume, because of the way the text is written, that the flesh upon the bones and the breath within the bodies should occur at the same time, but they have not. Israel is a nation again, in her own land, but she has not yet trusted the Lord as Savior and received His indwelling Holy Spirit.

There is an additional prophecy in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel that distinguishes this resurrection from the Gentile nations of the world from a previous restoration (recorded in the book of Ezra), after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. In that restoration the Jews were still divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. However Ezekiel declared in *the two sticks* prophecy:

The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. (Ezekiel 37:15-28)

This prophecy provides that when Israel is restored as a nation she will no longer be divided into two kingdoms, but will have one political head. Like the *flesh* and the *breath* of the earlier prophecy, this prophecy takes us beyond the restoration of Israel as a nation to the return of the Lord and the establishment of His Kingdom upon this earth. It takes us to the time when Israel will have been redeemed and shall dwell in the Kingdom forever. Like the earlier prophecy in this chapter, this prophecy declares events that are fulfilled at separate times as if they are fulfilled at the same time.

Our Lord supplied us with a very important key to the understanding of prophecy in the fourth chapter of the book of Luke:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet [Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (Luke 4:16-21, emphasis mine)

If we carefully examine this text in Luke with the text in the book of Isaiah, it becomes evident that our Lord closed the book in the middle of a sentence. If He had kept reading, He could not have said, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*: because the remainder of the text, as well as the remainder of the chapter, is associated with the second coming of our Lord to this earth and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth.

The differences between the portion of Scripture which our Lord read and the portion He did not read must be understood in the light of several Scriptural principles: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God; God cannot lie; God is Omniscient and Immutable; prophecy has its source in God; and prophecy is given from God's perspective, not man's*. These factors were all in play when our Lord closed the book of Isaiah, saying, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*. He closed the book at the precise place where the prophecy changed from His first advent to His second advent: revealing the principle that things written together are not necessarily fulfilled together. Peter enlarged upon this principle in Second Peter, chapter three:

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (II Peter 3:8-13)

This text has confused many with its description of prophetic events, despite the fact that Peter commanded them not to be ignorant: ... *that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

The text states, *the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat...* If we apply the principle Peter gave concerning *a day is with the Lord*: this actually speaks of three events, not one. There is a separation of time between the events, even though they are written as if they are one event. This is determined by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

The day of the Lord describes the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. In the book of the Revelation, John tells us when that occurs, *Every eye shall see Him*. This is hardly a description of *a thief in the night*. There is no contradiction, the view is the view of an Omniscient God. All time is in the present tense to One Who is Omniscient, but we are subject to time and space. So there is a separation of seven years between the *day of the Lord* and our Lord's coming, as a *thief in the night*. *The thief in the night* aspect of our Lord's coming speaks of when He comes to meet us in the air: when He comes to gather His jewels (the redeemed) to Himself. Whereas the day of the Lord speaks of the time when He will come as *King of kings and Lord of lords*, and *every eye shall see Him*.

The text goes on to describe the destruction of the earth, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat. However this does not occur at the coming of our Lord. It occurs, according to the book of the Revelation, at the end of the millennium, when the devil shall be loosed a little season

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

and shall seek to destroy the Lord and His saints. At that time, the Lord will send down fire from heaven to destroy this insurrection. After that, He will create a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

At the beginning of this chapter, we stated that the reconstitution of Israel as a nation definitely puts us in the latter part of the *latter days*. The partial fulfillment of Ezekiel chapter thirty-seven certainly suggests this, and the prophet Hosea clinches it in the fifth and sixth chapters of his prophecy where he wrote, *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early*. These words (recorded by Hosea) are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. The setting for them was on the mount of Olives (at the time of our Lord's ascension into heaven), when the angels said, *This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*.

At the beginning of chapter six, Hosea recorded Israel's response to her affliction, which shall come upon her during the great tribulation period (*the time of Jacob's trouble*):

Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. (Hosea 6:1-3)

If we apply the formula we learned from Peter, ... *a day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day*, it is evident we are in the latter part of the *latter days*. First, in the second sentence of this text, the word *after* is the Hebrew word *achar*. *Achar* means the *hinder part* and is often translated *latter days*. Second, if we apply this meaning to the word

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

in context with the reconstitution of Israel as a nation; in context with our Lord's ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem, some forty years later; in context with the date of Israel's reconstitution as a nation: it is evident there were 1878 years from 70 A.D. to 1948, when Israel became a nation again. Third, applying the formula given to us by Peter: 1878 years is equal to 1.878 days, or as the text in Hosea states in Hebrew: *the hinder part of two days*. Fourth, at the present time, we have not yet reached the time of Israel's affliction. That will come during *the time of Jacob's trouble*, which will come when the church age is complete at the first resurrection. Fifth, the first resurrection is in three parts: the firstfruits (when Christ was raised), the main harvest (commonly called the rapture), and the gleanings (which includes those martyred during the great tribulation and the salvation of the nation of Israel at the coming of the Lord). Sixth, the very first tick of the clock, following the completion of the two days (at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel), will start the third day: when the Lord will establish His Kingdom upon this earth and complete His promise to Israel.

God has given us several prophetic overviews in Scripture. One of these takes us (in point of time) from the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar to the Kingdom of God, by means of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; another takes us from the first advent of Christ, through the church age, to the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is done in the observance of seven feasts of the Jews, which are associated with the early and latter rains, recorded in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus. The first three feasts speak of our Lord's first advent and the last three feasts speak of His second advent. The details of the middle feast of the Jews (Pentecost, which represents the church age) are supplied by our Lord in the seven parables that He spoke in the thirteenth chapter of the

## A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures

Gospel of Matthew.

Details are added to these overviews by Nebuchadnezzar's golden image; the vision of the *seventy weeks*, given by the angel Gabriel to Daniel in the ninth chapter of Daniel's prophecy; by the vision of the *four beasts rising up out of the sea* in the seventh chapter of Daniel's prophecy; by the mystery of the Harlot Babylon; and by various other prophecies provided by Daniel and other Old Testament and New Testament prophets.

Another important principle in the dividing of Scripture, or the interpretation of prophecy, is that all of the information one needs to know is not found in one place in Scripture. Bits and pieces must be gleaned from all of the Word of God and skillfully assembled in a system of theology that is without contradiction. Then, and only then, will we be on the road to *rightly dividing the word of truth*, or plumbing the depths of the prophetic Scriptures.

This is an awesome task, given the fact we are dealing with events not yet fulfilled and our sight is not perfect. Therefore this study will require a detailed view of much of the Old and New Testaments, but this will not be without rewards. Remember the apostle John wrote, *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand* (Revelation 1:3).

## Chapter II

### NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

The return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth is an event every informed believer has looked for from the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the end of His first advent, to the present time. The two men, clothed in white apparel, told the disciples as our Lord ascended into heaven, *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11).

The return of our Lord has been viewed as imminent by believers in every age from that day to this. The primary reason for this is found in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, recorded in the second chapter of Daniel. According to the dream, there were to be four Gentile world empires from the time of the Babylonian empire (some six hundred years before Christ) until the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth. The first three empires passed from world domination before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, as predicted in Nebuchadnezzar's

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

dream, the fourth empire, Rome, was in power at the time of His birth.

Christ is often referred to in Scripture as *a stone, a stumbling stone, a rock, or a rock of offense*. This means *the stone, cut (out of the mountain) without hands*, of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, was a prophetic disclosure of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. God's prophetic clock is exact. At the precise moment, established before the foundation of the world, our Lord came down from heaven (as the stone cut out of the mountain) to dwell upon the earth, and to fulfill His first advent ministry.

In keeping with this, it was during the fourth world empire that ... *there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all of the world should be taxed* (enrolled for a taxation). This was the human event which forced Joseph and Mary to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the city of their births, for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem of Judaea, according to the Scriptures.

Also, according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, *the stone smote the image of the beast upon its feet*. This will occur, according to God's prophetic clock, at the second coming of our Lord. This event is known in Scripture as *the Day of the Lord*. It is an awesome day: a day to be feared. Our Lord will not come meekly, like the Lamb of God in His first advent, but will come as *King of kings, and Lord of lords*: to bring to judgment and to destroy the fourth world empire.

This will end the reign of the antichrist, who, according to the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation of John, will be the eighth ruler of the fourth world empire. Our Lord will cast the antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire. Thus the fourth world empire will cease to exist. Our Lord will then judge the sheep and goat nations, after which He will establish His Kingdom upon this earth.

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

The Roman empire has lasted more than three times longer than the other three empires, of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, combined. No man could have anticipated this. In fact historians have separated the political empire of Rome from the religious empire of Rome, to the extent that secular history does not count the Roman empire to exist today. Even so Scripture views the political and religious empires as one empire: divided according to the legs, feet and toes of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The first division of this empire was political, with two capitals: Rome in the west and Constantinople in the east. This political division became a religious division at the time of the protestant reformation movement within the Roman church: with the Roman Catholic church in the west, and the Greek Orthodox church in the east. The empire was further fractured into the two feet and ten toes, which we know as protestant churches, by this same movement. Despite these divisions (which occurred about the time Columbus discovered America), the fourth world empire has never (since its inception) ceased to exist in one or the other of its forms.

In fact all New Testament church history has occurred in this one empire. This has led believers to be expectant of our Lord's soon return throughout the days of this empire. Consequently the return of our Lord has been the hope of the believer in every age. This is not a false hope, but an ever-present reality.

At the return of our Lord, we (believers) shall experience the redemption of our bodies. John tells us, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (I John 3:2-3). And the

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

apostle Paul wrote, *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope* (Romans 8:24). Later, Paul wrote to Timothy of his impending death: *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing* (II Timothy 4:6-8). From this it is plain to see: the Lord expects every believer in every age to live his life in expectation of His imminent return.

And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.

Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. (Daniel 2:1-6)

The wise men of Babylon protested that no king had ever required such a thing (to interpret a dream without hearing it) of *any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean*. This enraged Nebuchadnezzar. He recognized their deceit, as well as their delaying tactics, and sentenced them all to death.

And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain. Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.

Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

he would shew the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter. (Daniel 2:13-23)

After this Daniel sought an audience with Nebuchadnezzar. He did not promote himself as he stood before the king, but said, ... *The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days* (Daniel 2:27-28).

Daniel told the king his dream. He told him he had dreamed of a great image with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. He told him he dreamed of a stone, that was cut without hands, which smote the image on its feet. He told him that after the image was smitten on its feet, the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. *This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.*

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with [brittle] clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with [brittle] clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. (Daniel 2:36-45)

The Apostle John tells us in Revelation chapter nineteen, ... *for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*. This means, in all of Scripture, all prophecy ultimately relates to the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. This prophecy in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is also linked to the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nebuchadnezzar's dream is one of those prophetic overviews we mentioned in our previous chapter. It takes us from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, some six centuries before Christ, through the Babylonian, Medo Persian, Greek and Roman empires.

Early in the fourth world empire, the dream speaks of the virgin birth of Christ as a *stone cut without hands*. Also, at the end of the fourth world empire, the dream speaks of the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth: when the *stone becomes a mountain and fills the whole earth*. These two events, in the same empire, have implied the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a companion prophecy (in the seventh chapter of Daniel), Daniel saw a vision of seven

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

beasts rising up out of the sea. The sea is the Mediterranean. The beasts are four Gentile world empires which arose from the Mediterranean world. The first beast was a lion, the second a bear, the third a leopard and the fourth was a beast dreadful and terrible. These beasts correspond to the same empires represented by the different metals of the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The lion was Babylon; the bear was Medo Persia; the leopard was Greece (under Alexander the Great); and the beast, dreadful and terrible, is the Roman empire.

The fourth empire is described as being *diverse* from the other empires. The Hebrew word translated *diverse* can mean *different*, but its primary meaning is *to change*. This empire took on world-dominating status under Julius Caesar. After about five hundred years of the rule of the Caesars, Rome's political power began to decline. Nevertheless there has been a succession of Roman rulers from the days of Julius Caesar (who was born about 100 B.C.) to 480 in the West and 1453 A.D. in the East. Almost simultaneously with the political power of Rome, there has been the power of the Roman Catholic church. It claims a succession of popes dating from Peter (64 A.D.) to pope Benedict XVI (who entered the papacy in 2005).

The fourth world empire has existed, in its various forms, for more than two thousand years. This fact has enabled this empire to see more changes than all of the other empires which preceded it. Remarkably the last one hundred years of this empire have produced more changes than the preceding nineteen hundred years.

This empire has seen changes in every phase of man's existence; from the chariot, spear, sword and bow to all sorts of small arms, machine guns, cannons, laser and satellite-guided munitions and nuclear bombs; from transportation by camel, horse, oxen and perilous sea vessels

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

to the automobile, the train, the super liner, the airplane, the supersonic transport and the space shuttle; from the scribe and herald to the newspaper, telegraph, telephone, computer, data processor, word processor, the internet and world-wide communication systems of radio, television and cell phones. There have been so many changes during the span of this empire, it is impossible to enumerate them all. In this regard, the angel of the Lord said, *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased* (Daniel 12:4).

This empire did not cease to exist, as suggested by secular historians, but changed, as the word *diverse* suggests, from a political empire to a religious empire. According to the book of the Revelation, the fourth world empire will be a political empire once again under the reign of the antichrist: when he counterfeits the second coming of Jesus Christ to this earth.

In the seventeenth chapter of the book of the Revelation, John has given us additional information about this unique empire in his description of the antichrist and the harlot Babylon.

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. (Revelation 17:8-11)

The harlot Babylon is the Roman empire. John described her as ... *that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth*. In the first century of this era, the city that reigned over the kings of this earth was Rome. John further identified this city as Rome, when he wrote, *And here*

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

*is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition (Revelation 17:9-11).*

If we use man's secular divisions of history, we will find it very difficult to identify these kings. Man divides history far differently than God divides history. For example: most modern historians begin the Roman empire with Augustus, not Julius. This is because of a difference in the political structure of Rome, with the rise of Augustus. Even so, it was Julius Caesar who made Rome a world dominating power, after the reign of the Greeks. Thus it is Julius who is counted, by John, as the first of these seven kings. This means, at the writing of the book of the Revelation, the five kings who were fallen (dead) were Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius. The one who is, was Nero, and the one who was yet to come was Vespasian.

Once again there is a deviation between John's account in the book of the Revelation and secular historians. John jumps from Nero to Vespasian and does not consider three minor claimants to the Roman throne, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. None of these three reigned more than six months, and none of them had anything to do with the nation of Israel. The eighth king over the fourth world empire will be the antichrist. In our next chapter, we will observe the reason (with so many Roman rulers and Popes) God only counts seven kings to have reigned over the fourth world empire, with one yet to reign.

### Chapter III

## THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

One of the most important portions of prophetic Scripture, concerning the sequence of events leading to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, is found in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel. This chapter provides a revelation to Daniel, from the angel Gabriel, of a number of specific events in God's prophetic clock. According to the revelation given to Daniel, all of the events named in the revelation will be fulfilled within a span of *seventy weeks*.

*Weeks* is an unfortunate translation of the Hebrew word *septad*. It means seven. The prophecy is about seventy periods of seven. A consideration of the sevens in the light of history, as well as in the light of the events prophesied, provides that the sevens are periods of seven years: for a total of four hundred and ninety years.

The seventy sevens begin with the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem after seventy years of Jewish captivity in Babylon, and they end when our Lord Jesus Christ shall establish His Kingdom upon this earth. It would be easy to assume the seventy sevens are an

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

unending sequence; but, as we shall see, the first sixty-nine sevens, while classified as *seven sevens, and threescore and two sevens*, were an unending sequence, while the seventieth seven is separated from the others by a span of time. This span will be the entire church age.

Let us now consider the events that led to Gabriel's revelation to Daniel of the vision of the seventy weeks. Daniel had been carried into Babylonian captivity by Nebuchadnezzar as a youth. He had been trained for political service, as an advisor to the king, along with his companions Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah: better known by their Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abenego. These Jews served their captors faithfully through the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Evel-merodach, Nergal-sharezer, Labashi-marduk, Nabonidus, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. (*The Romance of Bible Chronology*, by Martin Anstey, Marshall Brothers, London, 1913, page 231)

We learned, in our study of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Babylon was to fall to Persia at God's appointed time. When Babylon fell to the Persians, in the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, Daniel and his companions had been in exile from Jerusalem and captives in Babylon for sixty-eight years. (This is determined by a study of Biblical Chronology.)

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. (Daniel 9:1-12)

Upon understanding the prophecy of Jeremiah -- that the Jews were to be in captivity in Babylon for seventy years -- and upon understanding his covenant responsibility to the law of Moses, Daniel, as seen in the above Scripture, confessed his sins and the sins of his people. He appealed to God on the basis of His grace and mercy: *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.*

It was then that the angel Gabriel appeared unto Daniel and *touched* [him] *about the time of the evening oblation* and informed him, *O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.*

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

determined.

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Daniel 9:24-27)

The seventy periods of seven relate to Daniel's people and Daniel's city. These are the Jews and the city of Jerusalem. Therefore the vision speaks of six things that relate both to the city and to the people. These will occur in the span of these seventy sevens. They are: to finish the transgression; to make an end of sins; to make reconciliation for iniquity; to bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up the vision and the prophecy; and to anoint the most holy. We shall consider each.

First, *to finish the transgression* relates to the apostasy of the nation of Israel. Initially it was to be restricted, but ultimately, with the salvation of the nation, at the end of the great tribulation, it will end. However, restricting the apostasy speaks primarily of the ministries of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, who ministered during the first forty-nine years after the Jews were to return to the land to restore and rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Second, *to make an end of sins* was accomplished at the end of the sixty-ninth week of the vision when our Lord made *one sacrifice for sin forever*. Our Lord told the Jews, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled* (Matthew 5:17-18). *Christ is the end of the law for righteous to everyone that believeth* (Romans 10:4). Further the Scripture teaches an identification between sin and the sacrifice for sin. So Paul wrote, *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we*

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

*might be made the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21). Thus Gabriel's statement to Daniel, *to make an end of sins*, prophesied the end of the sacrificial system.

Third, *to make reconciliation for iniquity* speaks of the atonement made by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. The word translated *reconciliation* is *kaphar*. *Kaphar* means *to cover*. It relates to the day of atonement, or covering, when propitiation, by the sprinkling of the blood upon the mercy seat, was made. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation* (Hebrews 9:23-28).

Fourth, *to bring in everlasting righteousness* has a dual fulfillment. Sinners are declared saints by virtue of their faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures declare, *when we see Him, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*. This means that the declared righteousness (in which we are presently viewed of God) will then become (by right of our resurrection, glorification and adoption) the actual righteousness of our Lord. God has the perfect right to do this because of the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in our behalf.

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

Thus Righteousness will reign when our Lord reigns in His Kingdom with those whom He has made righteous.

Fifth, *to seal up the vision and the prophecy* speaks of the conclusion of the Old Testament canon of Scripture. This means the last books of the Old Testament Scriptures were written by the prophets of the restoration, who produced the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi, during the first forty-nine years following the decree to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem.

Sixth, *to anoint the most Holy* speaks of the anointing of our Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, when our Lord establishes His Kingdom upon this earth and sits upon the throne of David.

Thus within the span of the seventy weeks of Daniel, counting from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, these six events shall take place. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away* (Matthew 24:35).

The seventy weeks of Daniel have set the prophetic clock. It is with respect to this clock that the seven kings of the Roman empire, recorded in Revelation chapter seventeen, are recognized. From the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the crucifixion of Christ, at the end of the sixty-ninth week, three Roman rulers had lived and died. As previously mentioned, they were Julius, Augustus and Tiberius.

Daniel's vision of the seventy-weeks was determined upon his city and his people. So even though the sixty-ninth week ended, Daniel's people had not ended. Thus we continue counting Roman emperors until the destruction of Jerusalem. After Tiberius came Caligula and Claudius;

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

but by the time the book of the Revelation was written, they had died and one was alive, with one to come. This takes us to Nero, who died in 68 A.D. He was followed by Vespasian. Under the reign of Vespasian, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. Since Israel (as a nation) and the city of Jerusalem were no more, God stopped counting Roman rulers until the revelation of the antichrist, who will be the *eighth, and is of the seven*.

Despite the fact that the Scripture is absolutely clear about the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, there has been a good deal of confusion about which Persian emperor gave the decree. This confusion has been born of secular history and the Ptolemaic chronology. We have already seen, that by the time of Daniel's vision, that the Jews had been in captivity for sixty-eight years. It was in the sixty-eighth year of their captivity that Daniel learned they were to be in captivity for seventy years. Thus the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem had to be forthcoming; and, indeed, it was forthcoming when Cyrus became sole rex, or king of the Persian empire.

It was prophesied by Isaiah (in chapter forty-four) that Cyrus was God's anointed who was to give the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. In addition to this, it is recorded in II Chronicles and in the book of Ezra that Cyrus gave the decree:

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. (Ezra 1:1-8)

In a wonderful work by Martin Anstey, *Romance of Bible Chronology*, in two volumes by Marshall Brothers, London, 1913, and reprinted as *Chronology of the Old Testament*, Kregel Publications, 1973, Reverend Anstey, in a very scholarly manner, compared all of the chronologies of antiquity with Biblical chronology. His conclusion was that Biblical chronology proves the accepted dates of the Ptolemaic chronology to be 82 years longer than the actual span of years. This places the date of the decree of Cyrus at 454 B.C. rather than at the accepted date of 536 B.C.

It is impossible to reconcile the vision of the seventy weeks of Daniel with the erroneous date of 536 B.C. (hence all of the confusion), but the corrected date of 454 B.C. (by Biblical chronology) fits perfectly into the vision of the seventy weeks.

With reference to the decree of Cyrus and the seventy weeks of Daniel, Martin Anstey wrote:

The one great event, and the only one in the history of the Jews which corresponds with the prophecy, is the return of the 42,360 exiles under Zerubbabel and Joshua, the rebuilding of the city and the Sanctuary, and the securing of the safety of the same by the erection of the protecting wall.

None of the Chronologers have been able to adopt this interpretation, because, although they have seen its truth, they have been unable to shake off the tyranny of the Ptolemaic system of Chronology. (Page 278, *The Romance of Bible Chronology*)

As seen in the above statement, commentators on the book of Daniel have been aware that

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

the only decree in Scripture that fits the vision of the seventy weeks of Daniel is the decree of Cyrus, but, in the name of scholarship, they have had difficulty reconciling Daniel's prophecy with secular history. History is not the problem, but the dates assigned to history by the Ptolemaic chronology, and an unwillingness to question the Ptolemaic system, are the problem.

Secular history may be used for authority when secular history agrees with Biblical history; but when there is a difference between a secular account and the Biblical account, the Biblical account carries the greater authority: *Let God be true, and every man a liar.*

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (I Corinthians 2:11-16)

The weeks of Gabriel's revelation prove to be weeks of years by virtue of the span of years between the decree of Cyrus and the crucifixion of Christ (at the conclusion of the sixty-ninth week of the prophecy). The prophecy is given in three divisions: seven sevens; threescore and two sevens; and one seven, or in literal terms: forty-nine years; four hundred and thirty-four years, and seven years: for a total of four hundred and ninety years.

An important observation, using the key of the seventy weeks of Daniel, should be noted at this time: there are precisely four hundred and eighty-three years (seven sevens plus threescore and two sevens) between the decree of Cyrus in 454 B.C. and the crucifixion of Christ in 29 A.D.

## The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

Then, as implied by the three divisions of forty-nine years, four hundred and thirty-four years, and one year: the counting of the seventy sevens stopped with one period of seven years yet to come.

This is the great tribulation period, *the time of Jacob's trouble*.

In our next chapter, *The Seven Feasts of the Jews*, it will be evident that the church age was to stand between the first advent of our Lord and His second advent. Therefore it is not strange that there has been a gap (to date) of nearly two thousand years between the first advent of our Lord and our expectation of His imminent return to this earth to establish His Kingdom.

## Chapter IV

### THE SEVEN FEASTS OF THE JEWS

Another important prophetic overview is found in Leviticus chapter twenty-three. It begins with a statement about the observance of the Sabbath, then it proceeds to give the details and the order of the observance of seven feasts of the Jews. These feasts and their associated sacrifices were observed from the first month through the seventh month of the Jewish year.

Throughout the Old Testament, the sacrificial system was in operation to show forth by types the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were a portrayal of His *one sacrifice for sin forever*, whereas the seven feasts of the Jews were a prophetic overview of the first advent of our Lord, the church age, and the second advent of our Lord. It is unlikely, but not impossible, that the antitypes of the seven feasts of the Jews were understood until after our Lord's earthly ministry.

When our Lord completed His earthly ministry, it became apparent to those with spiritual discernment that the first three feasts of the Jewish year had all been fulfilled when our Lord

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

presented Himself in Jerusalem on the tenth day of the month of Abib as *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*; when He was examined by the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, the chief priests, the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate, who declared, *I find no fault in this just man*; when He was crucified on the preparation of the Passover (John 19:30-31), and gave up His Spirit at the time of the evening sacrifice (the time when the passover lambs were being slain); when He was buried as the sun began to set towards the first day of Unleavened Bread (which is called Passover, the time when the passover lambs were eaten); and when He arose from the dead on the feast of Firstfruits to ... *become the firstfruits of them that slept* (I Corinthians 15:20).

When we look at the last three feasts of the Jewish year in the light of the first three feasts of the year, it becomes evident that while the first three feasts spoke of the first advent of our Lord, the last three feasts speak of His second advent.

The first of the last three feasts is the feast of Trumpets. It points to the first major prophetic event of the second advent of our Lord, the first resurrection. This is commonly known as the rapture. The rapture is the hope of every believer. It is the day when ... *the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed* (I Corinthians 15:52). *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord* (I Thessalonians 4:17).

This will be followed, at the end of the great tribulation period, with the second coming of our Lord. This is foreshadowed in the Day of Atonement. This was the day in the Jewish year when the high priest came out of the holy of holies (after having made a propitiation for the sins of Israel) to stand before the nation of Israel, to bring them salvation.

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:23-28)

This will be the day when Israel (as a nation) will be saved. Our Lord shall come to the mount of Olives. This was prophesied by Zechariah (14:4), and it was reiterated as our Lord ascended into heaven. The angels said, ... *this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11).

The last of the feasts to be observed is the Feast of Tabernacles. It speaks of the Kingdom age. Zechariah wrote:

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:16)

There was one more feast of the Jews. It was Pentecost. It was observed between the three feasts of the first month, and the three feasts of the seventh month, fifty days after Firstfruits. Since the first three feasts of the first month were prophetic of the first advent of our Lord, and since the last three feasts of the seventh month are prophetic of the second advent of our Lord, the observance of Pentecost between these feasts suggests this feast was not about our Lord, but about that which has existed between the first and second advents of our Lord, the church age.

This is supported by the fact that on Pentecost *two wave loaves ... baken with leaven* were

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

an essential part of the feast. Leaven is used in the Scriptures to speak of sin and false doctrine. This means the loaves of the feast of Pentecost could not represent our Lord, *For in Him was no sin at all*, but they could represent the church.

This can be seen in our Lord's parable of the tares and the wheat, where true believers are represented by the wheat. In keeping with this, the loaves of Pentecost were baked with wheat and with leaven. Since the church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles (which is the number of the loaves); and since our Lord taught the parable of the tares among the wheat to His disciples, showing that there is leaven in the church (a false gospel in the midst of the true gospel); and since the Scriptures reveal, *if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us*, showing that despite salvation, believers retain their sin natures (this also corresponds with the leaven of the two loaves); and since the Spirit of God was given to the church on the day of Pentecost: a proper application of these truths strongly suggests Pentecost was a prophetic representation of the church age. This is corroborated by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of [the] promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:11-22)

On the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after our Lord's resurrection from the dead, our Lord sent His Holy Spirit to indwell and empower every believer who was then a part of the newly formed body of Christ (which we know as the church). Our Lord's promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit included all believers of all ages, but this promise could not be put into effect until Christ was glorified, according to John 7:37-39. Christ's church (His called-out assembly), also called His temple, could not be built until the foundation was laid; and He, according to I Corinthians 3:11, is that foundation. Then, according to I Peter 2:5, believers are the living stones with which the temple of God is being constructed. Thus Christ's called-out assembly is empowered to do the work of the Lord upon this earth until the end of this age.

When the rapture occurs, the bodies of the redeemed of all ages will be resurrected, glorified, adopted, and reunited with their souls. This glorious assembly will be transported into the presence of our Lord in heaven. At virtually the same time upon the earth (according to another prophetic overview in the life of David and his son Absalom), the antichrist will counterfeit the return of our Lord to this earth. He will then make a covenant with Israel for one week (seven years), which is the seventieth week of Daniel's vision.

After the antichrist has convinced much of the nation of Israel (with *signs and lying wonders*), as well as all of the apostate churches, that he is the Christ, the Lord will bring the one hundred and forty-four thousand to mount Zion. These Jews (twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel) will be the custodians of the truth during *the time of Jacob's trouble* (the great tribulation period).

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

It cannot be proven, but it is certainly implied in Scripture, that the one hundred and forty-four thousand (in the seventh and the fourteenth chapters of the book of the Revelation) are Jews who lived in times past, died, and were resurrected with our Lord when He was resurrected. They are referred to in Scripture as *the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb* (Revelation 14:4). Our Lord is also referred to as the firstfruits. Firstfruits is plural. This implies that firstfruits includes our Lord, as well as the one hundred and forty-four thousand.

Further it makes sense that God would use faithful servants, who had not been corrupted with the idolatry of the rest of the nation of Israel in their lives upon this earth (virgins), to preach during the most difficult times the world will ever face. It makes sense that our Lord raised this company of Old Testament believers and translated them into heaven after they showed themselves alive in Jerusalem. It makes sense that our Lord will use these seasoned, trained, and faithful servants to minister to the nation of Israel during *the time of Jacob's trouble*.

Even in this age, one of the requirements for preaching is, *Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil* (I Timothy 3:6). Therefore the one hundred and forty-four thousand Jews cannot be new converts to Christ, who would, of necessity, be saved without the preaching of the Word of God (since all of the redeemed will have been resurrected prior to the appearance of the one hundred and forty-four thousand upon the earth). This would be contrary to the way the Lord has brought redemption to man throughout the Scriptures -- *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. And also:

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (I Corinthians 1:21)

In keeping with the prophetic aspect of the feasts, the six days of the work week, followed

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

by a Sabbath, has also provided a prophetic view of the coming of the Kingdom of God. This is not directly stated in Scripture, but it is implied in the truth ... *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (II Peter 3:8).

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. (Leviticus 23:1-3)

If we apply ... *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* to God's Sabbatic covenant with Israel, each day of the Jews' work week represented one thousand years of human history. Whether the Jews understood this or not, every work week in their lives, followed by a Sabbath, was a perpetual testimony to God's promise of the Kingdom age.

At the present time, this interpretation may not seem possible because the time, from the creation of Adam to the present, has already exceeded six thousand years. The explanation for this seeming discrepancy is locked in the mysteries of Scripture, where, without wresting the Scriptures, it still allows for a literal fulfillment of six thousand years of human history from the creation of Adam until the second coming of our Lord.

In Martin Anstey's book, *The Romance of Bible Chronology*, he established, by a very careful analysis of Old Testament Chronology, that the first year of Adam was 4042 years before our present system of dating. The present year is 2008 A.D. From Adam to the present, then, is 6050 years. This seems to be too many years for the analogy *a day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*, or is it?

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

Our text states, *Six days shall work be done*. According to the book of II Chronicles, this principle was violated by the Jews to the extent they were exiled to Babylon:

And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years. (II Chronicles 36:20-21)

We have not mentioned it before, but in the twenty-third chapter of the book of Leviticus most of the feasts of the Jews were observed as Sabbaths. There were two Sabbaths associated with Unleavened Bread, none with Firstfruits, one with Pentecost, one with Trumpets, one with the Day of Atonement, and two with the Feasts of Tabernacles. This totals seven, and with the fifty-two normal Sabbaths in a year, this means there were fifty-nine Sabbaths to be observed by the Jews every year.

If we multiply the seventy years of the exile times three hundred and sixty-five and one quarter days (the number of days in a year), and divide that number by fifty-nine (the number of Sabbaths in a year), we will learn that the Jews failed to keep Sabbath for more than four hundred thirty-three and one third years (nominally, four hundred and thirty-four years).

If we reflect back to our studies of the seventy weeks of Daniel, we will note that the seventy weeks were separated into seven sevens, threescore and two sevens, and one seven, for a total of four hundred and ninety years. At this point, we must make an assumption based upon the character of the Jews. Let us assume they were faithful in observing the Sabbaths for the first seven sevens (forty-nine years) after they returned to the land. This was during the time of the rebuilding of the city and the sanctuary. Let us then assume they were as unfaithful in observing

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

the Sabbaths for the sixty-two sevens (four hundred and thirty-four years) as they had been prior to their captivity.

If this were so, we have a duplication of four hundred and thirty-four years of failed Sabbath observance. If our assumption is true, another period of seventy years of captivity is needed to keep Sabbath. (Incidentally, we cannot count beyond the 434 years of the seventy weeks of Daniel because the law ended with the crucifixion of our Lord, at the end of the sixty-ninth week of Daniel's vision.)

If we add these seventy years (of rest) to six thousand years (six days) that work may be done, this will give us six thousand years of work, to correspond with six days, and seventy years of Sabbaths, to correspond with another captivity. These two figures would give us a total of 6070 years. Now if we subtract the period of the Old Testament (4042 years) from the 6070 years, we will have a presumed date of 2028 A.D. as the latest possible date for the return of the Lord. If we subtract seven years for the great tribulation period, we can see that the first resurrection is indeed imminent.

As long as we are making assumptions, if the first resurrection were to occur this year (2008 A.D.), then the return of the Lord would be seven years hence, at the end of the great tribulation, in the year 2015 A.D. Let it be understood, there is no requirement to extend the return of our Lord to the maximum period of six thousand and seventy years from Adam. The specific number of years of the presumed exile is dependent upon the number of years of the unfaithful observance of the Sabbaths, which is known only to God. Therefore no man knows the day or the hour of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we can *Look up, for our redemption*

## The Seven Feasts of the Jews

*draweth nigh.*

This solution, while conjecture, provides a plausible reason for human history (by Biblical chronology) to be greater than the six days of labor, followed by a seventh day of rest. It also provides an answer to the many prophecies of the Old Testament that speak of Israel's return unto the Lord at the end of her exile, which were not fulfilled when she returned after seventy years in Babylon.

The truths we have learned from the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, along with the other truths we learned in our earlier chapters, will aid us in our understanding of the many prophecies that we shall study throughout this book.

## Chapter V

### THREE MAJOR PEAKS OF PROPHECY

As we continue in our study of the second coming of our Lord, it is not wise to impose the theories of various schools of thought upon the Scriptures. This is a perilous practice at best and would accomplish little in our total understanding of the truth. Rather we will use an inductive approach to our subject. We will allow the evidence we have gleaned from the Word of God, *rightly divided*, to formulate our position. This will eliminate any need to discuss the theories of postmillennialism and amillennialism.

The best approach to this or any other subject in the Word of God is always to allow the Word of God and the Spirit of God to direct our understanding. If one is well established in the truth, this is the best source to refute any and all of the errors that have arisen or will arise concerning the second coming of our Lord or any other doctrine of the Scriptures.

Our studies of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the seven feasts of the Jews, and the seventy weeks of Daniel have revealed that there are three major mountain peaks of prophecy that are yet

### Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

to be fulfilled at the end of the present church age. These are represented, as we have seen, in the last three feasts of the Jewish year.

The seven feasts of the Jews have established the prophetic order in which the prophecies of the fourth Gentile world empire will be fulfilled. The feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits were fulfilled perfectly (as we have seen) in the first advent of our Lord. The feast of Pentecost is presently being fulfilled by the church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles; and the last three feasts of the Jews reveal the major mountain peaks of prophecy (yet to be fulfilled) for which this chapter is named.

The first of the last three peaks of prophecy is the rapture. We have seen that it was represented in the feast of Trumpets. We have also seen that the Day of Atonement has represented the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth: when our Lord shall stand before the nation of Israel again to bring them salvation. The third and final peak will come fully into view when our Lord establishes His Kingdom upon this earth. This was revealed in the feast of Tabernacles, which, as we have seen, will be observed every year of the millennial reign of Christ.

There are, of course, many more prophecies to be fulfilled, but each of them is associated with the primary prophecies represented by the last three feasts of the Jews. Our Lord called some of these *the beginning of sorrows* (the birth pangs) that shall produce the second coming of our Lord. He spoke of *wars and rumors of wars, of famines, and of pestilences*. He spoke of the fig tree *shooting forth the branch* and of many other things. Each of His prophetic utterances is a part of the overall scheme of things that shall bring about the fulfillment of the last three feasts of the

## Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

Jews.

In fact we began our study of the second coming of our Lord with the observation that the fig tree has budded (according to Matthew 24:32, compared with Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37). We used the reconstitution of Israel as a nation to establish the fact (according to the prophet Hosea) that we are presently in the latter part of the *latter days*.

The manner in which some of the companion prophecies will be fulfilled is more evident than others. Some remain totally veiled in mystery. Over the years of our ministry the Lord has enabled us to understand a great deal, but we certainly make no claim to understand all of the prophecies associated with His coming. No one with spiritual discernment would make such a claim. Even so we know (based upon the fulfillment of the prophecies of the first advent of our Lord) that each of these prophecies will be fulfilled completely and perfectly in the span of the prophetic significance of the last three feasts of the Jews.

It has become a common practice for believers to refer to the first resurrection as the second coming of our Lord. This is entirely understandable (because it is the great hope of the believer), but it is not altogether accurate.

The first resurrection is that aspect of the second coming of our Lord when He comes for His saints. This will be *as a thief in the night*, when He shall come to catch away His jewels unto Himself (Malachi 3:17). Seven years later, at the end of the great tribulation period, He will come again to this earth *with all of his saints*. In the book of the Revelation, John wrote, *Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him...* Paul referred to both of these events in his second epistle to the Thessalonians when he wrote:

### Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. (II Thessalonians 2:1-2)

This text speaks of two separate events: *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and *our gathering together unto him*. The coming of our Lord is referred to in Scripture as *the Day of the Lord*. This will be the day when the Lord shall return again to establish His Kingdom upon this earth:

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. (Zechariah 14:1-9)

The second event mentioned by the apostle Paul is *our gathering together unto him*. This event, according to the vision of the seventy weeks of Daniel, precedes the Day of the Lord by the space of the seventieth week of Daniel's vision -- seven years. Remember the eighth ruler of the fourth world empire (the antichrist) *shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and*

### Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

*in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease* (Daniel 9:27a). This will be the primary sign for the Jews to flee Jerusalem, for our Lord said:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand;) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (Matthew 24:15-22)

Many professing Christians have been confused by these instructions. They have attempted to apply them to themselves, but these instructions are not for believers in the church age. These instructions are for the nation of Israel. These are instructions for the final week of Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks.

