

Living In
“The Last Days”

A Crash Course In Eschatology

A Prophecy Seminar Presented By

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Forward

As a Bible teacher I'm often asked, "*Do you think we're living in 'The Last Days'?*"

In response, I usually smile and give my standard short answer, "*Of course.*" But then, before the person can ask me his/her inevitable follow-up question of just how much longer I think we might have before Jesus comes back, I add, "*We've actually been living in 'The Last Days' for the past 2,000 years.*"

Technically speaking, "The Last Days" did, in fact, begin with the 1st Coming of Jesus (when He atoned for our sin), and they will end with His 2nd Coming (when He redeems our mortal bodies).¹ However, I don't want you to think I'm so dense as to misunderstand the real question being asked – the question which most likely brought you to this seminar.

Like generations of believers before you, you're looking around at a world that seems to be coming apart at the seams and you're wondering just how much longer it could possibly be before Jesus comes back and puts an end to such sinfulness.

This seminar is my long answer to the real question(s) burning on the minds of so many Christians today - "*Are we the generation that will experience the 2nd Coming of Jesus, and if so, what can we expect to happen?*"

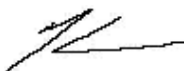
Let me warn you up front that this seminar won't strictly adhere to any of the prophetic systems with which you are probably familiar. If you're an ardent advocate of Pre-, Post-, or A-Millennialism who's come here with the hope of finding further validation of your particular system of *eschatology*,² you're at the wrong seminar. Here's why.

In order to make an honest attempt to search out the Scriptural answer to the question at hand, I intentionally "threw out" everything I knew about existing, systematic approaches to *eschatology* and started from scratch. That doesn't mean I ignored centuries of scholarly work; I simply determined not to take what any of the "experts" within these *eschatological* systems asserted as "the indisputable truth." Instead, I went back and did my own research within the primary resources - particularly within the original language texts of the Bible itself – in order to see what I could find out on my own. It took time, but it was well worth it.

What I discovered surprised me. I found that each of the existing *eschatological* systems had significantly strong and weak points. By eliminating the weak (always man-made) points and embracing the strong (Bible-based) points, I ended up with something altogether different, and yet so amazingly familiar.

What did I end up believing? Well, that's the meat of this seminar. That's why I'm inviting you to leave behind your own *eschatological* presuppositions, open your Bible, and let me take you on the journey of discovery that completely transformed my own belief about "Living In 'The Last Days'."

מָרַן אֲתָא *Maran Atha* ("Come, Our Lord")!



¹ Hebrews 9:27-28. See also Acts 2:14-21; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Peter 3:1ff; Hebrews 1:1-2; and 1 John 2:18.

² The technical term for the study of last things.

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

Prophets

A prophet is one who, on behalf of God,
“speaks forth”
(reveals information about past or present events)
or
“fore speaks”
(makes predictions about future events)

While there is some controversy regarding the exact meaning of the Hebrew word most commonly translated as “prophet,”³ the meaning of an even more ancient synonym is quite clear. “The Seer”⁴ was the “see”er of divine visions. By God’s intervention in his life, a prophet “saw” things that others could not see, and subsequently spoke out about them.⁵

In effect, a prophet was an individual through whom God supernaturally communicated, most often in the form of visions and dreams, and quite frequently about future events.

Some of the most famous patriarchs were prophets or divine dreamers/interpreters of dreams - Enoch,⁶ Abraham,⁷ Jacob⁸ and Joseph.⁹

Perhaps the most significant prophet of the Israeli nation was Moses. In the process of leading them out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land, he saw many visions, acted as an intercessor between the people and God, and even predicted future events on several occasions. For 40 years he was the prophet of Israel, writing what would become the foundational books for both the Old and New Testaments – the Pentateuch.¹⁰ Before his death he revealed that God would one day raise another prophet like himself from among the Israelis; one who would speak the very words of God Himself.¹¹

³ Hebrew: [nabiy’ /naw·bee/]. (FYI: I’ll be using Strong’s Concordance’s transliteration & pronunciation conventions for any Hebrew or Greek words to which I refer.) There are basically four views of derivation for this word: A prophet is, 1) a person who “speaks” for God; 2) a person who “bubbles up” with words from God; 3) a person who is “called” by God; or, 4) in the opinion of some, the etymology of the word has been completely lost in antiquity.

⁴ Hebrew: [ro’eh /ro·eh/]. See 1 Samuel 9:9.

⁵ This visual orientation can also be seen in Deuteronomy 13:1ff, where the prophet is paired closely with the “dreamer of a dream.”

⁶ Jude 1:14-15.

⁷ Genesis 20:7; cf. 12:7; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1.

⁸ Genesis 28:12ff; 31:10ff; 46:2ff; 48:19ff.

⁹ Genesis 37:5ff; 40:5ff.

¹⁰ Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

Purpose of Prophecy

Prophecy,
whether it takes the form of “revelation” or “prediction,”
establishes and validates Yahweh’s unique identity as
The One & Only Living God.

Ultimately, Moses’ prophecy about “The Prophet” who would mediate between God and Man was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.¹² However, during the intervening 1,500 years between Moses and Christ, many prophets arose in Israel - some genuine, others not.

According to the Law, every prophet had to meet two criteria in order to be considered genuine. First, the prophet’s message had to be in 100% agreement with the words of God already spoken (notice that this focuses upon “revelation”);¹³ and second, everything the prophet said about the future had to take place with 100% accuracy (this focuses upon “prediction”).¹⁴ If either condition was not met, the speaker was to be considered a “false prophet.” He was not to be heeded under any circumstances and, under ancient Israeli law, he was to be immediately executed without mercy.

Why so strict? The reason is fairly simple, but highly significant.

Prophecy, whether it takes the form of supernatural “revelation” about the past and present or as a “prediction” about the future, validates Yahweh’s identity as the one and only Creator God; the One who knows everything from beginning to end; a transcendent and eternal Being completely different from other so-called “gods.”¹⁵ False testimony from those supposedly speaking on His behalf cannot and must not be tolerated.

For obvious reasons, we’ll be working primarily with “predictive” prophecy in this seminar.

¹² 1 Timothy 2:5.

¹³ Deuteronomy 13:1ff.

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 18:20-22. On the basis of this standard alone, most (if not all) of those claiming to be prophets today should be completely disregarded.

¹⁵ Isaiah 41:21-42:9. In John 13:19; 14:29; and 16:4, Jesus assigns a very similar reason for his prophetic revelations and predictions to the Apostles.

Fulfilled Prophecy

There are two types of predictive prophecy: “fulfilled” and “unfulfilled”.

“Fulfilled” prophecy can be broken down further into two subgroups: that which is specifically designated as “fulfilled” by Scripture and that which appears to have been “fulfilled,” but without any specific Scriptural testimony as such.

Fulfilled prophecies with Scriptural confirmation are fairly easy to spot, since they are always accompanied by some formula directly quoting, alluding to, or otherwise referencing the original prophecy. Unfortunately, fulfilled prophecies without Scriptural confirmation can be much harder to pin down simply because they depend entirely upon human application of known historical events to the prophecies they appear to fulfill. While such applications may seem completely obvious to the one making them, they are none-the-less human in origin and therefore cannot be given the same weight of certainty extended to prophecies that have Biblical testimony regarding their fulfillment. What one scholar considers “fulfilled,” another might classify as “unfulfilled.” Ultimately, they are matters of personal opinion and should never be used as tests of Christian fellowship.¹⁶

Thus, the only type of predictive prophecy that can be understood with an absolute level of certainty is one which has specific Bible testimony regarding its fulfillment. All the rest are subject to at least some level of conjecture and speculation. This is exactly why the treatment of predictive prophecy is rife with such a wide variety of opinions and guesses.

As a matter of fact, even dealing with fulfilled prophecies specifically supported by Scriptural testimony can be problematic.

For example, Hosea 11:1 appears to be a rather straightforward (albeit poetic) statement about Yahweh’s removal of Israel from Egyptian bondage. However, Matthew 2:15 specifically identifies it as a prophecy fulfilled via Jesus’ brief stay in Egypt during His infancy. Without Matthew’s inspired comment it is highly unlikely that the Hosea passage would have ever been applied in such a fashion.

¹⁶ I consider it a great tragedy that so many Christians are quick to argue dogmatically, viciously, and publicly against other Christians regarding prophetic passages that have no Biblical explanation regarding their fulfillment. Certainly we can agree civilly to disagree intellectually on such matters of opinion without assassinating the character and witness of our brothers and sisters in Christ, can’t we? Isn’t our joint mission of proclaiming the clear gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world more important than such petty arguments?

Additionally, consider the fact that 1st Century Jewish scholars had some fairly structured concepts regarding the literal fulfillment of Malachi's prophecies about the return of the very powerful prophet Elijah, who had been supernaturally spirited away over nine centuries earlier.¹⁷ They expected Elijah to reappear immediately prior to the arrival of Messiah and the dawning of the judgmental "Day of Yahweh."¹⁸ Yet, the inspired statements by the angel Gabriel,¹⁹ as well as those made by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself,²⁰ make it clear that John the Immerser fulfilled Malachi's prophecy about Elijah,²¹ effectively rendering four centuries of scholarly Jewish speculation wrong.²² (Ironically, it was partly because of such *eschatological* expectations that the learned men of the Sanhedrin blew off their Scriptural responsibility to welcome Jesus as the prophesied Messiah, condemning Him to death instead as a blasphemer and a rabble-rouser.²³)

These facts prompt me to extend a little friendly advice to all those "Prophecy Experts" who promote their own speculations about "unfulfilled" Biblical prophecies as if they were absolute fact; condemning anyone and everyone who dares disagree with them – "STOP IT! You need to always leave room for the possibility you're wrong. Remember that grace is much more likely to be offered to those who freely extend it, than to those who don't."²⁴

During this seminar I will obviously engage in some speculation of my own. I promise that I will never call your Christianity into question just because you disagree with me. During the course of this seminar, I may vigorously criticize key components of various *eschatological* systems that you hold dear. Please understand now that any such comments later will in no way be designed as personal attacks against you or your favorite prophecy teacher. I'm just expressing my opinion based on my studies of God's Word. It's up to you to decide if, in the light of inspired Scripture, my opinion has any validity.

¹⁷ 2 Kings 2.

¹⁸ Malachi 3:1-7; 4:1-6; Matthew 17:10//Mark 9:11.

¹⁹ Luke 1:16-17.

²⁰ Matthew 17:11-13//Mark 9:12-13.

²¹ John's own response that he was not Elijah should be considered in the context of the literal expectations of the Jews who asked him pointblank if he was that ancient prophet (John 1:19-28). While he was certainly the fulfillment of the Malachi prophecy, this was because he came "in the spirit and power" (Luke 1:17) of Elijah and not because he was the prophet himself.

²² At this point I need to acknowledge the very real possibility that Elijah may end up being one of the two witness-prophets during the final confrontation between God and Satan (Revelation 11), providing a dimension of fulfillment to the Malachi prophecy not too far removed from the literal expectations of the ancient Jewish scholars. Frankly, that is my personal expectation. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that this is prophetic speculation regarding Elijah's possible participation in future events, while the New Testament has specifically and repeatedly identified John the Immerser as the fulfillment of the prophecy in question.

²³ John 5:39-47; Luke 23:2,14.

²⁴ Matthew 7:1-5.

Methodology For Understanding Predictive Prophecy

- 1. Study prophecies specifically cited in Scripture as “Fulfilled.”**
- 2. Study prophecies that seem to have been “Fulfilled” historically.**
- 3. Consider carefully how “Unfulfilled” prophecies might become “Fulfilled” in a similar fashion.**

In my prophetic studies, I have come to the conclusion that the safest way to prepare for speculating about “unfulfilled” prophecy is to make sure we understand “fulfilled” prophecy.

First, we should study the prophecies which are specifically cited elsewhere in Scripture as “fulfilled.” There is a two-fold benefit to this procedure:

- It will acquaint us with the inspired ways in which prophecies have already been fulfilled (i.e., literally or figuratively), providing additional depth to our thoughtful consideration of ways in which “unfulfilled” prophecies might become “fulfilled.”
- It will tend to remove from our active speculative process those prophecies which have already been identified as “fulfilled.”²⁵

Next, we should tackle those prophecies that seem most likely to have been fulfilled (although without Scriptural testimony), remembering all the while that we are now working in an area of fallible human reasoning. As before, we will benefit in two ways from doing this:

- It will allow us to assess how these theorized fulfillments relate back to their supposed predictions (either literally or figuratively), further broadening our understanding of how prophetic fulfillment appears to work.
- It will permit us to conditionally classify these prophecies as “fulfilled,” so that we can remove them from our active list of “unfulfilled” prophecies. (Although we ought to keep them at the back of our mind, just in case we run across something that would cause us to rethink their “fulfilled” status.)

Finally, having done our best to ground ourselves in Scripture,²⁶ we can seriously begin our thoughtful speculation on the unfulfilled prophecies that remain on our list.

Alright! Enough of introductory matters! Let’s get started with a look at Jesus’ most important prophetic discourse.

²⁵ Such as the aforementioned prophecy about Elijah’s coming.

²⁶ Obviously the time we have set aside for this seminar is not nearly enough for us to accomplish the extremely important first two steps together. Much of what I present will be based on my own work in this area, without specifically citing it. I strongly suggest that each of you invest the personal study time in God’s Word to develop your own “feel” for how prophecy has already been “fulfilled.”

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE OF JESUS

Background Information

When dealing with the issue of “fulfilled” versus “unfulfilled” prophecy, a solid understanding of Jesus’ “Olivet Discourse”²⁷ is absolutely essential. Let’s begin by putting this prophetic discourse into its proper historical context.

As the time of the crucifixion drew near, Jesus made His way through various cities and villages, teaching as He traveled to Jerusalem one last time.²⁸ He spent the final Sabbath²⁹ of this journey (8 *Nisan*)³⁰ in the Perea territory of Herod, where some Pharisees tried to rattle Him by telling Him that the Tetrarch wanted to kill Him. Jesus replied,

Go tell this fox, “Behold! I expel demons and accomplish healings today and tomorrow; on the third I am fulfilled.” None the less, it is necessary for me to go on today, tomorrow, and the next, because it is not acceptable for a prophet to die outside Jerusalem.³¹

By these words Jesus predicted that He would arrive at Jerusalem in three days, at the most appropriate time for His role as the ultimate Passover lamb,³² i.e., 10 *Nisan*, the very day on which all Passover lambs were to be designated for sacrifice.³³ As He spoke so openly about His impending death, Jesus portrayed the depth of His emotion at facing yet another rejection by ethnic Israel. I say “another rejection” because He, being Yahweh Incarnate, had already suffered innumerable rejections by the nation Israel; rejections that had culminated in the first desolation of both Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians.³⁴

He knew that while a large number of the Passover pilgrims already assembling at Jerusalem in this momentous year would welcome Him with shouts of prophetic praise on the 10th, many of those same individuals would be clamoring for His crucifixion by the 14th. With His divine mind’s eye He could see the result of this rejection – another desolation of Jerusalem and the Temple, this time by the Romans.