The seventy weeks, according to the angel Gabriel, *are determined upon thy people* (the Jews) *and upon thy holy city* (Jerusalem). Our Lord's instructions were for a people who were under the covenant of the law until the time of their salvation. This was (and still is) Israel. We must not let the believer's relationship to the law confuse the issue. Paul wrote, *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone* [whether Jew or Gentile] *that believeth*. The nation of Israel has not yet believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently Israel's covenant of law relationship with God will continue until the time of her salvation.

This does not take place at the time of her flight from Jerusalem (at the midpoint of the tribulation period) when she *shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place* (Matthew 24:15). Israel's salvation will come at the coming of

### Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

the Lord (at the end of the great tribulation), when *they shall look upon me whom they have pierced* (Zechariah 12:10). These facts enable us to understand our Lord's instructions to Israel: *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day...*

As we continue with the text to the Thessalonians, Paul admonished them not to be shaken or troubled by the many false doctrines and counterfeit claims of certain teachers regarding *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He reminded them that he had taught them the truth concerning the Day of the Lord.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. (II Thessalonians 2:3-6)

The Day of the Lord is predicated of two events in Paul's text: *a falling away first, and that man of [the] sin be revealed, the son of [the] perdition...* The falling away first is a translation of the Greek word for apostasy. This is a description of the final stages of the church age. The church will be in a state of apostasy like Israel was at the first advent of our Lord.

The apostle John described the final stages of the church age in his letter to the church at Laodicea, in the book of the Revelation. The Laodicean church age is preparing the world for the revelation of the man of the sin, the antichrist, who will counterfeit the second coming our Lord Jesus Christ. After which, he will make a covenant with Israel for seven years (the final week of the seventy weeks of Daniel's vision).

During the apostasy of the final days of the church age, the true church (along with the saints of all ages) will be called into the presence of our Lord in heaven when the trumpet shall

### Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

sound and our Lord shall say, *Come up hither*. Once the saints (indwelt by the Holy Spirit) are taken out of this world, there will not be a single person left upon the earth who can discern the truth of the Word of God. Then the man of the sin (the antichrist) shall be revealed in a counterfeit return of the Lord.

For the mystery of [the] iniquity doth already work: only he [the Holy Spirit indwelling the true church] who now [restraineth] will [restrain], until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall that Wicked [the antichrist] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe [the] lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in [the] unrighteousness. (II Thessalonians 2:7-12)

The point of Paul's argument was that these things were not then taking place. So the Day of the Lord could not have already come. Paul reminded them that he had taught them there would be two events that would precede the Day of the Lord -- the apostasy of the church, and the revelation of the man of sin. He reminded them that the man of sin could not be revealed until that which hinders his revelation is taken away. This is *our gathering together unto him*.

It is the church of Jesus Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that prevents the revelation of the antichrist by the proclamation of the truth. As long as the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ is still being proclaimed in this world, it is not possible that the Day of the Lord has come. The truth prevents the revelation of the man of sin, but an apostate church aids and abets his revelation, because:

... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto

### Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (I Corinthians 2:9-16)

This text teaches us that believers in Jesus Christ know the things of God because of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. In this age God no longer speaks directly to man. He speaks to man through the proclamation of the truth by His church, which He commissioned to *Go into all of the world and preach the gospel*. Paul taught the Romans:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Romans 10:13-15)

These two texts teach us that it is the church, indwelt by the Spirit of God, that proclaims the truth in this world. Our Lord said, *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*. It is the proclamation of the truth that counteracts the errors of this world's system. If the church, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is removed from this world, there will be no one in the world who can counteract or refute the lie of the antichrist when he comes and claims to be the Christ.

At the beginning of the second chapter of second Thessalonians, Paul spoke of two events, *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him*. If the removing of that which hinders (in this chapter) is not the rapture of the church, as those who believe in a mid-

### Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

tribulation rapture claim, then Paul never speaks of *our gathering together unto him* in this chapter. This is not possible. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God...*

The Old and New Testament Scriptures contain vast numbers of prophecies concerning the first and second advents of our Lord. We have seen the prophecies of our Lord's first advent fulfilled completely and perfectly. We know that the second advent of our Lord will also be fulfilled with the same exacting perfection. Nevertheless as we anticipate the fulfillment of the prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled, it is Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel's vision of the seventy-weeks and the seven feasts of the Jews, which constantly direct us in our understanding of that which has not yet been fulfilled.

God's prophetic clock of the seventy weeks of Daniel began the countdown to the Kingdom of God upon this earth when the Persian emperor Cyrus gave the commandment *to restore and to build Jerusalem*. The events of the seven sevens were fulfilled exactly as promised, as was the crucifixion of Christ at the end of the sixty-nine sevens. Then, with the crucifixion of Christ, God's prophetic clock stopped. This could not be seen in the vision of the seventy weeks, but it was anticipated in the feast of Pentecost, between the first three feasts and the last three feasts of the Jewish year.

The seventieth week of Daniel will not begin until the revelation of the antichrist, when he will counterfeit the return of our Lord to this earth. He will then make a covenant with Israel for one week (seven years). It is possible that one of the terms of this covenant will be the rebuilding of the earthly temple in Jerusalem. This act, along with his *signs and lying wonders*, will greatly aid in the deception of the apostate church and the nation of Israel.

### Three Major Peaks of Prophecy

Since the antichrist will be the eighth ruler of the fourth world empire; and since our Lord Jesus Christ will destroy the fourth world empire at His coming; the fourth world empire will cease to exist when our Lord establishes His Kingdom upon this earth, at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel's vision.

Without Nebuchadnezzar's dream of four world empires, the seven feasts of the Jews, and Daniel's vision of seventy weeks, it would be impossible to see the correlation between human history and the first and second advents of our Lord; but with them, we recognize that the first and second advents of our Lord are inexorably linked to the Jews and the city of Jerusalem, within the time frame of the seventy weeks of Daniel's vision.

## Chapter VI

### A NEW TESTAMENT OVERVIEW

It is claimed that one out of every thirty verses in the Bible is concerned with the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom upon this earth. This claim is consistent with the theme of the Scriptures -- the redemption of man. Even though believers of every age have counted themselves to be redeemed (which is proper), their redemption will not be completed until they are raised, glorified, and adopted at the coming of the Lord.

This promise, like all of God's promises is certain. Its fulfillment can be compared to the Old Testament saints who were promised the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, but they did not receive the Holy Spirit of God (to permanently indwell them) until Christ was glorified in His death, burial and resurrection (John 7:37-39). When the Lord *led captivity captive and gave gifts to men*, the redeemed in paradise became *the spirits of just men made perfect* in heaven, and the living saints received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (*to never leave them nor forsake them*). Similarly, the saints of all ages, both living and dead, will not receive the redemption of their bodies until the Lord raises, glorifies and adopts them. This truth is reinforced by John in

## A New Testament Overview

the third chapter of his first epistle, where he wrote:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (I John 3:1-2)

This is the wonderful hope of the believer. It is this hope that should have caused every believer from the ascension of Christ to the present time to have longed for His coming; to have longed for that day when believers will no longer be subject to sin, to sickness, to sorrow, to dying and to death; to have longed for that day when our imputed status (the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ) will become our actual standing; in other words, to long for the day when we shall at last be like Him.

The study of the second coming of our Lord is certainly not limited to a few books of the Scriptures. We find it declared in shadows, in types, and in direct statements throughout the Word of God. One such statement is found in the book of the Revelation, where John wrote:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. (Revelation 1:1-3)

There are three things in these verses which all believers in Jesus Christ should know. First, the subject of this book is *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. A revelation is an unveiling. This means that the contents of the book of the Revelation is an unveiling of the circumstances and events that shall lead to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth and the establishment of His Kingdom upon this earth.

## A New Testament Overview

There are numerous prophetic overviews of last-day events in the Word of God. *The Revelation* provides us with one more. In this regard, we know we are *rightly dividing the word of truth* when all of the information that we glean throughout the Word of God (on a particular subject) fits together perfectly. This is true of every subject in the Word of God, not just the second coming of our Lord. Consequently the information we shall observe in the book of the Revelation will reinforce what we have already learned from Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the seventy weeks of Daniel, and the seven feasts of the Jews. It will also provide us with additional information for our *edification, exhortation and comfort*.

Second, John declared that this is an unveiling that is to *shortly come to pass*. This, of course, as we have seen earlier, is from God's perspective -- *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*.

We know from our earlier studies in the book of Hosea that we are in the latter part of the *latter days*. In November of 1947, following the atrocities of World War II against the Jewish people, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine. Then, on May 14, 1948, Israel declared herself to be a nation among the nations of the world once again. Our Lord had prophesied this event when He spoke to His disciples about last-day events:

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation [a people, i.e., the nation of Israel] shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. (Luke 21:28-33)

Third, God promises a special blessing to those who read and hear the words of this

## A New Testament Overview

prophecy and keep the things that are contained in it. This means that the study of the book of the Revelation in particular, and the study of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in general, will provide special blessings to the people of God, but only to those who read, hear, and understand what is written on this subject.

One of the primary blessings that comes to the student of *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* is peace of mind. In his first epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote of the second coming of our Lord in the context of comforting and edifying believers:

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. (I Thessalonians 5:1-11)

First, this portion of Scripture reveals that the day of the Lord *so cometh as a thief in the night*. Since the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, events that are signs of the coming of the Lord to believers bear no significance whatsoever to the unsaved of this world. This means that the rapture of the church, the revelation of the antichrist, and the judgments of the great tribulation period will not register in the minds of the inhabitants of this world that they are signs of the coming of the Lord. In their spiritual blindness that day will catch them completely unaware, as *a thief in the night*. We stated earlier that the Lord will come for

## A New Testament Overview

the redeemed *as a thief in the night*. There is no contradiction. Rather this is a double reference that refers to two different events with the same language.

Second, believers are told, in the face of all of the judgments that shall befall the earth during the tribulation period (*the time of Jacob's trouble*), *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*. This refers to the believer's preservation from the wrath that is to come upon the earth before our Lord comes to establish His Kingdom and not to the salvation of the soul. This is the reason Paul could say, *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do*.

This brings us now to another prophetic overview in the book of the Revelation. This overview, like the seven feasts of the Jews, will reveal the sequence of events that shall bring about the second coming of our Lord to this earth. It begins with John's declaration:

... to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (Revelation 1:4-8)

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden [lampstands]. The seven stars are the angels [messengers] of the seven churches: and the seven [lampstands] which thou sawest are the seven churches. (Revelation 1:19-20)

In this opening statement to the seven churches of Asia, John asserted, *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the*

## A New Testament Overview

*earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.* In this statement and others in the Revelation, John never speaks frivolously of the judgments that are to come during the great tribulation period prior to the return of the Lord. He recognizes that these judgments are the birth pangs that shall produce the return of the Lord. He knows that these birth pangs shall produce conditions on earth such as the world has never known (Matthew 24:21). He knows they cannot be avoided. Some of them are judgments from God; others are expressions of the rage of the antichrist. John simply writes, *Even so, Amen.*

The apostle spoke of things past when he wrote of his experiences on the island of Patmos. He spoke of things present in chapters two and three when he wrote specifically to the messengers (the angels) of the seven churches in Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. He also spoke of things to come in his seven letters to the seven churches, as well as in the remainder of the book of the Revelation.

There were many more churches in Asia at the time John wrote to the seven churches named in the Revelation. In fact, most of the churches established by the apostle Paul in his three missionary journeys into Asia are not mentioned in this book. Only Ephesus is mentioned. Of the seven churches John addressed, five of them were in a state of apostasy. Only two of them could be counted faithful. So the apparent reason the Spirit of God chose these seven churches was that their particular historical circumstances provided a prophetic overview of church history, from the first century until the end of the church age and the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel.

We must be aware that while the general character of any of the seven churches of the first

## A New Testament Overview

century has been seen in future ages, all seven churches existed in one age. This means it must be possible for any particular church of any particular age to bear the characteristics of any one of the seven churches. In other words, no church is compelled to assume the character of the age in which it exists, but has the choice to be faithful to that which the Lord has committed to its trust. Nevertheless throughout the church age, as characterized by five of the seven churches in Asia, churches have plunged deeper and deeper into apostasy.

In my view, we are presently living in an age that is characterized by *a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind* (See Matthew 13:47-52). This is simply another view of the Laodicean church:

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. (Revelation 3:14-18)

The Laodicean church is described by our Lord as *lukewarm*. This tepidness has nothing to do with zeal or lip service to God. It reflects their attitude towards the Word of God. Thus experience became more important than sound doctrine in the Laodicean church. The attitude of the Laodiceans was the same as the attitude of the nation of Israel at the first advent of our Lord. Remember our Lord said, *This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me*. And the apostle Paul described Israel to the Romans, when he wrote, *I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*. Further the prophet Hosea wrote:

## A New Testament Overview

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. (Hosea 4:6)

And the prophet Amos declared:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. (Amos 8:11-12)

The same attitude that brought about the apostasy of Israel has brought about the apostasy of the church. Paul said, *For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him* (Acts 13:27).

Earlier in this chapter we stated that the parable of the dragnet in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Matthew portrayed the present age of the Laodicean church. The dragnet is a portrayal of the techniques of mass evangelism. Mass evangelism operates on an unstable foundation despite its apparent successes. In order to gain the cooperation of all of the churches of an area, evangelists have minimized the importance of doctrine to maximize the attendance in their meetings. They, like Balaam with the nation of Israel, have taught the people to violate their separation in the name of unity. The result of the counsel of Balaam was the idolatry of the nation of Israel. This, too, is the result of the counsel of the mass evangelists.

As time passed many churches learned from the mass evangelists that minimizing doctrine maximized their attendance, and maximizing their attendance maximized their material wealth. This resulted in the birth of the nondenominational or interdenominational church. It also produced churches that have retained their denominational identity, but have adopted the same

## A New Testament Overview

tactics of the so-called nondenominationalist. Thus, in fulfillment of the prophetic aspect of the Laodicean church, many of our present-day churches are Laodicean. They say, we are *rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*, but our Lord said of them, *And knowest not that [you are] wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*.

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul used the Jews as an example to the church to maintain its separation and to *flee idolatry*. Yet, upon inspection, it is evident that many a church that bears the name of Jesus Christ has made exactly the same mistakes that Israel made; so that the present-day church (prophetically characterized by the Laodicean church) is as apostate as Israel was at the first advent of our Lord.

After completing the seventh letter to the seventh church, it is not surprising that the fourth chapter of the book of the Revelation begins with the sound of the trumpet, and a call to the apostle John, *Come up hither*. This is more than an invitation to the apostle to come into heaven. This call to John represents the call to all of the redeemed. This is a prophetic display of the first resurrection. It signals the end of the church age and sets the stage for the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel's vision:

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst

## A New Testament Overview

of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (Revelation 4:1-11)

In heaven John finds twenty-four elders, twelve of the twenty-four represent the twelve tribes of Israel (the Old Testament saints), and the other twelve represent the twelve apostles of the Lamb (the New Testament saints). The entire company of the twenty-four elders represents the resurrection of the redeemed of all ages. They have been clothed in white linen (which represents the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ). They have crowns upon their heads (which represent their reward for faithful service). They are in the presence of the Lord in heaven.

After having been rewarded for their faithful service (by the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit), the twenty-four elders will cast their crowns before the feet of the Lord saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* This brings us to our next chapter, *The Revelation of the Antichrist.*

## Chapter VII

### THE REVELATION OF THE ANTICHRIST

In our previous chapter we observed that the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ has provided us with a prophetic overview of the church age. This was done with the seven letters to seven churches in Asia in the first century. The book of the Revelation has also provided an overview of the first resurrection with John's call into heaven in the fourth chapter. These overviews continue throughout the book of the Revelation so that in chapter five the scene is in heaven, where John declares:

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. (Revelation 5:1-4)

The opening of the seven seals that guard the contents of this book will begin the events of the seventieth week of Daniel. This week, as we have seen, cannot begin until the antichrist makes a covenant with Israel for one week (Daniel 9:27); and the antichrist cannot be revealed

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

until that which hinders is taken out of the way (II Thessalonians 2:7). That which hinders was removed in the fourth chapter of the Revelation when we observed the first resurrection. Now, in the fifth chapter, we are confronted with this seven-sealed book.

It is important for us to be aware that many of the events in the book of the Revelation are presented like scenes in a play. A chapter in the Revelation may present events that are coincidental or almost coincidental with events in preceding chapters or events in succeeding chapters. Events are also presented sequentially. We must not forget that when dealing with prophecy, things written together are not always fulfilled together. We must also be aware that in the Revelation there are flashbacks in time, so that after considering several events, we may consider events that preceded the events we just considered. There are also portions of the Revelation that flash forward in time. The timing of the events is determined by a careful examination of the events in the Revelation with other events in the Revelation, and by a comparison of those texts with relevant Scripture throughout the Word of God. For example, it may appear that the events in the fifth chapter of the book of the Revelation occur sometime after the events of the fourth chapter, but this is not the case. When these events are finally fulfilled, the amount of time between the events will be so slight they will appear to occur at the same time.

This is discovered in the fifteenth chapter of II Samuel where it is revealed that Absalom sought to overthrow the kingdom of David, his father. He stole the hearts of the people by subtlety, claiming he would do them justice if they brought their complaints against the king to him. He *prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him* (II Samuel 15:1). This was a declaration of his intent to be king. He sent spies throughout all of the land and

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

declared, *As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron* (II Samuel 15:10).

Absalom is a type of the antichrist. This can be seen in many ways. He possessed great beauty like Lucifer (Ezekiel 28:17), so that the Scripture says, *But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him* (II Samuel 14:25). Absalom was like the serpent who deceived Eve (Genesis 3:1), he *stole the hearts of the men of Israel* with subtlety (II Samuel 15:6). Absalom was like Cain (and all who follow the way of Cain), because the driving force in his life was *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. He did not recognize, as all who are trapped in *a way which seemeth right* do not recognize, that all of the ways which come from that singular way end in death (eternal separation from God). They are all rooted in the lie of the devil: *Ye shall not surely die ... and ye shall be as [God], knowing good and evil* (Genesis 3:4-5). Consequently the life of Absalom clearly manifested his judicial participation in *the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* through the federal headship of Adam. The self-righteousness obtained from that tree dominated his every thought, so that he thought himself more righteous than David, his father. Absalom was like Korah, who usurped the authority of Moses and Aaron (compare Numbers 16 with Jude 1:11), in that he rebelled against the authority of David. He was also like Lucifer, when Lucifer attempted to overthrow the throne of God. Lucifer convinced one-third of the angels that he could be God, and Absalom thought he should be king. *Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause may come unto me, and I would do him justice* (II Samuel 15:4). Absalom's perspective was the perspective of the world.

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

It did not allow for the sovereignty of God or of David his father, who, in the typology of Scripture, represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, in rebellion against God and David, Absalom pronounced himself king in Hebron at the sound of the trumpet (II Samuel 15:10). Likewise, at the time of the first resurrection, the antichrist will counterfeit the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ by declaring himself to be the Christ *with signs and lying wonders* (II Thessalonians 2:9).

This sequence of events (which allows for the revelation of the antichrist at virtually the same moment that the first resurrection takes place) agrees with the sequence we learned in our studies of the seven feasts of the Jews. We learned that the first of the last three feasts was the feast of trumpets. We learned it corresponds to the first resurrection, when ... *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord* (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

As we consider the acts of Absalom, prior to the time he declared himself to be king, his acts correspond with the acts of present-day apostate churches. These churches are in the process of stealing the hearts of the people with subtlety, just as Absalom stole the hearts of the Jews. They give lip service to Christ as Absalom gave lip service to his father; yet they have denied the Person or the work of Christ, or both the Person and the work of Christ, by the humanly generated doctrines which they hold.

The apostle John warned, *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not*

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

*that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist* (II John 1:7). This non-confession means (by interpretation) a non-agreement with the Word of God about the Person or the work of Christ. These churches have abandoned the fundamental truths of the Word of God for the works of their own hands and a pseudo-unity among the various denominations under the canopy of Christianity.

The prophet Samuel revealed that at about the same time that Absalom was declaring himself king in Hebron, David, his wives, and his children fled from Jerusalem (II Samuel 15:14). This was a prophetic portrayal of the first resurrection (when the redeemed of all ages will be caught into the presence of our Lord in heaven), and Absalom's reign in Hebron was a portrayal of the antichrist becoming the eighth ruler over the fourth world empire, Rome.

It is interesting to note, in the series of events in II Samuel when David was compelled to flee Jerusalem, he left ten concubines *to keep the house*. These concubines correspond with the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image, and they also correspond with the ten horns in the seventeenth chapter of the book of the Revelation.

A concubine is not a wife, but functions as a wife. The churches (which fragmented from Rome during the Protestant Reformation) will apostatize before the coming of our Lord. They are seen in the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation reunited with the Great Whore. These are not the bride of Christ, but they think they are, and, until their apostasy, they once functioned as the Bride of Christ. It is these apostate churches, along with the Great Whore, which will enthrone the antichrist and declare him to be the Christ.

Apostasy (a departure from the truth to false worship) is categorized in Scripture as

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

fornication. This is the reason Rome (at this stage the Roman church) is called *THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS*. It is also the reason the ten horns associated with the Great Whore are seen in the ten concubines with whom Absalom committed fornication (according to the counsel of Ahithophel) in the seventeenth chapter of II Samuel. At the return of David these concubines were put away *unto the day of their death* (II Samuel 20:3).

In John's vision in the fifth chapter of the Revelation, there was no one in heaven or in the earth who was worthy to open the seven-sealed book in the hand of our Lord. Nevertheless:

... one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. (Revelation 5:5)

This brings us to the opening of the seals in the sixth chapter of the book of the Revelation:

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four [living creatures] saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. (Revelation 6:1-2)

If we compare this text with the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, described in the nineteenth chapter of the book of the Revelation, it is evident that our Lord's coming is as a Rider on a white horse. The fact that the rider in the sixth chapter and the Rider in the nineteenth chapter are both on white horses has caused some to assume they are the same, but they are not. The events that follow the appearances of the two riders identify the differences between them.

When the rider in the sixth chapter of the Revelation comes, he will bring peace to the earth and then, as revealed with the opening of the next three seals, he will *take peace from the earth*; he will control the world's economy, so that a day's wages will be required to subsist (Revelation 6:5); and he will kill all who fail to worship him (Revelation 6:8; 13:7-8; and 14:12-

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

13). These events do not correspond with the events in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation relating to the coming of our Lord. This can only mean that the riders in the two chapters are different riders.

This gives us the significance of the *white horses*. Since our Lord is the Rider on the white horse in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, the rider in the sixth chapter must be a counterfeit of our Lord. This is confirmed by the apostle Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians:

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the second coming of Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first [the apostasy of the churches], and that man of sin be revealed [the antichrist], the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (II Thessalonians 2:3-4)

Paul described how the antichrist will do this. *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved* (II Thessalonians 2:9).

This hoax will be unhindered because all of the redeemed will have been removed from the earth by the first resurrection. This means that for a brief period of time there will not be anyone on the earth who will be able to discern the truth of the Scriptures, because ... *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Corinthians 2:14).

Even so there will be those upon this earth who will claim authority from God in these matters. The primary authority will be the false prophet (who will probably be the Roman pope

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

at the time of these events), and the secondary authority will be the heads of the apostate churches (counterfeit Christians who have settled the differences that caused them to be fractured from the Roman church at the time of the protestant reformation movement). These two sources will assure the world that the antichrist is the Christ.

Later, after the hoax has been perpetrated and the world has embraced the antichrist as the Christ, God will bring the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses to mount Zion to testify to the truth and to preach the everlasting gospel to the world during the great tribulation period. These will be Jews, twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. They will be virgins in the sense that in their lives they were not corrupted with all of the false teachings and idolatry that had corrupted the nation of Israel (see II Corinthians 11:2). It is a very good possibility that these will be those Jews who were raised from the dead at the time of our Lord's resurrection from the dead (compare Matthew 27:52-53 with Revelation 14:4-5).

The opening of the first seal of the seven-sealed book reveals the antichrist as Paul has revealed him: he is a counterfeit of the Lord Jesus Christ who would deceive (*if it were possible*) the very elect. His conquest is bloodless. He has a bow in his hand, but no arrow. He is after the minds of men (like Absalom, the apostate churches, and all of the false religious systems of this world). Therefore David wrote:

In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:1-3)

The spirit of antichrist has always had one mission. It is to destroy the foundations of the truth of the Word of God so that subsequent generations of those who have been the custodians

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

of the truth *are destroyed for lack of knowledge*. This was done to Israel by the counsel of Balaam. Balaam could not curse Israel, though it was his desire to do so for reward, but he had an ingenious idea. It is not stated in Scripture, though it is implied, that he taught Israel to violate their separation from the Moabites and other inhabitants of the land. He taught them there was no difference between them and the people of the land. He did this by emphasizing that the Moabites were their brothers through Lot, Abraham's nephew.

It did not take long for Balaam's counsel to produce the desired results. The young people in Israel began to marry the people of the land and to embrace their gods. The result was that Israel became steeped in idolatry and fell under the curse of God. Throughout the church age, similar counsel to that of Balaam has produced generations of professing Christians who are (and have been) *destroyed for lack of knowledge*.

The opening of the second seal reveals the antichrist in another aspect of his coming. When he first comes he will bring peace to the earth. Then, in an undetermined amount of time, he will take peace from the earth. Remember the warning of the apostle Paul, *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape* (I Thessalonians 5:3).

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:5-8)

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

The antichrist will be the man for all seasons that the world has been looking for. The opening of the first four seals reveals that he will rule the world religiously, politically, and economically. In Scripture he has been represented in two previous empires called Babel (ruled by Nimrod), and Babylon (ruled by Nebuchadnezzar). He will reign over the fourth world empire (Rome) as its eighth ruler. This empire is called Babylon in the Revelation of John.

The revelation of the antichrist continues in the thirteenth chapter of the book of the Revelation. There it is revealed that his empire will be a composite of the four world empires of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and of Daniel's vision in the seventh chapter of Daniel.

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. (Revelation 13:1-2)

This fourfold aspect of the antichrist's reign was seen in the third chapter of the book of Daniel when Nebuchadnezzar was lifted up in pride and saw his empire (the empire of Babylon) as the only empire in the future of mankind. Nebuchadnezzar ignored Daniel's interpretation of his dream and made an image all of gold instead of the four metals of the dream. It was sixty cubits tall and six cubits wide and at the sound of six instruments of music he demanded that all in his kingdom worship the image which he had made (compare Revelation 13:18).

He did this despite the fact that Daniel had clearly shown him that there were to be four world empires according to the details of his dream. God judged Nebuchadnezzar for his self-willed pride and caused him to go insane for a period of time. He did this so that Nebuchadnezzar, and all future generations, would recognize that *the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men,*

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

*and giveth it to whomsoever he will* (Daniel 4:17).

Nebuchadnezzar's image was a portrayal of the empire of the antichrist, *BABYLON THE GREAT, the mother of harlots*. It represents the reign of the antichrist, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego represent those in the nation of Israel who will refuse to worship the image of the beast and to receive his mark in their foreheads or in their hands. (See Daniel 3:1-25)

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? (Revelation 13:3-4)

What is this head that was wounded to death? Some have suggested that it is imperial Rome, which died in 1453 A.D. (Scofield Reference Bible, note 1, page 1342) This is a possible explanation of the wounded head, for the imperial aspect of Rome will be revived when the antichrist becomes the eighth ruler over the fourth world empire. Nevertheless it is my personal belief that this is a reference to Judas Iscariot, who I believe will be the antichrist.

The antichrist is described by the apostle John as *the beast that was, and is not, and yet is* (Revelation 17:8). Judas Iscariot lived during the ministry of our Lord (he was), he is presently dead (he is not), and if he is the antichrist, he will be upon the earth once again. A comparison between the description of the dragon (the devil) in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation and the description of the antichrist in the thirteenth chapter is the same. Paul described the antichrist as the son of perdition. In the sixth chapter of the gospel of John, our Lord called Judas the devil, and in his intercessory prayer (in the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of John) our Lord called Judas the son of perdition.

If Judas is the antichrist, there is not another person (known to us) who has lived, who

## The Revelation of the Antichrist

presently does not exist, and who could come in the future and counterfeit the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ more convincingly than Judas Iscariot. Consider this. After three years of ministry with our Lord, when our Lord indicated that one of the twelve would betray Him, they all asked, *Is it I?* Even when our Lord dipped the sop and gave it to Judas, none of the disciples understood what He had done. They thought Judas (because he held the purse) was being sent to buy something they needed for the feast of the Passover. This means that what the eleven did, they did by the power of God, but what Judas did, he did by the power of the devil. This, indeed, fits the Biblical description of the antichrist.

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. (Revelation 13:5-10)

In our study of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will of necessity continue in our consideration of the antichrist, but this concludes this chapter on *The Revelation of the Antichrist*.

## Chapter VIII

### THE ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND

No study of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ would be complete without a consideration of who the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses are, in the seventh and fourteenth chapters of the book of the Revelation.

We know from these two portions of Scripture that they are Jews who do not appear upon the earth until after the revelation of the antichrist. We know that once the deception that the antichrist is Christ has been perpetrated, the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be brought to mount Zion to be God's witnesses during the great tribulation period. (Revelation 14:1) We know from these same chapters that before the judgments of the great tribulation can begin, the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses will be sealed with the name of God in their foreheads. We know that once they have the protecting name of God upon them, they will then preach the truth of the everlasting gospel (Revelation 14:6-7) upon this earth, and many souls will be saved. We also know that almost as soon as these souls are saved, they will be put to death by

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

the regime of the antichrist (Revelation 7:9-17).

We have previously suggested that there is evidence that the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses will be the Old Testament saints who were raised from the dead when our Lord was raised from the dead. It is stated in the Scriptures that the witnesses are *the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb* (Revelation 14:4). It is also stated that Christ is *the firstfruits* (I Corinthians 15:23). *Firstfruits* is plural in both of these texts. This means that the Feast of Firstfruits (which we considered in the chapter on *The Seven Feasts of the Jews*) could not have been fulfilled by our Lord alone. It required the resurrection of more than one person to satisfy the plurality of the word, *firstfruits*. In consideration of this, while our Lord was being crucified, He *cried again with a loud voice and yielded up the ghost*:

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (Matthew 27:51-53)

This Scripture tells of the resurrection of *many* after our Lord was resurrected on the Feast of Firstfruits. It tells of them showing themselves alive in the city of Jerusalem. After that, nothing more is said of them until we come to the book of the Revelation, chapters seven and fourteen. In these texts it does not say that they were the saints who were raised when our Lord was raised from the dead, but it does say:

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. (Revelation 14:4)

The Scriptures do not supply us with spurious information. Everything was written for a purpose. The use of the aorist verbs, *were redeemed*, and *were not defiled*, in this text suggests

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

two completed acts in the past. This means that the one hundred and forty-four thousand were redeemed in the past. It also means that they were not defiled in the past. This suggests that they were not saints of the New Testament era, but of the Old.

This takes us back to the text we cited in the book of Matthew for their identification. The fact that they are called *virgins* suggests that they had not been defiled with the false doctrines and idolatry of the nation of Israel (compare II Corinthians 11:2-3). They had faithfully followed the Lamb of God. In other words, they had stood for the truth of the Word of God in the ages in which they had dwelt upon the earth, and they will be ready to serve the Lord faithfully during the most difficult of times that are yet to come upon the earth. They could not possibly be neophytes (newly redeemed, after the rapture). The language used to describe them suggests they are seasoned veterans, specifically trained for *the time of Jacob's trouble*.

This proposition fits into the fact that the first resurrection is described in Scripture as a harvest. A harvest in Israel had three parts. There were *the firstfruits*. Then came the main harvest, when the majority of the crop was reaped. After that, there were fruits that were not harvested in the main harvest. The nation of Israel had specific instructions concerning these gleanings:

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:9-10)

With respect to a harvest, then, our Lord and those who were raised with Him were the firstfruits of the first resurrection; those who shall be resurrected, when *the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed* (I Corinthians 15:52), will

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

be the main harvest; and the souls saved during the great tribulation period (*for the ... stranger*) will be a part of the gleanings; while the Jews, who will be saved at the appearing of our Lord (*for the poor*), when they look upon Him Whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10), will be the final gleanings of the first resurrection.

If the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be the saints that were raised at the time of our Lord's resurrection (and, to my mind, there is no doubt that they will be); and if they did not die a second time (because *it is appointed unto man once to die*, Hebrews 9:27) to be buried again, but were taken up with our Lord, when He ascended into heaven; then it can be assumed that they are presently being prepared to return to this earth to bear witness to the truth during the most difficult times this world will ever see. Consider our Lord's instructions to His disciples before He sent them out to preach:

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. (Matthew 10:16-23)

A review of these particular statements of our Lord to His disciples reveals that a part of the instructions could have been fulfilled by the ministries of the twelve. However there are certain instructions and declarations of the conditions of the world within these verses that will

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

require the reign of the antichrist and the conditions of the great tribulation period in order to be fulfilled. This can be seen in the entire text, but it becomes more clear in the last paragraph, and particularly in the last statement about the coming of the Son of man. This was not, and could not have been, fulfilled during the ministries of the twelve. It will require the second coming of our Lord to this earth for this statement to be fulfilled. Before that day, however, the following prophecy (which agrees with the instructions of our Lord to the twelve) will probably be fulfilled by the one hundred and forty-four thousand:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. (Zechariah 8:20-23)

The proposition that the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be those saints that were raised with the Lord, and that they were the firstfruits of the first resurrection, satisfies me. It does so because it agrees with the immutable nature of God. This is an important attribute of God that is revealed throughout the Word of God. Therefore this proposition is consistent with the great commission: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15). It is consistent with Paul's question to the Romans, *And how shall they preach, except they be sent?* (Romans 10:15). It is consistent with the statement, *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17). It is consistent with the fact that the Scriptures say, *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe* (I Corinthians 1:21). It is consistent with the

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

qualifications of those who are to preach the Word of God: *Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil* (I Timothy 3:6). It is consistent with the fact that the natural (unsaved man) cannot understand the things of God (I Corinthians 2:14). And it is consistent with the fact that God has always used redeemed men to bear the message of redemption to the lost of this world.

In view of this, the idea that men can bring themselves to faith by reading tracts and other literature (that they might happen upon during the tribulation period) does not agree with the way God has brought redemption to man throughout the Word of God; and it certainly does not agree with Paul's statement to Timothy, *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also* (II Timothy 2:1-2).

Thus with the revelation of the antichrist upon the earth, in the sixth chapter of the Revelation; after the completion of the church age, in the second and third chapters of the Revelation; after the rapture of the church, in the fourth chapter of the Revelation; after the loosing of the seven-sealed book by our Lord, in the fifth chapter of the Revelation; John revealed, in the seventh chapter of the Revelation, those who will be the witnesses of the truth upon this earth throughout the seventieth week of Daniel, *the time of Jacob's trouble*:

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. (Revelation 7:1-8)

A careful examination of these verses reveals one very obvious fact, and two facts that might be easily overlooked. The obvious fact is that the one hundred and forty-four thousand will all be Jews, twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. They will not be from any sect or denomination of the Christian era, no matter what is claimed by various groups, nor will they be newly converted Jews.

The Christian era was foreseen in the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was between the first three feasts and the last three feasts of the Jews. The era prophesied by Pentecost will end, as we have seen, with the main harvest of the first resurrection, commonly called the rapture. The revelation of the antichrist will begin the seventieth week of Daniel's vision. The seventy weeks were determined upon Daniel's people, and upon Daniel's city, Jerusalem. Therefore those who will do the preaching during the last seven years before the return of our Lord will be Jews, who *were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.*

The first fact that might be easily overlooked in the seventh chapter of the Revelation is

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

that Dan is missing from the list, and Levi is included in the list. According to the following Scripture, Levi would not ordinarily be included in the numbering of the nation.

These are those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers. So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel; Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying, only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: but thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. (Numbers 1:44-50)

Joseph's inheritance was given to his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. This made thirteen names for the tribes of Israel, instead of twelve. God separated Levi, in the stead of the firstborn, to provide for the priesthood and for the service of the tabernacle. Consequently when the land was divided to the tribes of Israel, no portion was divided to Levi. Rather each tribe was compelled to provide the Levites with cities, out of their inheritances throughout the land, in which to dwell (Numbers 35). Despite this, in the listing of the tribes in Revelation, chapter seven, Levi is reinserted into the number of tribes in Israel to account for the omission of the tribe of Dan.

The second not-so-obvious fact is that the name of Ephraim has been omitted from the listing of the tribes, but not the posterity of Ephraim. This is true because Ephraim's posterity would be included in the name of Joseph, who is listed.

It is important for us to determine, if possible, the reason the tribe of Dan has been omitted, as well as the name of Ephraim. In Judges, chapters seventeen and eighteen, we find the

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

most plausible reason for these omissions:

And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. And there was a young man out of Bethlehem-judah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehem-judah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah, *Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.* (Judges 17:1-13, emphasis mine)

The key to understanding the severity of the sin of Micah is found in the Levite from Bethlehem-judah. Micah's system of worship was contrary to the truth of the Word of God. It was an idolatrous system. Nevertheless Micah sought to give credence to his corrupted system of worship when he persuaded a Levite (associated with the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ in the typology of Scripture) to become a part of his counterfeit system of worship.

About the same time, there were five men from the tribe of Dan that were spying out the land for a place to establish their inheritance in the land of Israel. They, according to the eighteenth chapter of the book of the Judges, happened upon mount Ephraim and the household

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

of Micah, where they discovered Micah's *ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image* (Judges 18:14). They also recognized the Levite, who told them, *Thus and thus dealt Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest* (Judges 18:4). Then by force of arms (*six hundred men appointed with weapons of war*) they persuaded the Levite that it was better to be *a father and a priest* to an entire tribe in Israel than it was to one man. So they took the idols and the priest into the land of Dan (formerly Laish), where they established their inheritance in the north of Israel. *And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh* (Judges 18:31).

The sin of the man of Ephraim and of the tribe of Dan was not idolatry in the ordinary sense of the word. It was directed toward Jehovah, and it was also linked to the truth of the Word of God by a connection to the truth through an apostate Levite. This is illustrated in the parable of the tares among the wheat. Tares appear to be wheat until the time of harvest, when it is evident that they are tares (bastard wheat). The system that shall arise with the antichrist is the same. He will claim to be Christ *with signs and lying wonders, when he sits in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*. He will demand that the world worship him in order to be able to preserve their lives. Yet, while seeking to save their lives, they will lose their lives through the eternal damnation that comes by receiving the mark of the beast. This is the reason, I believe, Ephraim and Dan will not be allowed to have a part in the proclamation of the truth during *the time of Jacob's trouble*, during the reign of a counterfeit Christ.

Our Lord warned the Jews, in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, that they were in danger of committing a sin that could never be forgiven. This sin is commonly called *the unpardonable sin*.

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

What was it that they were doing that evoked such a warning? They were attributing the work of the Spirit of God to the devil, and the work of the devil to the Spirit of God. This is exactly what the antichrist will do when he sits in the temple of God, claiming to be God.

Once the antichrist makes this claim, he will demand (as Nebuchadnezzar did with the image he erected) that the world worship him as God. All who worship him will receive a mark in their foreheads or their hands, which will enable them to buy and sell. Without this mark, there will be no rational way to subsist (faith in the promise of God is not considered rational by the world). Even so the reception of this mark damns forever those who receive it. In other words, it is an unpardonable sin, the commission of which makes them children of the devil.

It is commonly believed that all unsaved people are children of the devil, but this is false. It is proven to be false by our Lord's parable of the tares and the wheat. In that parable, by our Lord's interpretation, the tares are children of the wicked one (i.e., the devil) and the wheat are the children of the kingdom (or children of God). The assumption is made because of this that there are two classes of people in the world: children of God and children of the devil. Those who make this assumption have failed to consider where the two types of seed are sown. They are sown in the field. The field, also by our Lord's interpretation, is the world. This makes a third class of people. This third class is simply the unsaved of this world who are neither tares nor wheat. Paul referred to this class of people as *children of wrath* or *children of [the] disobedience* in Ephesians 2:2-3.

During the great tribulation period, through the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will become children of God. Likewise

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

those who believe the lie of the devil, that the antichrist is in fact the Christ, and receive his mark by an act of worship, will become children of the wicked one.

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six. (Revelation 13:4-18)

One must not think that the commission of the unpardonable sin is reserved for the reign of the antichrist, because the spirit of antichrist is already in this world (II John 1:7). Deceivers (in the realm of the truth) are those who manifest the spirit of antichrist, and our Lord told us that they can be identified by their fruits. The fruit of the evil tree is always manifested by *a way*

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

*which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.* Whereas the fruit of the tree of life is salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. This tree recognizes the sinfulness of man and the Holiness of God. It recognizes that the sinfulness of man can never meet the demands of the Holiness of God, but that God was fully satisfied (in all of His attributes) by the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of the sinner. This is made evident in the first epistle of John:

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. (I John 3:7-10)

This is a marvelous proof text, but not in the English language. The English translators used the secondary meaning of the Greek word *poieo* in this text. The primary meaning of the word *poieo* is *to make*, while its secondary meaning is *to do*. Contextually, they should have used the primary meaning of the word, but they did not.

In the days of Herodotus, before the New Testament was written, Herodotus used *poieo* to describe the adoption of a child, or the marrying of a wife. Thus he used it in the sense *to make something one's own*. (Greek English Lexicon, Liddell and Scott, Seventh Edition, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1961, page 651)

To reconcile the statements in the above text with the truth of salvation by grace, apart from the deeds of the law, or with the truth that it is not by works of righteousness that we have done that we are saved, we must adopt the primary meaning of the word *poieo* in the above text.

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

It then takes on a vastly different meaning, a meaning that clearly defines who is in Christ and who is not. By interpretation, then, using the primary meaning of *poieo*, the following verses are my paraphrased version of I John 3:7-10:

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that maketh Christ's righteousness his own righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that maketh the sin of Adam a source of righteousness, by a corrupted understanding of good and evil, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning (i.e., he tried to make himself God, and then he introduced the same lie into the human family). For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil (that man can be justified before God by a corrupted sense of right and wrong). Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin (in the sense of making the devil's lie a source of life); for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin (in the capacity of making the devil's lie a source of life), because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever maketh not (Christ's) righteousness his righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (that is: he withholds the love of God, how that Christ died for his sins according to the Scriptures, from his brother).

The identification of a true believer from a counterfeit believer, then, is found in what they deem to be the source of their righteousness. The true believer is at rest in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, and recognizes (for righteousness sake) that he has ceased from his own labors, as God did from His (Hebrews 4:10); whereas the counterfeit believer has his trust in the lie of the devil, which is manifested in *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). This makes the christ whom he worships a false christ.

The Christ of the Bible supplies eternal life on the basis of His Person and work; whereas those who are involved in the lie of the devil make the Christ of the Bible a liar. They claim to worship Him (like Micah of mount Ephraim), but they deny Him by their insistence upon the works of their own hands to prove that they are believers (Titus 1:16). This makes their system

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

of worship as false as the system of worship of Micah of mount Ephraim, which became the system of worship of the tribe of Dan after they stole it from him. Thus the worship of a false christ by the works of one's own hands is akin to receiving the mark of the beast during the great tribulation period.

Despite the clear statements about the unpardonable sin in the first epistle of John, and in the book of The Revelation, regarding the mark of the beast, there is still a good deal of confusion about this sin. Perhaps some of this confusion comes because our Lord defined the unpardonable sin as the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit:

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers [i. e., offsprings of the serpent], how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (Matthew 12:31-37)

Our Lord had healed the demoniac by the power of the Spirit of God. Yet the Jews said He had done it by the power of Beelzebub. Thus they attributed the work of the Spirit of God to the devil, and the work of the devil to the Spirit of God. Then our Lord said, *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.* He ended this portion of His discourse with them, by saying, *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* Thus when a man's words agree

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

with the Spirit of God, he is justified, and when they do not, he is condemned.

After this, as recorded in the book of Matthew, our Lord spoke seven parables to his disciples. The first was about the Sower, and the second was about the tares and the wheat. These parables give us an understanding of our Lord's advice to His accusers. He told them, *the tree is known by his fruit.*

The Scriptures speak of many trees, but there are two trees that we can trace through the Scriptures from the book of Genesis to the book of the Revelation. They are the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is these two trees that enable us to discern the difference between the true prophet and the false prophet, and this was the essence of John's argument, in the third chapter of his first epistle, to identify the children of God from the children of the devil.

Throughout the Scriptures we have learned that God creates by His Word and by His Spirit (Psalm 33:6; 104:30). Believers are new creations in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:17). They are created anew by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God (Ephesians 2:5). Thus to claim that a man can become a believer in Jesus Christ by a counterfeit christ and a counterfeit gospel, in lieu of the true Christ and the true gospel, is a claim that falls into the category of doing the work of God by the power of the devil. This is the unpardonable sin. Further the Scriptures tell us:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved [borne along] by the Holy Ghost. (II Peter 1:19-21)

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

Since *All scripture is given by inspiration of [the Holy Spirit of] God*, the man who rejects the clear testimony of the Scriptures, regarding the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the lie of the devil (that a man may become like God by his knowledge of good and evil), has committed the unpardonable sin. This sin cannot be committed accidentally. It takes a definite act of worship, in the realm of the truth, that has corrupted the truth (revealed by God's Holy Spirit) with the lie of the devil. In other words, it is rejecting the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ for the lie of the devil, that man can be like God through his knowledge of good and evil.

There is one more facet of the ministry of the one hundred and forty-four thousand that we should consider. It is related to a portion of the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Ezekiel, which we considered in our first chapter, *A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures*.

We saw Israel resurrected out of the nations of the world when she became a nation again, May 14, 1948. We saw that the prophecy in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel was only partially fulfilled, because God has not yet put His Spirit within the Jews. God's Holy Spirit only indwells believers, and the Jews (as a nation) have not yet believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently this aspect of the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel has not yet been fulfilled. It awaits the day when those Jews, who will have been preserved in the wilderness through the last forty-two months of the great tribulation period, *look on Him Whom they have pierced* and are saved.

Even so in consideration of the truth we have learned in this chapter about the ministry of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, there will be one hundred and forty-four thousand Jews (indwelt by the Holy Spirit) in the city of Jerusalem before the nation of Israel is saved. In

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

addition to those, there will be many Jews and Gentiles who will be saved through the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. These believers, also indwelt by the Holy Spirit, will be put to death almost immediately after they will have been saved.

We have indicated that the one hundred and forty-four thousand will not come to mount Zion until after the revelation of the antichrist. We have indicated that the antichrist cannot be revealed until after the first resurrection at the trump of God. We have also indicated that there will not be a prolonged period of time between the first resurrection, the revelation of the antichrist, and the coming of the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses, to preach the everlasting gospel. This has been confirmed by the Scriptures that we have considered thus far. However this truth is also veiled in an Old Testament prophecy regarding the regathering of the Jews, out of the nations of the world, back into their own land:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem. (Isaiah 27:12-13)

This portion of Scripture (along with others in Isaiah 18:3 and 7; 58:1-14; and Joel 2:15-32) seems to imply that Israel will be regathered into the land at the sound of the trumpet. Yet we know that the Jews have already been regathered into the land of Israel and that Jews from around the world are immigrating to Israel daily. She is presently a nation again, back in her own land, but the trumpet, that will announce the first resurrection, has not yet sounded.

When it sounds, the trump of God will produce the first resurrection; which will produce the revelation of the antichrist; which will produce the regathering of the one hundred and forty-

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

four thousand; which will produce those who will preach the everlasting gospel during the great tribulation period; which will produce the redeemed during the tribulation period; which will produce the salvation of the nation of Israel, when *they look on Him Whom they have pierced*.

This is not a contradiction of the quotation from the prophet Isaiah, but a verification of a lesson we learned early in our studies together: prophetically speaking, things that are written together are not necessarily fulfilled together. Thus with the sound of a *great trumpet* in the above text, we will have a regathered and redeemed Israel in her own land in complete fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures, as indicated by the above listing of events.

Theologians have long believed that the regathering of the nation of Israel would take place with the sounding of the trumpet at the Feasts of Trumpets. (See the Scofield Reference Bible, note 2, on page 157, Oxford University Press, 1909, 1917, 1937 and 1945.) Some theologians have taken this idea to the point of expecting a separate resurrection for the nation of Israel (at the end of the tribulation period). (*Systematic Theology, Vol. II*, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dallas Seminary Press, 1947, page 149) It is easily seen, by the copyright dates for the Scofield Reference Bible and for Chafer's Systematic Theology, that these notes, and the position of Dr. Chafer, were written before the reconstitution of the nation of Israel on May 14, 1948.

We are not attempting to bring disdain upon the notes contained in the Scofield Bible, nor upon the eight consulting editors, nor on Dr. Chafer, but we are using these notes and statements to indicate the difficulty in interpreting prophecy before it has been fulfilled. It was perfectly logical for the editors of the Scofield Reference Bible to connect the Feast of Trumpets with the sound of the trumpet in each of the references we have listed. However with the reconstitution

## The One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand

of Israel as a nation, without the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets, their position must be reexamined: carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, to see if it is still tenable.

Such an examination has produced the prophetical sequence, outlined in this book, of the first three feasts of the Jews representing the first advent of our Lord and the last three feasts of the Jews representing the second advent of our Lord. It has also revealed that the feast of Pentecost, which falls between the first three feasts and the last three feasts, represents the present church age. This examination has revealed that the church age will end with the sound of the trumpet and the first resurrection. This will start the events of the seventieth week of Daniel and the fulfillment of the last two feasts of the Jews (the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles). The fulfillment of these feasts will produce the return of our Lord and the establishment of His Kingdom upon this earth. When this has been done, all that was prophesied in Isaiah 27:12-13, as well as the other references we listed, will have been fulfilled completely and perfectly.

## Chapter IX

### THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL

In our chapter on *The Revelation of the Antichrist*, we have observed that the seven-sealed book could not be opened by anyone in heaven, nor on the earth, save *the Lamb that was slain*. We have observed that the opening of the first four seals of that book has revealed four different aspects of the revelation of the antichrist. We have observed that the opening of the fifth seal has revealed a cry from those who have been martyred throughout the ages, for the avenging of their blood. We have observed that the opening of the sixth seal has given us a preview of the judgments that are contained in the seven-sealed book, but that these judgments will not be unleashed upon this earth until the one hundred and forty-four thousand servants of God have been sealed with the name of God in their foreheads. This brings us to the loosing of the seventh and final seal which has secured the contents of the seven-sealed book:

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. (Revelation 8:1-6)

We have referred numerous times throughout this book to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy as *the time of Jacob's trouble*. This description is from the prophet Jeremiah, who prophesied about the period of time the Jews would be in captivity in Babylon (Jeremiah 25:11). That particular judgment befell the Jews for their idolatry and their failure to keep the Sabbath (II Chronicles 36:21). Even so Jeremiah's prophecy extends beyond the Jew's exile into Babylon during the first of the four world empires to the judgment of the fourth world empire, which is called *BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH* (compare Revelation 17:5 with 17:18). Jeremiah has revealed (by comparing Scripture with Scripture) it is the judgment of Israel, as well as the judgment of the fourth world empire (which includes all of the nations of this world), that is anticipated with the opening of the seventh seal:

For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. Then took I the cup at the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me: to wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as it is this day; Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; and all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod, Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, and all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles [coasts, i. e., borders of nations] which are beyond the sea, Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners, and all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, and all the kings

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes, and all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach [Babylon] shall drink after them.

Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink. For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture. And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the LORD. He hath forsaken his covert [his den], as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger. (Jeremiah 25:15-38)

This is the beginning of the final judgment of *the mystery of the iniquity*. This mystery had its beginning in heaven when Lucifer was lifted up in pride because of his great beauty (Ezekiel 28:11-19). He sought to overthrow the throne of God in order to make himself God (Isaiah 14:12-17). This apparently led to the judgment of the earth as it was originally created, in verse one of Genesis chapter one, and produced the conditions of verse two:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:1-2)

The Scriptures are very clear, God does not create anything with the language that we find in verse two, *without form and void* (Isaiah 45:18). It is spiritually logical to assume, then, that the earth was judged because of the fall of Lucifer (Isaiah 14:17). This makes sense because the apostle Paul used the re-creation of the earth as an example of the salvation of one who becomes a believer, a new creation in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:17):

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (II Corinthians 4:6)

It also makes sense because the devil is called *the god of this world* (II Corinthians 4:4). It makes even more sense when we realize that it was the devil (indwelling the serpent) who enticed Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, with the promise, *Ye shall not surely die. For God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as the gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil* (Genesis 3:3-4). This reveals a similarity between the deception of Eve and the fall of Lucifer.

Thus, with the deception of Eve and the fall of Adam (I Timothy 2:14), *the mystery of the iniquity* had its beginning within the human family. The apostle John tells us (in the Greek text of his first epistle) *The sin is the iniquity* (I John 3:4). The word translated *iniquity* is a word which means *lawlessness*. It is singular and it is preceded by the definite article in the Greek text. Hence, it is the lawlessness. Consequently it was the singular lawlessness of Adam which produced the knowledge of good and evil, *a way which seemeth right unto a man* (i. e., *the mystery of the iniquity*) within the entire human family: because Adam is its federal head (Romans 5:12-

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

21). Thus the judgments of the great tribulation period, along with the judgment of Satan at the end of the millennium, will bring *the mystery of the iniquity* to its end.

For the mystery of [the] iniquity doth already work: only he who now [hinders] will [hinder], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe [the] lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in [the] unrighteousness. (II Thessalonians 2:7-12)

The mystery of the iniquity has produced the rejection of Jesus as the Christ by the nation of Israel; it has produced everything that is spiritually false inside and outside of the canopy of Judaism and Christianity; it has produced many false christs, and it will produce the antichrist; it has produced the *other gospel* of the apostate churches; it will produce all who will receive the mark of the beast during the reign of the antichrist; it will produce the final insurrection against God, when the devil deceives the nations at the end of the millennium. Even so it will find its final judgment at the great white throne, when all who have been deceived by it (and failed to receive its Remedy) shall be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10-15).

Our text (Revelation 8:1-6) seems to suggest some prayers of the saints (offered in times past) may seem to have gone unanswered, because they were offered by believers like some of those recorded in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews:

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Hebrews 11:33-38)

After the half-hour of silence, these prayers, with fire from the altar, shall be cast upon the earth. This will initiate the judgments of *the time of Jacob's trouble*. This will be followed by seven judgments from the seven-sealed book. Each judgment will be announced by the sound of a trumpet, blown by one of the seven angels in our text. Each judgment will be directed against the affect the mystery of the iniquity has had upon the inhabitants of the earth. Thus the prayers of these and others were not offered in vain. They have been held in remembrance before the throne of God until the opening of the seventh seal, which will allow the judgments contained in the seven-sealed book to be poured forth. Even so with all that is revealed in the Revelation, it does not reveal the details of all of the judgments that shall come upon the earth during the great tribulation.

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (Revelation 10:4)

As we have seen, *the mystery of the iniquity* has been directed against the sovereign purpose of God from the beginning. It embodies everything that is anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Holy Spirit, anti-truth, anti-gospel, etc. Consequently it has rejected the love of God that was manifested in the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ:

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (I John 4:9-11)

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

The love, mercy and grace of God were satisfied in the first advent of our Lord by His vicarious life and by His vicarious death in behalf of sinners. In His life, He became a man through the virgin birth (*in the fullness of the time*), so that He could be man without a sin nature; so that He could be the one Mediator between God and man; so that He could fulfill every jot and tittle of the law as well as all righteousness; so that He could be a Man with no cause of death in Him, totally without personal sin or a sin nature; so that He could willingly offer His life as a ransom for sin (as the Lamb of God, without spot and without blemish, in the role of the Kinsman Redeemer); so that He could satisfy the righteous judgment of God for the sins of the whole world; so that by His resurrection from the dead He could provide the hope: ... *because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:19); so that He could satisfy God's Holiness, His Righteousness, and His Justice.

Before our Lord's ascension into heaven He commissioned the New Testament church, *Go into all of the world and preach the gospel to every creature*. The gospel message is a message of grace because man is totally without merit. Therefore our Lord said:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that [the] light is come into the world, and men loved [the] darkness rather than [the] light, because their deeds were evil.

For every one that doeth evil [i.e., is fully occupied with the evil] hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that [maketh the truth his own] cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:17-21)

Mankind does not have to do anything of an overt nature to be condemned, for it is condemned by virtue of its relationship with Adam. Mankind received its sin nature from Adam,

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

and therefore it is the nature of men to sin. It is their nature to be blind to the truth of the Word of God, and it is their nature to think they can have a right relationship with God on the basis of their lifestyles.

This mind-set can be changed by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God. This changing of man's mind-set is translated as *repentance* throughout the Old and New Testaments. Unfortunately repentance carries the idea of being sorry for something, while both the Hebrew and Greek words that have been translated, *repentance*, mean a change of mind. It is this influence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that produced the almost immediate apostasy of the New Testament churches. Man thinks according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. So it does not take long for this natural way of thinking to corrupt the doctrine of salvation by grace, apart from the deeds of the law, by adding the necessity of law works and ritual into the doctrine of salvation. Paul fought this battle in virtually every book of the New Testament which he wrote, but the churches apostatized nevertheless. The last and greatest element of apostasy that shall come upon this earth will be the revelation of the antichrist. Therefore our Lord said:

For [with the revelation of the antichrist] then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. (Matthew 24:21-25)

Clearly, then, *the time of Jacob's trouble* is a time of judgment. It is a time that is vastly different than this present age, even though, through the preaching of the one hundred and forty-

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

four thousand, vast numbers of Jews and Gentiles will be saved by the grace of God during these seven years (Revelation 7:13-17).

This present age of the New Testament church has been characterized by the great commission of our Lord, to preach the gospel in all of the world. In contrast with this, it seems that the preaching of the gospel during the tribulation period will be limited to the land of Israel, even though John wrote:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

This text would seem to suggest that the gospel will continue to be preached in all of the world during the tribulation period, but it does not directly state that this is the case. Therefore this portion of Scripture must be reconciled with our Lord's instructions to the twelve (which extends to the twelve times twelve thousand). He said, *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come* (Matthew 10:23). We must also consider the prophecy of Zechariah, *In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you* (Zechariah 8:23). In the light of these texts it appears that individuals out of the nations of the world will have to come to where the truth is during the seventieth week of Daniel in order to be saved. Considering these three portions of Scripture, and considering that this will be the seventieth week of Daniel, and the Jews will be the custodians of the truth, it seems that conditions during the great tribulation period will be as they were when the

## The Opening of the Seventh Seal

queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem during the reign of Solomon (Matthew 12:42).

The preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be during a time of judgment; whereas, the preaching in this present age is without the threat of immediate judgment. Consequently the emphasis of our message should not be upon judgment, but upon the unparalleled mercy and grace of God, through the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of sinners. Even so judgment is coming, and some of what is coming will be viewed in our next chapter, *The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book*.

## Chapter X

### THE CONTENTS OF THE SEVEN-SEALED BOOK

The contents of the seven-sealed book begins to be revealed when the first of the seven angels sounds his trumpet. Each subsequent sounding by the other angels continues the revelation of the contents of the book. When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, *seven thunder* judgments are revealed to John, but he is told not to write them down (Revelation 10:3-4). John then writes of the ministry of God's two witnesses and the judgments they will bring upon this earth during the last forty-two months of the great tribulation period (Revelation 11:1-12).

These witnesses will probably be Enoch and Elijah, because in the days of their ministries upon the earth they were translated into heaven without dying. They, like all of us, must keep their appointments with death when they have completed their ministries, because the Scriptures say, *it is appointed unto man once to die* (Hebrews 9:27). Even those who are alive at the time of the first resurrection will die, but their bodies will not sleep in the grave awaiting the resurrection but will instantly be made incorruptible (see I Corinthians 15:50-57).

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

Given the context in which we find the ministry of the two witnesses, and given the fact that the seventh trumpet judgment does not take place until after the revelation of the ministries of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:15-19), it would seem that the judgments which the two witnesses bring forth upon the earth are also a part of the judgments of the seven-sealed book.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail. (Revelation 11:7-19)

This brings us to the final judgments that are described in the Revelation. They are the seven last plagues. These are poured upon the earth by the seven angels who empty their vials in

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

seven distinct judgments, which will lead to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the last of the earthly judgments, the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21).

Our Lord referred to all of the judgments contained in the seven-sealed book in His Olivet sermon when He said, *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be* (Matthew 24:21). The prophet Jeremiah also referred to these judgments as *the time of Jacob's trouble*:

For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the LORD their God, and David [i. e., Jesus Christ] their king, whom I will raise up unto them. (Jeremiah 30:5-9)

This prophecy goes far beyond anything that the Jews experienced in the Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman captivities, despite the terrible events that occurred during those judgments. This prophecy takes us through the many judgments of the great tribulation period to the Day of the Lord (i. e., the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when His *feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives*).

God is a loving, merciful and gracious God, but He is also a God of justice and holiness. As we have already seen, the love, mercy and grace of God provided for the judgment of the world's sins in Jesus Christ, to the satisfaction of God's holiness, righteousness and justice, but the world, as a whole, has rejected this expression of God's love. They have done this by believing in many gods or believing there are many ways into the presence of the true and living

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

God.

Many churches have done essentially the same thing, despite the fact that they claim to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. These churches openly denounce idolatry, but they practice idolatry by involving the works of their own hands as essential elements of salvation. This heresy began in the churches of Galatia when the Judaizers taught the Gentiles that they had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses or they could not be saved. This heresy has, over time, changed the ritual from circumcision to baptism; so that the majority of churches under the canopy of Christianity believe in baptismal regeneration for salvation, and in the performance of the laws of the church as well as the ten commandments to maintain salvation.

Therefore the world and these apostate churches find themselves in the same condition as Judah was, when Israel was carried into Assyrian captivity. They have witnessed the Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman captivities of Israel and Judah, but those judgments have not changed their minds about their own idolatrous conditions.

They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers [false gods]; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places [where the false gods were worshipped], and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot [i.e., in the worship of false gods in the name of Jehovah, Hosea 2:6]. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. (Jeremiah 3:1-11)

The sin of both Israel and Judah which produced the judgments of God upon them was idolatry. Idolatry was likened to the fleshly sin of harlotry (i.e., fornication and adultery) throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews became steeped in idolatry because of the counsel of Balaam, who taught them to violate their separation from the people of the land. (Numbers 31:14-16) This led directly to their worship of foreign gods when they joined themselves to Baal-peor (Numbers 25:1-5), and this continued throughout their history.

This corruption was further magnified by the teaching of the Rabbis, who interpreted the law in such a fashion as to make Israel believe she could be justified by the works of her own hands. This was true whether it was in the worship of an idol that she had made with her hands or whether she worshipped according to *the commandments and doctrines of men* that magnified her petty attempts at law-keeping. This corrupted view of herself kept Israel ignorant of God's Righteousness (Jesus Christ) while she went about trying to establish her own righteousness (Romans 9:31-10:4).

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah [i.e., totally destroyed]. (Isaiah 1:2-9)

The conditions in Israel and Judah which produced the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities (Jeremiah 50:17) are found in the world today, particularly in many present-day churches. It can be said of these churches (after having observed the accounts of Israel and Judah in the Scriptures), *And yet for all this her treacherous sister* [the world in general and many churches in particular have] *not turned unto me with their whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.*

Now if the fall of them [the Jews] be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. (Romans 11:12-21)

The majority of today's churches have become so many voices, with the other religions of the world, espousing a pseudo-morality instead of preaching the gospel as they were commanded of the Lord. This has taken away the distinctive message of the Christian faith: *how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and he rose again the third*

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

*day according to the scriptures* (I Corinthians 15:3-4). This is a message for sinners. Therefore it is a message for the whole world, *For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Even so the message of the average church in these days of apostasy is a message of lip service to Christ, while depending upon its own righteousness for an enduring relationship with the Lord.

Consequently politicians and church leaders have tried to find something good in all of the religions of the world. Since they view Christianity as a system of morality and not as the custodian of the truth of salvation in Jesus Christ; and since the religions of the world all have some sort of ethical standards which they hold; there is a common ground between this pseudo-christianity and the religions of the world. Nevertheless this common ground fails to recognize that man's corrupted sense of morality (*which is a way that seemeth right unto a man*) cannot satisfy the absolute standards of God's holiness, righteousness and justice. These standards could only be met by God Himself, Who became a man through the virgin birth of Jesus Christ to do just that. Consequently our Lord said, *I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me* (John 14:6).

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities [a way which seemeth right unto a man] have separated between you and your God, and your sins [of worshipping falsely] have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for [righteousness], nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity [the works of their own hands], and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth [evil]. They hatch [adders'] eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is [cracked hatches out] a viper. Their webs shall not become garments [of righteousness], neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity [having their source in the lie of the devil], and the act of violence is in their hands.

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

Their feet run to evil [i.e., the evil one], and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity [according to what seems right to them]; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace [i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ] they know not; and there is no [justice] in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace [i.e., the peace of God and peace with God].

Therefore is [justice] far from us, neither doth [righteousness] overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. (Isaiah 59:1-9)

The rejection of the truth that Jesus Christ is the only way into the presence of the true and living God declares that Jesus Christ is a liar. Now the people and religions of this world may not openly declare Him to be a liar, but what they believe does. Despite their beliefs, the Scriptures declare that Jesus Christ is God. The Scriptures declare that God cannot lie. This means that the religions of the world have openly rejected the saving work of Jesus Christ for the works of their own hands. This places all who have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ under the judgment that is to come:

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that [the] light is come into the world, and men loved [the] darkness rather than [the] light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth [the] evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. (John 3:18-20)

Judgment is coming because many churches, and the world at large, have accepted the evolutionary hypothesis for the creation of the universe. Some of these churches have sanctified their belief in evolution by claiming that evolution was the means used of God to bring forth life upon this earth. This is convoluted reasoning at best and proves to be (by an extension of all of the Word of God) a denial of the existence of God, and it is a denial of the truth of the Word of God.

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

If God started the process of evolution, the question must be asked, when then was man created in the image of God? If man evolved, then there is no federal head of the human family and no basis for man's sin nature, which was derived from the fall of Adam. If there is no federal head to plunge the human family into sin, then there cannot be a Federal Head in Jesus Christ to provide for the redemption of man. If these things are not true, then what part, if any, of the Bible is true? Yet the Bible says, *No lie is of the truth* (I John 2:21). If the Bible is not true, why should man fear a judgment from God? The fact is, the world does not believe the Bible is the very Word of God nor does it believe in the judgment of God.

Man has arrogantly come to believe the only things he needs to fear are the things that he is capable of doing to his environment. This has led him to believe, with proper management, he can fix the world's environmental problems; which has led him to believe (if fixing the problems should fail) he may be able to migrate to other planets with the technology he has gained from the exploration of space; which has also led him to believe he can obtain longevity by scientific advancements; which has led him to attempt to solve the genetic code, so that he can clone body parts; which has led him to be willing to kill his unborn children (by using aborted fetuses for stem-cell research) to accomplish this attempt at immortality. The truth is: mankind has bought the lie of the devil completely. It is trying to make itself into God by its self-determinate use of its knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:5).

It should not seem strange, then, that judgment is coming; and it should not seem strange that the first three judgments from the seven-sealed book are directed at the environment which man has come to worship, calling it *mother-nature* and *mother-earth*.

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

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

And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. (Revelation 8:6-11)

For the last thirty years or so man has panicked over the thought of destroying his environment. Common sense and faith in God have been cast aside. At first there was a paranoia about the earth cooling. An article that appeared in *Newsweek*, April 28, 1975, said, *The resulting famines could be catastrophic*. There was talk and some action to attempt to control world-wide birthrates to alleviate these famines. As I recall, condoms were shipped to third world countries in an attempt to control the world's population. There was even some talk of melting the polar icecaps to counteract the cooling trend. I do not recall reading how they proposed to do this, but they did propose it. (*Politically Incorrect Guide to Science*, Tom Bethell, Regenery Publishing, Inc., 2005, pg. 1)

Even so it wasn't long before the paranoia changed from global cooling to global warming; and by the late 1980s it was the pet cause of the environmentalists, and it has persisted in that role to this present day. The fears as well as the solutions have reversed themselves, so that the present-day fear is that the icecaps will melt because of global warming, causing world-wide flooding and drastic changes in the weather.

So-called scientific evidence is put forth by the media and certain politicians proclaiming

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

their fears over global warming and the so-called greenhouse effect. There are almost continuous public declarations on radio, television, and in the newspapers and news magazines of the bane of global warming due to the greenhouse effect, but at no time do these proclaimers consider what the Bible says about the last days. That would be *unscientific*, to say the least. Consequently God has been replaced by *mother-nature* and *mother-earth*, which, apparently, are far more *scientific* than any reference to the Scriptures or to the true and living God.

It does not occur to man that both of these terms (mother-nature and mother-earth) are blasphemous because they deny the existence of God. But how can one blaspheme God, if one does not believe in God? After all so-called science declares that the universe fell into perfect order by a cosmic accident, and that man evolved by a similar quirk of fate. As far as the world is concerned, our weather patterns are not in the hands of an Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient God Who created the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them: a God Who has prophesied the future and Who has provided for our salvation. Rather they are, in the world's view, in the hands of mother-nature: whoever or whatever that might be.

After the judgment of the earth in the first three trumpet judgments, the focus of the judgments changes from the earth to the heavens:

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

This judgment is of such a nature that it will alter the orbit of the earth around the sun. This will be necessary because one revolution of the earth upon its axis (one day) will be lessened

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

by one third. This means that the day will change in duration from twenty-four hours to sixteen hours. Consequently for there to be a corresponding number of days in a year (365.25 days), the earth's orbital path around the sun will have to take less time than it presently takes to allow for the reduction of the number of hours in a day. This will make the orbit of the earth around the sun closer to the sun. This means that the temperature of the earth will rise dramatically, not due to so-called global warming, caused by the greenhouse effect, but because of a judgment that only the God Who created the heavens and the earth can impose.

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of [demons], working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying,

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great. (Revelation 16:1-21)

The last three trumpet judgments are called the woe judgments. The first of these is associated with the antichrist, but it also has its source in heaven:

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter. (Revelation 9:1-12)

We have not looked at the seven trumpet judgments in a chronological sequence. We have viewed them as we have so that we would understand that the seven trumpet judgments, and the other judgments in the seven-sealed book, as well as judgments recorded throughout the Old

## The Contents of the Seven-sealed Book

Testament Scriptures, will come in God's order. Some of these, like the prophecy of Joel, can be compared to some of the judgments in the Revelation of John. This means that there are many more judgments described in the Scriptures (besides these which we have considered) that are associated with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth.

It would be difficult because of the expanse and number of these prophecies to consider them all, but we could look at each of them in detail and try to determine the exact sequence in which they will be unleashed upon this earth. If we were able to do that, what purpose would it serve, other than making this book much longer than it is? Mankind has never yet been swayed by the fear of judgment from God.

Therefore it suffices us to say, this present age is not an age of judgment. This age is an age in which God is still dispensing His grace to save those who will believe Him from the wrath that is to come. Nevertheless the age that is coming (with the removal of the redeemed from this earth) will be a time of *great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be* (Matthew 24:21). It is no wonder, then, that there will be silence in heaven *about the space of half an hour* before these judgments shall begin to be unleashed upon this earth.

## Chapter XI

### THE OCCASION OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

The Lord's discourse to His disciples on the mount of Olives, a few days before His crucifixion, supplies us with a great deal of information about *latter day* events. This message, like so many prophetic portions of Scripture, contains information that is written together but may not be fulfilled together. It refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.; it warns of false christs that shall arise throughout the ages; it spans the centuries to the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in the parable of the fig tree; it speaks of wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines and pestilences as the *beginning of sorrows* (birth pangs) that shall ultimately produce the coming of the Lord; it speaks of false prophets who shall deceive many; it speaks of the love of many waxing cold because *the iniquity* will abound and produce the apostasy that shall arise in the final stages of the church age; it speaks of the revelation of the antichrist and of the great tribulation period; it speaks of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom upon this earth; and it speaks of much, much more.

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

It is our purpose to devote this chapter to the circumstances and events that led our Lord to deliver the prophecies that are contained in *the Olivet Discourse*. It will be the purpose of our next chapter to deal with the Discourse itself.

Therefore let us go back in time and remember that our Lord and His disciples came to Bethany on the ninth day of the month of Abib, five days before He was crucified (Mark 10:46-11:1; John 12:1). Abib is March or April in the Jewish lunar calendar. It was late in the afternoon when they reached Bethany because they had traveled about fifteen miles from Ephraim to Jericho early that morning (John 11:54). Jesus had healed one blind man as He was going into the city and two blind men as He was coming out of the city, and He and His disciples had also traveled the twenty miles from Jericho to Bethany (Matthew 20:30; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35).

In Bethany they came to the house of Simon the leper, *There they made him a supper* (John 12:2). Martha served and Lazarus was one of the guests. Mary came, *as He sat at meat*, to anoint our Lord with a very costly ointment (Matthew 26:7; John 12:2-3). This sent Judas into a hypocritical tirade about the poor, questioning why this expensive ointment had not been sold and the money given to the poor. *This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this* (John 12:6-7).

This statement anticipated the events that were to follow. The anointing was not an accident of fate, nor was the night upon which Mary anointed our Lord a matter of chance. Mary acted out of love and adoration for our Lord, but her action was undoubtedly prompted by the Holy Spirit. The anointing was prophetic. It was the tenth of the month, and the anointing

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

declared that our Lord would be sacrificed as the Passover Lamb four days hence on the fourteenth day of the month (Exodus 12:3-6).

On the next day (still the tenth of the month: because the day follows the night in the Jewish reckoning of time [Genesis 1:5]) our Lord entered the city of Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass, while the people *cut down branches off of the trees and strawed them in the way* (Mark 11:8) and shouted praises unto the Lord (John 12:12-16). This fulfilled the prophecy, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass* (Zechariah 9:9). This prophecy, coupled with Exodus chapter twelve, proclaimed that our Lord presented Himself to the nation of Israel on that day as the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:1-6). It also established the truth that John the Baptist had declared three years earlier, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* (John 1:29).

This truth was magnified many times over in the days following our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. The things that He did and the things that were done to Him fulfilled the selection, examination, and slaying of the Passover Lamb. These events showed our Lord to be the object of faith of those who offered their sacrifices by faith, of every Scriptural sacrifice from the garden of Eden to the cross of Calvary. The animal sacrifices themselves could never take away sin, but faith in the One Who was represented in the sacrifices could (Hebrews 10:1-18).

The Lord had instructed Moses before the first Passover in Egypt: *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole congregation of Israel*

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

*shall kill it in the evening* (Exodus 12:1-6). They were to catch the blood of the lamb in a basin, and they were to *strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door posts of the houses, wherein they shall eat it* (Exodus 12:7). They were to roast the lamb with fire and eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8),

Nevertheless, at various times throughout her history, Israel had neglected to observe the feast of Passover despite the fact that God had told Moses the Passover was to be observed for ever (Exodus 12:24; II Chronicles 30:1-5). The Jews had also altered the observance of the law and the sacrificial system by a series of interpretations that had been placed upon them by *the tradition of men* (Mark 7:6-13). It is difficult to say, then, with any degree of accuracy, how the feast of Passover was being observed at the time of our Lord's crucifixion.

No matter how the nation of Israel was then observing the feast, our Lord fulfilled every detail of the feast. He presented Himself for sacrifice on the tenth day of the month of Abib. He was examined on subsequent days by the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees (Matthew 22:15-46), the chief priests, the Sanhedrin, by Herod and finally by Pilate, who announced, *I find in him no fault at all* (John 18:38). On the preparation day of the Passover He was hanged on the cross at the time of the morning sacrifice (Mark 15:25), and He bowed His head and dismissed His Spirit at the time of the evening sacrifice (Matthew 27:46; John 19:30). This corresponded with the instructions God had given to Moses concerning the killing of the Passover lamb, it was to be slain in the evening (Exodus 12:6). After that our Lord's body was taken down from the cross and prepared for burial. It was then placed in the tomb before the Passover Sabbath began (John 19:31). Then, in accordance with *the sign of the prophet Jonah*, our Lord rose from the dead after

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

three days and three nights, at the beginning of the feast of Firstfruits (Matthew 12:38-40; Leviticus 23:9-11).

On the eleventh day of the month, our Lord and His disciples came to a fig tree as they traveled from Bethany to Jerusalem. Jesus cursed the tree when He discovered that it bare no fruit, saying, *Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever* (Matthew 21:19). This act might seem strange to us, but by this act our Lord provided His disciples with an important object lesson. The fig tree was an allegorical portrayal of the nation of Israel. It showed all the signs that it should have had fruit on it, but it had none. Thus the cursing of the fig tree was prophetic of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matthew 21:19-20), when the *mountain* (Israel) of our Lord's parable would be *cast into the sea* (the Gentile nations of the world) in answer to the prayers of the saints (Matthew 21:21-22). This was borne out by the fact that the tree withered so quickly, and by the fact that in a few days our Lord would say to the religious leaders in Israel, *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate* (Matthew 23:38).

On the following day, as our Lord and His disciples were once again on their way into Jerusalem, they came to the same tree:

And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? (Matthew 21:20-23)

He answered them with a series of parables which revealed the sad spiritual condition of the nation of Israel (Matthew 21:28-22:14). Then the Pharisees and their enemies, the Herodians,

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

joined forces to try to trap the Lord with their question: *Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not* (Matthew 22:17)? He defeated their subtlety with a question about whose image was upon a Roman coin. They answered, *Caesar's*. Then our Lord said, *Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's* (Matthew 22:21). This left them silent before our Lord because they could not deal with such wisdom.

The same day the Sadducees related a story to our Lord about a Jewish woman who had married seven brothers, according to Jewish law. The first had died, and she had married the second. This process continued until she had married them all. Then they asked, *Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her* (Matthew 22:28). He told them, *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven* (Matthew 22:29-30). Then He defeated their subtlety by asking them, *... have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living* (Matthew 22:32).