²⁷ So named because it was delivered on Mt. Olivet, overlooking Jerusalem from the east.

²⁸ Luke 13:22.

²⁹ As indicated by both the following (Luke 14:1) and preceding (Luke 13:10) contexts.

³⁰ Jesus resurrected on Sunday the 16th of Nisan, the third day since his death (Luke 22:21) on Passover, Friday the 14th. He entered Jerusalem on Monday the 10th, the day after (John 12:10) he had arrived at Bethany on Sunday the 9th six days before the Passover (John 12:6).

³¹ Luke 13:32-33.

³² 1 Corinthians 5:7; See also John the Immerser’s comments in John 1:29.

³³ Exodus 12:3-6.

³⁴ Daniel 9:1-19; cf. Jeremiah 25:1-11.

Therefore He prophesied:

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! *You, the one* killing the prophets and stoning those sent to her, how many times have I wanted to gather your children in that way a bird gathers her chicks under her wings, and you didn't want *it*?

Behold! Your house is being left to you *desolate*. I say to you, you will not see me until you say, "Blessed is the one coming in the name of Yahweh!"³⁵

Three days later, on the road leading into Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a huge crowd of festival celebrants greeted Jesus with the traditional words of Psalm 118:25-26 - "Save us!"³⁶ and "Blessed is the one coming in the name of Yahweh!"³⁷ This was exactly when, where and how Jesus had said it would occur.

It was on that occasion that Jesus spoke once more to Jerusalem about her approaching desolation, lamenting her horrendous fate.

If you yourself had realized in this day the things *required* for peace...but now they have been hidden from your eyes. Days will come upon you *when* your enemies will erect fortifications against you, surround you, and press in on you from all sides; they will demolish *both* you and your children within you. There will not be stone upon stone left in you, because you did not recognize the time of your evaluation.³⁸

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because His prophetic sight could already see the entire city demolished and her population decimated. He knew that many of the people currently cheering around Him did not recognize who He really was or why He had come. In just a few days they, their human High Priest and their Sanhedrin would completely reject Him as their rightful king,³⁹ condemn Him to execution as a criminal on a Roman cross, and thereby bring upon Jerusalem and the Temple a second divine desolation.

A couple days after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as the final Passover lamb, the apostles were pointing out to Jesus all the massive stones which King Herod had used in his extensive renovation of the Temple nearly 50 years earlier, along with the many impressive dedicatory gifts with which it had been adorned since. Jesus' only response was to basically repeat what He had said on the 10th about the impending desolation of the city.

See these great buildings? There won't be stone upon stone left here that will not be taken down.⁴⁰

³⁵ Luke 13:34-35. Matthew's account (23:37-38) is found - out of chronological order - just prior to his record of the Olivet Discourse, probably because of its close topical connection. While Luke implies the word "desolate," Matthew explicitly records it.

³⁶ Greek: [*hosanna* /ho-san·nah/], which approximates the Hebrew imperative phrase: [*hoshiyanna na'* /ho-shee-ah naw/].

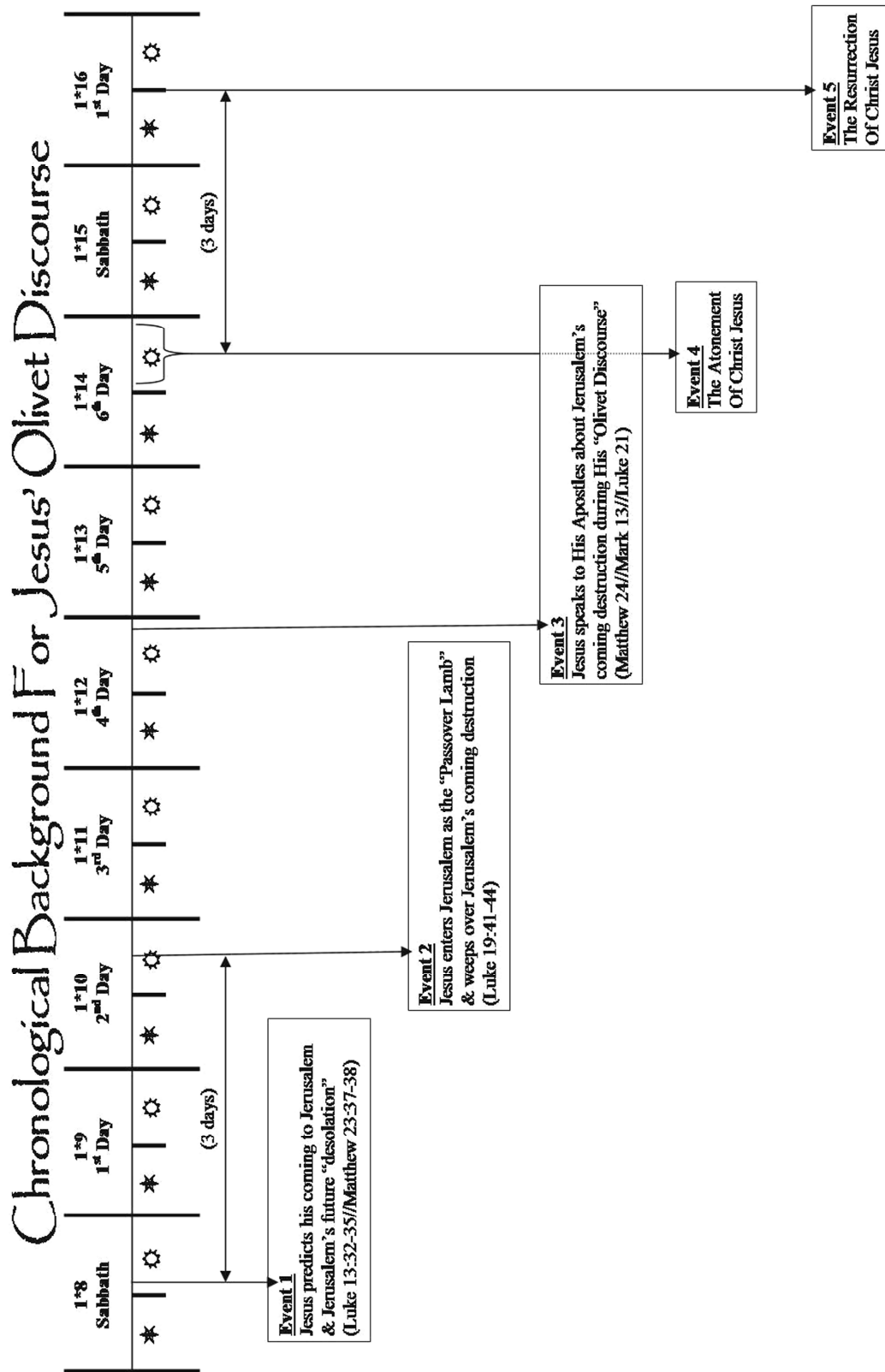
³⁷ Matthew 21:1-9//Mark 11:1-10//Luke 19:29-40.

³⁸ Luke 19:41-44.

³⁹ John 19:13-15 records the legal rejection of Jesus as king by the Jewish nation.

⁴⁰ Mark 13:2.

CHART: Chronological Background of Jesus' Olivet Discourse



No doubt shocked to hear, not just once, but twice within a matter days, that such an important site as the Temple would be completely razed to the ground, four of the Apostles – Peter, Andrew, James, and John – waited until later in the day, when Jesus had taken a seat on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Temple complex, in order to inquire about this prophecy. It was their private question(s) that prompted “The Olivet Discourse.”

*The Apostles’ Question(s)*⁴¹

<u>MATTHEW</u>	<u>MARK</u>	<u>LUKE</u>
24:3b Tell us, when will these things be? What <i>will be</i> the sign of your arrival and the consummation of the age?	13:4 Tell us, when will these things be? What <i>will be</i> the sign whenever all these things are about to be consummated	21:7 So, Teacher, when will these things be? What <i>will be</i> the sign whenever these things are about to happen?

While they were primarily interested in the timing of the Temple’s destruction, Matthew’s account makes it very clear that they included a secondary question regarding “WHAT SIGN” would precede Jesus’ “ARRIVAL”⁴² as the final King of Israel, and His subsequent inauguration of the eternal kingdom.⁴³ As religious Jews, they quite naturally seem to have assumed that such an astonishing event as the total destruction of the Temple had to be associated with “the end of the world” as they knew it and the dawning of the long anticipated Messianic age.

Since we live after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, but before the 2nd Coming of Jesus as “King of kings and Lord of lords,”⁴⁴ we have the advantage of knowing that the apostles were actually asking about two different events. If we are very careful in our consideration of Jesus’ answer, we will be able to see that He precisely answered both questions, giving the bulk of His attention to the most pressing event chronologically - the destruction (or desolation) of the Temple.

⁴¹ Over the nearly thirty years of my ministry, to facilitate my own understanding of the gospels, I have developed a translation, arranged in parallel columns for easy comparison, identifying all the Greek vocabulary common to at least two of the accounts by means of bold print. I will be using this parallel arrangement throughout our consideration of the Olivet Discourse.

⁴² This is His Second “Coming” - Greek: [*parousia* /par-oo-see-ah/], sometimes translated “Presence.”

⁴³ Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44; and 7:13-14, 27.

⁴⁴ Revelation 19:11ff.

Precursors to the Temple's Desolation

<u>MATTHEW</u>	<u>MARK</u>	<u>LUKE</u>
<p>24:4 Replying, Jesus said to them, “See that no one misleads you, 24:5 for many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Anointed!’ and will mislead many.</p> <p>24:6 You are about to hear wars and reports of wars; see that you are not troubled, for it must happen, but it is not yet the end.</p> <p>24:7 For nation will be raised up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in <i>various</i> places.</p> <p>24:8 All these things <i>are</i> but the beginning of labor pains.</p>	<p>13:5 Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one misleads you. 13:6 Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and will mislead many.</p> <p>13:7 Whenever you hear wars and reports of wars, do not be troubled; it must happen, but it is not yet the end.</p> <p>13:8 For nation will be raised up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in <i>various</i> places. There will be famines.</p> <p>These things are the beginning of labor pains.</p>	<p>21:8 He said, “See that you are not misled, for many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time has drawn near!’</p> <p>Do not go after them. 21:9 Whenever you hear wars and unrest, do not be terrified, for these things must happen first; but it is not immediately the end.” 21:10 Then he was saying to them, “Nation will be raised up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 21:11 There will be Great earthquakes and, in various places, famines, pestilences, and terrifying things. There will be great signs from heaven.</p>

As you can see for yourself, Jesus began His discourse with a general warning that the apostles should not to be fooled by the claims of false Messiahs, nor unsettled by news of political and social unrest, nor frightened by natural disasters. Such events would not be indicative, in and of themselves, that the end of the Temple was imminent, nor that the true Messiah was about to appear.

Josephus, a Jewish priest, soldier, and historian of the 1st Century, wrote extensively about the events leading up to and surrounding the war during which Jerusalem was laid waste by the Romans. He records examples of all the things mentioned by Jesus that took place during the 37-year period between the discourse and the desolation. There were false Messiahs and prophets.⁴⁵ Political and social unrest increasingly became the norm for the Jewish people.⁴⁶ Famines,⁴⁷ earthquakes⁴⁸ and supernatural signs also took place.⁴⁹

But, as Jesus warned, these things were like the first twinges of labor. The really painful contractions of delivery were yet to come.

⁴⁵ Antiquities 20.5.1; 20.8.6//Wars 2.13.5.

⁴⁶ Antiquities 20.

⁴⁷ Antiquities 20.2.

⁴⁸ Although Josephus cites only one specific incident of the earth quaking during the period AD 33-AD70, a quake which he directly connected to the desolation of the Temple (Antiquities 6.5.3), the New Testament itself provides some pretty significant examples with this time frame (Matthew 27:51-54; 28:2; Acts 16:26).

⁴⁹ Wars 6.5.3.

Persecution During the Spread of the Gospel

<u>MATTHEW 10</u>	<u>MATTHEW 24</u>	<u>MARK</u>	<u>LUKE</u>
<p>10:17 Beware of men, for they will</p> <p>hand you over to councils and</p> <p>in their synagogues.</p> <p>10:18 You will be led before governors and kings on account of me</p> <p>as a testimony to them</p> <p>and to the nations.</p> <p>10:19 Whenever they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you should say,</p> <p>for it will be given to you in that hour what to say;</p> <p>10:20 for it will not be you speaking, but rather the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>24:9a At that time</p> <p>they will</p> <p>hand you over to tribulation</p> <p>24:10 At that time many will stumble; they will hand over one other, and will hate one another.</p> <p>24:11 Many false prophets will be raised up, and they will mislead many.</p> <p>24:12 Because of the increase of lawlessness the love of many will be made cold.</p> <p>[Next verse taken out of sequence]</p> <p>24:14 This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in the whole inhabited world as testimony to all nations; then the end will arrive. [Return to sequence]</p>	<p>13:9 But</p> <p>watch yourselves!</p> <p>They will</p> <p>hand you over to councils and you will be beaten</p> <p>in synagogues</p> <p>and you will stand before governors and kings on account of me</p> <p>as a testimony to them.</p> <p>13:10 The good news must first be proclaimed among</p> <p>all nations.</p> <p>13:11 Whenever they lead you away for handing over, do not worry ahead of time about what you should say. Instead, whatever is given to you in that hour, speak;</p> <p>for it will not be you speaking, but rather the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>21:12 But before all these things</p> <p>they will thrust their hands on you and will pursue you; handing you over to</p> <p>synagogues and jails</p> <p>leading you away before kings and governors on account of my name.</p> <p>21:13 It will be your opportunity for a testimony.</p> <p>21:14 Therefore,</p> <p>decide in your hearts not to rehearse <i>how</i> to present a defense,</p> <p>21:15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your detractors will be unable to resist or contradict.</p>

<u>MATTHEW 10</u>	<u>MATTHEW 24</u>	<u>MARK</u>	<u>LUKE</u>
<p>10:21 Sibling will hand over sibling to death; a father <i>his</i> child; children shall rise up against parents and put them to death.</p> <p>10:22 You will be hated by everyone because of my name</p> <p>however, the one enduring to the end, he will be saved.</p>	<p>[Next out of sequence] 24:9b and they will kill you;</p> <p>you will be hated by all nations because of my name.</p> <p>[Return to sequence] 24:13 However, the one enduring to the end, he will be saved.</p>	<p>13:12 Sibling will hand over sibling to death; a father <i>his</i> child; children shall rise up against parents and put them to death.</p> <p>13:13 You will be hated by everyone because of my name</p> <p>however, the one enduring to the end, he will be saved.</p>	<p>21:16 You will be handed over by parents, siblings, relatives, and friends;</p> <p><i>some of you they will put to death.</i></p> <p>21:17 You will be hated by everyone because of my name.</p> <p>21:18 Not a hair of your head shall be ruined.</p> <p>21:19 By your endurance, secure yourselves.</p>

Having instructed His apostles not to be overly anxious about the frightening events that would soon turn their world upside down, Jesus went on to speak with them on a much more personal level. He informed them that as they obediently proclaimed the good news of the kingdom throughout their world they would undergo intense persecution on His account.