But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions. (Matthew 22:34-46)

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

It was then that our Lord brought a scathing denunciation upon the nation of Israel as a whole, and upon the scribes and the Pharisees in particular. This denunciation is found in the twenty-third chapter of the book of Matthew. It reveals that they justified themselves in the things that they did by the *commandments and doctrines of men*, but our Lord said:

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Matthew 23:28-39)

As they departed the temple, Jesus told His disciples, *See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down* (Matthew 24:2). This was an amazing statement in the light of the construction of Herod's temple.

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who was alive at the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy, wrote in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, *Now the temple was built of stones that were white and strong, and each of their length twenty-five cubits, their height was eight, and their breadth about twelve. . . .* (*The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, Translated by, William Whiston, A.M., The John C. Winston Company,

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

Philadelphia, Toronto, 1957, pg. 472, Bk 15, Par. 3) Given the size of the individual white marble stones used in the construction of the temple (approximately 40 feet by 12.5 feet by 19 feet each), it is no wonder the disciples could not immediately question our Lord about the events and circumstances that could produce the destruction of such an edifice.

At the time of our Lord's statement, the temple had been under renovation and reconstruction for about forty-nine years. The renovation would not be completed for another thirty-four years. It was a magnificent edifice and was considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. So the concept that one stone would not be left standing upon another overwhelmed the disciples of our Lord. Consequently there is no recorded conversation until they reached the mount of Olives. *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* (Matthew 24:3). These questions, like Mary's anointing of our Lord, must also have been wrought by the Holy Spirit of God for they refer to things that the disciples did not yet understand (compare: Acts 1:6).

According to the on-line encyclopedia Wikipedia, *Herod's Temple in Jerusalem was a massive expansion of the Second Temple along with renovations of the entire Temple Mount. Herod the Great's expansion project began around 19 B.C. The renovation by Herod began with the building of giant underground vaults upon which the temple would be built so that it could be larger than the small flat area on the top of Mount Moriah. Ground level at the time was at least 20 ft. (6m) below the current level, as can be seen by walking the Western Wall tunnels. The edge of this platform remains everywhere; part of it forms the Western Wall.*

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

This information from Wikipedia is important to me because it confirms information I have retained in my memory, but have long since forgotten some of the sources. Wikipedia is an electronic encyclopedia and is not generally accepted by the academic world because it is not in printed form. Nevertheless the information has been derived from academically acceptable sources and was a convenient source of help to me.

In this regard the purpose of this work on the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is not to convince the academic world of its veracity. That is an impossible task, no matter the documentation. The purpose of this book is to strengthen believers in the faith. The scholarship of this world cannot do that because *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Corinthians 2:14). Consequently the believer's growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is dependent upon the Word of God and the work of the Spirit of God. As a preacher and teacher of the Word of God, I understand perfectly that I can *plant* and I can *water*, but only *God can give the increase* (I Corinthians 3:6).

It is an historical fact that not one stone of Herod's Temple has been left standing upon another. Some have mistakenly thought that the Western Wall was a part of the temple, but it was not. All that remains of the temple in Jerusalem is a massive foundation of stones that were back-filled and overlaid with native stones, some of which were as much as *44.6 feet by 11 feet and weighing 628 tons, while most were in the range of 2.5 by 3.5 by 15 feet.* (Wikipedia, Herod's Temple) These stones did not form any part of the temple. These stones merely expanded the area suitable for building Herod's Temple upon Mount Moriah. *As for the temple itself, it was made, not of*

## The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse

*local stone, as was the rest of the complex, but imported white marble, which was in sharp contrast to the entire city and gleamed in the daylight.* (Wikipedia, Herod's Temple)

To gain a concept of the Western Wall and the other remains of this building platform, picture a modern construction site for a large building complex. Long before construction of the buildings begin, earth-moving equipment and compactors are brought to the site to prepare the ground for construction. Depending upon the topography, it is sometimes necessary to erect retaining walls. Trucks deliver tons and tons of rock which is compacted to provide a building platform for the buildings as well as the surrounding area. Once the ground has been prepared for the building, then excavation for the foundation begins and concrete is poured. After that the building is erected. Now move back in time before this type of construction was possible and you will recognize that what remains in Jerusalem were not the stones of the temple, but the stones that prepared the top of Mount Moriah for the building of the temple.

In our next chapter, *The Olivet Discourse*, we shall provide our Lord's answers to the three questions of the disciples, and we will provide an explanation of the parables of the *ten virgins*, *a man traveling into a far country*, and *a shepherd dividing his sheep from the goats*.

## Chapter XII

### THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

In our chapter on *The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse*, we observed that the disciples of our Lord (Peter, James, John and Andrew [Mark 13:3]) came to Him privately as He sat upon the mount of Olives to ask Him about the statement He had made concerning the buildings of the temple: *There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*. Given this opportunity, they asked, *[W]hen shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* (Matthew 24:3). These questions broadly covered the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the revelation of the antichrist, and the events of the great tribulation period that shall precede the second coming of our Lord. These events and others are the subjects of our Lord's Olivet discourse.

Since it was unlikely that they knew that there had been a partial fulfillment of the seven feasts of the Jews in the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord; and since they probably did not know that the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's vision had been fulfilled with these same

## The Olivet Discourse

events; and since they did not understand when or how the Kingdom would be established, this lack of understanding implies that these questions did not originate with them (as we have suggested), but with the Holy Spirit.

This sort of testimony has been seen on many occasions in the Scriptures. For example: when Mary visited Elisabeth prior to the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke 1:41-43). Zacharias spoke similarly of the birth and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ after the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:67-79), and Simeon said, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel* (Luke 2:29-32).

The disciples were not ignorant of these matters because they were unfamiliar with the Scriptures, but because of where they stood in time. Peter and John would later be used of the Lord to write books of the New Testament under the inspiration of the Spirit of God; but immediately after the resurrection of our Lord, they did not have at their disposal all that we have at our disposal. Even if they understood some of these things, it would have been impossible for them to have known that the entire church age (of nearly two thousand years to date) would be a parenthesis between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of Daniel's prophecy, nor could they have known that this parenthesis was foreshadowed in the feast of Pentecost. It was perfectly logical for them to believe that the Lord was going to establish His Kingdom at that time, and this

## The Olivet Discourse

is seen in a question they asked our Lord before He ascended into heaven:

Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own [authority]. (Acts 1:6-7)

We cannot fault the disciples for their lack of understanding so soon after the resurrection because they could not, at that time, see what we have seen. They did not then have the New Testament Scriptures or the advantage of observing the fulfillment of prophecy throughout the church age. We have seen our Lord fulfill all of the prophecies of His first advent perfectly because of the Scriptural record we have in the New Testament; we have both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures at our disposal because of the advent of the printing press; we have seen our Lord's prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. fulfilled; we have seen the Jews scattered among the nations of the world where they have suffered because they said, *His blood be on us, and on our children* (Matthew 27:25); we have seen two world wars in the twentieth century alone, and countless other wars from the first century to the present time; we have seen worldwide famines and earthquakes in many places; we have seen pestilences in the form of tsunamis, hurricanes, tornados, malaria, viral epidemics, and many other types of plagues; we have seen Israel resurrected out of the nations of the world and reestablished as a nation again in her own land; we have seen the gospel preached in every corner of this earth from the first century to the present; we have seen conditions as it was *in the days of Noah*, and we have seen conditions as it was *in the days of Lot*; yet, for all of the *birth pangs* that we have seen, we do not know the precise day or hour of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. That information is reserved for the Father.

## The Olivet Discourse

The first resurrection that precedes the tribulation period could take place at any time. We know this because Israel is a nation again back in her own land, and a large number of present-day churches throughout the world have already succumbed to the great apostasy foretold by the apostles, Paul and John (II Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 3:14-19). Since the apostasy and the revelation of the antichrist are the two signs that must precede the Day of the Lord (II Thessalonians 2:1-4), this leaves but one of these signs to yet be fulfilled. Even so the true church will not observe the second of these signs because the antichrist cannot be revealed as long as that which hinders is in the way. That which hinders is the presence of a discerning body of believers (indwelt by the Holy Spirit) who can know the things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-14). This hindering presence shall be removed by *our gathering together unto him*. We know this by comparing *our gathering together unto him* in II Thessalonians 2:1 with *what withholdeth* in II Thessalonians 2:6-8.

After hearing the three questions of the disciples:

... Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows [birth pangs].

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because [the] iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:4-14)

This is a broad sweeping prophecy. It spans the entire period of time from the first advent

## The Olivet Discourse

of our Lord until the second advent of our Lord. It speaks of things that existed then and of things that are taking place now. Consider the first statement, *Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.* Israel was confronted with false christs almost immediately after the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. This hoax has continued throughout the church age and will culminate with the greatest of the false christs, the antichrist.

One of the first of the false christs, following the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, was Herod Agrippa I. The Scriptures tell of his persecution of the church (Acts 12:1), of his killing of James the brother of John (Acts 12:2), and of his imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:3-5). They also record the circumstances of his death (Acts 12:20-23), but they do not tell us he was accepted as the Christ by the High Priest, the Sanhedrin, and the people of the nation of Israel. This is implied but not stated in the account of his death in the book of Acts (12:22-23). Even so we have the information that Herod Agrippa was a false christ from a history that was written by the Roman Emperor Tiberius Claudius. It was translated into English by Robert Graves in 1935:

I have no dramatic gift, like my brother Germanicus: I am merely a historian and no doubt most people would call me, in general, dull and prosy, but I have come to a point in my story where the record of bare facts unimproved by oratorical beauties should stir the wonder of my readers as greatly as they stirred me at the time. Let me first tell in what an exalted mood King Herod Agrippa came up from Jerusalem to Caesarea to the festival that had been prepared in honor of my birthday. He was nursing a secret pride so great that it almost choked him. The foundations of the great edifice that he had so long dreamed of raising, the Empire of the East, were grandly and firmly laid at last. He now had only to speak the word and the walls would (these are the very words he used to his Queen Cypros) "shoot up white and splendid into the dark blue sky, the crystal roof would close over it, and lovely gardens and cool colonnades and lily-ponds would surround it, spreading out as far as the enraptured eye could reach." Inside all would be beryl and opal and sapphire and sardonyx and pure gold and in the mighty Hall of Judgment would blaze a diamond throne, the throne of the Messiah, whom men had hitherto known as Herod

## The Olivet Discourse

Agrippa.

He had already revealed himself, in secret, to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, and they had all with one accord bowed themselves to the ground and glorified God and acknowledged him as the prophesied Messiah. He could now publicly reveal himself to the Jewish nation, and to the whole world. His word would go out: "The Day of Deliverance is at hand, saith the Anointed of the Lord. Let us break the yoke of the Ungodly." There were now two hundred thousand Jews trained in the use of weapons in Herod's dominions alone, and thousands more in Egypt, Syria and the East; and the Jew fighting in the name of his God, as the history of the Maccabees had shown, is heroic to the point of madness. Never was there a better disciplined race. Nor were arms and armor wanting: Herod had added to the seventy thousand suits of armor that he had found in Antipas's treasury two hundred thousand more, besides those that he had taken from the Greeks. The fortifications of Jerusalem were not complete, but in less than six months the city would be made impregnable. Even after my order to cease work Herod had secretly continued hollowing out great store chambers under the Temple and driving long tunnels under the walls to points more than a mile outside, so that if ever it came to a siege the garrison could make surprise sorties and attack an investing army from the rear. (*Claudius the God and his wife Messalina*, translated by Robert Graves, Random House, New York, 1935, 1962, pg. 315, 316)

This account of Herod's aspirations and the Jews' response is quite revealing considering the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially given the fact that every prophecy in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Lord's first advent was fulfilled perfectly and completely in the life and ministry of our Lord; and given the fact that our Lord had established Who He was with signs and wonders to the amazement of the common people and the consternation of the Jewish leaders; and given the fact that He had spoken to the nation of Israel with a wisdom that had confounded them, from the least to the greatest: it is incredulous, from a human point of view, that Jesus of Nazareth was rejected and Herod Agrippa, a pompous egomaniac from the lineage of Esau, was accepted as the Jewish Messiah by the nation of Israel less than fifteen years after they had crucified our Lord.

The acceptance of Herod Agrippa as the Messiah was just the beginning of the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy concerning false christs. Herod would simply be one of many throughout

## The Olivet Discourse

the ages from the first advent of our Lord until His second advent. Claudius' account, though unknown to him, clearly reveals the spiritual blindness of all unredeemed men. This blindness is a part of the sentence of death that was imposed upon the human family because Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in disobedience to God. Nevertheless the spiritual death and spiritual blindness that plagues the human family can be corrected by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Claudius' account of the death of Herod has provided history with a view of Herod's self-deception; it has provided history with a view of the Jews' deception; it has provided some of Herod's observations as he lay dying; and it has provided history with Herod's final letter to Claudius.

The Jews put on sackcloth and lay in their tens of thousands prostrate on the ground about the Palace, even in the terrible heat. Agrippa saw them from the window of the upper room where his bed was laid and began to weep for them. "Poor Jews," he said. "You have waited a thousand years, and must now wait a thousand more, perhaps two thousand, before your day of glory breaks. This has been a false dawn. I deceived myself and I deceived you." He called for pen and paper and wrote me a letter while he still had strength to hold the pen. I have the letter here before me with the others he wrote me and it is pitiful to compare the handwritings -- the others boldly and decisively written, line under line as regular as a flight of steps, and this scrawled crookedly, each letter jagged and broken with pain, like confessions written by criminals after they have been put on the rack or flogged with the cat-o-nine-tails. It is short:

"My last letter: I am dying. My body is full of maggots. Forgive your old friend the Brigand, who loved you dearly, yet secretly plotted to take the East away from you. Why did I do this? Because Japhet and Shem can live as brothers, but each must rule in his own house. The West would have remained yours from Rhodes to Britain. You would have been able to rid Rome of all of the Gods and customs of the East: then and only then could the ancient liberty that you prize so much have returned to you. I have failed. I played too dangerous a game. Marmoset, you are a fool, but I envy your folly: it is a sane folly. Now I charge you with my dying breath not to revenge yourself on my family. My son Agrippa is innocent: he knows nothing of my ambitions, and neither do my daughters.

## The Olivet Discourse

Cyprus did all that she could do to dissuade me. The best course for you now is to appear to know nothing. Treat all your Eastern allies as faithful allies still. With Herod gone what are they? Adders, but their fangs are drawn. They trusted me, but they have no trust in the Parthian. As for my dominions, make them a Roman province again, as in the time of Tiberius. Do not injure my honour by returning them to my uncle Antipas. To appoint my son Agrippa as my successor would be dangerous, but honour him in some way or other for my sake. Do not put my dominions under the rule of Syria, under my enemy Marsus. Rule them yourself, Marmoset. Make Felix your governor. Felix is a nobody and will do nothing either wise or foolish. I can write little more. My fingers fail me. I am in torment. Do not weep for me: I have had a glorious life and regret nothing but my one single folly -- I underrated the pride and power and jealousy of the ever-living God of Israel, that I bore myself towards Him like any foolish philosophizing Gadarene Greek. Now farewell for the last time, Tiberius Claudius, my friend whom I love more truly than you ever supposed. Farewell, little Marmoset, my schoolfellow, and trust nobody, for nobody about you is worthy of your trust. Your dying friend Herod Agrippa, surnamed The Brigand." (*ibid.*, pg. 320-321)

The value of this bit of history is enormous, not because it attests that Herod was a false christ, but because it gives us the personal testimony of a false christ, and it provides us with a view of the absolute spiritual blindness and self-deception of those who become false christ. It also provides us with a view of the spiritual blindness of those who follow them. This information is not needed to corroborate the testimony of the Scriptures, but it does fit perfectly into the description the apostle Paul provided in his second epistle to Timothy: *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived* (II Timothy 3:13). The apostle Peter also supplies us with a similar description of those who mock the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the*

## The Olivet Discourse

*heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (II Peter 3:3-7).*

It is evident that both those who follow false christs and those who deny the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ are plagued by the same malady: they are spiritually blind and they are spiritually dead. Since apostasy is a departure from the truth; and since it can only occur in the realm of the truth; and since it is impossible for genuine believers to apostatize, apostasy does not occur all at once. It creeps in by a subtle neglect of the truth. Often this occurs when one thing is emphasized to the neglect of another. Thus churches which once preached the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ can depart from the truth through failing to follow Paul's instructions to Timothy: *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (II Timothy 4:2-4).*

This brings us to some basic instructions in our Lord's Olivet discourse:

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because [the] iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:9-14)

The events of the last days that are contained in our Lord's Olivet discourse are not in chronological order. Some things that are written together will not be fulfilled together. This portion of Scripture provides a good example of that prophetic principle.

## The Olivet Discourse

In the first sentence (*Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake*) we have an expression of the anti-semitism that has been directed against the Jews by organized religion and by political leaders at various times, following the crucifixion of Christ. It is evident that these persecutions also included believers in Jesus Christ when we compare the accounts of the Olivet discourse in the Gospels of Mark and Luke with this account in the Gospel of Matthew (Mark 13:9-11; Luke 21:12-19).

The Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and some Protestant churches have persecuted the Jews as well as some genuine believers in Jesus Christ at various times throughout the history of these organizations. The Jews were often called *Christ killers* and some genuine believers were called *heretics*. It is no wonder that so many Jews hate the name of Jesus. They have been systematically searched out and abused in that name by churches that should have had some compassion for them; but there was no compassion because these churches did not understand the saving grace of Jesus Christ, or the elective purpose of God:

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11:26-36)

Salvation is not effected by the ritual and form that has become so much a part of

## The Olivet Discourse

traditional church dogma. It is accomplished by the preaching of the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God. This means that the forced baptisms of many Jews by so-called Christian churches accomplished nothing but a form of self-preservation for those Jews who submitted to them. These baptisms certainly did not produce salvation.

The hatred of the Jews did not exist at the beginning of the church age. At that time it was the Jews who were the persecutors, not the Christians. Many of the Jews, like Saul of Tarsus and the Sanhedrin, directed their wrath against Jews who had become Christians (Acts 6:8-15). However as the church gained in stature and political power this changed. This change had been foretold by our Lord's parable of the mustard seed (Luke 13:18-19), which was a parable about unparalleled church growth.

The mustard seed was a singular seed that had been planted for the healing of the nations; but when it experienced extraordinary growth, to the place where it became like a tree, it then became a desirable lodging place for the birds of the air (Matthew 13:32). *The fowls* (or birds of the air) represented the *wicked one* in our Lord's parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:4, 19). Since the birds occupied the highest positions in the mustard seed that had grown into a tree, and since the birds lodged *under the shadow of it* (Mark 4:32), it is evident that the birds of our Lord's parable represented an ecclesiastical hierarchy within the church that operated in the lie of the devil. It was these leaders who persecuted the Jews as well as some genuine believers in Jesus Christ according to our text in the Lord's Olivet discourse.

In the second sentence of our text, Matthew 24:10 (*And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another*), we have a description of conditions that

## The Olivet Discourse

shall arise during the great tribulation period. Our Lord described these conditions when He sent the disciples out to preach, early in His public ministry; but as we have seen before, His instructions were not just for the twelve, but for the twelve times twelve thousand:

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.* (Matthew 10:16-23, emphasis mine)

In the next two sentences of our text, Matthew 24:11 (*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because [the] iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*), we read of conditions that shall lead to the apostasy of the churches prior to the first resurrection and the revelation of the antichrist. The message of the false prophets in our text is the *other gospel* of Paul's epistle to the Galatians. This *gospel* required the performance of ritual and law for salvation in violation of the principle of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from the deeds of the law. Thus it was rooted in the lie of the devil. Remember, the serpent promised Eve she would live and not die if she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the moral concepts thus gained would make her like God. Solomon called this concept *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*, and our Lord called it *the iniquity* in our text. Thus we understand that wherever *the iniquity* abounds, *the love of many shall wax cold*. This condition produces the apostasy we spoke of earlier in this

## The Olivet Discourse

chapter.

The word *love* in this verse comes from the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* is defined for us in the fourth chapter of the first epistle of John: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another* (I John 4:7-11). It is self-evident that when the efforts of man are maximized with *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, then the Person and the work of Jesus Christ are minimized. Man no longer sees himself as he is, a sinner, but as one who merits a relationship with God because of personal righteousness. Consequently the love of Christ fades and apostasy ensues.

It is interesting to note in the four sentences of our text that we have considered thus far, that we have gone from the church age to the tribulation period and back again to the church age. This brings us to the next sentence in our text (*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved*), which takes us back again to conditions that shall be brought to fulfillment during the tribulation period. Those who endure to the end are those who refuse to worship the antichrist. Those who worship him will receive his mark that they might buy or sell. In this regard our Lord said, *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it* (Matthew 10:39).

In the last sentence of our text, Matthew 24:14 (*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be*

## The Olivet Discourse

*preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*), we have a promise of the preaching of the gospel that will find its fulfillment in both the church age with preaching by faithful churches, and during the tribulation period with the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand: who will preach unto the end.

Now we come to our Lord's answer to the second question of the disciples, *and what shall be the sign of thy coming?*

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:15-30)

The antichrist and the false prophet will come to Jerusalem at the midpoint of the great tribulation period. It appears that this visit will be occasioned by the dedication of a newly constructed temple in Jerusalem. It appears that this construction will be allowed under the terms of the covenant which the antichrist will make with the Jews for seven years (Daniel 9:27). This

## The Olivet Discourse

is consistent with the fact that the antichrist will be a false christ. The Scriptures declare that the *BRANCH* (which is Christ) will build the temple in Jerusalem (Zechariah 6:12-13), yet the Lord will not come again to this earth until after the tribulation period. Even so on the occasion of the visit of the antichrist and the false prophet, they will place an idol of the antichrist in the temple, and the false prophet will cause this image to speak (Revelation 13:15). This is *the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet*.

The religious world of both Jews and Christians is looking for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. From the writings of the apostle Paul, we know that the antichrist will sit in the temple in Jerusalem and show himself to be the Christ with signs and lying wonders (II Thessalonians 2:4, 9). So how do we reconcile the fact that the *BRANCH* (Jesus Christ) will build the temple, and the antichrist will sit in the temple before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth?

The answer to this question lies in the fact that one is an earthly temple and the other is a temple made up of *living stones*. The apostle Paul declared *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ* (I Corinthians 3:11), and Peter wrote:

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. (I Peter 2:1-8)

## The Olivet Discourse

When we combine these two portions of Scripture, the implication is that our Lord has been building His temple with *living stones* from the time that He laid the foundation with His crucifixion, burial and resurrection from the dead, and with His giving of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers on the day of Pentecost. This agrees with the fact that the apostle Paul wrote, *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and [have been built] upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building [being fitted together grows] unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also [are being built] together for an habitation of God through the Spirit* (Ephesians 2:19-22). Thus each believer in Jesus Christ (from Adam until the end of the age) is a part of that temple, and this agrees with the description of the New Jerusalem in the book of the Revelation:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Revelation 21:1-4)

Later in this chapter John is told, *Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife*. The Lamb's wife is the new Jerusalem. She is described with gates named for the twelve tribes of Israel and with foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles. Her inhabitants are they whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. This city is populated with the saints of all ages and this agrees with the testimony of the writer of the book of Hebrews:

For ye are not come unto the mount that might [not] be touched, and that burned

## The Olivet Discourse

with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:18-24)

If the temple of God (that was prophesied to be built by the *BRANCH*) is a temple made up of living stones (of both the Old and the New Testament saints) that have been being built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ from the time of the giving of His Holy Spirit to indwell the redeemed, after His crucifixion, burial and resurrection, then that leaves the building of the temple in the city of Jerusalem under the authority of the antichrist. While this proposition may seem strange, the Scriptures imply the antichrist will have the authority to do this. This implication is found in the covenant the antichrist will make with Israel that will commence the seventieth week of Daniel's vision, and it is found in Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (II Thessalonians 2:1-4)

When the Jews observe the abomination of desolation in the earthly temple, this will be the primary sign of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. If they have learned anything from their exile into the nations of the world, they should have learned not to be idolaters, but all will not have learned that lesson. Two-thirds of the nation will seek to save their lives and will thus

## The Olivet Discourse

lose them, while one-third of the nation of Israel will flee Jerusalem when they see the *abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place* (Matthew 24:15), for Zechariah wrote:

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God. (Zechariah 13:8-9)

In this regard our Lord said, *Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it* (Luke 17:28-33).

Some expositors have made Lot's flight from Sodom a portrayal of the first resurrection, but this does not fit the conditions of the first resurrection. When the rapture takes place, believers will not have a choice to remain behind like Lot's wife. They will all be resurrected, beginning with the dead in Christ and extending to those who are alive and remain (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). However when the antichrist sets up an image of himself in the temple in Jerusalem, which is spiritually called Sodom, the place from which Lot fled (Revelation 11:8), then the Jews will have a choice to seek to remain in Jerusalem or they may leave according to our Lord's command. Those who refuse to worship the antichrist and receive his mark will flee into

## The Olivet Discourse

the wilderness where God will preserve them for the last three and one-half years of the great tribulation period (Revelation 12:13-16); but those who are like Lot's wife will remain in Jerusalem, because the things they have prayed for over the centuries will be in Jerusalem. The antichrist will have brought a false sense of peace to the city (I Thessalonians 5:3); the temple will have been built; and there will be an individual who has convinced them that he is the Christ sitting *in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God* (II Thessalonians 2:4). Thus our Lord continued:

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:31-51)

Throughout our study of the second coming of our Lord we have dealt with the problem

## The Olivet Discourse

of events being written together, but not being fulfilled together. In this final portion of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, we are again faced with this problem. The first sentence of the above portion of Scripture (*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*) seems to be a part of the second coming of our Lord described in the previous verses (on page 140), but it is not. It is actually a description of the first resurrection, which is portrayed in the first of the last three feasts of the Jews, the feast of Trumpets. After that statement there is a break in the context, and our Lord spoke a parable about a fig tree. Then there is a return to the context of the first resurrection, where the days before the first resurrection are compared with the days of Noah and the apostasy of the last days of the church age, which shall precede the first resurrection. Thus our Lord said, *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 24:45-51). These shifts in subjects by our Lord can be very disconcerting to the novice, but analysis of prophecy is not for novices. In fact it is not an easy subject even for the seasoned teacher of the Word of God.

Between the days that will be like the days of Noah (which describes earthly conditions and

## The Olivet Discourse

attitudes in the churches leading up to the first resurrection) and the sound of the trumpet (which is associated with the first resurrection), our Lord spoke the parable of the fig tree:

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (Matthew 24:32-36)

Israel is the fig tree according to the visual lesson supplied by our Lord in the cursing of the fig tree on His way into Jerusalem, a few days before His crucifixion. Our Lord verified that it was the nation of Israel that He cursed when He said, *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*, a few days after the cursing of the fig tree. Later, after the wholesale rejection of our Lord as the Christ by the nation of Israel (when they crucified Him), we have seen this curse fulfilled in the Romans' siege of Jerusalem and the dispersion of those Jews who survived the siege in 70 A.D. The Jews remained buried in the Gentile nations of the world for a long time after their dispersion by the Romans, according to the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, because her bones were very dry. Then, in partial fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy, Israel was resurrected from her burial ground among the nations of the world on May 14, 1948. At the present time Israel is a nation again back in her own land, but she does not yet possess all of the land that God promised her. This possession will probably occur during the millennial reign of Christ.

The Arab world and many other nations of the world are hostile towards Israel. They think she is the source of the problem in the Middle East, but Israel is not the problem. The problem rests in the nations of this world which are in rebellion against the promises of God, because of their unbelief. God gave the land of Canaan to Israel, not because she deserved it, but because

## The Olivet Discourse

it was His will to do so. This was an expression of His grace, just as salvation is an expression of His grace. The world is blind to the grace of God, so it cannot understand why the Jews should have claim to the land of Canaan, especially since they were exiled from it. Nevertheless God also promised to restore Israel to the land whenever it became necessary to exile her into the Gentile nations of the world because of her disobedience and idolatry. Consequently the United Nations' mandate in 1947 to partition Palestine was simply God's method of using the nations of this world to fulfill His will, because *the powers that be are ordained of God* (Romans 13:1).

When the United Nations voted to partition Palestine in November of 1947, the Arab nations declared that when the British would leave Palestine in May of 1948, if Israel declared herself a nation again among the nations of the world, then they would, according to Haj Amin Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, *drive the Jews into the sea*. (*O Jerusalem*, by Larry Collins & Dominique LaPierre, Pocket Book Division of Simon & Schuster, 1972, pg. 83) Nearly sixty years later, after numerous wars in which she was decidedly the underdog, Israel (*this generation*) is still a nation in the land that was promised to Abraham. When one considers the land mass and populations of the Middle East occupied by the Arabs (Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, to name some of them) compared to the land mass and population of Israel, it is only by God's grace and the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ that Israel exists as a nation in the Middle East.

In the days of Abraham, four hundred years before Israel became a nation, God promised him a land that was then occupied by the Amorites (Genesis 15:16-21). This promise was later confirmed to Isaac and then to Jacob, so that in the days of Moses, Israel was delivered from Egypt and became a nation among the nations of the world. As the Jews prepared to enter the

## The Olivet Discourse

land, after their exodus from Egypt, God made a covenant with Israel (Deuteronomy chapters 29 & 30). One of the conditions of the covenant was exile for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:36-37). This was to occur if Israel fell prey to the idolatry of the inhabitants of the land. God promised that if this were to occur, the Jews would be deported and they would serve the false gods of the Gentile nations of this world. This has occurred three times in her history, as we have previously noted. However these exiles were matters of discipline and were never meant to be permanent (Hebrews 12:6-8). So, despite the exiles of the past, now that Israel is back in the land that was promised to Abraham, Israel will never be eradicated by the nations of this world. She will possess the land God gave her unto the coming of Jesus Christ. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away* (Luke 21:33).

The reestablishment of Israel as a nation in her own land places us, prophetically speaking, in the latter part of the latter days as we stated in our first chapter, *A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures*. This was the one event, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., that many professing Christians never expected to happen. As a result of this, many churches have had a tendency to spiritualize the promises God gave to Israel. They claimed these promises were fulfilled in the church. This was particularly evident in the Roman church and in many of the churches that fractured from the Roman church during the protestant reformation movement.

These concepts fall broadly into a system of interpretation called covenant theology. The basic premise of this system of thought declares that if an individual or church keeps the promises God made to Israel, then the blessings that come from keeping those promises are theirs and not Israel's. It is important to understand that there were some promises given to Israel that also

## The Olivet Discourse

included believers in every age. Nevertheless God's promises to Israel are God's promises to Israel. He will perform them. He cannot lie.

This brings us to the first of three parables that were a part of our Lord's Olivet discourse, recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:1-13)

The three parables are about three different groups of people. The first parable deals with the present church age; the second parable deals with the nation of Israel; and the third parable deals with the Gentile nations of this world.

The first parable takes us to the church age, which will end with the first resurrection. The five wise virgins are churches (II Corinthians 11:1-3) which, in the days of their ministries, have been empowered by the Holy Spirit (the Oil in their lamps) to do the work which the Lord committed to their trust: preaching the truth of the Word of God to a lost world. Whereas the five foolish virgins are churches which once gave forth the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit of God, but over time they have found other methods to do what they perceive to be the work of God, and any faithful testimony to Jesus Christ has become mere lip

## The Olivet Discourse

service.

These virgins cannot be individual believers because believers cannot lose their salvation. Believers have *eternal life; and they shall never perish* (John 10:28), but churches, like nations, can apostatize. The foolish virgins are not new to us. They can be seen in the second and third chapters of the book of the Revelation, where the five foolish virgins are characterized by the apostasy of five of the seven churches in Asia. The last of these, as we have seen, is the Laodicean church. It characterizes the age immediately before the first resurrection (Revelation 3:14-19). The lesson to be learned from this parable is that from the first century until the first resurrection, there will be churches which will be faithful to the ministry committed to their trust, and there will be churches which will be unfaithful to that trust.

This brings us to our Lord's second parable, recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money [silver].

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went

## The Olivet Discourse

and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money [silver] to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:14-30)

The key to this parable is seen in the servant who took his lord's silver and hid it in the earth. Throughout the Old Testament, and particularly in the worship of the tabernacle in the wilderness, silver represents redemption (Exodus 30:11-16 and 38:25-31). It is unfortunate that the translators translated the word for silver, *money*, because the connection to the redemptive work of Christ is lost in that translation. However when we recognize that our Lord was talking about silver, and silver in the typology of Scripture represents salvation, then the parable becomes plain. There are rewards in heaven for the servant who has been faithful in proclaiming the truth of salvation. However for the servant who has buried the truth of salvation, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The reason for this is obvious. If the servant hid the truth of salvation from others, for whatever reason, it was also hidden to him.

Each servant in this parable refers to Israel. This can be seen in the book of Isaiah, where Jacob is referred to as *my servant* (Isaiah 44:1), and also in Genesis, when Jacob wrestled with the Lord, the Lord changed his name to Israel (Genesis 32:24-28). Thus Jacob my servant is Israel my servant. Therefore this parable is about Israel's service to the Lord, whether she was faithful or unfaithful at different times throughout the fifteen hundred or more years that she was the servant of the Lord.

## The Olivet Discourse

It is obvious that over the course of her history, God used Israel in a mighty way. All of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, were written by Jews (Romans 3:1-2). Consequently from the time of their exodus from Egypt until they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, the Jews (Israel) have been the custodians of the truth of the Word of God. In the present age, the church is the custodian of that truth. Thus these first two parables in our Lord's Olivet discourse teach essentially the same truth to two different groups, the church and Israel: both of which have been, or are, the servants of the Lord.

Few in this world seem to understand that our Lord's public ministry was to Jews (Romans 15:8). His sermons before His resurrection from the dead were directed to Jews and not Christians. Thus most of what we read in the Gospels was directed to the Jews and not to the church. In our Lord's ministry, He used the law *lawfully* to bring the Jews to salvation, but the religious leaders among them were so steeped in the traditions of men that they were blind to the truth of salvation. They had not appropriated it to themselves, and they certainly could not convey the truth of salvation to others within the nation of Israel (Matthew 23:13). This can be seen in an event that happened on our Lord's journey to Bethany, six days before the Passover. We did not consider this event in our previous chapter, *The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse*, because, for our purpose, it is more useful to our present discussion.

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And

## The Olivet Discourse

Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:1-10)

This meeting with Zacchaeus was prompted by our Lord's omniscience. This was to be the day of his salvation. It was also to be a day that would show forth a negative reaction by the religious leaders in Israel (because of their biases) to the salvation of a sinner. Therefore this event illustrates the truth of our Lord's second parable in His Olivet discourse. The reaction of the religious crowd to our Lord's contact with Zacchaeus (a sinner) illustrates the hardness of their hearts. They were without compassion for this publican. As far as they were concerned, the truth that had been committed to their trust as leaders in Israel was hidden and would remain hidden to Zacchaeus. Nevertheless our Lord said, *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* Thus the apostasy of those leaders could not prevent the elective purpose of God, not in that age nor in any age:

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money [silver], that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou

## The Olivet Discourse

wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money [silver] into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. (Luke 19:11-27)

Further light is shed upon the servant who hid his Lord's silver when we consider a statement in our Lord's sermon on the mount: *No man, when he hath lighted a [lamp] covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a [lampstand], that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have* (Luke 8:16-18, emphasis mine). The words which we have emphasized, *seemeth to have*, describes the servant who hid his Lord's silver, perfectly. He claims to be the servant of the Lord, but he does not know Him. He may *honor him with his lips, but his heart is far from him* (Mark 7:6).

While this parable is about Israel, it matters not if we apply this parable to Israel (as we have done) or to different churches in this age. The lesson is the same. When Israel or the church has hidden the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ from others, *after the commandments and doctrines of men* (Colossians 2:22), they have hidden it from themselves. While this parable is about Israel, the results of apostasy are the same, whether with the Jews at the first advent of our Lord or with the church at the second advent of our Lord, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 25:30).

## The Olivet Discourse

The final parable of our Lord will provide its own interpretation if we allow it to do so. However if we press it beyond known Scriptural truth, as many have done, the truth of the parable will break down and all understanding will be lost.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (Matthew 25:31-46)

The sheep and the goats in this parable are nations, not individuals. As nations they will be rewarded (at the coming of our Lord) for what they have done *unto one of the least of these my brethren*. The brethren of the Lord compose the nation of Israel. So those who have had compassion upon the nation of Israel will be the sheep, and those who have abused Israel will be the goats. The goat nations *shall go away into everlasting punishment*, but the sheep nations will be rewarded by entrance into the earthly Kingdom of God (during the millennial reign of Christ).

## The Olivet Discourse

It must be remembered that the sheep nations are being rewarded for good works. Therefore their reward in the Kingdom is not salvation, because salvation *is not by works of righteousness which we have done* (Titus 3:5). Our Lord spoke of these nations in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, when He said:

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. (Matthew 10:39-42)

Once we understand that the sheep nations are not redeemed people, but nations that have done good unto Israel throughout the *time of Jacob's trouble*, then we can understand who the people are that shall be deceived by the devil at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, when the devil is loosed for a little season (Revelation 20:7-10). Too many expositors have sought to make the sheep nations redeemed people because of the last few words in our Lord's final parable, *but the righteous into eternal life* (Matthew 25:46). These expositors have failed to remember that salvation is not obtained by works of righteousness that anyone has done. They have also failed to remember that the righteous (II Corinthians 5:21) shall enter into eternal life, but the self-righteous will not.

Indeed the sheep nations will enter the realm of eternal life when they enter the Kingdom because they will be in the presence of our Lord and the redeemed, but they will not have eternal life unless their faith and trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as stated above, it is obvious they

## The Olivet Discourse

are not redeemed. Otherwise they could not be deceived by the devil when he is loosed for a little season, at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. This little phrase, *but the righteous into eternal life*, is another example of the prophetic principle, things that are written together do not always go together.

### Chapter XIII

## THE MYSTERY OF GOD

We have learned that the seven feasts of the Jews, the seventy weeks of Daniel's vision, and Nebuchadnezzar's dream have provided us with prophetic overviews of events that led to the first advent of our Lord and of events that will lead to His second advent. The Scriptures contain many of these overviews, each of which provides important keys to unlocking *The Mystery of God*, which is God's plan for the ages.

The seven feasts of the Jews were an important part of the sacrificial system which was given with the law on mount Sinai. The law was given to act as a *schoolmaster* (Galatians 3:24-25) to bring the Jews unto Christ through the truth of the gospel that was contained in the shadows and types of the sacrificial system. By and large the Jews did not recognize this aspect of the law. They saw the daily sacrifices as well as the seven feasts of the Jews as ordered rituals and forms, something to be observed daily and yearly according to their covenant relationship with God. Even so there were Jews who, by the Word of God and the Spirit of God, believed God's promise

## The Mystery of God

of a Savior which was contained in the *mystery* of the sacrificial system. Consequently they trusted the Lord as their Savior.

Even so these believers could not understand that the first three feasts of the Jews portrayed three aspects of our Lord's first advent ministry, and the last three feasts portrayed three aspects of our Lord's second advent ministry, nor could they understand that the middle feast of Pentecost portrayed the church age, which has existed now for nearly two thousand years. This *mystery* was contained in the seven feasts of the Jews, but it was a mystery that could not be understood until other prophecies were first fulfilled.