At first, this persecution would come from within Judaism itself, with trials and punishments carried out by Jewish councils and synagogues. Later, as the gospel began to spread among non-Israelis, they would find themselves arraigned before the ethnic kings and governors of the Roman Empire.

Regardless of the source of trouble, Jesus did not want them to “pre-worry” or rehearse their defense, because the Holy Spirit would supply them with the appropriate words - arguments so powerful that those hearing them would be flabbergasted.⁵⁰

The New Testament record confirms that this was exactly what happened. Within days of the Church’s birth on Pentecost, AD 33, two of the apostles were arrested for healing a lame man in the name of Jesus.⁵¹ During the Sanhedrin hearing that followed, the scholars on the council were shocked by the depth of Scriptural reasoning demonstrated by ordinary Galilean men without formal rabbinical training.⁵² On this first occasion, the two men were let off with a warning; however, when they continued preaching Jesus as Messiah, they were rearrested. This time the Sanhedrin beat them severely before releasing them.⁵³

⁵⁰ While a general principle of Holy Spirit assistance to persecuted Christians might be drawn from this passage, we must keep in mind that the promise was made specifically to the supernaturally inspired apostles.

⁵¹ Acts 3 & 4.

⁵² Acts 4:13.

⁵³ Acts 5:17ff.

When apostolic testimony about Jesus continued to gather adherents, the Sanhedrin took further steps to stop it from spreading among the general populous. An aggressive rabbinical student named Saul became their special agent in rounding up those who believed in Jesus as Messiah so that they could be tried and condemned on charges of blasphemy.⁵⁴ To escape Saul's dragnet, nearly everyone except the apostles fled from Jerusalem, spreading the good news as they went.⁵⁵ Only Saul's miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus stemmed this high tide mark of official Jewish persecution.⁵⁶

To keep a long story short, within one decade of the Church's birth, the good news had been preached all along the eastern Mediterranean. From Cilicia all the way around to northern Africa, Jesus had been proclaimed as Messiah within Jewish, Samaritan and Gentile communities, with tens of thousands embracing Him as such. However, there was some very serious opposition to the good news.

In AD 44, Herod Agrippa, a personal friend of the emperors Caligula and Claudius, and a prominent client king of the Romans, had the Apostle James executed as an enemy of the people, intending to do the same to Peter. It was only by lethal angelic intervention that Peter's own martyrdom was postponed.⁵⁷

During the next 20 or so years, the remaining eleven apostles, plus two specially appointed apostles - James and Paul⁵⁸ continued taking the good news throughout the balance of the Roman Empire. All along the way they had to deal with the misleading propaganda of false prophets and the opposition of official persecution. Both Jewish and Gentile authorities saw them as threats to the status quo and dealt with them harshly.

By AD 66, at the start of the Jewish uprising that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the apostles had presented their testimonies before various ranks of imperial officials, right up to the Emperor himself. One by one, almost to a man, they were martyred on account of the good news of Jesus Christ. Exactly as predicated by Jesus in His Olivet Discourse.

It seems obvious to me that what Jesus was really emphasizing in this section of the discourse was the supernatural inspiration that would assist His apostles in successfully laying the foundation of the New Testament Church throughout the Empire in only one generation, despite intense persecution from both Jews and Gentiles. That is why I consider Matthew 24:14//Mark 13:10 to be the first of several generally misunderstood and widely misapplied comments within the discourse.

When Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom would be proclaimed throughout "the world" before "the end," He meant the world of the Roman Empire and the end of the Jewish Temple - NOT the entire globe and the end of human history.

⁵⁴ Acts 8:1-3; 22:3-4, 19; 26:9-11.

⁵⁵ Acts 8:1, 4.

⁵⁶ Acts 9:1-31; 22:5-21; 26:12-18.

⁵⁷ Acts 12:1ff

⁵⁸ James was the half-brother of Jesus, whom He had evidently appointed apostle to the Jerusalem believers. Paul, a.k.a. Saul, had been appointed apostle to the Gentiles by the resurrected Christ.

Thus, contrary to widely held opinion, I consider this part of the discourse to be a “fulfilled” prophecy and not an “unfulfilled” one.

Now, before Pre-Millennial prejudice causes some of you to reject this assertion out of hand, let me show you how the inspired writings of Paul affirm this understanding.

Around AD 57, thirteen years before the desolation of the Temple, Paul quoted Psalm 19:4 to bolster his own conviction that ethnic Jews throughout the known world had already been given ample opportunity to hear and believe the gospel about Jesus, even though, to the apostle’s great personal sorrow,⁵⁹ many of them had rejected it.

However, not everyone obeyed the good news, for Isaiah says, “Yahweh, who has believed our report?”

So then, faith *comes* out of hearing, and hearing via the word of Christ.

But *suppose* I say, “They have not heard, *have they?*”

Quite to the contrary. “Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words into the limits of the inhabited earth.”⁶⁰

A few years later, Paul portrayed the good news, not once, but twice within the same context, as having already been proclaimed throughout the known world.

[The good news] which is present among you, even as it is producing a crop and being made to grow in all the world. . . . [the good news] which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven; of which I, Paul, was made a servant.⁶¹

Perhaps this is a good place to remind ourselves of a preeminent principle of Biblical interpretation - Scripture is ALWAYS its own best commentary.

Paul’s inspired revelation that the good news of the kingdom had already been preached throughout the known world (i.e., the Roman Empire and beyond), as much as ten years prior to the Temple’s destruction lends great weight to understanding Jesus’ similarly phrased prophecy in exactly that manner.

Regardless of how great a missionary sermon it might make, this part of the Olivet Discourse can’t really be used to support well-meaning assertions that the gospel must be preached to every person living on the globe before Jesus can return. I understand the sentiment, but exegetically, this passage is not available for that interpretation.

⁵⁹See Romans 9:ff.

⁶⁰Romans 10:16-18.

⁶¹Colossians 1:6, 23.

Daniel's "Abomination of Desolation"

<u>MATTHEW</u>	<u>MARK</u>	<u>LUKE</u>
<p>24:15 So whenever you see the abomination</p> <p>of desolation, the thing spoken by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy location," [let the reader understand], 24:16 then let those in Judea escape into the hills.</p> <p>24:17 Let not the one on the roof come down to take things from his house.</p> <p>24:18 Let not the one in the field turn back to get his cloak.</p> <p>24:19 Alas for those who are pregnant and those nursing in those days!</p> <p>24:20 Pray that your escape might not happen in winter, nor on a Sabbath.</p>	<p>13:14a But whenever you see the abomination</p> <p>of desolation</p> <p>standing where is should not be," [let the reader understand], 13:14b then let those in Judea escape into the hills.</p> <p>13:15 Let not the one on the roof come down nor go inside to take something from his house.</p> <p>13:16 Let not the one in the field turn back to get his cloak.</p> <p>13:17 Alas for those who are pregnant and those nursing in those days!</p> <p>13:18 Pray that it might not happen in winter.</p>	<p>21:20 But whenever you see Jerusalem surrounded by military encampments, then you will know that her desolation had drawn near.</p> <p>21:21 Then let those in Judea escape into the hills. Let those in her midst withdraw.</p> <p>Let not those in the plots of land enter into her.</p> <p>21:22 Because these are days of vengeance to fulfill all the things that have been written.</p> <p>21:23a Alas for those who are pregnant and those nursing in those days!</p>

Jesus next provided His apostles with a very specific "trigger event" that would indicate, beyond a shadow of any doubt, that the end of Jerusalem - when "there will not be stone upon stone left" in the Temple - was about to occur. When they saw this event they would know it was time to abandon Jerusalem and Judea, and "head for the hills." This was the "abomination of desolation," prophesied in the book of Daniel.

I'm certain that the majority of you have read or heard plenty of speculation regarding this "abomination of desolation." Let's toss all those preconceptions aside for the moment and just simply consider the three places in Daniel where this phrase appears.

The term appears twice in the final section of the book (11:31 & 12:11), where it seems to be a very precise prediction about the abomination of desolation that was placed in the Temple complex by Antiochus IV during 167 BC. Here's a thumbnail sketch of how that occurred.

In the 143rd Year of the Seleucid kingdom of Syria (169 BC),⁶² when Antiochus felt that his right to rule southern Syria (an area which included Judea) was being challenged by the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt, he preemptively invaded them. Upon negotiation with the Ptolemies, he returned home without retaining control of the capital city of Alexandria.⁶³

⁶² 312 BC marks Year 1 of the Seleucid kingdom.

⁶³ Polybius, *The Histories*, 27.19 & 28.18-23 and 1 Maccabees 1:16-20.

After the Roman Senate learned of Antiochus' recent threat toward their "bread-basket" ally,⁶⁴ they dispatched a former consul, Gaius Popilius, to insure that Antiochus did not return in force to seize full control of Egypt.⁶⁵

Sure enough, the following year (168 BC), not satisfied with the political situation in Egypt, Antiochus did return with the purpose of seizing Alexandria. Four miles from the capital city Popilius met him and put into his hands the Senate's written decree regarding their support of Ptolemaic sovereignty in Egypt. When Antiochus indicated a desire to confer with his advisors regarding the matter, the Roman representative used a stick to draw a circle around him, insisting that he respond before crossing this famous "line in the sand." Unwilling to take on Rome, Antiochus agreed to withdraw both his army & his navy from the region of Egypt within a specific period of time.⁶⁶

According to the Jewish author of 2 Maccabees,⁶⁷ there had been 40 days of odd aerial phenomena occurring over Jerusalem throughout the time of Antiochus' spring-time march from Syria to Alexandria. Then, a rumor arose that the king had actually died in Egypt.⁶⁸ At that point Jason - the former High Priest of the legitimate line, but who had gained the post by bribing Antiochus for the privilege of Hellenizing Judea⁶⁹ - decided it was time for him to take control of the Temple & the city back from Menelaus - the illegitimate High Priest who had secured the position around 172/171 BC by promising even more Jewish money to Antiochus than Jason had forwarded in previous years.⁷⁰ Jason's coup failed, amidst many Jewish casualties.⁷¹ When Antiochus heard of this turmoil, he assumed that Judea was in full revolt and immediately marched from Egypt to Jerusalem to deal with this crisis⁷².

Taking the city by storm, Antiochus' army engaged in a three-day slaughter of Jews. About 40,000 died in armed resistance to his soldiers while another 40,000 civilians died in the crossfire or in reprisal operations. 80,000 others were taken captive and sold into slavery. After being shown the interior of the Temple by the renegade High Priest Menelaus, Antiochus headed back to Antioch, taking with him the golden Altar of Incense, the Menorah, the Table of the Bread of the Presence, various other Temple implements and 1,800 talents of precious metal that had been stored in the Temple Treasury.⁷³

⁶⁴ Rome depended heavily upon Egyptian grain to feed their growing urban population.

⁶⁵ Polybius, *The Histories*, 29.2.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 29.20 and Livy, *History of Rome*, 45.12.

⁶⁷ Written during the 120s BC, about a generation after the events.

⁶⁸ 1 Maccabees 5:1-4.

⁶⁹ 2 Maccabees 4:1-17.

⁷⁰ 2 Maccabees 4:23-27

⁷¹ 2 Maccabees 5:5-10

⁷² 2 Maccabees 5:11.

⁷³ 1 Maccabees 1:20b-28; 2 Maccabees 5:12-23.

Around Pentecost of the following year,⁷⁴ Antiochus sent Apollonius to kill off all the military-aged Jewish men and to sell their wives and children into slavery. To accomplish this task he pretended to be at Jerusalem only for the peaceful collection of the tribute. When, on the Sabbath,⁷⁵ the Jews of Jerusalem came out of the city to see his 20,000 soldiers engaged in military parade, he suddenly attacked them per Antiochus' orders. Jerusalem was subsequently plundered. Most of the city walls were torn down, while the most ancient portion of the city was turned into a citadel, guarding access to the Temple Mount. Hellenized Jews, under the leadership of the High Priest Menelaus, were apparently permitted to continue some form of Jewish worship there.⁷⁶

Timing-wise, this Sabbath-day slaughter becomes DAY ZERO of the 1,290- day countdown to the rededication of the Temple cited in Daniel 12:11. Thankfully, the priestly family which would accomplish that Temple rededication escaped and made their way to their home city of Modi'in, about 16 miles NW of Jerusalem.⁷⁷

Shortly thereafter, Antiochus issued a decree that all his subjects had to adopt his Greek religion, specifically outlawing any practice of the Jewish faith.⁷⁸ Many of the Jewish people willingly complied; probably under the directed leadership of the traitorous High Priest Menelaus.⁷⁹ By my understanding of Daniel 8:9-14⁸⁰ and subsequent calculation, the twice-daily sacrifices within the Jewish Temple seem to have officially ended on the final day of the 7th Jewish Month.⁸¹

The final stage of the total Hellenization of Jerusalem was the transformation of the abandoned Temple into the shrine of a Greek god. Antiochus' representative ordered the construction of a Greek-style sacrificial altar – placed right on top of the existing Jewish altar – on 9*15.⁸² Ten days later, on 9*25,⁸³ this Greek-style altar was formally dedicated to Zeus of Olympus with the sacrifice of a sow, an event specifically called the “abomination of desolation” by the writer of 1 Maccabees.⁸⁴

It took three years of armed resistance, but Judas Maccabee was eventually able to force the Macedonians and their Jewish collaborators far enough away from the Temple area that he and other loyal priests were able to reestablish the twice-daily sacrifices on the very anniversary – 9*25⁸⁵ - of the desecration.⁸⁶

Thus, the “abomination of desolation” references in Daniel 11:31 & 12:11 clearly appear to fall into the category of “fulfilled” prophecy, removing them from our consideration. This leaves us with Daniel 9:27 as the only citation of which Jesus could have been speaking

⁷⁴ SAT/SUN 3/4 JUN 167 BC.

⁷⁵ FRI/SAT 2/3 JUN 167 BC.

⁷⁶ 1 Maccabees 1:29-40 and 2 Maccabees 5:24-26.

⁷⁷ 2 Maccabees 5:27.

⁷⁸ 1 Maccabees 1:41-50.

⁷⁹ 1 Maccabees 1:51-53.

⁸⁰ Which is clearly about Antiochus IV and his persecution of the Jewish faith.

⁸¹ FRI/SAT 20/21 OCT 167 BC.

⁸² WED/THU 6/7 DEC 167 BC.