It is difficult to know exactly how much understanding the Old Testament saints had. We know they understood enough to have their faith in the promised Messiah because our Lord said, *I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6). Therefore many from Adam to Christ had their faith in our Lord as their Savior. This truth is revealed in a statement made by our Lord to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the dead, *But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living* (Matthew 22:31-32). This truth is also seen in the testimonies of the saints that are recorded in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews. Those who are named there are among the great *cloud of witnesses* (in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews) who lived their lives by faith, and who were used by the writer of the book of Hebrews as examples of how believers in this age are to live by faith. We know David understood a great deal. This can be seen in many of the Psalms and particularly in Psalm fifty-one, where David

## The Mystery of God

described his relationship with the Lord after his sin with Bathsheba: *O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise* (Psalm 51:15-17). This reveals the believer's new covenant relationship with the Lord, but this relationship was not yet paid for, and would not be paid for until our Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary. Therefore David's understanding was projected far beyond the age in which he lived. This sort of understanding can be seen in other Old Testament saints as well. We get a glimpse of it in the patriarch Enoch. He was translated into heaven (Genesis 5:24) six hundred and seventy-six years before the flood, yet he spoke of the second coming of our Lord according to an account recorded by Jude in the New Testament:

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. (Jude 1:14-15)

These examples convey the truth that some of the Old Testament saints understood much more than they have been given credit for. Some of them apparently understood some things by direct revelation from God -- things that are not necessarily recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. Nevertheless we also know that there were others, like Daniel, who did not understand some of the things they were given to prophesy:

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (Daniel 12:8-9)

## The Mystery of God

Nebuchadnezzar's dream has provided the historical sequence of the empires related to *the mystery of God* from Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon; Cyrus' and Darius' empire of the Medes and Persians; Alexander's Greece, which was divided among his four generals after his death; and the Roman empire of the Caesars and the popes. These are by no means all of the empires that have existed from the time of the Babylonian empire to the present, but these empires are intrinsically related to God's prophetic purpose in Daniel's people, the Jews, and Daniel's city, Jerusalem.

The vision of the seventy weeks of Daniel, like the seven feasts of the Jews, also had an obvious and a mysterious side to it. The obvious truth was that from the decree to restore and build Jerusalem unto the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth, there was to be a period of seventy times seven from the beginning to the end of the vision, but it was not revealed what the seventy periods of seven were to be. This did not become known until our Lord was crucified (*cut off, but not for himself* [Daniel 9:26]) four hundred and eighty-three years after the decree of Cyrus (454 B.C. to 29 A.D.). Even then it was not known that there would be a gap between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of Daniel's vision consisting of the entire period of the church age. This parenthesis was hidden in the mystery of the feast of Pentecost, and it could not be solved until four hundred and ninety years had elapsed from the decree of Cyrus without the establishment of the Kingdom. Once those years had passed, it became evident that the last week of Daniel's vision was separated from the others. Consequently when Israel became a nation again in May of 1948, it became evident that the vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14) was about Israel's resurrection from the nations of the world and not about a literal resurrection of Jews who had died. It also became evident that Israel's resurrection was separated from her

## The Mystery of God

salvation. It was then possible to know that the feast of trumpets was not connected with the salvation of Israel, but with the first resurrection. Then it became evident that the last three feasts of the Jews are to be associated with the second advent of our Lord, and this revealed that the feast of Pentecost was a prophetic portrayal of the parenthesis between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of Daniel's vision.

It is apparent then that these overviews required a partial fulfillment of their mysterious aspects before they could be solved; and to those who are without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, even with a partial fulfillment of these mysteries, they are still without understanding. Our Lord told His disciples, when they asked why He spoke to the scribes and Pharisees in parables, *Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given* (Matthew 13:11). Thus *the mystery of God* is for the children of God.

At the counsel in Jerusalem, following Paul's first missionary journey into Asia, James said, *Known unto God are all of his works from the beginning of the [ages]* (Acts 15:18), and in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm David wrote:

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. (Psalm 139:1-6)

God's understanding of David portrays God's understanding of all men. If we were to read this Psalm in its entirety, it would reveal that God is Omniscient and Omnipresent. If we would then reflect upon the fact that the Scriptures declare that God created the heavens and the earth by His Word and by His Spirit (Psalm 33:6; 104:30; Genesis 1:1), we would then know that God is

## The Mystery of God

Omnipotent. In keeping with these attributes, the Scriptures also declare that God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). He is Immutable. These attributes, along with His Holiness, His Righteousness, His Justice, His Mercy and His Grace make God absolutely incomprehensible to the human mind, except as God has revealed Himself to man through His Word and by His Spirit. This is seen in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, in which he revealed the differences between saved and unsaved men:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (I Corinthians 2:1-16)

John prophesied of the completion of *the mystery of God* in the tenth chapter of the book of the Revelation:

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the

## The Mystery of God

mystery of God should be [brought to completion], as he hath [proclaimed the gospel] to his servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:7)

God's Omniscience is the basis of *the mystery of God*. This can be seen in the fact that the Scriptures declare that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). The Scriptures also declare that believers were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). *Such knowledge, as David said, is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it* (Psalm 139:6). This knowledge transcends the fall of Lucifer; the introduction of sin into the world by the serpent; the fall of Adam and Eve; the sin nature and false concepts of all of mankind that derived from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; the revelation of man's sin in the giving of the law; the solution to the sin question in the incarnation, life, vicarious death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; the proclamation of the truth, as well as the apostasy of the church age; the first resurrection; the revelation of the antichrist; the judgments and events of the great tribulation period; the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand; the salvation of souls during the tribulation; the placing of the abomination of desolation in the temple in Jerusalem; the flight and preservation of one-third of the nation of Israel into the wilderness; the revelation of Jesus Christ on the mount of Olives at His second coming; the battle of Armageddon; the salvation of the nation of Israel; the judgment of the nations; the marriage supper of the Lamb; the binding of Satan for one thousand years; the millennial reign of Christ; the loosing of Satan and the deception of the nations; the judgment of Satan and the great white throne judgment; and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

This truly is *the mystery of God* (I Corinthians 2:7; Revelation 10:7). It has been portrayed

## The Mystery of God

in the shadows and types of the sacrificial system; it has been portrayed in prophecies; it has been portrayed in historical incidents that have had an allegorical significance; it has been portrayed in proverbs and parables; and it has been portrayed in direct statements in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Additionally there are the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God) contained in the parables of Matthew chapter thirteen and Luke chapter eight. As ministers of the truth, we have been made *stewards of the mysteries of God* (I Corinthians 4:1). Therefore we should not be ignorant of the mystery of the blindness of Israel (Romans 11:25); nor of the mystery of the gospel (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 6:19); nor of the mystery of the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:51); nor of the mystery of His will (Ephesians 1:9); nor of the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:3-4; Colossians 4:3); nor of the mystery of the fellowship of Christ (Ephesians 3:9); nor of the mystery of marriage, which typifies the relationship between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:32); nor of the mystery of the indwelling Spirit of God: *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:26, 27); nor of the mystery of the iniquity (II Thessalonians 2:7), which was manifested in the fall of Lucifer, and in the introduction of sin into the human family in the garden of Eden, and in the cohabitation of the sons of God with the daughters of men in the days of Noah, and in the betrayal of the Lord by Judas, and will be manifested in the revelation of the antichrist, and in the casting of Satan out of heaven and into the earth at the midpoint of the tribulation period, and in the binding of Satan for one thousand years at the beginning of the millennium, and in the loosing of Satan and the deception of the nations at the end of the millennium; nor should we be ignorant of the mystery of the faith (I Timothy 3:9); nor of the mystery of godliness,

## The Mystery of God

through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ (I Timothy 3:16); nor of the mystery of the seven stars which refers to the messengers of the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 1:20) nor, lastly, of the mystery of the woman, the harlot Babylon (Revelation 17:5, 7).

We have considered the overview of the seven feasts of the Jews, the overview of the seventy weeks of Daniel, and the overview of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. There are two more of the many overviews in Scripture that are important to our present study. The first of these is found in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. The second is found in the twelfth chapter of the book of the Revelation.

These two overviews span essentially the same period of time, but the perspective of each is different. The overview in the Revelation is from the perspective of Israel, who is the *woman* in this chapter. Consequently it spans the time from the birth of Christ to His ascension. It does this in the first five verses of the twelfth chapter of the Revelation. In verse six it jumps in time to the great tribulation period. It is at this point in time (between verses five and six) that the overview in the Gospel of Matthew takes over. This overview is from the perspective of the New Testament church, because it spans the church age with seven parables which were spoken by our Lord. These parables take us in time from the ascension of Christ to the first resurrection at the end of the church age. Once the redeemed have been resurrected, the perspective of Israel takes over once again; because from verse six to the end of the twelfth chapter of the Revelation, this overview spans the period of the tribulation until the salvation of Israel at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of

## The Mystery of God

Jesus Christ [when they look on Him Whom they pierced]. (Revelation 12:17)

This difference in perspective is very important because the word *elect* is sometimes used to describe the nation of Israel, and at other times it is used to describe both the Jews and the Gentiles who make up the church in this present age. Without the perspective of these two overviews, it would be difficult to know when the elect are Israel and when they are the church. This is the primary reason why many professing Christians believe the church will go through the first three and one-half years of the great tribulation. However if we understand the difference between the perspective of Israel and the perspective of the church, as well as the truth contained in the first three overviews, we will have the correct combination to unlock this aspect of *the mystery of God*.

The seven parables spoken by our Lord in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew provide the church with essential information for the church age. The parable of the Sower is about the great commission, *Go ye into all of the world, and preach the gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15). This mission has been passed from generation to generation by faithful churches. Paul told Timothy, *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also* (II Timothy 2:1-2). He also told him, *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and*

## The Mystery of God

*they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables* (II Timothy 4:1-4).

Paul's warning to Timothy brings us to the second parable spoken by our Lord, the parable of the tares and the wheat. This parable has provided the church with a warning about the work it has been commissioned to do. This work has been done in the world, where the devil has also been at work. Therefore from the first century to the present, the church has been warned not to be ignorant of his devices. Likewise our Lord's warning to the Jews, *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits* (Matthew 7:15-16), should have been heeded by both the Jews and the church; but it was not heeded when the Jews were the custodians of the truth, and, unfortunately, the church has fallen asleep as well.

This brings us to our Lord's next parable, the parable of the mustard seed. We have already considered this parable in our study of the apostasy of the Laodicean church. Therefore we know that the singular seed that was planted by our Lord was the church which was planted for the healing of the nations. We also know that the unparalleled growth of the mustard plant was the result of the sowing of the tares by the wicked one, and not by the sowing of the wheat by faithful preachers in the church. This can be seen in our Lord's sermon on the mount, where He told the Jews, *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves* (Matthew 7:13-15). The apostle Paul also taught:

## The Mystery of God

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is [Hagar]. For this [Hagar] is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, *Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.* (Galatians 4:21-27, emphasis mine)

The *other gospel* of the Judaizers, recorded in Paul's epistle to the Galatians, combined ritual and law as essential elements to salvation. This is *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). It was born in the lie of the serpent to Eve, and it was typified by our Lord in the tares that were sown among the wheat. In the above quotation we emphasized that *the desolate* (Hagar, who represents law and ritual for salvation) has *many more children* than Sarah (who represents grace and faith). This confirms the fact that the unparalleled growth of the mustard seed was due to the *other gospel* of the *tares among the wheat*, which was also described as the *broad way* in our Lord's sermon on the mount, and not as any kind of a result of preaching the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

One error leads to another. This brings us to our Lord's fourth parable, the parable of a woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal. The significance of the leaven is found in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, where our Lord warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and in the eighth chapter of Mark where He warned them to beware of the leaven of Herod. He explained that the leaven of each of these was their doctrine (Matthew 16:12).

## The Mystery of God

Since it was a woman who took three measures of meal (wheat) and added leaven to them; and since wheat in the first two parables represents children of the kingdom; and since leaven represents false doctrine (teaching); and since women are not to teach or usurp authority over men, but are to be in subjection (I Timothy 2:11-14), the woman in this parable is used in a bad ethical sense because she is teaching three different forms of false doctrine in the church. Her doctrine is the leaven of the Pharisees, the leaven of the Sadducees, and the leaven of Herod. The leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy (Luke 12:1), which manifests itself by self-righteousness. The leaven of the Sadducees is the denial of spiritual truth, which has been seen in their denial of the resurrection and other doctrines (Acts 23:8). The leaven of Herod, as we have seen in the chapter on *The Olivet Discourse*, is the world's attempt to provide the conditions of the Kingdom of God by political means. It has manifested itself throughout the history of the church by state-supported churches and attempts to legislate morality. Each of these forms of false doctrine will be a significant part of the apostasy that will precede the first resurrection. Once the first resurrection has taken place, all who will remain upon the earth who profess to be Christians (i.e., the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image or the ten horns of the beast) will be counterfeit Christians. Hence *the whole* [will then be] *leavened* (Matthew 13:33).

The fifth and sixth parables are closely related. The treasure hid in the field is Israel. She was hidden in the field in 70 A.D. because of her rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior (Luke 19:14). Nevertheless the Lord sold all that He had (which speaks of His death on the cross of Calvary) to purchase the field (which is the world) in order to obtain the treasure hid in the field. This parable speaks of the salvation of the nation of Israel out of the nations of the world,

## The Mystery of God

which will occur when she looks on the One Whom she pierced and believes and is saved. Whereas the pearl of great price is the redeemed of all ages (God's called-out assembly [in this age, called the church] which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles). The merchant man is the Lord. He purchased the pearl by His death on the cross of Calvary, His burial and His resurrection from the dead. Since all seven parables are for the age between the ascension of our Lord and the first resurrection, the difference between these two parables is defined by the differences between the two overviews we have been considering in this chapter.

We have already considered the seventh parable, a net let down into the sea, when we considered the techniques of mass evangelism which have produced the apostasy that is characterized by the Laodicean church. It should be noted that these techniques have been used in other ages, other than the Laodicean age. The church gained imperial favor under the Roman emperor Constantine. When he forced the people he conquered to be baptized or die, this was another form of the net let down into the sea. It was also a form of the leaven of Herod, which was introduced into the meal by a woman, and the woman in this case was the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently the ministry of the church has sometimes been according to the truth of the Word of God and at other times it has not, and this is revealed in these seven parables.

It is important for us to understand that the parables of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew show a progression of various influences that have been brought to bear upon the proclamation of the truth in this present age of the church. This progression can be specifically noted in the seven letters of the apostle John to the seven churches in Asia, recorded in the second and third chapters of the book of the Revelation. It is also important for us to remember that all seven

## The Mystery of God

churches existed in the first century of the present era. Therefore it should be evident that the influences that are characterized by the seven parables did not have the same effect on all of the churches to whom John wrote, nor will all of the churches of this era be affected the same way.

Dr. C. I. Scofield, the primary editor of the Scofield Reference Bible, attempted to make the conditions in the seven churches in Asia a dispensational portrayal of the church age, from the first century to the first resurrection. I must admit that I took his dispensational view to be the proper way to view the seven churches in Asia until I was faced with the writing of this book. It was then that I came to realize that while his theory has some merit, it also has some flaws. For example, in Revelation 2:1-7, the heading for the letter to the church at Ephesus (*The message to Ephesus. The church at the end of the apostolic age; first love left*) would seem to suggest that during the apostolic age the church kept its first love in tack, but at the end of the age the church began to lose its first love. Does this heading present the facts as they are revealed in the Scriptures? No, it does not. All seven of the churches to whom John wrote existed during the apostolic age. So by virtue of this fact, Ephesus does not represent the conditions of the church at the end of the apostolic age. The church at Ephesus presents conditions that existed in a church of the apostolic age; a condition that can exist in any church of any age; a condition that should be avoided in every age. Even so we would have to agree with Dr. Scofield that by the end of the apostolic age there could have been many churches like the church at Ephesus that were fundamentally sound in every respect, but had, nevertheless, become introspective and lost their first love, Jesus Christ. Further, by way of example, the heading over Revelation 2:8-11 in the Scofield Bible (*The message to Smyrna. Period of the great persecution, to A.D. 316*) suggests

## The Mystery of God

a dispensation of persecution until the date of A.D. 316. Is persecution dispensational? What does the Scripture say? Paul wrote Timothy, *But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (II Timothy 3:10-12). While there have been periods of church history in which there were great persecutions, every believer who is faithful to the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, apart from the deeds of the law, will suffer some kind of persecution for his testimony to the truth.

I find no need to consider all of the headings in the Scofield Bible to belabor a point. I certainly agree with Dr. Scofield that there have been ages that have been characterized by one or more of the seven churches in Asia, but what is more important is to realize that the characteristics of any individual church in any age is not dependent upon the age, but upon the personal choices and directions made by the leadership of the church, and the demands made by the membership of the church upon its leadership. Consequently the seven letters to the seven churches reveal the different responses made by different churches (in every age) to the truths contained in the seven parables of our Lord. These influences will ultimately result in the great apostasy, prior to the first resurrection.

## Chapter XIV

### A CLEAR PERSPECTIVE

In our previous chapter, *The Mystery of God*, we became acquainted with two more overviews in the Scriptures, the mystery of the seven parables in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and the mystery of the woman in the twelfth chapter of the book of the Revelation. While these two overviews span approximately the same period of time, the overview provided by the mystery of the woman starts first and ends last. Its perspective is Jewish. The woman, as we have seen, is Israel. In the first five verses of the twelfth chapter of the Revelation, she *pained to be delivered* (which speaks of the birth of Jesus into the nation of Israel); the dragon sought to devour her child as soon as it was born (when Herod ordered the death of all of the Jewish children, *from two years old and under*); and the man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, was caught up to God and to His throne (when Christ ascended from the mount of Olives). After the ascension of the Lord in verse five, in verse six the woman has fled into the wilderness where for the last twelve hundred and sixty days (three and one-half lunar years) of the

## A Clear Perspective

great tribulation period she is fed of God. Her flight into the wilderness is according to our Lord's instructions to the Jews in His Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:15-21).

It is important to understand that this overview has been given from the perspective of Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks, which were determined upon Daniel's city, Jerusalem, and upon Daniel's people, the Jews (Daniel 9:24). The New Testament church has been left out of this overview. The reason for this is that the church age lies between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of Daniel's vision and is therefore not a part of it. Israel has been the *treasure hid in the field* for the greater part of the church age. She was buried in the nations of the world with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Roman captivity in 70 A.D. She remained buried until her resurrection out of the nations of the world on May 14, 1948, when she became a nation again among the nations of the world. Despite her resurrection from the nations of the world and her present status as a nation, Israel's prophetic history will not begin again until the revelation of the antichrist at the end of the church age. At that time the prophetic clock of Daniel's seventy weeks will start its countdown to the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the antichrist will make a covenant with Israel for one week (Daniel 9:27) to complete the final week of the vision of the seventy weeks.

Thus the overview of the mystery of the woman spans chapters six through nineteen in the book of the Revelation. These chapters have taken us from the revelation of the antichrist to the revelation of Jesus Christ: for in our studies thus far we have considered the revelation of the antichrist; the appearance of the one hundred and forty-four thousand on mount Zion; the many judgments that shall be loosed from the seven sealed book during *the time of Jacob's trouble*,

## A Clear Perspective

which will culminate with the second coming of our Lord, the salvation of Israel and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth.

The other overview provided by the mystery of the seven parables in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew starts last and ends first. It spans the first five chapters of the Revelation. Its perspective is the perspective of the New Testament church. It stands in the gap between the ascension of our Lord and the first resurrection prior to the great tribulation period. It stands, as we have seen, in the position of the feast of Pentecost, between the first three feasts of the Jews (which were fulfilled in the first advent of Christ) and the last three feasts of the Jews (which will be fulfilled in bringing about His second advent).

The seven parables of our overview reveal seven influences that shall come upon all churches in the age between the ascension of our Lord and the first resurrection. These influences have found an historical expression in the seven churches to whom John wrote in chapters two and three of the Revelation. This historical expression has also given us a prophetic expression of these same influences upon all churches throughout the church age. A consideration of the seven churches to whom John wrote will show us how any church in any age can respond positively or negatively to any or all of the influences that are contained in the seven parables of our Lord. Over the course of the church age then, the responses of the churches may be like the two faithful churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, or they may be like the responses of the other five. The various responses of the churches ultimately become a matter of whether they walk according to the Word of God, preaching and teaching the truth, or whether they walk according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man* (Proverbs 14:12).

## A Clear Perspective

Since the Scriptures prophesy *a great falling away* (an apostasy) in the final age before *our gathering together unto him* (II Thessalonians 2:1-3), five of the seven parables spoken by our Lord show a progression of influences that shall ultimately produce this apostasy. This means that in the final age before the first resurrection, the majority of the churches of the last days will have succumbed to the tares among the wheat; the mustard seed that grew into a tree; the leaven that the woman hid in three measures of meal; and to the evangelistic methods of a net let down into the sea. Some churches will also have been affected by the fact that Israel was the treasure hid in the field. They will have persecuted the Jews and assumed that the promises God made to Israel were to be fulfilled in the church, and not in Israel. Even so no church in any age need be apostate. They may faithfully preach and teach the truth of the Word of God, without trying to manipulate the results. This was illustrated by the different grounds upon which the seed fell in the parable of the Sower, and the principle was reiterated by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase* (I Corinthians 3:6-7). The churches which shall be faithful to the task of preaching and teaching the Word of God, and allowing God to give the increase without manipulation, will make a positive contribution towards the redemption and instruction of the pearl of great price.

Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. (Isaiah 1:9)

The book of the Revelation begins with the revelation of Jesus Christ to John who conveyed this revelation to seven churches in Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Internal evidence in the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation reveals

## A Clear Perspective

that John wrote to these churches before the death of Nero in 68 A.D.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen [Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius], and one is [Nero], and the other [Vespasian] is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition (Revelation 17:9-11).

Since none of the churches except the church at Ephesus is mentioned in the book of Acts, it is unlikely that any of these churches was more than fifteen years old (if that) when John wrote to them. This emphasizes how rapidly the negative influences that were portrayed in our Lord's parables changed some churches from faithful churches, proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, to apostate organizations drawn away by the lure of another gospel, riches, fame, political power, and the false doctrines of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. The subtle manner in which this began is seen in the church at Ephesus:

Unto the [messenger] of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden [lampstands]; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy [lampstand] out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (Revelation 2:1-7)

An examination of this address reveals that the church at Ephesus was fundamentally sound in almost every respect. It had labored faithfully, it was patient, it was able to identify false prophets, and it hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which the Lord also hated. Even so one of the

## A Clear Perspective

influences that had been revealed in our Lord's parables had caused this church to change its mind from the adoration it had towards the Lord when it was first saved, to another mind-set. Therefore our Lord said, *I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

On the surface it is difficult to recognize how this happened. This church seems to have been faithful in so many respects. Even so the church's fault is revealed in our Lord's instructions, *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works.* This statement shows us that this church had left the adoration of the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ for its own self-righteousness. The word translated *do* in this text is the Greek word *poieo*. *Poieo* as we have already learned can mean to make or to do. Herodotus used it, as we have seen, in the sense of making something one's own. The first works are the works of the Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of sinners. Thus to make the first works one's own was for them to remember the pit from which they had been dug by the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This agrees totally with Paul's instructions to Titus regarding salvation, *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3:5-7).

Despite the fact that salvation is by God's grace, apart from the deeds of the law, this church had been infected with the leaven of the Pharisees:

And [Jesus] spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this

## A Clear Perspective

publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:9-14)

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with doing the right things, but when the things that believers do or do not do become badges of pride, this becomes a source of self-righteousness and minimizes the One Who stood in their stead in life and in death to redeem them from their sins. Remember the question Paul asked the Roman Christians after showing the depravity of the Jews and the Gentiles in chapters one and two of the book of Romans, *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God* (Romans 3:9-11).

Believers are in no way better than the unsaved of the world, whether they are Jews or whether they are Gentiles. The difference between believers and unbelievers is that unbelievers are still under the condemnation of their sins, while believers have received the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ and stand justified before God, because the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son has cleansed them from all sin. Indeed there are changes in the lives of believers (I Peter 4:4). These have been wrought by the Word of God and by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, but these changes provide no basis for boasting. Thus Paul asked, *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law* (Romans 3:27-28).

The second church that John wrote to, the church at Smyrna, reveals a church which

## A Clear Perspective

willingly took upon itself the responsibility of preaching the Word of God to a lost world. They were empowered to do this by means of the gifts and callings of God. Obedience to our Lord's great commission had given them the opportunity to express their thanksgiving for their salvation by declaring the grace of God to others. When souls were saved by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, they provided these converts with the fellowship of the saints and instructions in the truth of the Word of God: that they might *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (II Peter 3:18).

And unto the [messenger] of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. (Revelation 2:8-11)

This church had remembered the pit from which it had been dug. It recognized that it was saved by grace through faith. It recognized that it had no merit of its own, and so it saw the world in the same condition that it had been in before its salvation. Therefore it faithfully preached salvation to a world that was dead in trespasses and in sin. It did this with compassion and without coercion, expecting God to give the increase according to His elective purpose. It understood and heeded Paul's instructions to Timothy:

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of,

## A Clear Perspective

knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (II Timothy 3:10-4:4)

The church at Smyrna understood that it had one mission in the world, as all faithful churches from the first century to the present have known. That mission was characterized in our Lord's parable of the Sower, just as the product of that mission was characterized in the parable of the pearl of great price. So the church at Smyrna willingly took to heart the commission of our Lord to the church, not out of duty, but out of thanksgiving:

All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The church at Smyrna recognized that this mission could be fraught with danger, and indeed she was persecuted as she exercised her ministry in this world. She recognized that it is the church's responsibility, yea it is the church's privilege, to diligently proclaim the truth, no matter the cost; and she recognized it is the Spirit of God's work to quicken the truth of the Word to the hearts and minds of those who hear the gospel, so that ... *when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Acts 13:48). The church at Smyrna did not possess a great deal of material wealth. Our Lord acknowledged their material poverty, nevertheless He said, *but thou art rich*. They were

## A Clear Perspective

rich because they had operated in faith by means of the gifts and callings that God had given them; and without fear of reprisal from the world, and in the face of further persecution, they willingly proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ to the honor and glory of their Lord and Savior.

The third church that was addressed by the apostle John was the church at Pergamos. This church, unlike the church at Ephesus, was affected by all five of the negative influences that were portrayed in the parables of our Lord:

And to the [messenger] of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. (Revelation 2:12-17)

The church at Pergamos, like the church at Ephesus, did not fail in its relationship with the Lord all at once. It had a faithful beginning. It, like the church at Smyrna, had known persecution (*in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr*), but there came the time when this church developed two forms of doctrine, the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. These doctrines in turn manifested themselves in this church with the negative influences that were contained in the parables of the tares among the wheat, the mustard seed that grew into a tree, the woman that placed leaven in three measures of meal, and in the treasure hid

## A Clear Perspective

in the field.

To determine what the doctrine of Balaam was, it is necessary to consider the account of Balaam in the book of Numbers, chapters twenty-two to twenty-five. Balaam was an Old Testament prophet who was approached by messengers from Balak the king of Moab. Balak had sent them to Balaam to get him to curse the Jews. He was afraid the Jews would attack his kingdom like they had defeated Sihon and Og, kings of the Amorites and the Bashanites. So when Balaam received these elders and lodged them, God questioned, *What men are these with thee?* Balaam explained that Balak wished him to curse the Jews:

And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you. And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us. (Numbers 22:12-14)

Nevertheless Balak persisted in offering riches and honor to Balaam if he would curse the Jews; and while Balaam overtly refused, in his heart he desired to go with the servants of Balak. *And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do* (Numbers 22:20). While this seems to bear the approval of God, God knew Balaam's heart and the incident with Balaam's ass (which had more understanding than the prophet and saved his life) reveals God's displeasure with Balaam. After that ... *the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak* (Numbers 22:35). Consequently every time Balaam and Balak went to a different vantage point to curse the Jews, God blessed them, and this frustrated both Balak and

## A Clear Perspective

Balaam. Balaam's heart was set upon the riches and honor that had been promised him (Jude 1:11); so in counsel with the Midianites, he determined to vex the Jews with craftiness (Numbers 25:17-18).

It is probable then that Balaam taught Balak that Moab (the progenitor of the Moabites) had been born to the eldest daughter of Lot, through a relationship with her father, Abraham's nephew. This made the Jews and the Moabites brethren. It is probable Balaam taught Balak to stress this relationship in any encounter with the Jews. Since they were brethren, wouldn't it be proper for the Moabites and the Jews to consider marriage relationships between their children? This was a subtle ploy to get the Jews to violate their separation from the idolatrous practices of the Moabites, who worshipped Chemosh. It is probable that this was the manner in which Balak *cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication*. It seems then that the doctrine of Balaam was the violation of the separation of the people of God from that which was religiously false; and the ploy then, as now, was to minimize the truth of the Word of God and to maximize the term *brethren*.

Much later in the history of the nation of Israel, Jehoshaphat king of Judah made a similar misjudgment in his relationship with Ahab king of Israel, which confirms our suppositions about Balaam's counsel to Balak:

Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, *I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war*. (II Chronicles 18:1-3, emphasis mine)

## A Clear Perspective

This text reveals that Jehoshaphat and Ahab had entered into a marriage alliance, which was a rather common practice between neighboring kingdoms throughout much of history. Even so this was an alliance that never should have been. Ahab and the northern kingdom of Israel were idolaters, and Jehoshaphat and the southern kingdom of Judah had removed the idols from their land and at that time had rejected the worship of idols for the worship of the true and living God. Nevertheless because they were brethren, Jehoshaphat violated his relationship of separation from that which was religiously false and said, *I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war.* When the war was ended, and Ahab was dead:

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, *Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.* Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God. (II Chronicles 19:1-3, emphasis mine)

Jehoshaphat's statement defines the doctrine of Balaam, *I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war;* and the statement of Jehu defines the consequences of the doctrine of Balaam, *Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.* Jehoshaphat's sentimentality had evoked a pledge from him to aid the enemies of God, just as the church at Pergamos and many other present-day churches (that practice this doctrine) have done. Ahab cared nothing for Jehoshaphat, but he was willing to use him and put him at risk. So as they prepared for battle he disguised himself, but he persuaded Jehoshaphat to wear his kingly garments (II Chronicles 18:28-32); and so it is with those who ignore our Lord's warning about wolves (false prophets) in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15) when they join together to purportedly serve the Lord.

## A Clear Perspective

We have already seen the results of the violation of separation from that which is spiritually false in the parable of the net let down into the sea, which has become the methodology of the mass evangelists and of the interdenominational churches. Coupled with these sweeping tactics to reach the masses, the other gospel of the tares and the wheat is a close companion. This in turn produces the numbers that can (with excessive growth) change an herb into a tree, so that it might become home to the birds of the air (i. e., the devil). Further, this type of growth would not be possible without an acceptance of or an overlooking of the many false doctrines of the woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal. Thus the doctrine of Balaam involves the negative influences of at least four of our Lord's parables, and probably five.

The second form of doctrine held by the church at Pergamos was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. According to the Scofield Reference Bible this name was not ascribed to any known sect in the history of the church. The name is derived from two Greek words, *nikao*, to conquer, and *laos*, the people (the word from which we get the term laity). Dr. Scofield proposed that this compound word was used to describe the differences between the priesthood and the laity, with the priesthood ruling the common people (Scofield Reference Bible, Oxford University Press, New York, Copyright, 1909, 1917, 1937, 1945, note 1, pg. 1332). While this concept has an historical basis in the Roman Catholic Church, it is not supported (to my knowledge) with Scriptural illustrations. Since Scripture is used to interpret Scripture, Scofield's suggested answer for the doctrine of the Nicolaitans does not seem to fit. However the original Greek provides another meaning for *nikao* which does have support with Scriptural illustrations. *Nikao* means to conquer, but it was also used by the Greeks to speak of *opinions*. Hence it was used to convey *the prevailing opinion* or *the vote of the*

## A Clear Perspective

*majority* (*Greek-English Lexicon*, Liddell & Scott, Oxford, First Edition, 1889, Seventh Edition, 1961, pg. 533). This definition brings to mind three major incidents in the Scriptures as well as numerous lesser incidents.

The first incident is found in the book of Numbers. God had commanded Moses to choose twelve princes of the tribes of Israel to spy out the land:

And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. (Numbers 13:26-33)

After receiving this report, the congregation wept that night (Numbers 14:1), and they said, *Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!* (Numbers 14:2). Then the congregation wished to stone Joshua and Caleb for encouraging them to go into the land (Numbers 14:10):

And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save

## A Clear Perspective

Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still. (Numbers 14:26-38)

The second incident is also found in the book of Numbers. Korah, Dathan and Abiram led a revolt with two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly of Israel against the authority of Moses and Aaron:

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?* (Numbers 16:1-3, emphasis mine)

The third incident is found in the book of first Samuel:

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, *Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* (I

## A Clear Perspective

Samuel 8:1-7, emphasis mine)

There are other incidents in the Scriptures when the people of God rebelled against the authority of the man of God, but these three are sufficient to establish what the doctrine of the Nicolaitans actually was. In the first incident the congregation rejected the opinion of Caleb and Joshua, which agreed with the promise of God, for the opinion of the majority, which reflected unbelief. In the case of Korah, Dathan and Abiram there was a direct attack upon Moses and Aaron, two men chosen of God to lead the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. It is interesting to note that had the congregation had its way, the Jews never would have departed Egypt in the first place; for each time trouble arose from Pharaoh, the Jews murmured against Moses. This was not only their pattern of thought before they left Egypt, it continued to be their pattern of thought throughout their forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

In the third incident the people rebelled against the authority of God that had been placed in the hands of Samuel. They sought a king to rule them rather than submitting to the rule of God through the man of God. Samuel was broken-hearted over their request, but the Lord consoled him by telling him, *[F]or they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* Then the Lord told Samuel to give them a king, but to protest solemnly and to tell them what the king would do in terms of taxes, conscription, confiscation of property, etc. Even so the people still stood in rebellion against the rule of God and for the rule of man (I Samuel 8:7-22).

In two of these three incidents, the choice of the people provided a usurpation of the priesthood of God. In the case of Korah, Moses reminded him of the position he had as a Levite

## A Clear Perspective

in the service of the tabernacle, and he said, *and seek ye the priesthood also?*

And [Moses] spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

And Moses said, *Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.*

And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. (Numbers 16:26-35, emphasis mine)

After such a demonstration of God's power and God's will, you would think that the congregation of the Jews would have then been submissive to the will of the Lord and to the God given authority of Moses and Aaron, but they were not: *But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord* (Numbers 16:41). It then took the budding of Aaron's rod to convince the congregation that Aaron was God's chosen priest. Thus God said:

And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds,

## A Clear Perspective

and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not. And Moses did so: as the LORD commanded him, so did he. (Numbers 17:5-11)

Saul, who was king by the will of the people, also usurped the authority of the priesthood when Samuel did not come to Gilgal at the appointed time:

And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee. (I Samuel 13:7-14)

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is characterized by rebellion against the authority of God and the vested authority of the man of God, as well as by unbelief. So as the negative influences that were characterized in five of our Lord's parables began to spread throughout the churches, this unbelief and rebellion manifested itself in the other gospel of the Judaizers. This in turn produced excessive growth in the church, which attracted those who thought according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. Consequently the many doctrines of the woman who hid leaven

## A Clear Perspective

in three measures of meal, demanded some means of atoning for the sins of believers which were committed after they were saved. The reasoning of man denied the eternal security of the believer, which was predicated upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: *Because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:19), and the fact that Christ is our eternal Priest (Hebrews 7:23-28). This unbelief resulted in the formation of a priesthood and a sacrificial system to deal with the sins of the people, *after the commandments and doctrines of men*, a concept which was refuted completely by the writer to the Hebrews:

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission [forgiveness on the basis of a payment] of these is, there is no more offering [sacrifice] for sin. (Hebrews 10:11-18)

It wasn't the clergy conquering the people that produced a counterfeit priesthood, but the people in rebellion against the Word of God and the man of God that produced it. Even though, as suggested by Dr. Scofield, as time went on and the church increased in power and wealth, a corrupted priesthood did indeed oppress the people, it also oppressed the *treasure hid in the field*. Thus the Roman and Greek Orthodox churches exacted many pogroms against the Jews.

The fourth church to whom John wrote was the church at Thyatira. This church was a product of all of the negative influences that were contained in five of the seven parables spoken by our Lord, but the emphasis in this church was upon the woman who took three measures of meal and hid leaven in them:

## A Clear Perspective

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.  
(Revelation 2:18-29)

The prophetic extension of this church into the last days provides a clear picture of the harlot who sits upon many waters in the seventeenth chapter of the book of the Revelation. This church is in fellowship with the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image (described as horns in the Revelation), which are apostate Protestant churches that have reunited with Rome. This church as a whole will be cast into the great tribulation period. Yet despite the depths of her degradation, the Lord makes an appeal to the redeemed who are within her, *hold fast till I come*. These will, of course, escape the wrath that is to come (I Thessalonians 5:9).

The fifth church was the church at Sardis. This is a church in its prophetic extension which portrays an almost completely apostate membership because it has a name that it lives, but it is dead:

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the

## A Clear Perspective

seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Revelation 3:1-6)

Apostasy begets apostasy, and so once the other churches in Asia began to see the apparent successes of the apostate churches, the negative influences of five of our Lord's parables manifested themselves in all of the churches but the two faithful churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia. Yet our Lord could say, *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

This bespeaks the fact that it does not take a lot of faith to be saved. Even apostate churches, despite their apostasy, may from time to time give some testimony to the truth. It is the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God that produces salvation. Thus there were a few even in Sardis that shall walk with the Lord in white.

Since we have already considered the Laodicean church in great detail in previous studies, the last church we will view in order to gain a clear perspective of the events of the last days is the church at Philadelphia:

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

## A Clear Perspective

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Revelation 3:7-13)

This church, like the church at Smyrna, was a church that was faithful to what the Lord had committed to its trust. Its position in the book of the Revelation, after Sardis and before Laodicea, connotes the idea that in its prophetic extension this church portrays a faithful church unto the first resurrection: *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

At the end of each of the messages to the seven churches, there is a promise to those who overcome. It is important that we understand what it means to overcome. John, who wrote the Revelation, also wrote a Gospel and three epistles. In the fifth chapter of his first epistle, he wrote:

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (I John 5:4-5)

Overcoming is not obtained by personal struggle. Overcoming is a product of salvation. Even so in the arena of life, as a church of Jesus Christ, each church has the capacity to make a choice to be faithful to that which has been committed to its trust, or it can be caught up in the apparent successes of the five negative influences in our Lord's parables. When God opens doors before us, we are to step through them and continue to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus

## A Clear Perspective

Christ, faithful unto the end. *The just are to live by faith; the law is not of faith; whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and their sins and iniquities will I remember against them no more.* Therefore the Lord is ready to reward His faithful churches with crowns of righteousness; He is ready to make us inhabitants of the new Jerusalem and to bring to fruition all that He has promised the redeemed in every age.