⁸³ SAT/SUN 16/17 DEC 167 BC.

⁸⁴ 1 Maccabees 1:54-61 and 2 Maccabees 6:1-6.

⁸⁵ SUN/MON 13/14 DEC 164 BC.

⁸⁶ 1 Maccabees 4:52-53.

Decoding Daniel 9:24-27

On the very eve of Babylon's capture in 539 BC, Prince Regent Belshazzar consulted Daniel about a supernatural event that portended the imminent transition of his power to the Medes & Persians. The old prophet's interpretation - unfavorable to the Babylonians - proved correct, and he thereby gained the favor of the incoming ruler, Darius the Mede. Unfortunately, Darius' trust in Daniel made him the immediate target of some very powerful, pro-Media/Persia leaders within Babylon, precipitating the famous lion's den episode.⁸⁷

The following year, Daniel was irresistibly drawn to the prophetic writings of Jeremiah. It had now been 68 years since Nebuchadnezzar first captured Jerusalem and subsequently deported Daniel to Babylon and Jeremiah had specifically predicted Babylon's desolation of Judea would only last for seventy years.⁸⁸

When Daniel sought God's help in understanding Jeremiah's prediction, he was probably quite shocked by the answer he received. Instead of a simple clarification regarding the termination of the current seventy-year desolation, he was informed of a future desolation of Jerusalem; one following the arrival of "Messiah the Prince" - the Anointed One; an arrival that would adhere to a very specific timetable (Daniel 9:24-27).

A lot has been written on this brief (but rather difficult-to-translate) passage, especially by Pre-Millennialists. The current, exceptionally widespread interpretation, even as it has been represented in many English Bible translations, favors the following key points:

- There were 490 years decreed for the Jewish people to finish certain things.
- There would be 483 years [(7x7 years) + (62x7 years)] from an official decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until "Messiah the Prince" would arrive.
- "Messiah the Prince" would be "cut off" – killed – without cause.
- After the Messiah's death Jerusalem would to be destroyed by the people of "the prince that shall come."
- "The prince that shall come" will be involved in some sort of covenant during the final 7 years, which will take place at the very end of earth's history.
- Mid-way through the final 7 years "the prince that shall come" will put a stop to the daily sacrifices being offered in a rebuilt Jewish Temple
- "The prince that shall come" will also desecrate the Jewish sanctuary with an "abomination of desolation," often specified as being an idolatrous image of himself (per many commentator's understanding of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

⁸⁷ Daniel 5-6 includes the events surrounding the transition of power between the Babylonian and Median/Persian empires.

⁸⁸ Jeremiah 25:1ff; specifically verses 9-10. Jeremiah repeated this prophetic timing a few years later, when another group of Judeans were deported to Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1ff; specifically verse 10).

There are some problems which immediately arise from this understanding of the text, the most serious being the following:

- It separates the final 7 years from the preceding 483 years with all the years of the Christian era - a period approaching 2,000 years. Contextually, this seems to me to be an arbitrary & forced approach. It would be much more natural to see the entire period as being contiguous.
- It resorts to mathematical manipulation in order to account for the passage of 483 “prophetic years” (each reckoned as 360 days in length) during the actual 477 solar years that passed from the issuance of a specific Persian decree until the “Triumphal Entry” of Jesus. This is a severe departure from the normal reckoning of time observed in other prophetic passages, forcing an externally conceived, absolutely unique meaning upon the text.
- It does not seem contextually appropriate to have the word translated “prince” to be applied to the coming “Messiah” in verse 25 and then immediately applied to a coming evil leader in verse 26. It is much more natural to see both instances of the word as referring to the same person – “Messiah the Prince”
- It does not take into account a scholarly disagreement over which of two Hebrew homographs (words with the same spelling but different meanings) ought to be understood in verse 26.
- The use of the word “prince” and the homographic variation in translations will result in a very significant difference of opinion as to who the key actor in verses 26 and 27 truly is.

Here is my own translation of the passage:⁸⁹

9:24 Seventy ‘sevens’ have been allocated for your people and your holy city to terminate the rebellion, to stop sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in perpetual righteousness, to put a seal on vision and prophecy, and to anoint *The Most Holy One*.⁹⁰

9:25 You should know and understand that from the issuance of an order for Jerusalem to be restored and built until *the* Anointed⁹¹ leader, *there will be* seven ‘sevens’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be restored and built, *both* streets and wall, and the times will be poured out.⁹²

9:26 After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed will be executed⁹³ without any *basis for* condemnation in him. The city and the holy place will be ruined, along with⁹⁴ the coming leader.⁹⁵ They will be cut off in a flood⁹⁶ and until the end, desolating war is determined.

9:27 He⁹⁷ will strengthen a covenant with many *for* one ‘seven.’ Within half of the ‘seven’ my sacrifice and drink-offering will be removed. Upon the Temple *will come* an abomination of desolations. Until the end, the pouring out of desolation is determined.

⁸⁹ My translation is based on the Hebrew, but takes into consideration some of the fine points of meaning brought out in the Greek texts, including that of Theodotion, whose translation of Daniel was extremely popular within the 2nd/3rd Century Church.

⁹⁰ Contrary to what many English versions indicate, this anointing of the “most holy” (a masculine noun in both the Hebrew & Greek translations of the Old Testament) has to be a reference to the “Anointed” leader (i.e., “Messiah the Prince”) whose coming is prophesied in the very next verse. It is definitely not a reference to the “most holy place” or “holy of holies” located within the Jewish Temple, specifically mentioned in verse 26. Not only was this “most holy” room within the Temple always represented by a neuter noun in the Greek Old Testament, it is also represented by the very specific placement of the Hebrew article throughout the Hebrew Old Testament (), which is not present here in Daniel 9:24 ().

⁹¹ Anointing with scented olive oil was part of the ancient Israeli coronation ceremony. The Hebrew title, מָשִׁיחַ [mashiyach /maw·shee·akh/], came into the Greek as Μεσσίας [Messias /mes·see·as/] and eventually into English as “Messiah.” The parallel Greek title, Χριστός [Christos /khris·tos/], came into English as “Christ.”

⁹² Like sand pours out in an hour glass, thus, having a meaning of “time will pass.”

⁹³ While the literal meaning of this word is “cut off” I’ve chosen to use the judicial term “execution” because of its close connection to the judicial term “condemnation” that follows closely after it.

⁹⁴ This is where the problem with the homographs (words with the same spelling but different meanings) comes into play. In ancient Hebrew there were no written vowels; therefore, the preposition, “with” ׀ [im /eem/], looked exactly like the noun, “people” ׀ [am /am/]. Though I end up disagreeing with every English Bible version, I believe that the preposition was the intended word and that it makes the most sense grammatically and contextually. This understanding ties the fate of the city & the Temple to that of the “Messiah,” exactly as Jesus indicates elsewhere, making Him the key player of verses 26 & 27. And lest you think my translation is unique and therefore completely invalid, there are ancient Greek texts of Daniel which followed this exact same translation track. That was how I first became aware of this variant understanding.

⁹⁵ This is the exact same word for “leader” that was applied to the Messiah in verse 25; yet another reason to believe that the person being talked about in verses 26 & 27 is the Messiah.

⁹⁶ Swiftly, as in a flash flood.

⁹⁷ For the reasons already given, I believe this pronoun refers to the Messiah.

First, let's deal with the time element of the seventy sevens. It seems fairly obvious that this represents a total of 490 years; however, I don't think it's just any sequence of 490 years.

Throughout their entire history as a nation, the Israelis had lived under a God-mandated cycle of six years of work followed by a seventh year of rest. In fact, the reason given for the seventy-year desolation of Jerusalem was to make up for those Sabbatical years not observed by Israel during their time in the land.⁹⁸

I am convinced that the seventy "sevens" being cited in Daniel are seventy "Sabbatical cycles" and not just a simple series of 490 years. So, let's keep our eyes open for any concurrence between that cycle and this prophecy.

The starting point for this 490-year time period is quite specific – it begins with the issuing of a decree to restore and build Jerusalem, including its streets and wall. This specificity helps pinpoint the exact time that the countdown to Messiah began.

The Jerusalem Decree of Cyrus the Great, issued sometime in early 537 BC, about a year after Daniel's vision, permitted any Jew living within Persian territory to return to Jerusalem in order to assist in rebuilding the Temple and reestablishing the worship ceremonies.⁹⁹ Tens of thousands of ethnic Israelis immediately traveled to Judea, where they rebuilt the altar of sacrifice and reestablished worship ceremonies prior to the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall of 537 BC.¹⁰⁰ The following spring they laid the foundation for the Second Temple, but soon suspended their rebuilding project due to the aggressive response of the non-Jews living nearby.¹⁰¹ Everyone agrees that this cannot be the starting point of the Messianic countdown because there is no mention of rebuilding either Jerusalem or her walls.

Sixteen years later, in 520 BC, at the urging of the prophet Haggai,¹⁰² the Jews resumed their rebuilding project. When the non-Jews complained to Darius, he reaffirmed Cyrus' original decree, adding that the cost of the construction would now be paid from regional assessments, and that anyone who hindered the project was to be executed.¹⁰³ But once again, because there is no mention of rebuilding Jerusalem or her walls, this cannot be the starting point for the countdown either.

Pre-Millennialists point confidently to the year 444 BC as the starting point for the countdown, for it was in that year that Nehemiah sought for and received letters from Artaxerxes appointing him governor of Judea and permitting him to use lumber from the royal forests in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and the governmental residence.¹⁰⁴ This decree certainly specifies the two things that the other decrees lacked – the rebuilding of Jerusalem and her wall – but it has another problem. If one begins the countdown to Messiah in 444 BC, the 483 years that need to tick off before Messiah arrives on the scene ends in AD 39. By any system of chronology, this is much too late for application to Jesus.

⁹⁸ 1 Chronicles 36:19-21, which fulfills the covenantal warnings of Leviticus 26:31-35.

⁹⁹ Ezra 1:1-4.

¹⁰⁰ Ezra 1:5-3:7.

¹⁰¹ Ezra 3:8-4:5.

¹⁰² Haggai 1:8.

¹⁰³ Ezra 6:8-12.

¹⁰⁴ Nehemiah 2:7-8.

This problem led Pre-Millennial theorists to resort to a creative method for counting these years.¹⁰⁵ They simply(?) converted the 476 standard (365.25-day) years between Nehemiah and Christ into 483 “prophetic” (360-day) years. This allowed them to start with an assumed date of Artaxerxes’ decree for Nehemiah’s commission to rebuild the walls and to finish with the “triumphal entry” of Jesus into Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ Of course, this still left them with the final 7 years of Daniel’s count, which they insisted must be pushed forward into the future.

There is really no Biblical reason – nor chronological need, as we shall soon see – for such mathematical gymnastics.

First of all, there is no such thing as a 360-day “prophetic year.” It is nothing more than an artificial construct designed to meet the perceived need of fitting this specific passage to a pre-conceived dating system; viz., a starting point in 445 or 444 BC. Supposed biblical support for the concept is usually taken from chronological citations in Genesis 7 and 8, but I would contend that these passages indicate the existence of an actual 360-day solar year (with twelve 30-day lunar months) prior to the catastrophic changes brought on by the Flood.¹⁰⁷ There is no doubt that the Biblical Israelis never observed a 360-day calendar.

Second and most importantly, there is another starting point for this countdown that has been completely ignored by most chronologists simply because the associated decree by the Persian king involved doesn’t specifically mention the rebuilding of Jerusalem or her walls. Nevertheless, a decree to do both these things was issued by the king’s legitimate agent based on a royal decree given to him. Here’s how it occurred.

Thirteen years before Nehemiah successfully carried out his commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, Artaxerxes gave permission for a priest/scribe named Ezra to return to Jerusalem (accompanied by any ethnic Israelis, priests, or Levites within the Persian Empire who wished to do so) in order to perform the requirements of the Jewish law, a copy of which Ezra had in his possession.¹⁰⁸ While Artaxerxes’ primary intention in issuing this decree was offering appropriate sacrifices in the rebuilt Temple, he did include a line that effectively granted Ezra full authority to carry out the will of God at his own discretion.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Sir Robert Anderson’s The Coming Prince (1881) is typically presented as the standard work in which this method is presented.

¹⁰⁶ I have scholarly objections to some of the chronological assertions made by some of those who detail their calculations in this process, but responding to them in detail is not within the scope of this brief critique.

¹⁰⁷ Appeals for support of this 360-day “prophetic year” to eminent scholars, such as Sir Isaac Newton, who cited the use of a 360-day calendar by certain ancient cultures, totally ignore the fact that these peoples of the past typically added additional days to their standard year, either by tacking on five special “holidays” each year or by adding a special “holiday” month every few years (like the Israelis) in order to keep their calendar in synch with the seasons. These means they were aware of and effectively observed a 365.25-day solar year just like we do.

¹⁰⁸ Ezra 7:12-14.

¹⁰⁹ Ezra 7:18.

“Between-the-line” evidence indicates that Ezra used this *carte blanche* authority to order that Jerusalem’s walls be rebuilt. This is shown by Ezra’s prayer of confession offered on the 18th day of the 9th month,¹¹⁰ when he spoke of God’s kindness demonstrated to the returnees, as evidenced by their raising of the house of God, and by Him giving them “a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.”¹¹¹ This reference to a wall is not some figure of speech (as some claim) since we know that the enemies of the Judeans filed a legal complaint with the king that specifically cites work being done on the walls.¹¹² Unfortunately for the Jews, King Artaxerxes responded by ordering that work on the walls be halted until he granted specific permission to re-wall the city, an order that the enemies of Judah gladly rushed to enforce.¹¹³

Thus, there is solid, Biblical evidence that it was Ezra, acting as the legitimate agent of Artaxerxes, who actually issued the prophesied decree to rebuild and re-wall Jerusalem.

Interestingly enough, Ezra returned to Jerusalem in the summer of 457 BC, during the final months of the 137th Sabbatical Year.¹¹⁴ Ezra ordered the walls rebuilt sometime between his arrival and when he offered his aforementioned prayer of confession. Since work could not have begun until after the end of the Sabbatical Year and the beginning of the next cycle of six work years, Daniel’s countdown would have begun in the fall of 457 BC. This means that Daniel’s “sevens” would coincide exactly with Jewish Sabbatical cycles, as I had earlier hypothesized. I think that is more than coincidental.

Let’s see how Daniel’s countdown would work out from this starting point.

The first series of 7 Sabbatical cycles (49 years) would have ended in the fall of 408 BC. By this time Jerusalem was completely rebuilt and repopulated. This matches the prophecy.

The second series of 62 Sabbatical cycles (434 years) would have ended in the fall of AD 27, so that the first year of the final Sabbatical cycle (the 70th “seven”) would have been from the fall of AD 27 until the fall of AD 28. We know that John the Immerser definitely began to proclaim the imminent arrival of Messiah during the 15th Year of Tiberius Caesar,¹¹⁵ which began at some point in AD 28.¹¹⁶ This matches the prophecy as well.

John immersed Jesus just a few months before Christ began his three-year public ministry at Passover in AD 30. He was crucified three years later, during Passover, AD 33. Daniel was specifically told that the Messiah would be unfairly executed after the sixty-two “sevens” which would place it during the seventieth “seven,” exactly as it occurred. So we have a third match.

¹¹⁰ FRI/SAT [SABBATH] 6/7 DEC in 457 BC.

¹¹¹ Ezra 9:9.

¹¹² Ezra 4:7-16.

¹¹³ Ezra 4:17-23. It should be noted that Ezra 4:24 marks the resumption of a context interrupted at 4:5

¹¹⁴ See APPENDIX C for details on the Israeli 7-year Sabbatical Cycle.

¹¹⁵ Luke 3:1-3.

¹¹⁶ Perhaps on 1 July, when his annual authority as Tribune was renewed.

The prophet was also told that Messiah would “strengthen”¹¹⁷ the covenant with many during this final “seven.” During their prophetic ministries, both John and Jesus called for Israelis to repent of sin and to prepare for the arrival of the kingdom of God. This would certainly qualify as strengthening the covenant of holiness that God wanted to have with humanity in general and with Israel specifically. That would make four matches.

Finally, Daniel was told that during this final “seven” the sacrificial system would be removed. According to the book of Hebrews, that’s exactly what Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection accomplished.

As a bonus match, we know that Jesus’ ministry was three and a half years long, counting from His immersion in the winter of AD 29/30 to His ascension in the late spring of AD 33. Even this fits within the timeframe of the prophecy, since it highlights half of seven years.

But what about the rest of Daniel’s prophecy - where exactly does the second desolation of the Temple fit?

Daniel simply says that “the abomination of desolation” would occur after the execution of the Messiah, that it would be connected to His death, and that it would end the Temple sacrifices. All these things were true prior to AD 70.

You may remember that, as Jesus approached Jerusalem for His prophetic appointment with the cross, He had lamented that “stone would not be left upon stone” because ethnic Israel, as a nation, did not recognize His Passover-time arrival at Jerusalem as their final evaluation.¹¹⁸ According to Him, the horrendous days coming upon the Temple and Jerusalem would be “days of vengeance to fulfill all the things that have been written.”¹¹⁹

I think it is Luke’s style of gospel writing which helps settle the issue beyond any shadow of doubt. When comparing his narratives with that of Matthew & Mark it becomes very obvious that he sometime engages in explanatory paraphrase, no doubt intending to assist Theophilus in understanding “the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”¹²⁰

Where Matthew¹²¹ provides a strict quote of Jesus’s Mt. Olivet warning (24:15) – “whenever you see the abomination of desolation, the thing spoken by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy location...” – Luke engages in a paraphrased explanation of what Jesus actually meant (21:20) – “whenever you see Jerusalem surrounded by military encampments, then you will know that her desolation had drawn near.”¹²²

¹¹⁷ The literal meaning of the word used in the Hebrew & Greek texts.

¹¹⁸ The fact of this evaluation couldn’t be made any more clear than with the parable of the unproductive fig tree that Jesus told during the final year of His ministry (Luke 13:6-9). Israel as a whole had failed to produce the true fruit of repentance during the first three Passovers of His ministry (representing a total of two calendar years). His fourth and final Passover visit, after His 3rd Year of ministry, would determine their fate. If they had no fruit this time, they would be marked for destruction.

¹¹⁹ A comment from the “Olivet Discourse” unique to Luke’s account (21:22). “All the things that have been written” is a clear reference to the sacred Scriptures of the Jews, including the book of Daniel.

¹²⁰ Luke 1:4.

¹²¹ Mark also makes use of a strict quote, simply not mentioning the Daniel connection.

¹²² This passage also helps respond Biblically to those prophecy teachers who claim that “the abomination of desolation” is an idolatrous image placed within the Jewish “holy of holies.” Luke says otherwise.

Therefore, I really do believe that we can safely conclude that “the abomination of desolation...spoken by Daniel the prophet,” which Jesus predicted in His Olivet Discourse, was the arrival of the Roman legions at the Holy City in AD 70 in order to carry out this act of divine vengeance.

That being said, I find it interesting that this application of Daniel 9:24-27 seemed perfectly obvious to a non-Christian Jew like Josephus. As a Pharisee, a priest and a combatant during the early part of the war and an eyewitness of the Temple’s destruction later, Josephus goes into great detail about the circumstances underlying the conflict. He concluded that both the Babylonian desolation of the 1st Temple and the Roman desolation of the 2nd Temple came about because of Israel’s unrepentant sin. But more to the point before us at the moment, he believed that both desolations were fulfillments of Daniel’s prophecies.

“And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel’s vision, and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them.”¹²³

This Roman desolation of the Temple has continued until today. Despite the secular reconstitution of an ethnic Israeli government within their ancient homeland, the Jewish people still have no real control over the site of the twice desolated Sanctuary. That may be part of Daniel’s prophecy as well - that the Temple would be desolate “until the end.”

Regardless, there is no real reason to anticipate some future “abomination of desolation” like that theorized in Pre-Millennial *eschatology*. Even if the ethnic Jews of Israel did build a 3rd Temple, doing so is not required for the fulfillment of any prophecy we have thus far seen. In truth, attempts by ethnic Jews who do not accept Jesus as Messiah to reestablish the Old Covenant sacrifices in a rebuilt Temple would further insult the once-for-all sacrifice made the Lord Jesus.¹²⁴ I would not want to be party to such things when He returns.

¹²³ Antiquities of the Jews 10.11.7 (or 10.11.276). Josephus, F. (1996, c1987). *The works of Josephus: Complete and unabridged*. Peabody: Hendrickson.

¹²⁴ Read Hebrews Chapter 10, especially verses 29-31.

“The Great Tribulation”

<u>MATTHEW</u>	<u>MARK</u>	<u>LUKE</u>	<u>DANIEL</u>
<p>24:21 For then</p> <p>there will be great tribulation</p> <p>such as has not occurred from the beginning of the world</p> <p>until the present, nor shall ever occur.</p> <p>24:22 If those days are not curtailed, it is not likely that anyone would be saved; but because of the chosen those days will be curtailed.</p>	<p>13:19 For those days</p> <p>will be tribulation</p> <p>such as has not occurred from the beginning of the creation that God created</p> <p>13:20 If Yahweh did not curtail the days, it is not likely that anyone would be saved; however, because of the chosen that He chose those days were curtailed.</p>	<p>21:23b For</p> <p>there will be great distress on the land and wrath to this people.</p> <p>21:24 Many will fall by the edge of the sword and will be taken captive among all the nations.</p> <p>Jerusalem will be downtrodden by the nations Until the times of the nations are fulfilled.</p>	<p>12:1 In that time, Michael shall arise - the great ruler standing over the sons of your people. There will be a time of tribulation; tribulation</p> <p>such as has not occurred from the time at which humanity came to be upon the earth until this time.</p> <p>In that time</p> <p>your people will be saved – all those being found written in the scroll.</p> <p><u>ROMANS</u> 11:25b ...a partial callusing has happened in Israel until the fullness of the nations has come in.</p>

It would appear that everything Jesus said up to this point in His Olivet Discourse has related to the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. But what about the so-called “great tribulation” about which He next spoke? Certainly it can’t be related to the 1st Century desolation of Jerusalem, can it?

Once again, let’s let Scripture explain Scripture.

Luke’s paraphrased parallel describes this “tribulation” in terms of two elements – “distress” directed toward the land of Judea and “wrath” directed against the Jewish people. By way of explanation, the passage goes on to describe the deaths of many Israelis, the forced removal of others, and the perpetual occupation of Jerusalem by nations other than Israel. This was exactly what happened, beginning in AD 70.

In total, 1.1 million ethnic Israelis perished during the final siege of Jerusalem. Many of these were Passover pilgrims from all over the known world who were trapped in the city when the Romans suddenly surrounded it for their final assault. Another 97,000 survivors were turned into slaves and scattered throughout the Empire.¹²⁵

It is likely that even more would have died had Titus not been so committed to keeping non-combatant casualties to an absolute minimum. I count this extension of clemency, along with the escape of Jewish believers prior to the city's destruction, as the fulfillment of God's curtailing of the days so that not everyone would be killed; so that "the chosen" (those ethnic Israelis who had believed in Jesus as Messiah) might be saved amidst the desolation.

As for the city of Jerusalem, Titus ordered it demolished, with only a few towers in the upper city and a portion of the wall around that same area left as an example of just how great a city it had been before it was destroyed.¹²⁶ The remainder was basically erased, thereby fulfilling Jesus' words about there not being "stone upon stone left" within the Temple complex.

Since that time, also in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, Jerusalem has been occupied by various Gentile nations. Even though ethnic Israelis currently occupy parts of the ancient city, they have never regained full control of the Temple mount, indicating to me that the "times of the nations" have not yet been fulfilled.

But let's consider for a moment whether or not the destruction of Jerusalem and the removal of ethnic Israel from the land by the Romans can be considered an unprecedented and unparalleled "great tribulation."

The Jewish historian Josephus certainly thought so.

"Accordingly it appears to me, that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were;"¹²⁷

However, some might object that much worse things have happened since then. "More ethnic Israelis died in Hitler's death camps than in the Roman siege of Jerusalem!" they would exclaim. "Certainly the events of AD 70, as horrible as they were for the people of that day, cannot be considered as bad as or worse than Hitler's holocaust!"

Actually, since the world had a much smaller population in the 1st Century, the ethnic Israelis killed in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem, when viewed as a percentage of the world population (about .0028 of a world population estimated at 400 million), was slightly higher than that perpetrated by the Third Reich during World War II (about .0024 of a total world population of 2.6 billion).

However, the AD 70 holocaust was much worse than the 1940's holocaust for something much more significant than "casualties versus total population."

¹²⁵ Wars 6.9.3.

¹²⁶ Wars 7.1.1.

¹²⁷ Josephus, F. (1196. c1987), *The works of Josephus: Complete and unabridged*. Includes index. (Wars 1.5), Peabody; Hendrickson.

The destruction of the 2nd Temple in AD 70 marked the divine termination point for the final remnants of the Old Covenant. The righteous requirements of the Old Covenant had been “fulfilled” by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ during Passover, AD 33, and the New Covenant was subsequently inaugurated by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, AD 33.

While many ethnic Israelis embraced this prophesied New Covenant, a majority did not. Despite the fact that an entire generation of preferential preaching was provided “to the Jew first,”¹²⁸ many ethnic Israelis simply refused to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was Messiah. So, forty years after Jesus began His ministry, Yahweh permitted their Old Covenant world to come crashing down around their stubborn heads.

The animal sacrifices of the Temple (already rendered null and void by the final sacrifice of Christ) could no longer be offered once the Temple was gone. The city of Jerusalem (which had once again become a prideful stumbling block for ethnic Israelis) was no longer under their control. And finally, the ethnic Israelis (who had long enjoyed all the benefits of an exclusive relationship with Yahweh) were now scattered across the face the earth where they were forced to watch people from all the other ethnic groups embrace the blessings of the New Covenant relationship with Yahweh that they themselves had rejected.¹²⁹

In all this we must remember that the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of the Temple was God’s doing. It came about because ethnic Israel had not only failed to keep the provisions of Old Covenant; they had also refused to accept the Messiah who came to fulfill the very purpose of that covenant by establishing a new and better one.

While Yahweh (because of sin) had once before abandoned “His people,” “His City” and even “His Temple” into the hands of Babylonian pagans, this impending destruction and desolation by the Roman pagans would NOT be a temporary time of divine wrath from which Israel could return by repenting before Yahweh under the conditions of the Torah. This Roman destruction and desolation would signify the permanent transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. Never again would ethnic Israelis be accepted back into right relationship with Yahweh via the Mosaic sacrificial system, administered through the Temple at Jerusalem. The only acceptable means of restoration would be via embracing the atoning death and resurrection of the Messiah whom their nation had previously rejected.¹³⁰

Since Yahweh was finished with the Old, and because most of ethnic Israel had rejected the New, they had effectively become a people without any covenant. They had the heritage of the Chosen People (the Israel of the Old Covenant), but of their own free will, they were not part of the Chosen People (the Church of the New Covenant). If that’s not the most horrendous situation in all of Israel’s history, I don’t know what would be.

Luke’s account included a unique representation of Jesus comments that leaves no doubt as to the seriousness of the situation.

“For there will be great distress on the land and wrath to this people.”¹³¹

¹²⁸ Romans 1:16.

¹²⁹ It was this final situation that the Apostle Paul hoped would move ethnic Israelis to repent of their original rejection of Jesus as Messiah and to instead embrace Him as their resurrected King (Romans 11:13-14).

¹³⁰ This is a major thesis in the inspired New Testament letter to the Hebrews.

¹³¹ Luke 21:23b.

This was not just any ordinary wrath. It was the wrath of Yahweh against ethnic Israelis who were unwilling to receive the prophesied kingdom on His terms; people such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, whom John rebuked for thinking they could come into the kingdom without the requisite change of heart.¹³² When they rejected the call to repent and be immersed, along with John's prophetic testimony about Jesus, they were rejecting God's will for them,¹³³ and, as Hebrews 12:25-29 states, it is a terribly unwise thing to refuse the call of the living God.

However, as a final note of hope, Paul's comments in Romans 11:25 seem to indicate his understanding that the "partial callusing" of ethnic Israel (i.e., their rejection of Jesus as Messiah), would continue up to the end of the New Covenant period. We will soon explore the possibility that this may prophetically signify the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah by many ethnic Israelis immediately prior to his 2nd Coming.

¹³² Romans 3:7-12.

¹³³ Luke 7:29-30.

The Unmistakable Nature of Jesus' 2nd Coming

<u>MATTHEW</u>	<u>MARK</u>	<u>LUKE</u>
<p>24:23 Then if anyone says to you, “Behold! Here is the Anointed One!” or “Here!” don’t you believe <i>it</i>,</p> <p>24:24 for false anointed ones and false prophets shall be raised and shall give great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen.</p> <p>24:25 Behold! I have foretold you.</p> <p>24:26 Therefore, if you are told, “Behold! He’s in the wilderness!” don’t go out, <i>or</i> “Behold! In the inner rooms!” don’t you believe <i>it</i>,</p> <p>24:27 for even as the lightning comes from the east and is seen unto the west, so shall the presence of the Son of Man be.</p> <p>24:28 Where the corpse <i>is</i>, there the eagles shall be gathered.</p>	<p>13:21 Then if anyone says to you, “Behold! Here <i>is</i> the Anointed One!” or “Behold! There!” don’t you believe <i>it</i>,</p> <p>13:22 for false anointed ones and false prophets shall be raised and shall give signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen.</p> <p>13:23 Watch yourselves! I have foretold you.</p>	<p><i>Luke associated the following comments with a question asked of Jesus by some Pharisees about the coming of the kingdom.</i></p> <p>17:23 They will say to you, “Behold! There!” “Behold! Here!” You should not go after or pursue <i>them</i>,</p> <p>17:24 for even as the lightning flashing out from under heaven shines into <i>another place</i> under heaven, so shall the Son of Man be.</p> <p>17:25 But first it is necessary for him to suffer many things and to be rejected by this generation. [<i>There are intervening verses.</i>]</p> <p>17:37 Responding, they said to him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the body <i>is</i>, there also the eagles shall be gathered.”</p>

Now we come to the very first mention of Jesus’ 2nd Coming within the Olivet Discourse. However, it should be carefully noted that it is presented simply as a point of contrast to the desolation of the Temple and is not the beginning of Jesus’ actual response to the apostles’ secondary question about the timing of His return.