This chapter has been about *A Clear Perspective*. The overviews which we have considered respecting things Jewish and things connected with the church should help us with our perspective. God has a national future for Israel. He has promised to redeem them, and He will, but the prophets, who were inspired of God, have told of terrible judgments that are yet to come upon this earth. Jeremiah has told us that this is *the time of Jacob's trouble*. Zechariah has told us that Israel will be saved when they look upon Him Whom they have pierced. At the same time, God has promised the redeemed of this age (both Jews and Gentiles) that we are not reserved unto wrath. He has told us that the apostasy of the last days, and the revelation of the antichrist, are the two signs that must precede the coming of our Lord; but the antichrist cannot be revealed while that which hinders is in the way. We have also learned that the church age is between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel's vision and is, therefore, not a part of them. This should give us a clear perspective of last-day events.

## Chapter XV

### MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT

In our last two chapters we have learned that the parables of our Lord in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew were directly related to the seven churches in the second and third chapters of the book of the Revelation. We have learned that five of our Lord's parables supplied a portrayal of negative influences that would be brought to bear upon the churches throughout the church age. We have also learned that during the same period of time, two of the parables have revealed the positive influence of faithfully proclaiming the gospel of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no question that there were genuine believers in Judaism when the Jews were the custodians of the truth; and there is no question that there are faithful believers under the canopy of Christianity in this present church age: God has always had a believing remnant (Isaiah 1:9; Romans 11:5). Even so our Lord's parables were prophetic. They have shown us that from the beginning, there has been little difference between professing Christians in the church age, than

## Mystery Babylon the Great

there was with the Jews when Israel was the custodian of the truth. The masses in both Israel and the church have, over time, succumbed to the negative influences brought to bear upon them. Very early in church history there were battles for *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints* (Jude 1:3). These battles occurred because of those who *crept in unawares* (Jude 1:4) and *spoke evil of those things which they [knew] not: but what they [knew] naturally* (Jude 1:10). Jude compared them to Cain, Balaam and Korah (Jude 1:11).

*The faith* is a fragile commodity in the hands of religious men, because *no lie is of the truth* (I John 2:21). This has been seen in the first century in five of the seven churches in the second and third chapters of the Revelation. It can also be seen in the church at Corinth. A few years after this church was established, it already had those within it who denied the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (I Corinthians 15:12). This was not a slight deviation from the truth, this was a denial of a fundamental element of the gospel: for if Christ did not rise from the dead, *our preaching is vain, and [our] faith is also vain* (I Corinthians 15:14). Further, Paul had just returned from his first missionary journey into Asia when he had to deal with the problem of the Galatian heresy, both in his epistle to the Galatians (Galatians 1:6) and in the counsel at Jerusalem. This heresy asserted that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved (Acts 15:1).

This counterfeit gospel ran rampant throughout the churches. The apostle Paul dealt with it in his epistle to the Galatians and as a sub-theme in most of his other epistles. Nevertheless it continues to be perpetuated to this present day. The only difference between the heresy then and the heresy now is that the ritual has been changed from circumcision to baptism. In many of the

## Mystery Babylon the Great

churches under the canopy of Christianity, this is infant baptism. Thus our Lord could say to both the Jews (when they were the custodians of the truth) and to the church (in this age in which it is the custodian of the truth), *This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me* (Mark 7:6).

It can be seen, then, that the masses within the churches have departed from the truth for the same reason that Israel departed from the truth: *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men* (Mark 7:7). Towards the end of Paul's third missionary journey, he had the opportunity to speak to the elders at Ephesus and to advise them of certain negative influences that would come upon them:

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:25-31)

In addition to this warning, a careful reading of the epistles of Paul, Peter, John, the writer to the Hebrews, and Jude reveals that the early church was confronted with *the leaven* that the woman hid in three measures of meal; and as Paul told the Ephesian elders, these doctrinal errors would come upon the churches from both external and internal sources. There would be false prophets who would come to them in sheep's clothing, and there would be ambitious men who would arise from within the churches to enter the ministry as a profession, and not as a calling.

## Mystery Babylon the Great

Our Lord called these shepherds *hirelings*. Hirelings have no interest in the sheep, other than using them to provide for themselves (John 10:12-13). Consequently hirelings put the emphasis upon virtually everything but the truth of the Word of God to accomplish this end. This means they have little time or interest in studying *to show [themselves] approved unto God, [workmen] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (II Timothy 2:15).

Since they are not called of God, they could not discern the Word of God even if they studied. Consequently their congregations receive little or no truth. Further, these hirelings have been trained (in Bible Colleges and Seminaries) to appeal to the flesh. They do this in the name of spirituality, and this mock spirituality has produced many numerical and financial success stories, which are self-justifying to the institutions that trained them, to the hirelings, and to their congregations. It enables them to boast, along with the church at Laodicea: *[We are] rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; [but, sadly, they do not know that they are] wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* (Revelation 3:17).

Despite the spiritual dearth, there are genuine believers (as we have seen in the churches in the second and third chapters of the Revelation) within these congregations. Even so these believers receive virtually nothing from the ministry to help them grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). Remember that in our Lord's parable of the tares among the wheat, we learned that the tares were sown among the wheat while men slept. The men that slept, of necessity, must be those who were in charge of sowing the seed. In the church this is the pastor-teacher. So, as with a shepherd and his sheep, the flock is endangered when the shepherd is not vigilant in feeding and caring for the sheep. This neglect

## Mystery Babylon the Great

makes the sheep an easy prey for wolves in sheep's clothing.

We have seen that the church has one mission in the world. It has been given the authority of Jesus Christ to go into all of the world and preach the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20). The church is to preach with authority because *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (II Timothy 3:16-17). Despite the authority of the Word of God, and as with the temptation of Eve in the garden, if the Word of God can be undermined by crafty men (as it was by the serpent), churches are set adrift like ships without anchors. Thus, in this day of the great apostasy, many churches have fallen into this condition because their pastors have failed to do what Paul instructed Timothy to do:

I charge thee therefore [because all Scripture is given by inspiration of God] before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.* But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (II Timothy 4:1-5, emphasis mine)

The failure to endure sound doctrine came upon the churches rather quickly, because the five negative influences we have seen (in the parables of the tares among the wheat, the mustard seed that grew into a tree, the woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal, the treasure hid in the field, and a net cast into the sea that gathered of every kind) had their effects upon the churches. Consequently the churches, like the nation of Israel before them, began to give mere lip service to God. They began to move away from the autonomy and authority of the local church (centered in the Word of God) to a centralized ecclesiastical authority, *after the commandments*

## Mystery Babylon the Great

*and doctrines of men* (Colossians 2:20-23).

This, ironically, began with proper motivation. The poorer churches received help from their more affluent sister churches, as with the offering Paul gathered for the church at Jerusalem (II Corinthians 8:1-15); but with the deaths of properly motivated leaders (like the apostles), and the base nature of hirelings who arose within the churches, the autonomy and authority of many of the poorer churches were soon usurped. This was accomplished by an ecclesiastical body that was given the responsibility to distribute assets to the poorer churches, but at the cost of their independence. Those churches and individuals who would not relinquish the autonomy of the local church and the authority of the Word of God were ultimately persecuted by the great whore (Revelation 17:6): *MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH* (Revelation 17:5).

The Scriptures give us the identity of this woman with certainty: *And the woman that thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth* (Revelation 17:18). That city was Rome. In order to maintain a Biblical perspective, it is important to understand that Rome has not ceased to exist as a world power, as is taught by secular historians. The power that Rome has today is different than the political power she had for about five hundred years. This power began to change from a political power to a religious power during the reign of Constantine, when Christianity became the state religion of Rome. This merger of church and state produced the Roman Catholic Church (even though the Roman Church claims an earlier beginning, with a succession of Popes all the way back to the apostle Peter). This is not an introspective attack upon the Roman Church, but a declaration of the truth we have learned from the Revelation and from

## Mystery Babylon the Great

Nebuchadnezzar's dream: the fourth world empire will be the world-dominating power during the reign of the antichrist (Revelations 17:11) unto the second coming of Jesus Christ.

In our chapter on *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*, we learned that he had a dream which he promptly forgot. His wise men could not tell him the dream or the interpretation, so Nebuchadnezzar sentenced them all to death. When Daniel found that he and his companions were also under the sentence of death, he questioned why the decree from the king was so hasty (Daniel 2:15). Then Daniel gained time from Nebuchadnezzar to petition the Lord about the dream, and the secret was made known unto him in a night vision (Daniel 2:19). Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great image with an head of gold, breast and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron, with feet of iron and of clay (Daniel 2:32-33). Daniel told the king: *Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth* (Daniel 2:34-35).

The interpretation of the dream that was given to Daniel, as well as other revelations in the book of Daniel (in the light of history), have revealed that the gold was Babylon, the silver was Persia, the brass was Greece, and the iron and clay are Rome. The dream declared that during the fourth world empire a stone would be cut out without hands. This speaks of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ during the reign of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1-7), early in the empire. However at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, He will judge the fourth world empire

## Mystery Babylon the Great

and its leaders, the antichrist and the false prophet (Revelation 13:11-12), as well as the apostate churches, when He smites the image of the beast upon its feet. After that, the stone will become a mountain and fill the whole earth, which speaks of the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen [Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius], and one is [Nero], and the other [Vespasian] is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he [the antichrist] is the eighth, and is of the seven [i.e., of the same empire], and goeth into perdition. (Revelation 17:9-11)

We have quoted the above text again to emphasize that the study of Roman history, from the secular point of view, provides little understanding of the history of Rome, from the Scriptural point of view. This is evident in this quotation because secular history does not begin the Roman Empire with Julius Caesar. It begins it with Augustus. The reason for this is the difference in the political structure of Rome under Augustus. Despite this change, the empire was still Roman, whether it was a republic ruled by a dictator or a republic ruled by an emperor. Further, while secular history recognizes the division of the Roman Empire into its two legs during the reign of Diocletian (286 A.D.), it does not recognize that the fourth world empire exist today. Secular history tells us that the Western Empire died unofficially in 480 A.D. with the death of Julius Nepos, and the Eastern Empire continued until 1453 A.D., when it was captured by the Ottoman Empire. (Western Roman Empire, Wikipedia)

Yet, according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream (given to him by God), there were to be four world empires, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, successively, unto the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth. Since God cannot lie, there is no contradiction nor failure of

## Mystery Babylon the Great

this prophecy. Rather, there is a difference in perspective. The academic world of the historian divides history into neat packages based upon similarities of government. Consequently it does not count the rise of the Roman Catholic Church in the West, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the East (except within the dates of 480 in the West and 1453 in the East) to be a continuation of the history of Rome. Neither does it count the fracturing of the Roman Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation movement (into the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream), after the political fall of Rome, to be a part of the Roman Empire, but God does:

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with [brittle] clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with [brittle] clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

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

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and *the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.* (Daniel 2:40-45, emphasis mine)

The history of the Roman Empire, according to the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is different than the perspective of secular history. The Biblical view, as we have already seen, counts the political and religious aspects of Rome to be one empire. Thus as the Roman Empire began to decline politically, it ascended religiously. It later separated into the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Greek Orthodox Church in the East. These are, from the Biblical perspective, the two legs of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Then as the history of the Roman

## Mystery Babylon the Great

Church unfolded, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it fractured (brittle clay) into the ten toes of the Protestant Reformation movement. This separation has remained pretty much in tack until the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the advent of interdenominationalism. During this period of time the net was let down into the sea with the cooperation of virtually all of the denominations under the canopy of Christianity. Then at about the midpoint of the twentieth century, the ecumenical movement took off with great impetus with the ministries of men like Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and Billy Graham.

Bishop Sheen could be properly called the first *televangelist*, while Billy Graham is the best known mass-evangelist of the twentieth century. At the beginning, Billy Graham did not use the medium of television, but confined his ministry to city-wide meetings in auditoriums and stadiums. It wasn't long (1955), however, before he saw the distinct advantage of adding television coverage of his meetings. This greatly expanded his ministry and his popularity. Both of these men were ecumenical in their approach, and so was Pope John Paul II.

Bishop Sheen's broadcasts bridged ecclesiastical barriers, and Billy Graham insisted upon the cooperation of the various Christian denominations in his evangelistic campaigns. These two men, Sheen and Graham, met on a train ride from Washington to New York and became good friends. As Billy Graham's popularity increased, he was invited by Cardinal Wojtyla to preach in Krakow cathedral. They later met, after the Cardinal became Pope John Paul II, and found they were in agreement about reuniting all of Christendom. Thus, through the efforts of these men and many others, the toes that had fractured from the empire during the Protestant Reformation movement began an overt campaign to reunite with Rome.

## Mystery Babylon the Great

Although Billy Graham comes from a typical Southern Baptist background, which traditionally has not been sympathetic to Catholicism, he has broken that mould. Billy has always respected people for what they are. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that he had a great respect for Pope John Paul II.

Their contact began in 1978, when Cardinal Wojtyla invited Graham to preach in Krakow cathedral. They didn't actually meet on that occasion, however; Pope John Paul I had died suddenly, and the Cardinal had to leave for Rome and the consistory which would eventually elect him to the See of Peter. Graham preached also at the great Marian shrine of Czestochowa, and is on record as being deeply impressed by the faith of Catholic Poland.

Three years later, Billy did indeed meet the Pope, this time in Rome. He found him extremely cordial and very interested in his ministry. 'After only a few minutes,' he wrote, 'I felt as if we had known each other for many years.' The two men of God exchanged gifts. Graham gave the Pope a woodcarving of a shepherd with his sheep, crafted by a North Carolina artist.

They recalled together the words of Jesus: 'I am the Good Shepherd; I know my own and my sheep know me ... There are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too' (John 10:14-16). In turn, the Pope gave Graham a medallion of his papacy and several beautifully bound volumes. (Irish Jesuit publication: *The Messenger*, June 2006, "Just as I am: Billy Graham")

During the nineteenth century, the Young Men's Christian Association (1844) and the Young Women's Christian Association (1855) were formed. The formation of these organizations set the mood for a modern ecumenical movement. The movement gained some impetus in 1910 with the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. In 1948 the World Council of Churches was formed, and 1950 saw the formation of the National Council of Churches. Each of these organizations was ecumenical in scope. Thus they minimized doctrine and maximized cooperation between the various Christian denominations.

From about the middle of the twentieth century to the present, then, there has been an overt movement to bring all of the denominations of Christianity together, as was suggested in the conversation between Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II. However, if we consider the context of our Lord's statement about *sheep* and *other sheep* mentioned in the Irish Jesuit article about

## Mystery Babylon the Great

Billy Graham, our Lord was speaking to Jews. Thus His reference to His *sheep* was a reference to redeemed Jews of that era, while the reference to the *other sheep* of His statement was a reference to those who would be redeemed during the church age. This means that His statement had nothing to do with an ecumenical movement to reunite the Roman Church with Protestant churches, even though this was the assumed interpretation applied by both Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II to our Lord's remarks.

Unity around the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is one thing, but unity for the sake of unity is quite another. Remember, John wrote: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world* (I John 4:1-3). Since all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and since God cannot deny Himself, the unity of the Spirit must be an agreement with God's Word (specifically about the Person and the work of Jesus Christ), rightly divided.

Even so, fuel was added to the ecumenical movement throughout the twentieth century with many outside of the church organizations being formed. Demos Shakarian, who worked closely with Oral Roberts, formed the Full Gospel Christian Business Men's Association in 1951. This interdenominational organization now has branches in 132 countries of the world. In 1990 The Promise Keepers was founded by the former head football coach of the University of Colorado at Boulder, Bill McCartney. The core beliefs of the organization are outlined in *Seven Promises*,

## Mystery Babylon the Great

which are embraced by its membership. The sixth promise is significant. It states: *A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity.* This seems a noble concept, but is this unity the Biblical *unity of the Spirit*?

The *unity of the Spirit* is a wonderful thing, but this Promise Keeper's promise has nothing to do with the unity of the Spirit. In practice, as demonstrated in their meetings, one Promise Keeper may ask another Promise Keeper, *Are you a Christian?* If the response is, *Yes.* Then he will say, *I, too, am a Christian and that makes us brothers.* Is this naivety or spiritual stupidity, or is it both? Given all of the false teaching under the canopy of Christianity, how could such a statement identify *wolves in sheep's clothing*, or how could it identify those from the midst of the churches that would arise, *speaking perverse things*? Stating that one is a Christian does not make it necessarily so.

To be a Christian, one must be a new creation in Christ Jesus. He must have had the preaching of the Word of God quickened to his heart by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:5), and thus be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). He must be in agreement with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus have his trust in the Lord, and not in works of righteousness which he has done. Yet the majority of people who call themselves Christians know nothing of these things. The majority were baptized as infants, confirmed when they reached puberty, and believe they must keep themselves in a right relationship with God by works of righteousness which they have done, which requires keeping the law of Moses. These misconceptions must be compared with the Word of God:

## Mystery Babylon the Great

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7)

And:

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of [the] disobedience: among whom also we all had our [manner of life] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:2-9)

And also:

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20)... To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:26-28)

And to show the purpose of the law:

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.* (Galatians 3:21-25, emphasis mine)

## Mystery Babylon the Great

As we come to the description of the woman in the seventeenth chapter of the book of the Revelation, we must realize that by a proper interpretation of the Scriptures, this woman would not be recognized by the world as a harlot, nor would the world recognize her offsprings, the ten horns, as harlots. The world would call them Christians. So how would The Promise Keeper's assessment of a Christian work with this woman and her offsprings?

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Revelation 17:1-5)

This woman is referred to as a whore. She is a whore in the sense that Israel was a whore. God likened Israel's worship of the false gods of the land to the activities of an unfaithful wife (Hosea 3:1); and this woman's worship has been diverted from the Person and work of Jesus Christ to the worship of the works of her own hands, by *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, the devil's lie. She sits upon many waters; therefore her reign is world-wide (Revelation 17:15). Her reign is so inclusive that the kings of the earth have worshipped falsely with her, and the inhabitants of the earth are in a stupor because of her false doctrines.

In the parable of the mustard seed, we saw that the seed grew into a tree. Its growth was so great that the birds of the air lodged in its uppermost branches and enjoyed its shade. By our Lord's interpretation, the birds were the devil. This is reversed in the description of the woman;

## Mystery Babylon the Great

the whore is sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, which is the devil who has enthroned her. The fruits of the other gospel which she has preached have made her rich, like the church at Laodicea, so that she is arrayed in costly materials, with jewels, and with a cup of gold.

This woman is described as having seven heads and ten horns. We have seen that the seven heads refer to the seven rulers of Rome who reigned until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and we have seen that the eighth ruler will be the antichrist. Thus the harlot Babylon is Rome (in the final stages of the empire) before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. The ten horns are the churches that fractured from the Roman church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but through the apostasy of the last days and the ecumenical movement, they have reunited. This union will be short-lived, for when we come to the end of the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation, we shall see that the ten horns will be used of God to judge the whore, when they shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire (Revelation 17:16-17).

Nevertheless at the beginning of the great tribulation period, the ecclesiastical head of this empire, along with the ten horns, will testify to the world that the antichrist is the Christ. They will be thoroughly convinced that this is true; and since all of the redeemed will have been raised in the first resurrection, there will not be anyone upon this earth who can discern the truth of the Word of God and therefore refute the authority of the whore and her apostate associates. Thus, with the *signs and lying wonders* that will be performed by the antichrist, the deception will be complete (II Thessalonians 2:9-10). It will go unchecked until our Lord brings the one hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses to mount Zion to testify to the truth during the great tribulation period.

## Mystery Babylon the Great

John testified that he saw *the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the [witnesses] of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great [wonder]. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns* (Revelation 17:6-7). The history of the Roman Church has indeed been a bloody one (See *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, The John C. Winston Company, 1926.) She has put to death many who have testified to the saving grace of Jesus Christ; and also, by federal headship, she is counted to have had a part in the deaths of the Old Testament saints who stood for the truth of the Word of God.

We stated earlier that as the churches were made subject to a centralized authority, that authority persecuted those who would not submit. Thus, as the Lord preserved a remnant in Israel in the Old Testament era, He has also preserved a remnant from the first century to the present, so that in the midst of the apostasy of the last days, our Lord still has a faithful remnant who shall testify to the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to a lost world. This remnant will be preserved unto the day when *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words* (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and

## Mystery Babylon the Great

the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. (Revelation 17:8-18)

In our chapter on *The Revelation of the Antichrist*, we stated that we believe that the antichrist will be Judas Iscariot. We believe this because Paul referred to the antichrist as the son of perdition (II Thessalonians 2:3), and our Lord also called Judas Iscariot the son of perdition (John 17:12). After our Lord's discourse on the bread of life, He referred to Judas as the devil (John 6:70), and the description of the antichrist in the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation (13:1) is precisely the same as the description of the devil in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation (12:3). These facts, along with the fact that in this Scripture the antichrist is described as the one who *was, and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit*, seem to require the preexistence of someone like Judas Iscariot to be the antichrist. Further, Judas was fully capable of deceiving the eleven into thinking that he was one of them. This was made evident when our Lord told the twelve that one of them would betray Him. They all said, *Is it I?* No one but the Lord knew it was Judas. Consequently there was nothing obviously different about the ministry of Judas than the ministries of the eleven. It should not seem strange then that the antichrist will have the ability

## Mystery Babylon the Great

to deceive the world with his *signs and lying wonders* (II Thessalonians 2:9-10).

This brings us to the ten horns who, along with the false prophet, shall attest that the antichrist is the Christ. We have identified the horns as the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which fractured from the Roman Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation movement. However in 1969, Hal Lindsey, in his book *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, identified these ten horns as the European Common Market nations. We mean no disrespect to Mr. Lindsey, but the Common Market nations do not fit the description of the horns in our text. The Common Market nations exist as nations now, but our text states, *And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast* (Revelation 17:12, emphasis mine).

The devil must mimic the truth of the Word of God in order to add credibility to the things that he does in this world. Consequently, in the realm of the truth, we have a triune Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and in the realm of the lie, we also have a trinity: with the devil in the place of God, the antichrist in the place of Christ, and another spirit in the place of the Holy Spirit. Further, in the realm of the truth, we have the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ; and in the realm of the lie, we have another gospel, based upon the works of man, which had its origin in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12).

Our Lord promised a rulership to those who live their lives by faith (Matthew 25:21). Thus, in the fourth chapter of the Revelation, we saw the twenty-four elders with crowns upon their heads, which they had received at the judgment seat of Christ. Even so they removed their

## Mystery Babylon the Great

crowns and cast them before the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, because He alone is worthy to reign (Revelation 4:10-11). In contrast to this, and by way of the lie of the devil usurping the truth of God, the ten horns will receive the power to reign as kings one hour with the beast; and, according to our text, they will give *their kingdom unto the beast* (Revelation 17:17). These parallels are not in Scripture by accident: for they reveal the sham nature of the devil, the antichrist, and the other spirit. They show the subtle and deceptive nature of the devil's lie.

So the unity that we have seen between the Roman Church and the Protestant churches of the last days is a sham unity. It will not last. It is as false as everything else that the devil has produced. Thus, at a point in time, during the reign of the antichrist: *the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled* (Revelation 17:16-17). This action by the ten horns will probably occur around the mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel, when the focus will be shifted from Rome to Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-21).

After the reign of the antichrist has been completed, at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, and during the battle of Armageddon: *the ten horns shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful* (Revelation 17:14). Thus the fourth world empire will end in judgment when the Lord smites it upon its feet.

Ironically the church in Rome was once the home of many faithful believers in Jesus

## Mystery Babylon the Great

Christ, but as the influences of five of the seven parables of our Lord gained impetus, the church at Rome grew into a tree that lodged the devil in its uppermost branches. This influence was so overwhelming, that rather than promoting the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ as it once had, this church became *MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH* (Revelation 17:5).

The history of this city-state certainly befits its Biblical name, Babylon. This name has its roots in the Hebrew word *Babel*, which means: *confusion*. It was first used in Scripture to describe the kingdom of Nimrod (Genesis 10:9-10), a great-grandson of Noah:

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1-9)

Confusion reigned because of rebellion against the revealed will of God. Today, confusion reigns for the same reason, and the worst possible confusion is that which reigns in the name of the truth. The church at Rome was once a bastion of the truth, but it has become the world-dominating center of the lie of the devil, along with the ten horns that have reunited with her. This is confusion. Thus she truly is *MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF*

Mystery Babylon the Great

*HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH* (Revelation 17:5).

## Chapter XVI

### THE SPIRIT OF THE PROPHECY

The facts and the circumstances that would necessitate the redemption of man were known unto God from all eternity. God is Omniscient (Acts 15:18; Psalm 139). Therefore the Scriptures declare that the Lamb (Jesus Christ) was slain from before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). This means that God's grace and mercy abounded in His redemptive purpose before God created man, before the circumstances arose in which the woman was deceived and Adam wilfully sinned (I Timothy 2:14). This eternal plan of redemption, then, found opportunity for historical expression immediately after they sinned, when God judged the serpent and said that the seed of the woman would bruise his head and the serpent would bruise His heel (Genesis 3:15).

On that occasion God quickened His promise to Adam's heart by His Holy Spirit so that he believed it. This was manifested by the fact that Adam applied the promise of the Seed of the woman to the only woman who then existed. He called his wife's name *Eve, the mother of all living* (Genesis 3:20). This implies that he believed that God would fulfill His promise through

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

her. It is evident then that Adam's understanding of God's prophetic promise was not perfect. Even so he believed the promise and his faith was counted unto him for righteousness.

The manifestation of Adam's faith was not too different than the faith of generations of believers throughout the history of the world. Their faith was genuine (providing salvation), but their understanding of how God would fulfill His promises was not always complete. For example, after our Lord was risen from the dead His disciples asked: *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel* (Acts 1:6)? This lack of understanding is further illustrated by the fact that before our Lord died, the disciples did not understand that it was necessary for Him to die (Matthew 16:21-22). They believed that He was the Christ, as witnessed by Peter's testimony (Matthew 16:13-18), but they lacked understanding of all that the Christ would have to do and to suffer. The prophet Daniel was greatly used of the Lord to record many prophecies of the last days, but he did not understand all that he prophesied. On one occasion he mourned and was ill because he understood (Daniel 10:1-2, 8), and on another occasion he was told to shut the words of a prophecy up and seal it until the time of the end because the prophecy was not for his time (Daniel 12:4). This reveals a Biblical principle: prophecy may or may not be understood with respect to the details of its fulfillment, but this does not alter the fact that believers are to be fully persuaded that God always keeps His promises (Romans 4:21), whether they know or do not know how God will accomplish them.

A more complete understanding of prophecy, as we have seen, often requires partial fulfillments or further revelations from God before a particular prophecy can be understood. This means that Adam's name for his wife was merely an expression of his present-tense conviction

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

regarding God's promise. Even so, in terms of fulfillment, it was not a reference to the natural progeny that would be produced by her, as is often assumed, for by natural generation it could hardly be said that she would be *the mother of all living*; because the New Testament reveals:

*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive* (I Corinthians 15:22).

Consequently *the mother of all living* was not Eve; it was Mary (Luke 1:27-35):

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5).

We have seen that Adam believed the promise of God. His wife also believed it. This is revealed by the fact that God clothed both of them with a covering of skins to replace their feeble attempts (which they had exercised before they believed) to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. The covering provided by God speaks of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, whereas the fig leaves speak of the works of the flesh. The works of the flesh could not make them or anyone else of subsequent generations acceptable to God. This was immediately revealed (after they believed the promise of God) by the fact that God provided a covering of skins to replace the unacceptable covering they had made for themselves. Thus the faith of Adam and Eve was counted unto them for righteousness, like the faith of Abraham and all believers of subsequent generations (Romans 4:3).

The provision of these skins was the next allegorical step in this historical incident (Genesis 3:21); and the acquisition of these skins, though it is not stated in the account in Genesis, required the death of a vicarious sacrifice (probably a lamb) on behalf of each of them. This provision of an acceptable covering revealed the Scriptural principle: *without the shedding of blood, there is*

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

*no remission* (Hebrews 9:22). It also revealed the principle: *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21).

Thus as we progress through the Scriptures, the promise that was given in the judgment of the serpent was subsequently confirmed to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and to the nation of Israel through the various covenants and revelations that God gave them. It is interesting to observe that the Old Testament Scriptures and these covenants were progressive and prophetic in their revelation of the Bible's central theme, the redemption of man that is in Jesus Christ.

It is important for us as students of the Scriptures to recognize that the redemption of man has been presented in the Scriptures in two phases. The first phase presented the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures that promised the first advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of this phase has been recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. The second phase has been presented in the prophecies of the Old and the New Testament Scriptures that relate to the second advent of our Lord and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth. Both phases were included in the promise of the Seed of the woman, because at the coming of our Lord the Seed of the woman will restore man to the image in which he was created (I John 3:1-2; Genesis 1:26). When this occurs, the redemption of man will then be complete (Romans 8:23-25). Therefore all prophecy is related to the redemptive purpose of Jesus Christ: *for the [witness] of Jesus is the spirit of [the] prophecy* (Revelation 19:10). It should be noted in this text that the definite article precedes the singular word prophecy in the Greek text of the New Testament. We have indicated this by enclosing the definite article in brackets. Thus *the prophecy* regarding the redemption of man is at the root of all of the prophecies of the Old and New Testament Scriptures,

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

and these are connected directly or indirectly to the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first phase of redemption then has been manifested in the life and ministry of our Lord, when He became a Man by means of the virgin birth (Luke 1:31-32); when, as a Jew (John 1:11), He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law (Matthew 5:17-18); when He also fulfilled all righteousness (Matthew 3:15); when, having no cause of death in Him, He willingly offered Himself (John 10:17-18) as a ransom for sin (Matthew 20:28; I Timothy 2:6), *the Just for the unjust* (I Peter 3:18); when He was crucified, buried and arose again the third day (I Corinthians 15:3-4); when He showed Himself alive after His resurrection to the apostles and to above five hundred brethren at one time (I Corinthians 15:5-6); when He ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, to be seated at the right hand of the Father (Romans 8:34) where He ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25), and from whence He will return to the earth to bring to completion the second phase of the redemption of man (Acts 1:10-11); when the redeemed will be resurrected (I Thessalonians 4:16-17), glorified (Romans 8:29-30) and adopted (Galatians 4:5) into the family of God (I John 3:1-2); when the Lord's feet shall touch upon the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), and Israel shall look upon Him Whom they pierced and be saved (Zechariah 12:10); when the Lord will judge the earth and cast the antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:17-20); when the Lord will judge the sheep and the goat nations (Matthew 25:31-33); when Satan will be bound for one thousand years (Revelation 20:1-2); when the Lord shall establish His Kingdom and reign with the saints over all of the earth (Revelation 20:6); when Satan will be loosed a little season and will deceive the nations (Revelation 20:7-9); when the Lord will judge Satan and cast him into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10); when the

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

Lord will resurrect the unsaved and judge them at the great white throne judgment seat (Revelation 20:11-15); when the Lord will create a new heaven and a new earth in which He will dwell with the saints forever and forever (Revelation 21:1-3), which has been the hope of the redeemed ever since God promised that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent would bruise His heel.

It should be evident then that the first and second advents of our Lord Jesus Christ are inseparably related to the promise of the Seed of the woman. Our Lord's heel was bruised in His first advent, and the serpent's head will be crushed in the final judgment of Satan at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. The redeemed will have experienced the redemption of their bodies, so that they no longer will be subject to sin, and the hope of the gospel will no longer be a hope (Romans 8:23-25); it will then be a reality.

When the redeemed are raised according to the truth of the gospel, they will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ. It is unclear whether this judgment takes place at one time, or whether it takes place in the three phases of the first resurrection (firstfruits, harvest and gleanings). Whenever it takes place it will not involve the judgment of sins as has been erroneously sermonized by so many legalistic preachers. God has already judged the sins of the believer in Jesus Christ. Consequently the new covenant relationship declares: *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more* (Hebrews 10:16-17, emphasis mine). This new covenant relationship is beautifully illustrated in the New Testament by the fact that not one sin of an Old Testament saint is recorded in the New

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

Testament.

This means that as soon as our Lord had put the new covenant into effect by His crucifixion, burial and resurrection from the dead, He made it effective to all believers of all time. Consequently in the New Testament Abraham is seen as having been strong in the faith and fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform (Romans 4:20-21). Not one act of unbelief on his part is seen in the New Testament. The only things that are seen are those things which he did by faith. Likewise the believers in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews do not have any of their sins recorded in the New Testament. All that is recorded of them is what they had done in their lives by faith. This makes the eleventh chapter of Hebrews a portrayal of the judgment seat of Christ. Everything that is remembered of the lives of those recorded in this chapter is what they had done by faith; and since *whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Romans 14:23), the differences between the historical record of their lives in the Old Testament and the record in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews are not contradictions, as has been supposed by some, but are confirmations of the believer's new covenant relationship: the relationship by which he shall be judged at the judgment seat of Christ.

In the fifth chapter of second Corinthians the apostle Paul wrote of the judgment seat of Christ in context with the interim condition of believers between the times of their deaths and the time of their resurrection from the dead. He made it clear that when believers die they are not disembodied, even though their bodies will sleep in the grave until the day of the resurrection. Our Lord also spoke of this when He promised the disciples, *I go to prepare a place for you* (John 14:2). Thus, with our Lord's resurrection from the dead, He did indeed prepare *dwelling places*

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

in which believers will abide, awaiting the day of their resurrection. Unfortunately the translators translated the Greek word for *dwelling places* as *mansions* in their translation of the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. These *dwelling places* are not mansions. They are interim bodies in which believers will dwell until the day of their resurrection. This agrees with Paul's experience on his first missionary journey into Asia, when he was stoned to death at Lystra. It also agrees with his testimony in his second epistle to the Corinthians, which he wrote over fourteen years later using the third person to describe himself: *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (II Corinthians 12:2-4).* On that occasion the transition of Paul's soul from its earthly home to its heavenly home was so smooth and so rapid he could not tell whether he was in his body or out of his body. Thus based upon this experience and upon further revelation from God, he wrote the following to the church at Corinth:

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Wherefore we [eagerly desire], that, whether present or absent, we may be [well

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

pleasing to] him [see Hebrews 11:6]. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in [the] body [i. e., the body of Christ], according to that he hath done, whether it be [beneficial] or [worthless]. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. (II Corinthians 5:1-11)

The believer has the treasure of salvation in an earthen vessel, his body (II Corinthians 4:7). While this earthen vessel is subject to sin, to sickness and to death, the redeemed soul and spirit which reside within this earthen vessel (with the Holy Spirit) are declared to be holy, righteous and just. The believer has this judicial standing by virtue of the one sacrifice for sin forever that was made by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. In keeping with our Lord's promise of eternal life, the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanses the believer from all sin (I John 1:7). This raises the question, then: How is the believer to live his life?

The Scriptures are very clear on this matter. The life of the believer is a life of faith, not of law: *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith, and the law is not of faith* (Galatians 3:11-12). This should be evident, but the influence that came from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (a way which seemeth right unto a man) has been constantly used, by those who do not understand salvation by grace, to compel the believer to endeavor to live a life of law works. Such a life beguiles the believer of his rewards (Colossians 2:4-8), because *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*. Therefore Paul wrote to Timothy about the lawful use of the law:

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine [other than salvation by grace] neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law;

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

*But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. (I Timothy 1:3-11, emphasis mine)*

Since Christ's righteousness is the believer's righteousness by faith (II Corinthians 5:21), it is evident from this Scripture that the law was not made for those who have their faith in Christ, but it was made for the *ungodly and for sinners*.... *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster* (Galatians 3:24-25, emphasis mine). So while the believer agrees with every precept of the law, he knows that his relationship with God is not predicated of law (Romans 7:22-25). Therefore the good works of a believer are not generated from the motive of fear and punishment that were under the law, they are generated of thanksgiving for the marvelous grace that God has bestowed upon sinners by faith. Therefore all of the things that are available for the believer to do (through the gifts of the Spirit) are done willingly and not of necessity (II Corinthians 9:7). Thus the apostle Paul wrote:

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my [preservation] through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. (Philippians 1:12-24)

Paul was in prison when he wrote these words to the Philippians. He knew this was part of his lot in life. He knew from the time of his salvation that he would suffer many things in his efforts to do what the Lord had called him to do (Acts 9:15-16): to faithfully preach the gospel whenever and wherever the Lord would give him the opportunity. He knew that if his life was taken from him, he would be instantly in the presence of the Lord. Yet he knew that while this was the desirable thing, it was more needful for those to whom he ministered for him to remain alive, to teach and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

While only certain ones are called to preach, we all have a ministry within the body of Christ. This is to be performed until the Lord takes us into His presence, either by life or by death. As long as we are in our earthly bodies, then, we are to operate in the gifts that God has given us for the furtherance of the gospel. This is the life of faith to which every believer is called and for which every believer will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. One believer is not counted above another in this labor of love. Each has his own gift(s) to be exercised within the body of Christ by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and to the benefit of the body (I Corinthians 12:4-11). Thus Paul instructed the Corinthians:

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me,

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (I Corinthians 3:6-15)

Therefore, from the foundation of salvation in Jesus Christ, each believer is to labor within the body of Christ by faith with the gifts that God has given him. Since Paul likened the gifts of believers to the different parts of a human body in his first epistle to the Corinthians (12:12-26), a good deal of the work that is done by the members of the body of Christ is not seen by the other members of the body, but this does not alter the essential nature of these gifts and services to the overall welfare of the body. In this respect it should always be remembered: *man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh upon the heart* (I Samuel 16:7). Consequently every believer has something to contribute to the ministry of the local church, which for him is the body of Christ, until he is raised in resurrection and the whole body of Christ is assembled in heaven.

Paul referred to this manner of working, in the above portion of Scripture, as building with gold, silver and precious stones. Since gold was used to cover the Ark of the Covenant and other parts of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the tabernacle represented the dwelling place of God, building with gold is used by Paul to represent those gifts and works performed by the believer that bring honor unto the Person and the work of the Father. Likewise silver was used in the tabernacle to denote redemption or the price of redemption, so in the typology of Scripture silver represents the Son. This means that if one is building with silver, these are the gifts and works

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

of the believer which bring honor unto the Person and the work of the Son. Similarly there were two stones upon the ephod of the high priest, by which the high priest was able to discern God's will for the nation of Israel. They were called the Urim and the Thummim. In the typology of the Scripture these represent the Holy Spirit. So building with precious stones upon the foundation of Christ are those gifts and works of the believer that bring honor unto the Person and the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

In contrast with these, the building materials of wood, hay and stubble all have their roots in the earth. So they speak of that which is *of the earth, earthy*. Since this was part of Paul's description of Adam (in his epistle to the Corinthians), building with these types of material speaks of those who are endeavoring to build upon the foundation of Christ with the works of the flesh. Since no flesh can glory in the presence of God (I Corinthians 1:29), the works that are described by wood, hay and stubble are all combustible materials. These cannot abide a trial by fire. Consequently Paul wrote: *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*. It must be remembered that this is a judgment of the believer's works, not whether he is saved, because he cannot be lost.