He had already warned them once to be on their guard against those who would proclaim themselves Messiah in the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. He now repeated that warning, adding that these charlatans might even demonstrate their claims with all sorts of miracles, signs, and wonders in an effort to gain a following even from the most sincere believers. Regardless of these supernatural demonstrations, they are not to be believed,¹³⁴ for the 2nd Coming of Jesus, the true Messiah, would be as unmistakable as a bolt of lightning. No one will be able to miss it for what it really is.

In an alternate account from Luke regarding this point, Jesus followed up by saying that before the Son of Man could arrive in this unmistakable fashion, He would first have to suffer and be rejected by this generation. As I've mentioned before, this 1st Century generation of ethnic Israelis were being evaluated by means of Jesus' 1st Coming. Their rejection of Him as the prophesied Messiah would trigger the wrath of God upon them and the desolation of their worthless¹³⁵ Temple.

After some comments about the 2nd Coming which occur later in Matthew and Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse, the alternate Luke account records that the disciples were moved by what they had heard so far to ask "where" all these horrible things would be taking place. Returning to the main question being answered – when will the Temple be made desolate and stone upon stone not be left – Jesus responded with proverb that sounds rather cryptic to the people of our own era, but one which few in that era would have misunderstood: "Where the corpse is, there the eagles will gather."

While everyone in 1st Century Judea knew that corpses attracted carrion-eating birds, there was a more ominous political undertone to what Jesus was saying. The eagle was also known to be the main battle standard of the 1st Century Roman legions.¹³⁶ For the polytheist soldiers of the multi-cultural Roman army, the eagle was a powerful, unifying, religious totem. To lose or surrender the eagle standard was a horrendous disgrace, and there are records of military operations launched just to recover lost or captured eagle standards. Legions were even referred to as "Eagles," and everyone listening to Jesus knew this.

With this bit of cultural background, it is blatantly obvious what Jesus was really saying here. Since ethnic Israel was on the verge of rejecting Jesus as its Messiah, Jerusalem was on its deathbed. Soon, with the advent of the New Covenant, it would be nothing more than a corpse upon which the legions of Rome would alight in order to pick it clean. Everything He was telling them was about that transitional reality.



While archaeologists have yet to unearth a genuine *Aquila* – the eagle standard of a Roman legion - they have recovered many coins upon which the Eagle is portrayed. This coin depicts the Eagle of *Legio XII Fulminata* which was nearly wiped out by the Jewish Zealots at the start of the Jewish War in October 66 (Wars 2.19.9). After being reinforced, the XII avenged their losses by helping desolate Jerusalem in 70.

¹³⁴ Check out the ancient warning about miracle working false prophets in Deuteronomy 13.

¹³⁵ "Worthless" in that after the death and resurrection of Jesus, animal sacrifices would be defunct.

¹³⁶ Wars 3.123; 5.48.

At Last! The 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ!

<u>MATTHEW</u>	<u>MARK</u>	<u>LUKE</u>
<p>24:29 Next, after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her brightness, the stars shall fall from heaven,</p> <p>and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.</p> <p>24:30 Then the sign of the Son of Man shall be made to appear in heaven. Then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and much glory.</p> <p>24:31 He will send his angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together his chosen ones out of the four winds, from one extremity of the heavens unto other extremity of them.</p>	<p>13:24 However, in those days after that tribulation,</p> <p>the sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her brightness,</p> <p>13:25 the stars shall be falling from heaven,</p> <p>and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.</p> <p>13:26 Then</p> <p>they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with much power and glory.</p> <p>13:27 Then</p> <p>he will send the angels</p> <p>and they will gather the chosen ones out of the four winds, from the extremity of earth unto the extremity of heaven.</p>	<p>21:25 There shall be signs in</p> <p>the sun, moon</p> <p>and stars;</p> <p>and upon the earth <i>the</i> distress of <i>the</i> nations in confusion <i>like</i> the noise and movement of the sea;</p> <p>21:26 men fainting from fear and expectation of things coming upon the inhabited world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.</p> <p>21:27 Then</p> <p>they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and much glory.</p> <p>21:28 But as these things are beginning to happen look up and lift up your heads because your redemption nears.</p>

As indicated earlier, the “great tribulation” for ethnic Israel began in AD 70. Yahweh had stripped them of the last vestiges of the Old Covenant, including everything they held dear – their Temple, their religious system, their land, and their unique relationship with Him. Because they had rejected Jesus as their Messiah, they were now a people without a covenant; and so they would remain – unless & until they repented.

This was exactly what caused Paul all the intense, personal grief that he expressed in Romans 9:1ff. He acknowledged the unique spiritual and cultural heritage of ethnic Israel, the debt owed that heritage by the non-Israelis now being saved by embracing the Christ¹³⁷ of the New Covenant, and finally his own hope that unbelieving ethnic Israelis might be moved by envy to join their believing kinsmen and Gentiles in confessing Jesus as Messiah/Christ.

It is imperative that we understand this sad, but undeniable New Testament truth: individual ethnic Israelis who reject Jesus as Messiah are NOT members of God's "Chosen People." This is not anti-Semitic rhetoric; it's a simple statement of fact. The New Testament, all but two books of which¹³⁸ were written by ethnic Israelis, testifies that the rejection of Jesus as Messiah by anyone (even by an ethnic Israeli who sincerely believes and adheres to Old Testament commands and precepts) is tantamount to the rejection of Yahweh Himself.¹³⁹ This period of "great tribulation" for unbelieving, ethnic Israelis, brought on by their rejection of the Messiah, will seemingly come to a close in conjunction with the Day of the Lord.

As we shall see later, Christ's return will be preceded by the wrath of God being poured out on the sinful world in a manner similar to that done to Egypt immediately prior to the ancient exodus of the ethnic Israeli slaves. It will be a frightening time for humanity, full of signs and wonders, marking the climax of the great spiritual war that began with Satan's fall and his subsequent temptation of Eve. His fallen angels, a.k.a. the "powers of the heavens" – or as Paul calls them, "the rulers...the authorities...the world powers of this darkness...the spiritual *agents of evil* in the heavenly regions"¹⁴⁰ – will, in Jesus' words from the Olivet Discourse, "be shaken" as God prepares to judge them for their part in their long conflict with the men and women made in God's image.

At that time the "sign of the Son of Man" will appear in heaven; or, as it is alternately phrased, "all the tribes of the earth" will "see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and much glory."

¹³⁷ Since most Gentiles did not know Hebrew, they knew Jesus as "Christ," the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew "Messiah."

¹³⁸ Luke and Acts.

¹³⁹ For example: "Anyone denying the Son doesn't have the Father. The one confessing the Son also has the Father." (1 John 2:24) Or: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God." (Romans 2:28-29) And even these comments by Jesus Himself: "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." (Revelation 2:9) & "Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you." (Revelation 3:9)

¹⁴⁰ Ephesians 6:12.

During His trial before the High Priest, when He was forced to testify whether or not He was Messiah, Jesus replied that He would be seen coming in exactly this fashion, i.e., as the Messiah. It was this statement, a clear reference to the *eschatological* prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14,¹⁴¹ that led the Sanhedrin to condemn Him to death for blasphemy. Forty days after the resurrection, when Jesus ascended into heaven, two angels appeared to the Apostles to tell them that he would return in the same way they had seen Him depart – amidst the clouds of heaven.¹⁴²

According to Zechariah 12:10,¹⁴³ even among the ethnic Israelis on whom the Holy Spirit rests (i.e., repentant Messianic Jews), there will be great mourning over the One they pierced. It will be at this time that Jesus will dispatch His angels, with the sound of a great trumpet, to gather in His “chosen ones,” regardless of ethnic origin, from all over creation.

When taken together, all these things preclude the idea of any sort of secret “rapture,” as is so widely taught by Pre-Millennialists of the “Pre-Trib” and “Mid-Trib” variety. When He comes in the clouds as He departed, every eye will see Him, both sinner and saint.

We’ll go into more detail on the 2nd Coming later. For now, let’s wrap up what remains of the Olivet Discourse of Jesus.

¹⁴¹ Matthew 26:64//Mark 14:62//Luke 22:69.

¹⁴² Acts 1:9-11.

¹⁴³ Alluded to in both Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7.

Wrapping Things Up

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MATTHEW //MARK</u></p> <p>24:32//13:28 Learn a parable from the fig tree: When its branches have already become tender and sprout leaves, you know that the summer is near. 24:33//13:29 Thus <i>shall</i> it also be for you. Whenever you see all these things happening, know that it is near, even at the door. 24:34//13:30 Amen, amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things happen. 24:35//13:31 Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall never pass away. 24:36//13:32 Regarding that day and hour, no one knows - neither the angels of the heavens, nor the Son, only the Father alone</p> <p>24:37 for even as the days of Noah <i>were</i>, so the coming of the Son of Man shall be. 24:38 For in the days prior to the Flood they were eating, drinking, marrying and being married until the day Noah entered the ark. 24:39a They didn't realize until the Flood came and took everyone.</p> <p>24:39b So shall it be in the coming of the Son of Man.</p> <p>24:40 Then two will be in the field. One will be received and the other dismissed. 24:41 Two will be grinding at the millstone. One will be received and the other dismissed.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>LUKE 21</u></p> <p>21:29 He told them a parable. “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 21:30 When they've already put out <i>leaves</i>, seeing <i>this</i> for yourselves, you know that the summer is already near. 21:31 Thus <i>shall</i> it also be for you. Whenever you see all these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 21:32 Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things happen. 21:33 Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall never pass away.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>LUKE 17</u></p> <p>17:25 But first it is necessary for him to suffer many things and to be rejected by this generation. 17:26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man.</p> <p>17:27 They were eating, drinking, marrying, and being married until the day Noah entered the ark.</p> <p>The Flood came and destroyed everyone. 17:28 Similarly, as it was in the days of Lot – they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, and building; 17:29 but on the day Lot went out from Sodom fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed everyone – 17:30 These same things shall be in <i>that</i> day the Son of Man is revealed. 17:31 In that day he who is on the roof <i>with</i> his things in his house should not go down to get them. Similarly, the one in the field should not return for things <i>left</i> behind.¹⁴⁷ 17:32 Remember Lot's wife. 17:33 Whoever seeks to secure his life will lose it, <i>while</i> he who loses it will save it. 17:34 I am telling you in this night two will be in one bed. One will be received and the other dismissed. 17:35 Two will be grinding at the same millstone. One will be received and the other dismissed.</p>
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There's ample opportunity for confusion in this latter section of the Olivet Discourse. However, if we are careful in our reading, we can avoid all that confusion.

If you haven't already seen it on your own, you should go back and take note of the fact that throughout the discourse the phrases "these things" and "this generation" serve as grammatical markers that distinguish Jesus' references to the desolation of the Temple from those referencing "that day" of His 2nd Coming. "These things" and "this generation" are very near chronologically to the time of the Olivet Discourse, while "that day" of His glorious return is chronologically distant.¹⁴⁴

Regardless of this grammatical truth, some have still tried to connect this final mention of "these things" and "this generation" to the distant 2nd Coming of Jesus. They suggest that the word translated "generation" should be understood as the "genetic group" of the Jewish people, or that the generation referred to is the one that sees the "leafing out" of the "fig tree" known as national Israel.

In regard to the first suggestion, I can't find any authentic examples where the word used here is used elsewhere in the New Testament in the sense of a "genetic group."¹⁴⁵ More to the point, the contextual phrase used here - "this generation" - is used everywhere else in the Gospels as a specific reference to the 1st Century generation.¹⁴⁶

As to the second suggestion, that the 1947 establishment of modern Israel is symbolized by the "leafing" of the "fig tree;" this ignores the fact that Luke's account says that it will be the leafing of all trees, and not just the fig, that serves as an indication of summer's arrival.¹⁴⁷

These commentators also very often assert that the fig tree is THE Biblical symbol for Israel. Apparently they haven't checked the evidence for this claim (which I suspect is being made second-hand, without personal verification), because that is simply not the case. While figs have sometimes been used, the grapevine is a much more common symbol, and when Paul used a tree as the symbol for Israel in his Romans 11 discussion about incorporating Gentiles into the kingdom of God, he turned, not to the fig, but to the olive.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ In English the relative pronouns "this" and "these" relate to things near in time or space, while "that" and "those" relate to things more distant in time or space. This same rule applies in Greek and is reflected in my translation.

¹⁴⁵ Luke 16:8 is the commonly given example, but I don't really see the necessity for adopting that shade of meaning to make sense of the passage. It looks to me that it is used as a synonym for the word "age" earlier in the verse, which, of course, the word "generation" is.

¹⁴⁶ You can check it out for yourself. Matthew 11:16//Luke 7:31; Matthew 12:41-42//Mark 8:12//Luke 11:29-32; Matthew 23:36//Luke 11:50-51; and Luke 17:25.

¹⁴⁷ I have heard some who make this claim say that "all the trees" refers to the reestablishment of enemy nations which will persecute national Israel. Yet, I've heard some of these same teachers claim that Israel is the only ancient people who have been able to regain their national identity. That's double talk! They simply can't have it both ways; that the "leafing" of Israel is unique and that it will be accompanied by the "leafing" of other ancient nations.

¹⁴⁸ Don't take their word or my word on this assertion that the fig tree is or isn't THE Biblical symbol for Israel; get an exhaustive concordance and check it out for yourself.

Let me be very plain on this point. As I have already mentioned several times, while God is certainly concerned with the salvation of ethnic Israelis, any one of them who has rejected God's New Covenant in Jesus the Son, is incapable of having a relationship with the Father until that rejection is reversed. The modern nation of Israel, which from its founding has been extremely secular in nature, must never be confused with the real chosen people of God's New Covenant – those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, without regard to their ethnic heritage, i.e., members of His Church.

The real point of this final section in the discourse is this: the 1st Century generation of the apostles would be able to see "these days" of the Temple's desolation approaching; but none of them would know the exact timing of "that day" when Jesus would arrive to gather His own to Himself.