The admonition for all believers then, from this description of the judgment seat of Christ, is that we should do God's work God's way. This is by faith with the gifts that He has given us. We should not devise man-made schemes to serve God, which like Sarah's scheme produced Ishmael, a son of the flesh, and not Isaac, the son of God's promise. Thus Solomon wrote, *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD,*

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

*and depart from [the evil one]. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (Proverbs 3:5-12).* This Old Testament quotation is the equivalent of Paul's New Testament instructions to the Galatians: *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Galatians 5:16-17).*

After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead [i.e., the spiritually dead] shall hear the voice of the Son of God [through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God]: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good [made the Good their own], unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil [practiced the evil], unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:1-29)

This is a very important incident in the ministry of our Lord. It illustrates the attitude of the religiously self-righteous in this world (in this case the Jews) towards those who are infirmed. God does indeed discipline His own, and this can be in the form of physical maladies (Hebrews 12:6). However the Jews of that day considered all of the poor, the crippled and the diseased to be such because of personal sins. They also considered their station in life to be such because they were holy, and if anything should befall them, it was merely the means of showing their spiritual superiority (James 1:2-3 in the Greek text). Consequently their attitude was a form of self-righteousness. So our Lord contrasted their response to His words with the impotent man's response to His words.

The impotent man heard the words of our Lord and was healed, both physically and

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

spiritually, because he believed our Lord. Therefore Christ's righteousness became his righteousness by faith. However, in contrast to the impotent man's response to our Lord, the Jews refused to hear our Lord's words or to acknowledge by what Power He had done what he had done. They were steeped in the traditions of the Jews, and their traditions blinded their minds to the truth of the Word of God. This made it impossible for them to recognize Who Jesus was and by Whose power the impotent man had been made whole. All that entered their minds was that He had healed the man on the Sabbath day, which to their way of thinking negated everything else our Lord had said and done. So with our Lord's testimony as to how the impotent man was healed, the Jews considered Him a Sabbath breaker and a blasphemer.

Therefore our Lord told the Jews that the time was coming and now is when the dead would hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that would hear would live. This statement was not about the resurrection, as has been assumed by many, it was about salvation; because it is the spiritually dead, not the physically dead, that shall hear the voice of the Son of God (through the preaching of the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God) and live. Consequently it was a direct reference to the impotent man, but it certainly extends far beyond him. After that He also spoke to them about the two resurrections. The first will take place before the millennial reign of Christ, and the second will take place after it.

Our Lord told the Jews that the participants in the first resurrection will be those who by faith have *done* good. This is another use of the Greek word *poieo* and, as we have seen, it is not about *doing good*. It is about *making the Good their own*. In other words, they have made Christ's righteousness their righteousness by faith. This was accomplished by the preaching of

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, whereas the participants in the second resurrection will be those who have rejected the righteousness of Christ for their own righteousness. Consequently they will not have heard the voice of the Son of God (with understanding) and will have *done evil*.

This translation makes us think that only the very evil (i.e., the wicked) will appear at the great white throne judgment. However the word translated *done* in this text is a Greek word which means to practice, and the word *evil* is preceded by the definite article. This means that these individuals will have practiced *the evil* by trusting that the deeds they have wrought by their knowledge of right and wrong will have given them an inheritance in heaven. This was the lie of the devil. This lie has been at the root of all that man calls good, whether it is in the realm of moral ethics or in the realm of the religions of this world. This means that both the religious and the irreligious will be resurrected to stand before the great white throne judgment:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: *and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: *and they were judged every man according to their works.* And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.* (Revelation 20:11-15, emphasis mine)

With the judgment seat of Christ and with this judgment, we have been faced with two judgments in this chapter. These judgments are associated with the two resurrections, the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust. However, contrary to common opinion, neither of these judgments is directly about sin. Both are about works. At the first resurrection

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

it will be the works of believers and at the second resurrection it will be the works of unbelievers that shall be judged. In the first resurrection, as we have seen, the works that are judged are fruits from the tree of life; whereas at the great white throne judgment the works that are judged are fruits from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Our Lord spoke of these in His sermon on the mount, when He said:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: *depart from me, ye that work [the] iniquity.* (Matthew 7:13-23, emphasis mine)

The strait gate refers to salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, thus it refers to the tree of life; while the wide gate is *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*, thus it refers to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since in His sermon on the mount, by the lawful use of the law, the Lord had thoroughly proven the Jews to be guilty before the law, our Lord warned the Jews of false prophets who would come to them in sheep's clothing. The false prophets would be those who would have exchanged the truth of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ for the lie of the devil. Consequently they would still be trying to involve man's corrupted sense of right and wrong in his relationship with God. This is

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

the reason our Lord spoke of a good tree and an evil tree, and contrasted the fruits of each of them.

As we have seen in previous studies, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a counterfeit (through the lie of the devil) of the tree of life. It is the counterfeit nature of the evil tree that is so destructive. Therefore our Lord warned: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work [the] iniquity.* This warning is necessary because there are so many under the canopy of Christianity who profess to know the Lord, but by their insistence upon works for salvation, they deny him (Titus 1:16).

The fruit of the evil tree always involves man's morality in his relationship with God, whereas the fruit of the good tree always rests in the completed work of Jesus Christ for a right relationship with God (Hebrews 4:10). This is well illustrated in the relationship between Cain and Abel. Abel believed God and brought of the firstlings of his flocks, a sacrifice unto the Lord. His sacrifice showed his faith in the promise of the Seed of the woman. Whereas Cain brought of the fruits of the ground, a bloodless offering unto the Lord. He rejected the promise of the Seed of the woman for the works of his own hands. Thus Cain believed he could have a relationship with God on the basis of what seemed right to him, but Abel recognized himself a sinner and rested in the promise of God.

This brings us back to the great white throne judgment. Those who will stand in judgment

## The Spirit of the Prophecy

there will be judged according to their works. This is right because they believe, like Cain, that they can have a right relationship with God by the fruit of the evil tree, a way which seemeth right unto a man. Consequently at this judgment there are two sets of books. One set of books is the record of the lives of all who will be judged at this judgment. It is a record of the very best that they have done in their lives, the things which they expect to give them an inheritance in heaven. Yet the best that they have done will leave them short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Therefore the book of life will be opened to see whether their names are listed with the redeemed. Failing this, they will be cast into the lake of fire with the devil and his angels. Thus what began in Genesis has found its completion in the book of the Revelation. God cannot lie. Truly, Jesus (the Seed of the woman) is the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Him (John 14:6).

## Chapter XVII

### WHERE DO THEY FIT?

We have seen that the Old Testament saints believed the promises of God concerning both advents of our Lord. As in any age, we know that some of them had more information and understood more than others, because some of them received direct revelations from God and were thus used of God to write the Old Testament Scriptures. Even though some of them were used in this way, it is impossible for us to say with any degree of accuracy how much any one of them actually understood about how the two advents of our Lord would be fulfilled, because there is a distinction between believing a promise and knowing how the promise will be kept.

It is spiritually reasonable then to apply to their understanding of the two advents of our Lord the same sort of understanding that we have concerning our Lord's second advent. For example, we have seen that certain prophetic truths could not be understood until certain other prophetic truths were first fulfilled. This is a part of the mystery of God, and it reveals the grace of God and the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit of God in every age without a specific

## Where Do They Fit?

understanding of prophetic events that have not yet been fulfilled.

The average Jew, prior to the Babylonian captivity, received his knowledge of the Word of God by hearing it read by the priests on the Sabbath day (Exodus 24:7). They also heard the Word of God from the prophets who were in their midst, both before and after their exile into Babylon. During their exile the Jews met together in private homes for prayer, the reading of the Word of God, and the observance of certain Jewish traditions. This was the beginning of the synagogue, which from that time on provided a place in the world where the Word of God could be heard (Luke 4:16-21). As a part of the restoration to the land, after their captivity in Babylon, the Jews who returned to Jerusalem were strengthened by the reading of the Word of God as they prepared to repair the walls of the city and to rebuild the temple (Nehemiah 8:8).

Given the general level of understanding of the Old Testament saints, as far as we are able to ascertain, we have seen that the prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel would most likely have been viewed by those who were aware of it as an uninterrupted sequence, since there was nothing about it that would have made them think otherwise. This was probably the accepted view of those who were aware of the prophecy until at least seven years after the crucifixion of our Lord, when it would have become obvious that the Kingdom had not been established upon the earth according to an uninterrupted sequential interpretation of the prophecy.

Further the significance of the seven feasts of the Jews (which in this age gives us an overview of the first and second advents of Christ, separated by the church age) would have been obscured to most, if not all of them. This can be seen by the fact that even after the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord (at the end of the sixty-ninth week of Daniel's prophecy), the

## Where Do They Fit?

overview provided by the seven feasts of the Jews could not be seen to be a prophetic overview until after Israel became a nation again in 1948. Once Israel was back in the land, but without salvation, it was then possible to see that the first three feasts of the Jews represented the first advent of our Lord and the last three feasts represented the second advent. It was also possible, as we have seen, to recognize that Pentecost, the middle feast of the Jews, represented the church age.

Despite the difficulties involved in the understanding of the prophetic Scriptures, we have already seen that for the age in which he lived, David had a great understanding of the new covenant relationship that was promised in Christ, and Enoch understood that the Lord would come *with ten thousands of his saints* (Jude 1:14). Even so it seems that the greater number of the Old Testament saints simply believed the promises that had been revealed to them, concerning both advents of our Lord, but like so many believers in this age, they did not know how the Lord would fulfill the details of the various prophecies.

We have been privileged to see all of the prophecies of our Lord's first advent (contained in the Old Testament Scriptures) fulfilled with perfect detail through the New Testament record that God has given us. Even so, with respect to certain aspects of our Lord's second advent, we find ourselves in a similar position to that of the majority of the Old Testament saints regarding some prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled. Indeed we, like they, believe these prophecies, but with our present level of understanding, we cannot tell (with absolute certainty) where some of these prophecies fit in the sequence of events that shall lead to the coming of our Lord and the establishment of His Kingdom upon this earth.

## Where Do They Fit?

Throughout the church age believers have been able to see the mountain peaks of second advent prophecies in the distance. Sometimes these peaks have appeared to be nearer than at other times. However with the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in her own land in 1948, we have become aware that we are definitely in the latter part of the latter days. Despite this awareness, we still do not know the day or the hour when our Lord will come (this is known only to the Father [Matthew 24:36]). Even so those of us who have diligently applied ourselves to the study of the second coming of our Lord now have at our disposal many more details of our Lord's coming than our brethren understood in previous generations, but despite this our prophetic vision is still not perfect. Some prophecies still elude our understanding, so that we do not know when or how they will be fulfilled, but we know that when they are fulfilled, they will be fulfilled perfectly.

One such prophecy is the battle described in the thirty-eight and thirty-ninth chapters of the book of Ezekiel. Most of the respected theologians that I have read on these passages of Scripture have ascribed them to the battle of Armageddon. They may be correct in their ascription, but this ascription has never completely satisfied me because the conditions for the battle of Armageddon and some of the conditions for this battle do not seem to fit together.

The solution to this problem may be that some of the things that are written together in these two chapters may not be fulfilled together, so that some of the events may occur at the beginning of the tribulation (where they seem to fit), and other events in these chapters may be fulfilled at the end of the tribulation (where they seem to fit). At this juncture, given the difficulties in accurately placing these prophecies, our responsibility as always is to continue to

## Where Do They Fit?

*study to shew [ourselves] approved unto God, [workmen] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15).*

If this allows us to agree with what we have read, so be it; but if it does not allow for an agreement with what we have read, then the Word of God must stand for what it reveals when it is rightly divided with the information that God supplies with the progression of time. With more light, more can be seen, so this should not be taken as a criticism. If these writers diligently applied themselves to the study of the Word of God and wrote with a present-tense conviction that what they wrote was correct as they understood it with the light that was available to them, then their inability to see certain prophetic truths cannot be faulted. As we have previously stated, prophecy is a difficult subject. It takes certain keys to unlock the prophetic Scriptures and make them more understandable. Without these keys, prophecy remains veiled in the mystery of God, so that our understanding of the when and the how of the prophecies cannot be seen until by God's grace and by our study He enables us to discover the keys.

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee.

Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. *After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.*

Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the

## Where Do They Fit?

land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: and thou shalt say, *I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.* (Ezekiel 38:1-12, emphasis mine)

As we approach the interpretation of this prophecy, it is important for us to know that Gomer, Magog, Tubal and Meshech were some of the sons of Japheth (Genesis 10:2), the eldest son of Noah (Genesis 10:21). The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Gomer founded the Galatians (Gauls ) and that Magog founded the Scythians (Tartars) (Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter VI, Section 1). Thus the general consensus based upon the evidence is that Gog the chief prince of Magog will be the ruler of Russia at the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy. Meshech and Tubal, names for two of the sons of Japheth, have been identified in modern times as the cities of Moscow and Tobolsk. (Scofield Reference Bible, 1909, 1917, pg. 888, Note 1.)

Thus this prophecy is about a northern confederation of armies that will be allied against Israel in the *latter years*. These armies will consist of Magog (Russia), Persia (Iran), Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer (Gauls), and Togarmah (Turkey). They shall arise and come like a storm (which seems to describe an aerial invasion) to the mountains of Israel to take a spoil of the Jews, the people that have been gathered out of the nations of the world in the latter years.

This alliance of nations has not yet been formed, but at the present time it seems to be in the process of forming. For example, Turkey is presently an ally of the United States which is an ally of Israel. Yet Turkey has recently made an alliance with Iran (an enemy of Israel) against the Kurds. Likewise Russia, after her supposed cold-war demise, has recently been saber-rattling

### Where Do They Fit?

and is very much a supporter of Iran, supplying her with weapons and military technology. Gomer has been identified as ancient Galatia, a people that migrated from Asia Minor to the West and have been known as the Gauls and as the Celts. History tells us that they populated Germany, Italy, France, Scotland, Ireland and England, so it is difficult to say just who will make up the nation called Gomer in this alliance of nations. Will it be one of them, all of them, or some of them? We simply do not know, but given the present political climate in Europe, it might be France and Germany. Likewise the present political situations in both Libya and Ethiopia lend themselves to this alliance with very little persuasion.

The primary condition that shall exist prior to this invasion is that Israel will dwell safely without the need of fortifying walls after she has been restored to the land in the latter years. The term *latter years* makes this a reference to present-day Israel and not to Israel's restoration to the land after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. These walls speak of the best military technology that was available at the time of the writing of this prophecy and should not be taken literally. This also applies to the attacking armies, which means that an army of horses and horsemen, with armor, swords, shields and bucklers is a description of the best military technology that was available in the days of the prophet and is not a literal description of the military might that will be brought against Israel when this prophecy is fulfilled.

Throughout our studies we have repeatedly emphasized that Israel was resurrected out of the nations of the world to become a nation again in her own land in May of 1948. We know that this is one of the two conditions that must exist prior to the fulfillment of this prophecy. Yet any student of modern Jewish history knows that from the time of the United Nations' vote to partition

## Where Do They Fit?

Palestine, in November of 1947 until the present-time, the Jews have never dwelt safely in their own land. They have fought numerous wars from the time of their war of independence in 1948, and they have become one of the most powerful nations in the Middle East, militarily. Even so almost daily they are confronted with acts of terrorism, and the majority of the Arab nations that populate the Middle East are devoted to Israel's destruction. It is apparent then that the dwelling safely condition of this prophecy awaits fulfillment, because Israel's present existence (from a human point of view) is dependent upon her military might, and this does not equate with the *unwalled cities* of the prophecy. So it appears that for this aspect of this prophecy to be fulfilled there must be a change in Israel's military status.

We can only speculate as to the time when this will occur. Will it happen before the tribulation, at the beginning of the tribulation, during the tribulation, or at the end of the tribulation? We do not know, but we know that at the beginning of the great tribulation the antichrist will counterfeit the second coming of Jesus Christ and he will bring peace upon the earth. After that, he will take peace from the earth (Revelation 6:4). So this time of peace offers the most logical time, given our present perspective, for the fulfillment of this prophecy.

We must remember that the nation of Israel as well as the nations of this world will be convinced by the signs and lying wonders of the antichrist that he is the Christ (II Thessalonians 2:4). Israel's delusion that the antichrist is Christ may be the very thing that will enable her to confidently lay aside her weapons, for during the reign of Christ the Scripture says: *And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against*

## Where Do They Fit?

*nation, neither shall they learn war any more* (Micah 4:3).

Since the antichrist will claim to be the Christ, and since the antichrist will have no authority with the nation of Israel other than the authority of Christ, it seems spiritually reasonable that he will be attached to certain prophecies about the Christ that will seem to give him authority. This attachment to prophecies about Christ is implied in Scripture, but it is not directly stated. For example, in the thirteenth chapter of Zechariah in context with instructions about false prophets in the last days, seemingly out of context, the prophet interjected a prophecy about the Christ: *smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered* (Zechariah 13:7). The logical explanation for this sudden shift in context is the counterfeit nature of false prophets, and particularly the counterfeit nature of the ultimate false prophet, the antichrist.

We have previously stated that we believe that the antichrist will give the nation of Israel the authority to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem when he makes a covenant with them for the final week of Daniel's seventy-weeks. If he does this, this will indirectly attach him to the prophecy in the sixth chapter of the book of Zechariah about the BRANCH building the temple of the Lord (6:13), and this will further convince the Jews that he is the Christ. It is very important that we understand that any attachment by the antichrist to any prophecy is not the fulfillment of the prophecy. It is merely an expression of the devil's deceptive nature.

In regard to the prophecy in Zechariah about the BRANCH building His temple, we have seen that the Lord has been building His temple with *living stones* (I Peter 2:1-6) upon the foundation of Himself (I Corinthians 3:11) from the time of His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection until the end of the age. However since the antichrist will be the devil incarnate; and

## Where Do They Fit?

since the devil indwelling the serpent deceived Eve into believing that she could be like God (*knowing good and evil*) if she would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and since Adam as the federal head of the human family plunged it into sin when he ate of that tree; and since the fruit of that tree has produced *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*; and since the ways which seem right have produced all of the religious and ethical systems of the world: it should not pose a problem for the devil to unify the religions of the world around the antichrist. This will allow the antichrist to order the construction of the temple in Jerusalem on a site revered by the Muslims.

In view of these remarks, it is important to understand that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with doing *the right things*. Right conduct in a society is certainly better than bad conduct. However the wrong comes when man thinks that by his conduct he can satisfy the Holiness, Righteousness and Justice of God; but this is impossible because the Scriptures have clearly established the truth: *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in [God's] sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin* (Romans 3:20). Thus a right relationship with God can only be obtained through the vicarious life and the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the good news of the gospel: *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs*

## Where Do They Fit?

*according to the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3:3-7).

The prophecy against Gog does not tell us how long Israel will dwell safely, but her vulnerability (lack of walls) seems to be the irresistible lure that will place the metaphorical hooks into the jaws of Gog and draw him to Israel to be judged of God. Only one-sixth of his army will survive this judgment (Ezekiel 39:2). Consequently the supernatural nature of this judgment (Ezekiel 38:18-22) will sanctify the Lord before the Gentile nations of the world (Ezekiel 38:23). Nevertheless, in view of his attachments to prophecies about the Christ, suppose the antichrist were to claim that he wrought this judgment upon the armies of Gog. Such a claim, along with his signs and lying wonders (II Thessalonians 2:4-12), could add further persuasion to Israel and to the nations of the world that his claim to be the Christ is true.

Once the army of Gog has been destroyed upon the mountains of Israel, God is also going to judge Gog's homeland: *And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the [nations]: and they shall know that I am the LORD* (Ezekiel 39:6). This sets up another interesting possibility. Suppose Russia were to initially perceive that this *fire on Magog* was not from God, but was a reprisal from the United States of America for Russia's attack on Israel. What would her response be? It is likely that she would launch her ICBMs from silos and submarines around the world. This could bring the destruction of another entity called Babylon into the equation.

The name Babylon is used throughout the Scriptures to designate several different entities. It is important for us to understand that though they are all called by the same name, they are not the same. The first, as we have already seen, was the kingdom of Nimrod where confusion was

## Where Do They Fit?

brought upon them by judgment. God confounded their languages so that they would spread abroad upon the face of the earth (Genesis 11:1-9). The kingdom of Nimrod was followed centuries later by the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, where confusion was wrought by the fact that God used an idolatrous people (Daniel 5:1-4) to judge Israel for idolatry (II Chronicles 36:11-19). Then, in the New Testament, the name Babylon was used by Peter to designate the city of Rome (I Peter 5:13). This use was carried over into the book of the Revelation (17), where it was used by John to describe the final stages of the fourth world empire, *BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS*, and he also used it to describe an economic entity (18), which does not seem to be the fourth world empire of the seventeenth chapter, even though it bears many of the characteristics of Rome as well as many of the characteristics of ancient Babylon.

We must not confuse the Babylons of the Old Testament with the Babylons of the New Testament. Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was eventually destroyed, and when it was, God placed a curse upon it that it should never be inhabited again (Isaiah 13:20). So, contrary to much that is being taught today about the revival of ancient Babylon, the Babylon of the New Testament cannot be a direct reference to the Babylon of the Old Testament. Nevertheless ancient Babylon is used in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation to introduce another entity that has many of the characteristics of ancient Babylon, but is neither ancient Babylon nor the HARLOT BABYLON of the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation:

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, [Fell, fell, Babylon the great], and [it was] the habitation of [demons], and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations [drank] of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth ... committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth [were] waxed rich through the

## Where Do They Fit?

abundance of her delicacies.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, [my people came out of her and shared not in the sins of her, and [received] not of her plagues. For her sins ... reached unto heaven, and God ... remembered her iniquities. [She was rewarded even as she rewarded them], and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she ... filled fill to her double. How much she...glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: *[for in her heart she says], I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

*The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*

*And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. (Revelation 18:1-24, emphasis mine)*

## Where Do They Fit?

I have taken the liberty of changing the tense of certain verbs (as translated in our King James Bible) in the first two paragraphs of the above portion of Scripture to correspond with the aorist tense that was used in the Greek text of this chapter. It is true that the use of the aorist tense could be from the perspective of the prophet and thus reflect the things that he saw in his vision, but this would not explain his later use of the future tense. This change of tense makes me believe that the use of the past tense was a reference to the judgment of ancient Babylon.

Thus John saw the fall of ancient Babylon, and this vision was projected forward to a nation that will exist in the latter years that parallels ancient Babylon. This can be seen in the last sentence of the second paragraph of this Scripture, where an allusion to the past judgment upon ancient Babylon suddenly changes to reveal the attitude of this other entity, which says, *I sit a queen and am no widow*. While this was the attitude of ancient Babylon, it also reflects the attitude of this other entity. This can be seen by the fact that John then changed from the use of the past tense to the use of the future tense throughout much of the remaining portion of this chapter.

Many years ago, while studying the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation, I was impressed by the many similarities between this description of Babylon and conditions that existed in the United States of America at that time and have continued to the present-time. A number of things stood out and still do. First, when this entity will be destroyed, the merchants of the world will weep and mourn *for no man buyeth their merchandise any more*. I cannot remember what sort of imports America had at the time of my initial study, but in the year 2000, according to the website for Nations Encyclopedia, the estimated imports of the United States were \$1.233 trillion

## Where Do They Fit?

as opposed to exports of \$776 billion. This certainly could make the merchants of the world rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Second, the United States resembles the Babylon of Nimrod after God's judgment by the confusion of its tongues, because *The American population is one of the most diverse in the world and is constantly changing because of immigration and differences in birth rates.* (Nations Encyclopedia) This diversity is encouraged by the inscription on the Statue of Liberty which reads: *Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden shore.* America has been a land of immigrants. Consequently American law provides for legal immigration, but strictly forbids illegal immigration. This makes the present interest in amnesty for illegal immigrants confusing at best. Third, the description of the angel casting a millstone into the sea produces an image of a nuclear explosion. It must be remembered that it was the United States of America that produced the first nuclear bombs during World War II. Then if one remembers that the Scriptures tell us that *they that live by the sword, shall perish by the sword*, it is possible to see a connection to this type of judgment. Fourth, America was once a mighty force for the proclamation of the truth of the gospel into all of the world. Yet in recent years there has been a definite departure from this position. Supreme Court decisions and organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and liberal politicians have moved away from the letter of the Constitution, which provides freedom of speech and freedom of religious expression, to support anti-semitism and anti-Christian policies. Somehow they use the very portions of our Constitution that guarantee these liberties to take away these liberties. Thus America has become humanistic in its philosophy and has

## Where Do They Fit?

departed from the things that once made her great. We cannot say with absolute certainty that the United States of America is the Babylon of the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation; but at the present time, viewing the other nations of the world, we do not see another nation that fits the image of this Babylon quite like America does.

Quite a few years after the above-mentioned study (which had a beginning but no ending), I was browsing in a bookstore one day and came across a book written by Max I. Dimont, *Jews, God and History*. Chapter twenty-seven in Mr. Dimont's book is titled, *United States: New Babylon*. In this chapter Mr. Dimont draws a parallel between ancient Babylon's relationship with the Jews and the United States' relationship with the Jews, and he reveals many parallels between Babylon and the United States. For example, *Between 1880 and 1920...Jewish intellectual life suddenly took root in America....The center of Jewish intellectual life shifted from the Old World to the New, just as the center of Jewish intellectual life in Biblical days had shifted from Palestine to Babylonia after the fall of Judah in the sixth century B.C.* (*Jews, God and History*, Max I. Dimont, Copyright 1962, Signet, Signet Classics, Mentor, Plume and Meridian Books, pg.355) Thus there is some authority for the United States being the Babylon of the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation besides my impressions many years ago.

When we began our view of the prophecy in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel, we suggested that part of the prophecy might be fulfilled at the beginning of the tribulation period and another part of it at the end of the tribulation. To this point in our study we have been stressing the events that we believe will be fulfilled at the beginning of the tribulation. Even so, from about verse seventeen of the thirty-ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the prophecy seems

## Where Do They Fit?

to jump from the beginning of the tribulation to the end of the tribulation, and this is probably the reason that many respected theologians of the past ascribed the whole prophecy to the battle of Armageddon. There are similarities between the two battles, but in the battle described by Ezekiel, only six nations shall come against Israel (Magog, Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Togarmah and Gomer), while in the description of the battle of Armageddon described by Zechariah, it is all the people of the earth:

The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, *though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it* (Zechariah 12:1-3, emphasis mine).

This difference in the number of people coming against Israel suggests that we have a description of two different battles. Even so after both battles God brings the carrion birds to the battle site to feast upon the bodies of the slain. Then in the description of the battle in Ezekiel, as well as in the description of the battle of Armageddon in Zechariah, there is a description of the salvation of Israel. We know that the salvation of the nation as a whole does not take place until the end of the tribulation, at the coming of our Lord, so this is the reason the theologians of the past ascribed both battles to the battle of Armageddon:

In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.* (Zechariah 12:8-10, emphasis mine)

## Where Do They Fit?

In my mind there is no question that the battle of Armageddon and the battle in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel are two different battles, despite the fact that there are similarities and that after both battles we have a description of the salvation of Israel:

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; after that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; *then shall they know that I am the LORD their God*, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. *Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD* (Ezekiel 39:25-29, emphasis mine).

Here again is the emphatic proof that things written together are not necessarily fulfilled together, for in this portion of Scripture we have a description of Israel's restoration to the land (in 1948), a description of the tribulation period (yet to come), and a description of the salvation of Israel (at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ). No wonder there has been confusion about this prophecy in Ezekiel.

Another possibility for Israel to *dwell safely* lies in the book of Obadiah. This prophecy is a description of a judgment of Esau, Jacob's brother, but it is not directly concerned with Esau because it was written during the eighth century before Christ, before the northern tribes of Israel were carried into Assyrian captivity and long after the death of Esau. Even so it speaks of judgments against the posterity of Esau for their actions against Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt. It also projects forward in time and speaks of judgments against Edom for their actions against Judah in the sixth century before Christ, during Nebuchadnezzar's captivity of Jerusalem; and it projects still farther into the future and speaks of their actions against Israel

## Where Do They Fit?

during the Roman siege of Jerusalem, which culminated in 70 A.D.

When we think of the posterity of Esau, we must be aware that they intermarried with the posterity of Ishmael (Genesis 36:1-3), and these two posterities have produced the modern Arab nations of the world, most of whom have sworn themselves to Israel's destruction. Even so there are some Arabs who have gotten along very well with the Jews, to the point of feeling the wrath of those Arabs who are sworn to Israel's destruction. Nevertheless as long as there are Arabs who feel this way, Israel's ability to dwell safely is in jeopardy. This brings the prophecy of Obadiah into consideration, for depending upon when this prophecy will be fulfilled, it could provide the circumstances under which Israel could dwell safely:

The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?

How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up! All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.

Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter. *For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my*

## Where Do They Fit?

*people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.*

For the day of the LORD is near upon all the [nations]: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been. But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's. (Obadiah 1:1-21, emphasis mine)

Like the prophecy in Ezekiel, it is impossible with our present level of understanding to fix a date for the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is also impossible to know if this prophecy is directed against all of the lineage of Esau, or if this prophecy is only directed against those Arabs who have delighted in the evils that have come upon Israel when God judged them for their rejection of the Christ; but on the surface it appears to be against all of them.

Even though the religion of Muhammad did not come into existence until the beginning of the seventh century after Christ, the fundamentals of Islam reflect a statement God made to Hagar before the birth of Ishmael: *And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren* (Genesis 16:12).

## Where Do They Fit?

When we consider the number of Arab nations in the Middle East and the number of Arabs who have migrated to the Gentile nations of the world, in the light of the scope of this judgment, it does not seem that this prophecy will be fulfilled before the battle of Armageddon. In this regard, at the beginning of the last paragraph, we read: *For the day of the LORD is near upon all the [nations]; as thou has done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.* Then at the end of that paragraph, we read: *And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.* Thus this judgment seems to fall to the time when the Lord will come and fight against His enemies:

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. (Revelation 14:14-20)

While the prophecy about the judgment of Edom could provide for Israel's safety, there is nothing about the prophecy that suggests that we should place it anywhere in the sequence of the last day events, other than where the prophet seemed to place it, at the battle of Armageddon.

So while the placement of each of the three prophecies which we have considered in this chapter still remain veiled in a cloud of mystery, the placements that we have made seem to fit the

### Where Do They Fit?

Scriptures, to the level of understanding that the Lord has given us at the present time. The theologians of the past placed all three in the realm of the battle of Armageddon, but as we have seen, this explanation does not seem to answer all that we know about these three prophecies. Are we correct in our placement of these three prophecies? Only the fulfillment of the prophecies will enable us to know for sure. Even so our present-tense conviction regarding these three prophecies is that we have placed them correctly in the sequence of last day events.

## Chapter XVIII

### THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

A number of years ago I wrote an article called *The Promise*. I have decided to include it in this chapter because it contains information that will be helpful in our study of *the Bride of Christ*. It is not a deviation from our subject, even though it was not written from the perspective of the study of prophecy. If you read *The Promise* with a receptive mind you will gain information that will enable you to understand who the bride of Christ will be. This information will help you to dispel the faulty claims of various denominations and sects under the canopy of Christianity that say they alone are the bride of Christ. Some of these do this with what seems to be rather convincing arguments, but these arguments cannot stand the test of the Scriptures, *rightly divided*. Thus in *The Promise* we read:

In the New Testament there are a number of times when various historical incidents, conditions, and blessings inherent in and fulfilled by the promise of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ are referred to as *the promise*. This is a translation of the Greek word

## The Bride of Christ

*epangellia*. In the twenty-six references listed below, all are singular and all are preceded by the definite article in the Greek text. Sometimes the article has been translated and sometimes it has not; but that these references are to historical incidents, conditions, and blessings which are associated with and find their fulfillment in the singular promise of the Person and work of Jesus Christ, I find evident.

As we examine these references it should also become evident to the reader that each promise has a direct connection with Jesus Christ and is therefore a part of a singular promise, even though on the surface it may appear to be one of many promises. For example, there are references to the Holy Spirit as the promise, but the gift of the Holy Spirit could not be given until Christ was glorified in His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection from the dead. Likewise there are references to eternal life as the promise, but this too finds its source in Jesus Christ. So whether it is the promise of the resurrection, or the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the promise of the birth of Isaac, or the promise that all of the families of the earth will be blessed through the seed of Abraham, each finds its fulfillment in, or for the purpose of bringing the Christ into the world to fulfill the promise of God.

Someone may possibly protest that the Holy Spirit was not given to the Old Testament saints to permanently indwell them, so how could the gift of the Holy Spirit be equated with salvation in Jesus Christ with Old Testament saints? It is true that the Holy Spirit was not given to them to permanently indwell them in their lifetimes, but we will see that He was given to them after Christ was glorified in fulfillment of the promise of God. The fact that few in this age are aware of the transaction which gave the promise of the Holy Spirit to them does not alter the fact

## The Bride of Christ

of its New Testament authority. Thus the gift of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of the promise.

Paul wrote of the promise in his letter to the Ephesians when he described their relationship with God, both before and after their salvation:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from *the covenants of [the] promise*, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:11-22, emphasis mine)

We will not attempt an explanation of this portion of the Word of God at this time other than to point out that the many covenants of the Old Testament were all *covenants of the promise*. Therefore each of them had, or will have, their ultimate fulfillment in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the promise of *the seed of the woman*, given to Adam in the judgment of the serpent, finds its end in Jesus Christ; and the preservation of Noah and his family from the flood preserved the lineage for *the seed of the woman*, as well as preserving a redeemable people through the lineage of each of Adam's sons; and the calling of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and God's covenant with him confirmed the promise that had been previously made to Adam and

## The Bride of Christ

Noah, that there would be a seed through whom all of the families of the earth would be blessed. And so it is with each successive covenant, whether it is the Abrahamic covenant confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, or the Mosaic covenant, or the Davidic, though individually given, all are inner-linked through the ultimate fulfillment of each in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This provides a common ground between Old and New Testament saints in the fact that through the Lord Jesus Christ we *both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God* [this statement describes the redeemed of all ages]; *and are built upon the foundation of the apostles* [New Testament] *and prophets* [Old Testament], *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit* (Ephesians 2:18-22, emphasis mine).

The following is a list of references to the promise: Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33; 2:39 and Galatians 3:14 refer to the Holy Spirit as the promise; Acts 7:17 refers to the exodus as the promise; Acts 26:6 refers to the hope of the resurrection as the promise; Romans 4:13; 4:14; and 4:16 refer to the inheritance in Christ as the promise; Romans 4:20; Galatians 3:17 and 4:23 refers to the birth of Isaac as the promise; Romans 9:8 refers to those who are the children of the promise; Ephesians 1:13 calls the Spirit of God, *the Holy Spirit of the promise*; Ephesians 2:12 speaks of the covenants of the promise; Ephesians 3:6 speaks of the Gentiles as being *fellowheirs, and of the same body, as partakers of [the] promise*; Hebrews 6:15 and 6:17 refer to the Abrahamic covenant as the promise; Hebrews 9:15 refers to the eternal inheritance of the believer

## The Bride of Christ

as the promise; Hebrews 10:36 refers to our salvation as the promise; Hebrews 11:9 refers to Israel as the land of the promise; Hebrews 11:39 refers to the results of the first advent of Christ as the promise; I John 2:25 refers to eternal life as the promise; and II Peter 3:4 and 3:9 refer to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the promise.

These last two references do not present a problem respecting the use of this construction because the return of our Lord Jesus Christ provides the culmination of the promise, even our salvation, when we shall receive the redemption of our bodies. So as we are about to consider many of these references to the promise, and what it entails, we must consider a statement by the apostle Paul to the Romans: *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you* (Romans 8:9-11).

These statements by Paul enable us to understand that the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is essential to salvation because *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. His presence is also essential to the resurrection from the dead. Therefore it was necessary at some point in time for the Old Testament saints to be given the Holy Spirit in order for God to fulfill His promise to them. We must never forget that *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*; God cannot lie; He is Immutable; therefore when the Scriptures say *There is ... One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all* this must be true of Old and New Testament saints alike. This can be seen in our Lord's proof

## The Bride of Christ

of the resurrection to the Sadducees: *But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

Further, from the seventh chapter of the gospel of John, we know that the Holy Spirit could not be permanently given to them in the ages in which they lived because Christ was not yet glorified. So while the permanent presence of the Spirit of God was not a present-tense reality to the saints of the Old Testament, the promise of the Spirit was, nevertheless, their hope. Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God, and Job knew that *though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God* (Job 19:26). Abraham and Job had the hope of the resurrection even though the truth of the indwelling Spirit and His quickening power for resurrection may have been hidden to them. Therefore: *these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made [complete]* (Hebrews 11:39-40, emphasis mine).

This statement does not mean that they were not saved. That would be a mockery of all that was written in the previous thirty-eight verses in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. It means that they were not privileged to see the fulfillment of *the promise* in their lifetimes. Thus they died not having received *the promise* because *they without us should not be made perfect* (Hebrews 11:40). This means that they could not receive the Holy Spirit until we (in this age following the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of the Lord) received the Holy Spirit because this is the age in which *the promise* was to be fulfilled. This is the age in which our Lord came to fulfill all that was written in the law, the prophets, and the Psalms concerning His first advent.

## The Bride of Christ

Now with respect to the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist said that Christ would baptize the Jews with the Holy Spirit, and our Lord promised the Jews, during the age of the law: *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet (John 7:37-40).*

Thus the promise of the Spirit of God was an essential part of the promise of salvation, but as John explained, *the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* Consequently after the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, Jesus told His disciples: *behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49, emphasis mine).*

The disciples of our Lord occupied the unique position of being a part of two different ages, the age of the law and what is called the age of grace. They were born as Jews under the covenant of the law and they were saved as Jews under the covenant of the law. Like those of that dispensation, the Spirit was with them, but He did not permanently indwell them. Then our Lord promised: *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you (John 14:16-18, emphasis mine).*

At this point it is essential for us to remember that *God is not a respecter of persons.* So

## The Bride of Christ

the promise to the disciples of the Lord must, of necessity, be a promise to those of similar circumstances (i.e., the Old Testament saints). Thus following His resurrection from the dead He told His disciples that they were to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the earnest of the Spirit; that is God's pledge, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, that He would fulfill all that had been promised to the fathers and to them. Thus Paul wrote:

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of *[the] promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption* [resurrection and glorification] of the purchased possession [Old and New Testament saints], unto the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:10-14, emphasis mine)

Our Lord also commanded them: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized* [i.e., with the Holy Spirit] *shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned* (Mark 16:15-16). So Jesus, before His ascension into Heaven: *being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence* (Acts 1:4-5, emphasis mine).

Thus our immutable Lord, having declared that faith and baptism with the Holy Spirit were essential to salvation, commanded that His disciples tarry in Jerusalem until they received this baptism; but this baptism was not just for them and believers of subsequent ages, it was also promised to the Old Testament saints. So when Christ was glorified, the disciples were given the

## The Bride of Christ

Holy Spirit and so were the Old Testament saints when Christ led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. This made the Old Testament saints to be complete in Him, because: *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* (Romans 8:9). Thus Paul wrote:

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism [i. e., with the Holy Spirit], one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things [i. e., fill up a deficiency: by giving those whom He led out of Abraham's bosom into heaven the baptism of the Holy Spirit]). (Ephesians 4:4-10)

There is no conceivable reason why Paul should have related the event of Christ's leading *captivity captive* to the Ephesians (in context with the gifts of the Spirit) unless He was declaring that the Old Testament saints had received the gift of the Holy Spirit the same as the Ephesians. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul spoke of this transaction as a mystery that had been hidden, but was now made manifest to the saints (which must be those of both the Old and the New Testaments): *Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from [times] and from [peoples], but now [was manifested] to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man [complete] in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily* (Colossians 1:25-29, emphasis mine).