To illustrate the difficulty of pinning down "that day," Jesus makes a comparison to some historical events. As it was in the days of Noah and Lot, life preceding the 2nd Coming will be going on as normal. Here again, commentators have often overstated the point. While the eras of Noah and Lot were horrendously sinful, that's not Jesus' point. He was indicating that it will be "business as usual" for sinners right up to the end, just as it was for the people living in the two historical periods mentioned; then, suddenly, judgment will fall. Any application beyond this point, however true, is superfluous.

In all three gospels,¹⁴⁹ although with some very divergent language, Jesus ends His discourse with a warning in the form of a parable. All those serving within God's household (those who profess Jesus as Messiah) who wish to maintain their positions within that choice household (the eternal kingdom) must remain sober and alert for their Master's return from a long business trip (the 2nd Coming). Those who neglect their responsibilities and abuse their fellow servants will be subsequently caught off guard by the return of the Master and will suffer the consequences for their misbehavior.¹⁵⁰

In summary, while the apostles obviously thought that the second desolation of the Temple and the glorious arrival of Messiah would occur concurrently, Jesus clearly distinguished between these two events. He warned them that the "abomination of desolation" – Roman armies setting up camp around Jerusalem – would serve as a definitive sign that they should flee Jerusalem before the desolation in Daniel 9:24-27 took place. On the other hand, He also challenged them to remain ready at all times for His arrival, since absolutely no one would know with certainty when that would occur.

Since we have discovered, contrary to popular belief, that both "the 70th week" of Daniel, as well as the "the abomination of desolation" have already occurred, it won't be necessary for us to speculate how these two events might be fulfilled in the future.

So, let's move on to the book of Revelation and see what we can discover there.

¹⁴⁹ Matthew 24:42-51//Mark 13:33-37//Luke 21:34-36.

¹⁵⁰ In Matthew's gospel, Jesus went on to tell three more parables, each intended to emphasize this same point of needing to always be ready for the 2nd Coming. In the first, members of a bridal party missed the festivities because they had not properly prepared themselves for a long wait prior to the beginning of said festivities. In the second, a servant lost everything, including his relationship with his Master, because he refused to invest even a minimal amount of effort during his Master's absence. In the third and final parable, Jesus pictured himself as a shepherd dividing sheep from goats, with the former being welcomed into the eternal kingdom and the latter being condemned to an eternity of separation.

OUTLINING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The book of Revelation is organizationally the last book of the Bible. According to the earliest traditions of the Church, it was also the final book of the Scriptural canon to have been written.¹⁵¹ It is of intense interest to Christians because it reveals the outcome of Satan's long spiritual war with Yahweh's people.

Content Outline for the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ Key Verse: Revelation 1:19

- I. "The Things Which You Have Seen"
 - A. Cover Note (1:1-3)
 - B. Salutation (1:4-8)
 - C. Vision of Jesus as the High Priest of the Heavenly Sanctuary (1:9-20)
- II. "The Things Which Are"
 - A. Letters to the Seven Prominent Congregations of Roman Asia (2:1-3:22)
- III. "The Things Which Will Take Place After These Things"¹⁵²
 - A. Vision of the Scroll of God's Final Wrath¹⁵³
 - (a) The Throne Room of Yahweh (4:1-5:14)
 - (b) Breaking of the Seven Seals (6:1-8:1)
 - (c) Sounding of the Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)
 - B. Vision of the War Between the "Seed of Woman" & the Dragon¹⁵⁴
 - (a) Survey of Events Culminating in Satan's Ejection from "Heaven" (12:1-17)
 - (b) Satan's Use of the Final Beast Government (13:1-18)
 - (c) "First Fruits" Martyrdom of the 144,000 (14:1-5)
 - (d) God's Final Warnings to the Peoples of Earth (14:6-12)
 - (e) Son of Man's "Harvest" of Martyrs (14:13-16)
 - (f) God's Harvest of Wrath Begins (14:17-20)
 - (g) Pouring Out of the Seven Bowls (15:1-16:21)
 - (h) Explanation Regarding the Harlot (17:1-18:24)
 - C. Vision of Jesus as the Returning King of Kings and Lord of Lords¹⁵⁵
 - (a) The 2nd Coming (19:1-21)
 - (b) The Millennium & the Resurrected Saints (20:1-6)
 - (c) The Final Judgment of Satan & the Resurrected Sinners (20:7-15)
 - (d) The Presentation of the New Creation (21:1-22:5)
 - (e) Closing (22:6-21)

¹⁵¹ Early tradition says that the book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John toward the end of the 1st Century. Of course, this makes the Preterist application of its prophetic contents to the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans completely unworkable.

¹⁵² John's main visions have some overlapping points. Each vision focuses upon a different aspect of the final period of history.

¹⁵³ This vision focuses upon Yahweh's overall control of the situation.

¹⁵⁴ This vision focuses upon the long war between Satan and Yahweh's people.

¹⁵⁵ This vision focuses upon Jesus' victorious arrival and the culmination of all things.

INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

As prophecy, the book of Revelation¹⁵⁶ deals with matters normally hidden from human view – past, present and future. In the first three chapters the Apostle John “speaks forth” about the glorified Christ who appeared to Him on Patmos in the guise of Heaven’s High Priest, passing on the contemporary messages He wanted delivered to the assemblies of believers located in seven prominent cities of Roman Asia (now western Turkey).

The balance of the book is a “forespeaking” of things John saw in conjunction with the return of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Since our time is limited, and since there are so many commentaries that have already provided excellent, in-depth treatments of the opening chapters, we are going to pass over them without comment.

Instead, let’s dive into the first of three main visions related to “Living in the Last Days.”

WARNING

**Unfulfilled Prophecies Ahead!
Prepare For Personal Speculation!**

¹⁵⁶ The Greek word # \$ % & [*apokalupsis* /ap-ok-al-ooop-sis/], which means “a revelation” or “an uncovering,” is the source of our English word “apocalypse.”

VISION OF THE SCROLL OF GOD'S FINAL WRATH
The Apostle John's "Throne Vision"

REVELATION 4

4:1 After these things, I looked, and behold, a door had been opened in heaven. The first trumpet-like voice I heard speaking to me was *now* saying, "Come up here and I will show you what must happen after these things." **4:2** Immediately I was in spirit-form.

Behold, *there* was a throne setting in heaven, and someone was sitting on it. **4:3** The appearance of the one sitting resembled a jasper and carnelian stone. The appearance of a rainbow around the throne resembled an emerald.

4:4 There were twenty-four thrones around the throne, and sitting on the twenty-four thrones were twenty-four elders, dressed in white clothing, with golden victor's wreaths on their heads.

4:5 Streaks of lightning, sounds, and thunderclaps emanated from the throne. There were seven fiery torches burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. **4:6** Before the throne *was* something like a glassy sea, resembling crystal.

In the midst of the throne and around the throne *were* four living beings with eyes front and back. **4:7** The first living being was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. **4:8** Each of the four living beings had six wings *which were* covered all over and inside with eyes. They never rested from saying, "Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Tsabaoth, who is, who was, and who comes!"

4:9 Whenever the living beings give glory, honor, and thanks to the one sitting on the throne - to the one living into the ages of ages - **4:10** the twenty-four elders will fall before the one sitting on the throne and will worship the one who lives into the ages of ages, and will throw their victor's wreaths before Him, saying,

4:11 "You are worthy, Yahweh our God, to receive glory, honor, and power because you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created!"

5:1 I saw **in** the right **hand** of the one sitting on the throne **a scroll**,

written upon front and back, sealed with seven seals.

5:2 I also saw a strong angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

5:3 No one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth was able to open the scroll nor look at it. **5:4** I wept greatly because no one worthy was found to open the scroll nor look at it.

5:5 One of the elders said to me, "Don't weep. Behold, the lion of the Judah tribe, the root of David, he overcome to open the scroll and its seven seals."

5:6 I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living beings, and in the midst of the twenty-four elders, a lamb *that looked* like it had been slaughtered. It had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the spirits of God sent into all the earth. **5:7** He came and took *the scroll* from the right hand of the One sitting on the throne, **5:8** and when he took *it* the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb. Each of them had a lyre and a golden bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of the Saints.

5:9 They sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain. You purchased for God, by your blood, *individuals* from every tribe, language, people, and nation, **5:10** and made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

5:11 I looked, and I heard the sound of many angels around the throne (their number was ten thousands of ten thousands, and thousands of thousands), the living beings, and the elders, **5:12** saying in a loud voice, "The Lamb which was slaughtered is worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing!"

5:13 I heard every creature which was in the sky, on land, underground, on the sea, and all the things therein saying, "Blessing, honor, glory, and strength *belong* to the One sitting on the throne, and to the Lamb, into the ages of ages!"

EZEKIEL 2

2:9 I looked, and behold, a **hand** had been extended toward me, and **in** it **a scroll**.

2:10 He spread it before me. It had been **written upon back and front**.

In it was written dirges, lamentation, and a woe.

On rare occasions, certain prophets have been privileged to experience what I call “throne visions.” Moses (Exodus 24:1ff), Micaiah (1 Kings 22:19-22), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1ff), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:4ff), and Daniel (Daniel 7:9ff) were all given glimpses of the heavenly throne during the Old Covenant period. In the New Testament, only three men had such a blessing: Stephen briefly described what he saw in the heavenly throne room just before his martyrdom (Acts 7:55-56); Paul mentioned the experience of an unnamed man who never revealed any details of what he experienced (2 Corinthians 12:2ff), and the third was the Apostle John.

An in-depth study of these throne visions is fascinating; unfortunately, it is also outside our present consideration. So, without losing our focus on its introduction of God’s final wrath, let’s have a look at just a few of the details of John’s throne vision.

The One Whom John saw upon the throne was, from our New Covenant perspective, the “Father.” Around His throne were twenty-four other thrones on which sat twenty-four elders. From what Jesus said during his ministry,¹⁵⁷ twelve of these elders were probably the Apostles.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps the others were historically significant spiritual leaders as well. Whoever they were, each possessed a golden victor’s wreath like that given to victorious military leaders and athletes in public ceremonies throughout the ancient Roman Empire.¹⁵⁹

Situated in front of the Father’s throne were seven burning torches, which may have taken the form of the great, seven-branched lamp stand that once stood in the Holy Place of the physical Sanctuary. Regardless, the text states that these seven torches represented the Holy Spirit of God. Thus, we have two of the three personages of the triune Godhead already represented in this throne vision.

Encircling the throne, John saw four, six-winged *sa-ra-fēm*,¹⁶⁰ as described previously by the prophet Isaiah.¹⁶¹ As they had been doing over 800 years earlier, these creatures were still worshipping Yahweh *Tsa-ba-ōth*.¹⁶² As they worshipped, the twenty-four elders also fell on their faces, throwing their victor’s wreaths before the throne in a personal act of worship.

¹⁵⁷ Matthew 19:28//Luke 22:30.

¹⁵⁸ That being the case, the mortal John of the past was actually standing in the presence of the immortal John of the future who was sitting upon one of the twenty-four thrones in the heavenly dimension.

¹⁵⁹ Paul wrote of this spiritual victor’s wreath, “I have competed in the great competition; I have completed the course; I have kept the Faith. As for the rest, there is reserved for me the victor’s wreath of righteousness, which the Lord – the righteous judge - will award to me in that day; not to me only, but to all those loving his appearance.” 2 Timothy 4:8.

¹⁶⁰ Plural of the Hebrew word *sa-raf*, from a root meaning “to burn;” probably a reference to the fiery appearance of this spirit creature.

¹⁶¹ By the way, both John and Isaiah seem to describe the throne of God from above the crystalline platform on which it rests, and make no mention of the four-faced, four-winged *kerubim*. Ezekiel described the throne as it was seen from below the expanse, and made no mention of the single-faced, six-winged *sarafim*.

¹⁶² Hebrew for “of the armies.” Yahweh *Tsaba-ōth* is a military title. Think “Commander-in-Chief” or “Commanding General.”

It was at this point that John noticed something unusual in the Father's hand. It was double-sided scroll sealed with seven seals. This well-secured scroll should be compared to the double-sided scroll of judgment seen by Ezekiel immediately prior to the desolation of the first Israeli temple - a scroll full of "dirges, lamentation, and woe."¹⁶³ This time, however, the scroll is about the imminent desolation of the entire earth.

Immediately a problem arose. There was no one in heaven or on earth worthy to open this scroll of judgment. This meant that the final wrath of God could not fall upon the earth, and therefore the eternal kingdom of righteousness could not come fully into being. This prospect caused the aged apostle to weep.

This was the perfect moment for the revelation of the third personage of the triune Godhead – the "Son." Jesus was now manifested as a lamb that had been sacrificed, but who lived – obvious symbols of the atonement and resurrection. As symbolized by the seven horns and seven eyes, He was full of the power and the Holy Spirit of God.

Without getting too far into an area of heated theological debate, allow me to state for the record that I believe that the perfect way in which Jesus lived His life as an ordinary human being forms the basis for His unique qualification to open this scroll of God's wrath.

Although He was indisputably God, He never-the-less emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives so that He could live life as a man.¹⁶⁴ As such, He underwent every aspect of the human experience – conception, birth, growth, education, emotions, work, and ultimately death. This would have included the full range of temptations that provide opportunity for individual humans to exercise free will in either compliance with or in violation of God's immutable, holy directives.¹⁶⁵ Unlike all the rest of us, Jesus never gave in to those temptations; He never sinned.¹⁶⁶ By this He proved, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that living a righteous life, even within a fallen world full of temptation, was actually possible for any human being. Sin is therefore an individual choice with an individual punishment.¹⁶⁷

On the other hand, being God, Jesus was not subject to the limiting factors of ordinary humans (i.e., time & space), who, even if they were able to remain sinless, and somehow moved to do so, could only die in the place of one sinful person. On the cross, as the transcendent God, Jesus was able to offer Himself as the sinless sacrifice for an infinite number of sinful persons at one moment of time.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ There is another double-sided roll of curses mentioned in Zechariah 5:1-4.

¹⁶⁴ Philippians 2:6-11.

¹⁶⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:13.

¹⁶⁶ Hebrews 4:15.

¹⁶⁷ Romans 6:23.

¹⁶⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:6ff; 1 Peter 3:18.

Having overcome the temptation to sin, and having offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sins not His own, Jesus earned the exclusive right to open the seals that would begin God's final wrath against all sin. No human could accuse Him of not knowing the power of temptation, nor could any human accuse Him of not caring about what happened to the individual sinner. As He Himself said, "For the Father judges no one, but has instead given all judgment to the Son."¹⁶⁹ He alone has the capacity to judge everyone with the perfect mixture of justice and grace.

Of course, all this is borne out by what was said by the twenty-four elders, innumerable angels, and the *se-ra-fēm* when Jesus actually took the scroll from His Father's hand.

¹⁶⁹ John 5:22.