So, as we have already seen, the writer to the Hebrews told the redeemed Jews of the New

## The Bride of Christ

Testament era that the Old Testament saints, some of whom were recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, could not be made perfect (i.e., complete) without us. Then to emphasize the fact that the redeemed Jews to whom he wrote were not under the law, but under a new covenant relationship provided by the Lord Jesus Christ, he wrote:

For ye are not come unto the mount [groping in darkness], and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn [i.e., to a gathering of the redeemed] which are written in heaven [i.e., in the Lamb's book of life], and to God the Judge of all, *and to the spirits of just men made perfect* [i.e., those who had been held in Paradise until Jesus led *captivity captive* and were then perfected by the baptism of the Holy Spirit], and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:18-24. emphasis mine)

Therefore we must ask, who, at the time of the writing of the book of Hebrews, could *the spirits of just men made perfect* be if they were not Old Testament saints, whom Jesus led out of *captivity captive*? And who, at that same time, could the *general assembly* and residents of the *heavenly Jerusalem* be, if not the redeemed from all ages? While these are rhetorical questions and need not an answer, in order to really grasp the answer we may have to modify our thinking somewhat from former concepts.

Typically almost everyone under the canopy of Christianity refers to the body of Christ as the church. This is because the translators of our English Bible translated the Greek word *ekklesia*, *church*. However the word actually means *a called out assembly*. It could be an assembly for the Olympic games, or other sporting event, or an assemblage for any purpose. Our

## The Bride of Christ

Lord said, *Upon this rock I will build my church*, thus distinguishing His assembly from any other type of assembly.

The fact that the translators used the word *church* for *ekklesia* tends to give us a bias when we read it in the Scriptures. Consequently we do not think of an assembly that our Lord has been calling out from the redemption of the first man, but we think of a building and its grounds, or we think of a New Testament organization. This is unfortunate because when we think of the body of Christ, we do not include the Old Testament saints in this body. Yet in Paul's argument in the second chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, he included them, and so did the apostle John in the book of the Revelation. If I were to ask, Who is the body of Christ or who is the bride of Christ? The answer from most professing Christians would be the church, with no thought of including any of the saints from Adam to Christ. Now consider the direct testimony of the apostle John:

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me saying, *Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife*. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, *which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel*: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh,

## The Bride of Christ

a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it:* and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: *but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* (Revelation 21:9-27, emphasis mine)

Our consideration of the promise has forced us to rethink many of the doctrines which are a part of the doctrine of the church. Certain theologians like Scofield and Chafer have told us that the church's inheritance is separate and distinct from the inheritance of Israel. Many of them say that Israel's inheritance is strictly earthly and not heavenly, even though they will be a redeemed people. Yet, at the same time, they say that the church's inheritance is both earthly and heavenly (because the church will co-reign with Christ in the kingdom), and they speak of superior blessings for the church over Israel, which would make God a respecter of persons.

This concept was formulated in an attempt to establish the fact that the return of Israel to the land of Palestine and her restoration and Kingdom was not fulfilled in a spiritual sense by the church (which was taught in times past by the Roman Church and many Protestant Churches), but is a promise of God to Israel. Even so in establishing one truth, they have unwittingly shredded the promise for the saints of the Old Testament and have made them a sort of second class spiritual citizenry.

Some of these theories have a degree of truth associated with them and some not, but theological theories aside, we must acknowledge certain truths that have been revealed through

## The Bride of Christ

our studies of the promise. First, the residents of the heavenly Jerusalem are those written in the Lamb's book of life. Second, the heavenly Jerusalem is the bride, the Lamb's wife. Third, the heavenly Jerusalem has twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel inscribed thereon, which certainly suggests that redeemed Jews are residents of the city. Fourth, the heavenly Jerusalem has a wall with twelve foundations, which are named for the twelve apostles of the Lord, which tells us that the redeemed of this age are also residents of that city. Fifth, the apostle John tells us the ultimate state of those who are not residents of the heavenly Jerusalem: *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire* (Revelation 20:15).

It cannot be any clearer than that. If a person's name is in the Lamb's book of life, he is a designated citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is called, *the bride, the Lamb's wife*. There are no distinctions given for what age he has lived in. If he does not have his name in the Lamb's book of life, he will be cast into the lake of fire following the great white throne judgment. With this distinction, there is no place for the concept of a redeemed people not being a part of the bride of Christ, no matter what age they lived in.

So this brings us to the limited definition of the bride of Christ being solely the New Testament church. Consider this: If we think of the church as only that body of believers who were redeemed from the first advent of Christ to the end of the present age, we have a serious problem. What do we do with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the other Old Testament saints who according to this definition are not a part of the bride of Christ? If they are not a part of the bride, this would mean that their names are not written in the Lamb's book of life; and this, according

## The Bride of Christ

to the twentieth chapter of the Revelation (20:15), would mean that they will be cast into the lake of fire at the end of the age; and this would make God a liar and the promise of God of none effect, which is an absolute impossibility. If, however, we see the bride as a called out assembly of believers from every age, recognizing that the Old Testament saints could not receive the Holy Spirit until Christ was glorified; and recognizing that *they, without us, could not be made perfect*; and recognizing that they, with us, were made perfect when Jesus led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men; then they, with us, are a part of the body of Christ; and they, with us, are living stones in the temple of God.

Now according to the promise in the fourteenth chapter of the gospel of John, believers are indwelt by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, thus making their bodies a living temple. Consequently the temple that the Messiah is to build, according to the prophecy in Zechariah, has been being built with living stones, according to the testimony of Peter and Paul, from the first century until now. Thus we recognize that some of the materials for that temple were being gathered from the time of Adam until the first advent of Christ, but could not be a part of that temple until Jesus Christ, the Chief Cornerstone, was laid as the Foundation of the temple. Then they were made complete, by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, to be stones in that temple. Further, there are other stones that are being gathered in this age; and there are stones yet to be gathered after this age, during the great tribulation period; and the final stones will be gathered at the coming of our Lord, when Israel will look upon Him Whom they pierced and be saved. This will complete the heavenly Jerusalem. Then those who have their names in the Lamb's book of life will be assembled together in one body, the body of Christ, which we call the

## The Bride of Christ

church, but is really *a called out assembly* of the saints and household of God.

Despite this evidence there will be those who because of traditional teaching will not want to accept this testimony. They will cling tenaciously to their former way of thinking. Some Baptists and others will insist that their particular denomination is the bride of Christ, offering one reason or another as proof. They will continue to argue against anyone but believers in this age being a part of the body of Christ. They will continue to use a statement made by John the Baptist (when he told the Jews he was not the Christ) as a proof text to show that John was not a part of the bride: *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease* (John 3:29-30). Consequently the limited bride people will say, *See, this proves that John was not a part of the bride, but was the friend of the bridegroom.* Actually all that this proves is that John was not the Christ. As to John's reference to the bride: at that time he was not a part of the bride because he was not permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, even though the Spirit had been upon him from before his birth. John, like the rest of the Old Testament saints, could not view himself as a member of the body of Christ during his lifetime because the body of Christ, like the temple, was not formed until Christ was glorified. Remember Jesus used the future tense when He said, *Upon this rock I will build my church...*

If those who have difficulties with these truths would read again the testimony of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (without the preconceived notion that Paul was only speaking of Jews and Gentiles who make up the church in this present age), they will see that the

## The Bride of Christ

body of Christ and the temple of the Lord are one and the same and are comprised of both Old and New Testament saints. This, after all, is the promise of God:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of *[the] promise*, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and *that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross*, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

*For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* (Ephesians 2:11-22, emphasis mine)

Now that we have completed *The Promise* and know who the bride will be, we need to know when the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place. It should be obvious that the marriage supper of the Lamb cannot take place until the bride is complete, and the bride will not be complete until the coming of our Lord, when the Jews look upon Him Whom they pierced and believe and are saved. This in fact is when the marriage will take place. However many Christians have been taught that the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place in heaven, before the return of our Lord to this earth. The reason for this is the exclusion of Israel from the bride and the fact that the marriage supper is spoken of in the Revelation before the return of our Lord to this earth; but as we have seen so many times before, the order in which Scripture is written does not necessarily represent a chronological order of fulfillment:

## The Bride of Christ

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, *Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: *for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.* And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

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

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:1-21, emphasis mine)

## The Bride of Christ

We shall consider the marriage supper of the Lamb in detail in our next chapter, *Events Associated with the Second Coming*. However, it should be noted that in the above text, *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth* before the marriage supper of the Lamb, and before the description of the second coming of our Lord. Thus, once again, we have a display of things that are written together, or in sequence with one another, that are not necessarily fulfilled together or in sequence with one another.

## Chapter XIX

### EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SECOND COMING

There are a number of events that will occur in close proximity to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom upon this earth. It seems that the first of these final events will be the gathering of the nations of the world against the city of Jerusalem to lay siege upon it during the final stages of the reign of the antichrist (Revelation 19:19). This assumption is based upon the fact that during this battle *the city [will be] taken, and the houses [will be] rifled, and the women [will be] ravished* (Zechariah 14:2). This cannot be a description of the battle that our Lord will fight at His coming, but appears to be a description of conditions that will exist in Jerusalem for an unknown period of time prior to the coming of our Lord.

We have seen that there can be difficulties in understanding the sequence of events associated with unfulfilled prophecies until certain aspects of the prophetic events have first been fulfilled. This can again be seen in one of Zechariah's prophecies: *And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be*

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

*left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God (Zechariah 13:8-9).* By interpretation this Scripture reveals that two-thirds of the nation of Israel will perish during the great tribulation period, but it does not tell us exactly how or when they will perish. It also reveals that the other one-third will be redeemed at the coming of our Lord (Zechariah 12:10).

We know that during the final three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel, the world will know *tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be* (Matthew 24:21). This seems to be *the fire* described in Zechariah 13:9 through which one-third of the nation of Israel will be brought safely; but despite the safety of these, *the fire* of the tribulation will produce the deaths of many Jews and many Gentiles. It is impossible at the present time to know whether the greater number of the two-thirds of the Jews that will perish will perish during the tribulation proper, or during *the fire* of the gathering of the nations against Jerusalem before the return of our Lord.

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. *Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.* (Zechariah 14:1-4, emphasis mine)

We also know that the preservation of the one-third of the nation of Israel will begin at the mid-point of the tribulation, three and one-half years before this final battle. This number of Jews

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

will flee Jerusalem when the false prophet sets up an idol of the antichrist in the temple and demands that the world worship it (Revelation 13:11-15). It seems then that those who will flee will flee in obedience to the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. It also seems that those who will perish will perish because they will reject their preaching. Those who reject the preaching will fall into the same trap that so many of their forefathers fell into: they will practice idolatry in an attempt to save their lives (Luke 9:24; Hosea 2:12-13).

It is reasonable to assume that the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be much the same as the preaching of our Lord during His earthly ministry. Our Lord was a minister to the circumcision (Romans 15:8). Since the tribulation period will be the final week of the seventy weeks of Daniel; and since these weeks were determined upon Daniel's people (the Jews) and upon Daniel's city (Jerusalem) (Daniel 9:24); and since the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy is called *the time of Jacob's trouble* (Jeremiah 30:7); it seems that the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be primarily directed to the nation of Israel. This will ultimately produce their salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Therefore our Lord warned the Jews that when they see the abomination of desolation in the holy place they are to flee Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-21). Our Lord also told them: *Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it* (Luke 17:32-33). Lot fled from Sodom (Genesis 19:17-26) and, interestingly, Jerusalem is called spiritual Sodom (Revelation 11:8). Those who refuse to worship the image of the beast will put their lives in jeopardy as did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image. Nevertheless they will be preserved in

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

the wilderness for the last three and one-half years of the tribulation, just as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were preserved in the *fiery furnace* (*Daniel 3:25*).

It also seems that this gathering of armies against Jerusalem may be the news event that will account for the media's coverage of our Lord's second coming to this earth. The Scriptures do not specifically state that there will be television coverage of our Lord's second coming. The concept of television would have been difficult to express thousands of years before its invention. Even so the Holy Spirit of God led the apostle John to write: *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him* (Revelation 1:7, emphasis mine).

The concept that every eye would be able to see the Lord at His coming was scoffed at by the critics of the Scriptures prior to World War II; but with the development of television broadcasts and reception, the advancements in rocket science, and the *Space Race* after the war, the world was launched into a new age of world-wide television via satellite communications. Consequently the concept that every eye could see the Lord at His coming is no longer scoffed at. If anything it is ignored because it has become commonplace in the comfort of their own homes for the majority of the world's population to be able to watch world-wide events as they take place. Even so there is nothing in Scripture that demands that this will be the way that every eye shall see Him, but it is reasonable to assume that this will be the way because God has rarely used miracles to accomplish His will when it was unnecessary to use miracles.

The actual coming of our Lord is predicated upon the fulfillment of the many promises throughout the Old and New Testament Scriptures of our Lord's coming to establish His Kingdom

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

upon this earth. It is also predicated upon the promise of the angels (as our Lord ascended into heaven after His resurrection from the dead): *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11).

While the purpose of our Lord's coming is to establish His Kingdom and to bring to fruition all of His promises associated with His Kingdom, He must also defeat the antichrist and his armies. It seems then that the second event associated with the coming of our Lord to the Mount of Olives will be the battle of Armageddon, when our Lord will go forth to battle against those nations that will have gathered themselves against Israel in the city of Jerusalem.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

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

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. *And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.* And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:11-21, emphasis mine)

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

The day of the Lord will fulfill the many prophetic judgments against the nations of the world that have been described by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zechariah, and others. The day of the Lord is synonymous with the second coming of Jesus Christ. Thus the day of the Lord will be a day of blessing to those who will be redeemed at our Lord's coming, but to everyone else it will be a terrible day of judgment: *Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him* (Amos 5:18-19).

The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. *And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.* In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.

*In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem;* and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: *and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.* In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. (Zechariah 12:1-14, emphasis mine).

It seems then that during this battle, when the Lord will come to fight against the nations gathered against Israel, that all that Israel has heard preached concerning the Christ will then come together. She will look upon the One Whom she pierced and be saved. Thus the third event associated with the coming of our Lord will be Israel's salvation (Romans 11:26-27). *This is the day that the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it* (Psalm 118:24).

This is not a change in God's method of salvation. God is Immutable (Malachi 3:6). God has always saved those that believe by the preaching of the Word of God (I Corinthians 1:21) and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God (Ephesians 2:5). Men have never been saved by miracles or special events, even though miracles or special events may have been in evidence at the time of the salvation of some. The faith that brings salvation always comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Thus Israel's salvation can be compared with the salvation of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. These Jews had seen the manifestation of the gift of tongues, but each individual who came to salvation that day, came to salvation because they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:10). So throughout the tribulation period, the one hundred and forty-four thousand will preach the gospel (Romans 10:14) throughout the cities of Israel (Matthew 10:23). This will produce the salvation of some (Revelation 7:13-14), and it will prepare the nation of Israel for its salvation at the coming of our Lord.

This means that Israel's salvation can also be compared to the salvation of Saul of Tarsus. Saul heard our Lord preach and he also heard Steven preach, but when he heard them preach he

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

was not saved. His salvation came later. Saul was on his way to Damascus when the Lord met him in a blinding light and said: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do* (Acts 9:4-6). God then sent Ananias to Saul. He laid his hands upon Saul and by the power of the Holy Spirit Saul received his sight. He was then baptized, which indicates that he had also received his spiritual sight: for he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17-18).

Thus after Israel has been confronted with the preaching of the Word of God and the actions of our Lord at the battle of Armageddon: *... it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not* (Zechariah 8:13-15).

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: *and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.* (Zechariah 12:10-11, emphasis mine)

It is understandable, given Israel's historical relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, that when she is saved she will mourn as one mourns over the death of an only son. She will mourn because she will realize that when her Messiah came to her in His first advent: *He came unto his own*

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

[nation] *and his own* [people] *received him not* (John 1:11). So when she is redeemed Israel will come to realize that all that she has suffered as a nation since our Lord was upon the earth: the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.; the *diaspora* into the Gentile nations of the world; the pogroms at the hands of so-called Christians; the holocaust during World War II; and the judgments of the great tribulation period will have all come upon her because she rejected the Lord. She said, *We will not have this man to reign over us* (Luke 19:14); she said, *We have no king but Caesar* (John 19:15); she said, *Crucify him, crucify him* (John 19:6); and she said, *His blood be on us and on our children* (Matthew 27:25). Nevertheless, when her mourning is ended, she will know unspeakable joy when she realizes that the Lord that she once rejected has become her Savior and made her a part of His Kingdom by His grace:

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.* (Isaiah 54:1-8, emphasis mine)

The fourth event associated with the coming of our Lord will come at the conclusion of the battle of Armageddon and after the salvation of the nation of Israel: *And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had*

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

*received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh (Revelation 19:20-21).*

At about the same time that the false prophet and the antichrist are cast into the lake of fire, Satan will be bound for one thousand years. Both of these events are essential to the establishment of the Kingdom. The antichrist and the false prophet must be judged in the lake of fire to bring the tribulation period to its conclusion, and Satan must be bound and cast into the bottomless pit before the Kingdom age can begin.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and *shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled:* and after that he must be loosed a little season. (Revelation 20:1-3, emphasis mine).

Thus Satan will be bound and will not be allowed to deceive the nations for the entire period of the millennial age. Nevertheless, when he is loosed from the bottomless pit, he will deceive the nations once again (Revelation 20:7-8). This brings us to the next event in our observation of events in close proximity with the coming of our Lord: the judgment of the sheep and the goat nations. This judgment was described by our Lord in His Olivet Discourse. It is an important judgment, because the judgment of the sheep and the goat nations will determine who shall enter into the Kingdom besides the Lord and His saints.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (Matthew 25:31-46, emphasis mine)

We have previously discussed this judgment in our chapter on *The Olivet Discourse*. It is not necessary then to go into a detailed discussion of it here, other than to remind the reader that the sheep nations cannot be redeemed people as is commonly taught. They are individuals out of the nations of the world that shall receive a *righteous man's reward* (Matthew 10:41-42). This reward is entrance into the Kingdom age for good works wrought upon the brethren of our Lord. However their entrance into the Kingdom must not be confused with salvation.

Salvation is by God's *grace ... through faith*. It is *not of works, lest any man should boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9). *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration,*

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

*and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:3-7). Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:19-20).*

The difficulty in understanding who the sheep nations are arises from the last statement concerning this judgment in the book of Matthew: *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46)*. This is a true statement, but it must be properly understood. The goat nations will be judged immediately upon the return of our Lord to this earth. The consequence of this judgment implies that the goat nations shall be put to death. Therefore at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, when the unsaved of all ages are resurrected, the goat nations will stand before the great white throne judgment and be judged according to their works. After that they shall be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12-15). Thus, according to our text, they *shall go away into everlasting punishment*.

In contrast with them the sheep nations will enter into the realm of eternal life when they enter into the Kingdom with the Lord and with His saints. They shall enter this realm because they shall have received *a righteous man's reward* for their good works. (*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*) Even so there is a marked difference between the sheep nations and those who actually possess the righteousness of Christ. This difference will be seen at the end of the millennium when the sheep nations will be

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

deceived by Satan. This deception will come despite the fact that they will have lived in a perfect environment for one thousand years. The blessings they will have enjoyed will make no difference to them when Satan is loosed *a little season*. Their deception will be complete. Thus they will join forces with Satan to battle against the Lord and His saints. *And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever* (Revelation 20:7-10, emphasis mine).

We have not included the judgment seat of Christ as a separate event that will occur in proximity to the coming of our Lord, because it seems that the judgment seat of Christ will have a three-part fulfillment. This cannot be proven, but it is suggested by the fact that the first resurrection has three parts (firstfruits, harvest and gleanings). The firstfruits were raised when Christ was raised from the dead (Matthew 27:51-53); the harvest will occur at the end of the church age, when the redeemed of all ages shall be raised from the dead (I Corinthians 15:51-52); and the gleanings will occur during the tribulation (Revelation 7:13-14) and with the salvation of the nation of Israel at the coming of our Lord (Romans 11:25-26; Zechariah 13:8-9). It seems then that each of these groups will be judged at the time of their resurrection so that when the final group is saved and judged, all of the redeemed of all ages will be gathered together to make up

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

the bride of Christ. This brings us then to the sixth and final event that will occur in proximity with the coming of our Lord: the marriage supper of the Lamb.

We have learned that many things that are written together in the prophetic Scriptures may not be fulfilled together. We have seen this principle again and again in our studies of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Once again it is important to remember this principle so that we do not make an erroneous assumption regarding the timing of the marriage supper of the Lamb. This could be easily done because this marriage is mentioned in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation just before the description of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. Even so this placement is not chronological. We know this because such a placement does not fit the preponderance of the evidence found in the Scriptures. Consequently we have placed it sixth in the list of events associated with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth to establish His Kingdom.

The marriage supper of the Lamb cannot take place in heaven before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth, because such a placement would exclude all of the Jewish and Gentile believers of the gleanings from being a part of the bride of Christ. Our studies in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation have revealed that the bride of Christ is composed of both Jews and Gentiles, and not just those of the church age as has been commonly assumed. We must not forget that the angel said to John, *Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife* (Revelation 21:9). After that the angel showed John *the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God* (Revelation 21:10). When John viewed the new Jerusalem, it had twelve gates named for the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12), and it had twelve foundations named for the twelve

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14): and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:24-27, emphasis mine). This last statement requires that the redeemed of all ages constitute the bride of Christ.

Thus our Lord spoke of the marriage supper of the Lamb when He spoke a parable about a man who made a great supper. This parable is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and in the Gospel of Luke, with minor variations between the two accounts. Matthew refers to the supper as a marriage supper and Luke does not. Even so, in each account of the parable of the great supper, the attitude of the religious crowd in Israel is one of the key factors. They refused the invitation to the supper, offering one lame excuse after another to refuse the servant's invitation. The other key factor is the command to the servant after the original guests refused to come. The master told his servant to invite *the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind* to come to the supper, that it might be furnished with guests:

... A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, *Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse.* The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, *Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.* And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

unto the servant, *Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.* For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. (Luke 14:16-24, emphasis mine)

This parable, along with its companion in the Gospel of Matthew (22:1-14), is primarily evangelistic in nature. Those who excused themselves from the wedding for one reason or another were the religious zealots in Israel who felt they did not need a Savior. Thus their refusal to come to the supper is a refusal of salvation in Jesus Christ. This is the point of the parable. Consequently the Lord commanded his servant to *Go out quickly into the streets of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind* that the wedding supper might be furnished with guests. This relationship is best illustrated by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans, comparing the nation of Israel to the New Testament church:

I say then, *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.* For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of [Elijah]? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? *I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.*

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

I say then, *Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.* Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; *how much more their fulness?*

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and

## Events Associated with the Second Coming

might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, *what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?* For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God:* on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. *And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.* For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; *that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved:* as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11:1-36, emphasis mine)

Thus we know that the guests at the wedding in our Lord's parable are not guests in the normal sense of the word. They are those who will make up the bride of Christ, and the servant is the Holy Spirit. This means that the invitation to the wedding supper is the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Therefore before our Lord ascended into heaven He commanded the redeemed of this age to extend His invitation to the wedding to the whole world when He said: *Go ye into all of the*

### Events Associated with the Second Coming

*world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* So once that the final guests are brought to the wedding supper (with the salvation of the nation of Israel at the coming of our Lord) the residents of the new Jerusalem will be complete, and the marriage supper will usher in the millennial reign of Christ with all of His saints.

## Chapter XX

### THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

We began this book with a consideration of two prophecies in the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Ezekiel: the prophecy of the *dry bones* and the prophecy of the *two sticks*. These prophecies speak of the resurrection of the Jews out of the nations of the world to become one nation under one head in the land of Israel; they speak of the salvation of the Jews at the coming of our Lord; and they speak of the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth under the reign of the Christ, the greater David.

In the dry bones prophecy we saw an example of the concept that some things which are written together in prophecy are not necessarily fulfilled together. We learned this principle by comparing what our Lord read in the synagogue at Nazareth with the text from which He read in the book of Isaiah and that He said: *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*. We have seen this principle repeated many times throughout our studies of the prophetic Scriptures. It has taught us not to make assumptions based only upon immediate textual considerations, but to diligently

## The Millennial Kingdom

compare Scripture with Scripture. This principle is not confined to prophecy alone, but has an application in the study of all of the Scriptures if we are to truly understand them.

Thus the principle of contextual considerations compared with other Scripture can clearly be seen in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah (one of the better-known prophecies concerning the millennial Kingdom). A part of that prophecy was fulfilled with the first advent of Christ; another part of it was fulfilled much later in time with the resurrection of Israel out of the nations of the world following World War II; and the parts of the prophecy that have not yet been fulfilled (the tribulation, the battle of Armageddon and the Kingdom) are more clearly seen elsewhere in the Scriptures, where comparisons of Scripture with Scripture aid our understanding.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: [but he shall judge the poor in righteousness, and shall decide rightly] for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the [viper's] den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; *to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.* And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

## The Millennial Kingdom

The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt. (Isaiah 11:1-16, emphasis mine)

The rod out of the stem of Jesse is David, and the Branch out of the roots of the rod is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus this prophecy spans the entire period of time from the first advent of Christ through the regathering of Israel out of the nations of the world, the tribulation period, the battle of Armageddon, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth (in which the Lord shall rule in *righteousness* and *faithfulness*); yet it is written as though all of these conditions and events could be fulfilled in close proximity to one another.

The first paragraph of this prophecy is primarily a description of the Lord Jesus Christ. It covers the period of time from His first advent (excluding the church age) through the tribulation period, when the Lord shall slay the wicked *with the breath of his lips*, to the battle of Armageddon, when the Lord will smite His enemies with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 19:15). It also refers to the millennial reign of Christ in poetic language: thus *righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins*.

The second paragraph of this text provides a view of the Kingdom age. It reveals that all of creation shall be in harmony under the rule of the Christ. There will no longer be predator and prey. A little child shall be able to lead without fear animals that were once a threat to him, and the dens of once deadly serpents shall be playgrounds for infants and toddlers. Further *the earth*

## The Millennial Kingdom

*shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

This seems to infer that the sheep nations (which will enter the Kingdom on the basis of good works and not on the basis of salvation) shall be fully apprised of the righteous standing of the saints by virtue of God's grace. This *knowledge of the LORD* seems to be what the Spirit of God laid upon the mind of Paul when he wrote: *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:7). If this assessment is correct, it appears that in the Kingdom a clear distinction will be made (through the teaching ministry of our Lord) between the works of the sheep nations and the imputed righteousness of the saints.

From the time of Cain and Abel there has been a conflict between those who believe that works are essential to salvation and those who believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Abel saw himself a sinner because of the federal headship of Adam. Thus he made an appropriate sacrifice unto God. Abel's sacrifice clearly showed that his faith was in the promise of God through the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ. Whereas Cain rejected the concept that Adam's sin was imputed to him. He believed he could have a right relationship with God on the basis of his good works. This prompted him to bring a bloodless offering unto the Lord of the things that he had grown. The Lord was compelled to reject Cain's offering because it did not agree with the revealed will of God:

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.* And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. (Genesis 4:6, emphasis mine)

## The Millennial Kingdom

Our Lord's question (*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*) does not suggest that Cain could do well as is often assumed: *For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Thus it reveals that Cain could not do well, and because of this, God extended His grace to him when He said: *Sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.* In the Hebrew text of this Scripture it is plain that *sin lieth at the door* is a reference to a sacrificial lamb that could be offered as a type of Christ: *For [God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21). Nevertheless Cain despised God's offer of grace, and to show his disdain for it he slew his brother.

In the eyes of the world Cain would be considered a good man (prior to killing his brother); but men like Cain, who feel justified by their own works, always resent the concept of salvation by grace. To them the offer of grace is an insult. Thus Jude warned: *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men [changing] the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ* (Jude 1:4). The assertion that God's grace produces lasciviousness is a denial of the Person and work of Christ, because it demands human effort for salvation. Therefore Jude said: *these speak evil of those things which they know not [I Corinthians 2:14]: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts [animals without reason], in those things they corrupt themselves* (Jude 1:10).

The accusation of the self-righteous against those who believe in the grace of God is that those redeemed by grace say, *Let us do evil, that good may come* (Romans 3:8). Paul says of

## The Millennial Kingdom

these accusers that *their damnation is just*; and this provides an insight into the actions of the sheep nations at the end of the millennium, when they shall be quick to rise in insurrection against the Lord and His saints at the loosing of Satan (Revelation 20:7-9). Thus the old animosity of Cain against Abel shall be manifested once again.

The third paragraph of this prophecy speaks of the regathering of the Jews out of the nations of the world (after their burial there in 70 A.D.); and it ultimately speaks of their salvation except for one phrase: *to it shall the Gentiles seek*. This phrase speaks of the Gentile's response to Christ through the preaching of the gospel during the church age. Therefore for those thus redeemed the remainder of the verse applies to them, to those redeemed during the tribulation period, and to the Jews who will be redeemed at the coming of our Lord: *and his rest shall be glorious*.

Finally the fourth paragraph speaks of the reunification of Ephraim and Judah into one nation. This occurred in 1948 with the partial fulfillment of the dry bones and two sticks prophecies, but it will not see its ultimate fulfillment until Jesus Christ shall sit upon the throne of David. This fourth paragraph then jumps in time to the battle of Armageddon, when the Lord shall tread *the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God* (Revelation 19:15). At that time He will *smite the earth with the rod of his mouth*. The fourth paragraph (in the Hebrew text) then speaks of Edom, Moab and Ammon being placed in subjection to Israel. After that it also speaks of the Lord providing a highway for the remnant of His people to return to the Land. This is not the regathering of the Jews out of the nations of the world that occurred when Israel became a nation again after World War II, but this is the regathering of those Jews who will flee Jerusalem

## The Millennial Kingdom

*into her place* (Revelation 12:14) when the false prophet sets up an idol of the antichrist in the temple. This regathering will occur at the return of our Lord to this earth, when Israel shall look upon him Whom they pierced and be saved. Thus this regathering is a prelude to the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth.

The lack of emphasis upon the redeemed of the church age in this prophecy (as well as in other prophecies about the Kingdom) has resulted in the idea that the earthly Kingdom is for the Jews -- an earthly reign for an earthly people; but like the preconceived ideas about who shall make up the bride of Christ, this concept does not consider all that is written on this subject. Thus it will be that the redeemed of all ages shall have a part in the earthly Kingdom just as redeemed Jews out of the Old and New Testament eras will, with redeemed Gentiles, be a part of the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:12, 27):

And when he had taken the book, the four [living creatures] and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, *and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth* (Revelation 5:8-10, emphasis mine).

The prophecy in the eleventh chapter of the book of Isaiah reveals much that we have seen in our studies thus far. We have seen Israel resurrected out of the Gentile nations of the world on May 14, 1948, when she declared herself to be a nation again among the nations of the world (Matthew 24:32-35). We have witnessed a migration of Jews out of the nations of the world back into the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; but despite this partial fulfillment of the *dry bones* prophecy and the prophecy in Isaiah eleven, Israel has not yet learned that the

## The Millennial Kingdom

Jesus Whom she crucified is her Messiah. She has not yet learned that it will be Jesus of Nazareth Who shall sit upon the throne of David in fulfillment of the *two sticks* prophecy. She has not yet learned that He died for her sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Consequently God's Spirit is not yet within the nation of Israel (as promised in the dry bones prophecy) even though she is a nation again back in the land of Israel; nor can the Spirit of God be within her until the Lord comes again to this earth to redeem Israel and to sit upon the throne of David in fulfillment of the two sticks prophecy:

The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the [nations], whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

*And David my servant [i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ] shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.*

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be

## The Millennial Kingdom

their God, and they shall be my people. And the [nations] shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. (Ezekiel 37:15-28, emphasis mine)

On the morning of June 7, 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel regained possession of the Old City of Jerusalem. (*Warrior Statesman: The Life of Moshe Dayan*, Robert Slater, St. Martins Press, New York, 1991, pages 269-270.) This was fifty years after the Balfour Declaration (1917), which stated in part: *His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object....* (*The High Walls of Jerusalem*, Ronald Sanders, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1983, pg. 612)

Could this have been a year of jubilee for Israel? If it were and we add seven years (to account for the tribulation period) to the forty-one years that have elapsed since then, at such a point in time we would be just two years short of another year of jubilee for Israel in the year 2017. Is it possible that our Lord will come again to this earth on the day of atonement at the end of the year 2016 to begin another year of jubilee? Since no man knows the day or the hour in which our Lord will return to this earth, we cannot declare with absolute certainty that He will return at that time, neither can we ignore the following Scripture: *And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family* (Leviticus 25:8-10,

## The Millennial Kingdom

emphasis mine).

If we reconsider our studies of the seven feasts of the Jews, with the first three feasts representing the first advent of Christ, the last three feasts representing the second advent of Christ, and Pentecost (which falls between these feasts) representing the church age, then it seems very likely that the Lord's return to this earth will begin Israel's jubilee on the day of atonement. This concept is strengthened by the fact that in the typology of Scripture salvation was brought to Israel on the day of atonement, and her possessions were returned to her in the year of jubilee. Both of these conditions will be met at the coming of our Lord when Israel shall be saved and possess the land given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 15:18-21): a land, incidentally, that she has never possessed in its entirety since she was delivered from the land of Egypt.

God's promises to Israel do not negate His promises to the redeemed of all ages, neither do the promises to the redeemed of all ages negate God's promises to Israel. Both will reign with Christ in the Kingdom. Thus with the return of the Lord, Israel shall be redeemed to begin her jubilee throughout the millennial reign of Christ; and the redeemed out of the nations of the world shall also enter into the Kingdom to fulfill one more aspect of God's promise to Abraham: *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed* (Genesis 12:1-3). Paul identified Abraham's blessed seed in his epistle to the Galatians: *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (Galatians 3:29).

## The Millennial Kingdom

This agrees with our Lord's statement to His disciples the night before His crucifixion: *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6). In this regard we must make a distinction between entrance into the earthly Kingdom, and acceptance into the presence of a Holy and Just God through the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ. One is an earthly reward predicated of earthly behavior; the other is an eternal inheritance, which was purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ and entered into by faith.

Thus we have seen that the redeemed of all nations of the earth (the saints of both the Jews and of the Gentiles) will reign with Christ in the Kingdom; and we have also seen, with the judgment of the sheep and the goat nations, that there will be individuals out of the nations of the world who will also enter the earthly Kingdom on the basis of their works: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Matthew 25:34-41, emphasis mine).*

There is nothing in the Scriptures by accident. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works* (II Timothy 3:16-17).

## The Millennial Kingdom

Therefore there must be a very important reason for there to be two classes of people (the saints and the sheep nations) who will enter into the Kingdom.

The distinction between these two, as we have seen, is that the saints will be in the Kingdom because they will have been redeemed by faith in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ; whereas the sheep nations, as we have also seen, will be in the Kingdom because of their works towards the brethren of our Lord. Indeed the good works of the sheep nations towards the brethren of our Lord were proper and noble things to do, but since salvation is *Not by works of righteousness which we have done* (Titus 3:5), the sheep nations will not be a redeemed people. The assumption that they will be has made it almost impossible to understand the events of the millennial Kingdom, where at the end of the earthly Kingdom the nations of the world will be deceived by Satan when he is *loosed a little season*.

We also have seen that the Lord is going to rule His Kingdom with His saints. This means that the only people left to be ruled will be the sheep nations. Therefore one of the conditions that must take place before the Kingdom can begin is that Satan will be bound for the duration of the Kingdom: *And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them* (Revelation 20:7-9, emphasis mine). Since the saints were glorified and adopted in the first resurrection (and will then be like the Lord Jesus Christ), this leaves the sheep nations to be the ones that shall be deceived by Satan;

## The Millennial Kingdom

this leaves the sheep nations to be the ones that will surround the city of Jerusalem and the camp of the saints; and this leaves the sheep nations to be the ones that shall be devoured with fire sent down from heaven when God views their insurrection.

Thus after having lived in a perfect environment for one thousand years; and having been fully apprised of *the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*; and having seen God's promises to the Jews and the Gentiles who believed on the Lord fulfilled perfectly; the minds of the individuals who will make up the sheep nations will not have been changed, because they will still think according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*.

In our Lord's sermon on the mount He spoke of a broad way and the many who will enter it (Matthew 7:13). Thus there has always been a majority of people upon this earth, from the time of Cain to the present, who have believed that they can have a right relationship with God based upon their works; but the sheep nations have proved that concept to be totally false. Thus after God sends down fire from heaven to destroy their insurrection against the Lord and His saints, He will raise from the dead the unsaved of all ages to stand before the great white throne judgment to be judged according to their works:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works*. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. *This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.* (Revelation 20:12-15, emphasis mine)

The mystery of the iniquity introduced the concept into the world that man could be like God if he would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, even though doing so was in

## The Millennial Kingdom

direct violation of the revealed will of God. Nevertheless it has been through this knowledge of good and evil (right and wrong) that man has believed that he can be like God. This is what Cain believed; and this is the reason Cain rejected God's grace when it was offered to him; and this is the reason he slew his brother in a rage.

Despite all of the misery the lie of the devil has brought upon this world, man has clung tenaciously to the fruit of the evil tree as a source of life. The great white throne judgment will settle this question once and for all. Thus the great white throne judgment will be a judgment of the good works of the world. This is the reason there will be two kinds of books at this judgment: the books which contain the good works of the unredeemed world and the book of life.

As each person stands before this judgment, God will read his good works from the books of works, and these will all fail to meet the perfect righteousness of God: for they will all have been performed from the fruit of the evil tree. Thus Paul wrote: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). This verse of Scripture is not about personal sin. It is about the sin of Adam which was imputed to his race. Therefore, as a result of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, all of the works of man are short of the glory of God, which is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Therefore our Lord said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto Father but by me*. Thus after reading their works from the book of works, God will then examine the book of life to show them that their names are not written there. Then, since there is no place found for them, they will be cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and this will bring the mystery of the iniquity to its just end:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new

## The Millennial Kingdom

Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

And he that sat upon the throne said, *Behold, I make all things new.* And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:1-8, emphasis mine)

Once the new heaven and the new earth have been created, then the New Jerusalem shall descend from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. This bride will be the redeemed of all ages, those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life:

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, *which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel*: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and *in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysopterus; the eleventh,

## The Millennial Kingdom

a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

And I saw no temple therein: *for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* (Revelation 21:9-27, emphasis mine)

Even though John made an allusion to the eternal Kingdom of God in the last chapter of the Revelation, we cannot speak of those things in detail; and anything that we might imagine it to be could not possibly do it justice. When we look at the grandeur of this earth and realize that from the time of Adam it has been under a curse, perhaps this will give us some understanding of how spectacular the new heaven and the new earth will be. Therefore we will end this study of the second coming of our Lord the way John ended (in Revelation 22:20-21) the book of the Revelation: *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*