The Breaking of the First Five Seals

REVELATION 6

6:1 I looked when the lamb broke one of the seven seals. I heard one of the four living beings speaking like the sound of thunder, "Come!" **6:2** I looked, and behold, a white horse and the one sitting upon it had a bow. He was given a victor's wreath and he went out overcoming and in order to overcome. **6:2** He was given a victor's wreath and he went out overcoming and in order to overcome.

6:3 When he opened the second seal I heard the second living being saying, "Come!" **6:4** There came another horse, a fire-colored one, and the one sitting upon it was permitted to remove peace from the earth, so that *people* might slaughter one another. A great sword was given to him.

6:5 When he opened the third seal I heard the third living being saying, "Come!" I looked, and behold, a black horse and the one sitting upon it had a scale in his hand. **6:6** I heard *something* like a voice among the four living beings say, "A *koinits* [one day's ration] of wheat for a *denairius*, [one day's wage] and three *koinits* of barley for a *denairius*. Do not harm the olive oil and wine."

6:7 When he opened the fourth seal I heard the fourth living being saying, "Come!" **6:8** I looked, and behold, a pale green horse and the one sitting upon it *whose* name was Death. Hades was following him. Authority was given to them over one-fourth of the earth, to kill by the sword, famine, death, and by beasts of the earth.

6:9 When he broke the fifth seal I saw beneath the altar the individuals slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they were maintaining. **6:10** They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Until when, holy and true Master, will You *defer* judging and avenging our blood from those living on the earth?"

6:11 A white robe was given to each of them, and they were told they will rest a short period of time still until their fellow servants - their brothers and those about to be killed even as themselves - should be fulfilled.

In the breaking of the first four seals we are introduced to a bow-wielding conqueror riding a white horse.¹⁷⁰ This appears to be the final human agent of Satan in his war against the saints of Yahweh. The conqueror was followed by a warrior riding a fiery red horse, indicating the prosecution of a great war. The warrior was followed by a merchant riding a black horse, indicating a high price for bread (a necessity), but with little or no impact upon olive oil and wine (non-necessities). Finally, Death arrived on a pale green horse, with Hades¹⁷¹ right behind him, indicating the imminent deaths of one fourth of the population due to the actions of all the riders, which are in turn connected to the actions of Satan's agent.

With the breaking of the fifth seal, our view is refocused upon the heavenly throne room. From beneath the heavenly altar of incense, the place of petition before the Father's throne, the murdered saints of every age will be asking God when He intends to fully avenge their deaths. They will be told to be patient, for in a brief period of time, after a very specific number of additional saints have been murdered for their faith,¹⁷² Yahweh's wrath will begin.

To keep this vision in its proper chronological perspective, we need to understand that all seven seals must be broken before any of the events revealed within the scroll can take place. What we have seen in the breaking of the first five seals is background information that will make much more sense when we begin dealing with more specific information in a parallel format later. We'll deal with the breaking of the sixth and seventh seals at that time.

¹⁷⁰ Roman generals being honored for their successful completion of a significant military operation would ride white horses during their triumphal procession through the streets of Rome.

¹⁷¹ As the personification of Death kills the bodies of people, the personification of Hades (the place of the dead) collects the now disembodied soul/spirits.

¹⁷² Keep this promise of God in mind for when we come to the passages about 144,000 martyred saints later.

VISION OF THE DRAGON'S WAR AGAINST THE "SEED OF WOMAN" *A Symbolic Overview of Satan's War*

REVELATION 12

12:1 A great sign was seen in heaven: A woman enveloped by the sun, the moon under her feet, and a victor's wreath of twelve stars on her head. **12:2** She was pregnant and cried out, laboring and being tormented by *her effort* to give birth.

12:3 Another sign was seen in heaven: Behold! A great, fire-colored, seven-headed, ten-horned dragon, *with* seven diadems on his heads. **12:4** His tail drew together a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. The dragon had taken position in front of the woman about to give birth so that when she did give birth he might consume her child.

12:5 She gave birth to a son, a male who is about to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod, and her son was snatched away to God and His throne...

[12:6 is paralleled elsewhere]

12:7 A war took place in heaven. Michael and his angels made war with the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought *back*. **12:8** He was not strong enough, nor could a place be found for them in heaven any longer. **12:9** The great dragon was ejected - the ancient serpent, the one called Accuser and Satan, the one misleading the entire inhabited earth - he was ejected to the earth, and his angels were ejected with him.

12:10 I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "The salvation, the power, the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ have now come into being, because the accuser of our brothers *and sisters* - the one accusing them before our God day and night - has been ejected. **12:11** They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. They did not love themselves, even to the point of death.

12:12 Therefore, celebrate, *O Heavens* and those of you camping in them. *But* woe to the land and the sea, because The Accuser has gone down to you with great vehemence, knowing he has little time."

Revelation 12 is an absolutely amazing passage! It uses symbols to portray Satan's enduring animosity toward "The Seed of Woman,"¹⁷³ along with his failure to defeat "The Seed"¹⁷⁴ when Jesus first came to earth in human form as an infant. It then predicts Satan's eventual ejection from the spiritual dimension we humans call "heaven,"¹⁷⁵ thereby setting the stage for his post-ejection attempt to foment popular resistance against "The Seed" when Jesus returns to earth a second time as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Within the book of Revelation this passage provides the concise contextual background needed for believing readers to anticipate, rather than fear, the imminent arrival of the long-anticipated showdown between the saints and their archenemy, the Dragon.

The first major character in this cosmic drama is the pregnant woman. The sun, moon, and stars under her feet also appeared in one of Joseph's dreams as a representation of his father Jacob's family.¹⁷⁶ This is the reason why many prophecy students see the woman as the ethnic Israelis who descended from Jacob - the nation of Israel.

¹⁷³ Genesis 3:15.

¹⁷⁴ Genesis 3:16.

¹⁷⁵ Ephesians 6:12.

¹⁷⁶ Genesis 37:9-10.

However, I think it would be terribly unwise to automatically equate this lady with the secular state of modern Israel. Let's not forget that the promise of the avenging "Seed of Woman" began with Eve, the mother of all ethnic groups, several millennia before the nation of Israel came into being. Remember too that Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, made a pretty big deal that God's promise to Abraham was that all ethnic groups would be blessed through him and his "Seed."¹⁷⁷

This woman may very well be representative of "Israel," but to paraphrase Paul, it is by faith, not flesh, that the descendants of Israel (via Abraham & Eve) are determined.¹⁷⁸ I think we ought to more clearly identify her as "Faithful Israel." Before the ascension of Jesus, which is so clearly portrayed in verse 5, she consisted almost exclusively of ethnic Israelis who had remained faithful to Yahweh via the Mosaic covenant. After the ascension, she was made up both of ethnic Israelis who embraced Jesus as their promised Messiah and non-Israelis (Gentiles) who called Jesus their Christ.¹⁷⁹

The advanced state of her pregnancy should be seen in light of the explicit prophecies that "The Seed of Woman" would eventually deal a decisive blow to Satan and thereafter establish an eternal kingdom of righteousness among the saints of God.¹⁸⁰ At the beginning of the 1st Century, due to a literal understanding of these prophecies, many faithful Israelis (and even some non-Israelis) were living in expectation of Messiah's arrival.¹⁸¹

The fire-colored dragon is unmistakably identified as Satan. His symbolic appearance as a seven-headed, ten-horned dragon is indicative of the fact that he is the real power behind the seven-headed, ten-horned beast we are about to meet. His tail sweeping a third of the stars to earth probably represents the relative strength of his rebel angelic forces in comparison to the loyal angels under Michael's command,¹⁸² especially since a symbolic connection between "stars" and "angels" has already been established in Revelation 1:20.

Satan's attempt to consume the newborn man-child ("The Seed of Woman") immediately calls to mind Herod's attempted assassination of the infant Jesus.¹⁸³ Yet, there were several other attempts to kill Jesus before His appointed time,¹⁸⁴ all of which should be included in this portrayal of the Dragon's assault upon the child.

¹⁷⁷ Galatians 3:6-29.

¹⁷⁸ Romans 2:28-29; 9:6ff.

¹⁷⁹ Paul portrays "all Israel" as a cultivated olive tree (its life-giving root no doubt a representation of Jesus) from which some natural branches (unbelieving ethnic Israelis) have been removed; among the remaining natural branches (the believing remnant of ethnic Israel) a wild olive branch (believing Gentiles) has been grafted (Romans 11:17ff). It might be noted that Paul seemed to expect some of the removed branches to be grafted back in at a later date.

¹⁸⁰ Genesis 3:15; 22:18; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7.

¹⁸¹ Matthew 2:1ff, Luke 3:15; John 1:19ff; 4:25; etc.

¹⁸² The chronological placement of this angelic rebellion should be the time of Satan's deception of Eve, for prior to that everything in Creation was "very good."

¹⁸³ Matthew 2:1ff.

¹⁸⁴ Luke 4:28-30; John 8:59; 10:31.

John understood that this child would grow up to fulfill Psalm 2:8-9. That particular Messianic Psalm was cited several times in reference to Jesus' 1st Coming,¹⁸⁵ but it was also used in reference to the situation of His 2nd Coming.¹⁸⁶ His being snatched away to God is an obvious reference to the ascension of Jesus.¹⁸⁷ At that time He sat down on the right side of His Father's heavenly throne,¹⁸⁸ marking the end of His 1st Coming and the beginning of preparation for His 2nd Coming.

Due to the positioning of verse 6 in the chapter, most commentators limit the "war in heaven" in verse 7 to the final 1,260 day period mentioned in verse 6. I would suggest that verse 6 is actually an example of advance information, a kind of "getting ahead of the story." In reality, the text does not explicitly state the length of this war in heaven. I think that it lasts quite a long time - from the ascension of Jesus in AD 33 until three and a half years before His 2nd Coming (a span of nearly 2,000 years now).

Let's think for a moment about what this heavenly war represents.

While it is true that Jesus won a huge victory over Satan at his 1st Coming,¹⁸⁹ the New Testament writers indicated that the conflict with Satan was by no means over at that time. Christians, both then and now, need to be alert and faithful warriors in their ongoing war against Satan and his angels "in the heavenlies," or as was meant by this phrase, in the unseen spiritual realm.¹⁹⁰ We also know for certain that the angels of *Yahweh* assist the saints in this ongoing supernatural struggle,¹⁹¹ even as Revelation 12:7 portrays.

Michael, the high-ranking angel whose name appears in this text, was first identified to the prophet Daniel as the guardian angel of his people, or as we've identified the woman of Revelation 12, "Faithful Israel."¹⁹² Daniel was also told that Michael would be instrumental during the "time of trouble" we have already identified as starting around the time of the Temple's destruction in AD 70.¹⁹³ He is evidently the angelic military leader who is now fighting the long war against Satan on behalf of all Saints, and who will eventually eject Satan and his rebel forces from the heavenly dimension.

That expulsion will mark the beginning of the final phase of Satan's defeat and the rapid approach of Jesus' return. Satan will no longer be allowed to do what he had done for millennia - accuse God's people before His throne.¹⁹⁴

We will deal with the remainder of this passage in parallel form later.

¹⁸⁵ Acts 4:25-28; 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5.

¹⁸⁶ Revelation 19:6.

¹⁸⁷ Acts 1:9-11.

¹⁸⁸ Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 3:1; and Hebrews 8:1.

¹⁸⁹ Hebrews 2:14-18.

¹⁹⁰ Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7b.

¹⁹¹ Hebrews 1:14.

¹⁹² Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1.

¹⁹³ Daniel 12:1; cf. Matthew 24:21.

¹⁹⁴ Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Zechariah 3:1-3; Luke 22:31-32.

Satan's Human Agency in the Final Phase of His War

<u>REVELATION 12</u>		
12:18 He [The dragon] stood on the sand of the sea.		
<u>REVELATION 17</u>		
17:1 One of the seven angels having the last seven bowls came and spoke with me saying, "Come here! I will show you the great prostitute who is sitting upon many waters 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth prostituted themselves, and by the wine of whose prostitution those living upon the earth were intoxicated."		
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 13</u></p> <p>13:1a I saw a ten-horned, seven-headed beast 13:1c and a blasphemous name upon its heads.</p> <p>13:1b rise out of the sea, with ten crowns upon its horns 13:2 The beast which I saw was like a leopard, its feet like those of a bear, and its mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave it its power, its throne, and great authority.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 17</u></p> <p>17:3a He carried me in spirit-form into a wilderness. 17:3b I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet seven-headed, ten-horned beast, full of blasphemous names.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DANIEL 7</u></p> <p>7:3 Four great beasts, each different from the others, rose out of the sea. 7:6 After this, as I watched, behold, a third beast was like a leopard... 7:5 Behold, a second beast was like a bear... 7:4 The first was like a lion...</p>
<u>REVELATION 17</u>		
17:4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, gilded with gold, precious stones, and pearls, and had a gold cup in her hand full of abominations and the impurities of her prostitution. 17:5 Upon her forehead a name had been written, a secret – "Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and abominations of the earth." 17:6a I saw that the woman was drunk from the blood of the Saints and the witnesses of Jesus.		
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 13</u></p> <p>13:3 One of its heads looked as if it had been slain to death, and its death-wound healed. The whole earth marveled after the beast. 13:4 They worshiped the dragon because he gave authority to the beast, and worshiped the beast, saying "Who is like the beast?" and "Who is able to make war with it?"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 17</u></p> <p>7:6b Seeing her, I marveled with great marvel.</p> <p>17:7 The angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the secret of the woman and the seven-headed, ten-horned beast carrying her.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DANIEL 7</u></p> <p>7:7 After this, as I watched, behold, there was a fourth beast, fearful, marvelous, and exceptionally strong. Its teeth were made of iron and great. It was eating and grinding, and it was trampling whatever was left under its feet. It was very different from all the beasts before it.</p> <p>It also had ten horns.</p>

<u>REVELATION 17</u>	
<p>17:8 “The beast that you saw was, is not, and is about to ascend from the abyss and proceed into destruction. Those living upon the earth - <i>each</i> one whose name has not been written in the scroll of life from the foundation of the cosmos – will be made to marvel as they see the beast that was, is not, and will come.</p> <p>17:9 “Here is the mind having wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains, and the woman sits upon them. They are also seven kings; 17:10 five fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. Whenever he does come he must remain a little while. 17:11 The beast who was and is not, he is an eighth and is of the seven, and he proceeds into destruction.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 17</u></p> <p>17:12 The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet taken sovereignty, however they will take authority as kings with the beast</p> <p>for one hour.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DANIEL 7</u></p> <p>7:24 Its ten horns are ten kings that will arise.</p> <p>After them will rise another, different than those previous, and he will subdue three kings. 7:25 He will speak words against the Most High, will wear out the Saints of the Most High, and will intend to alter times and custom. They will be given into his hand</p> <p>for a time, times and half a time.</p>
<u>REVELATION 17</u>	
<p>17:13 These have one purpose, and the beast gives them their power and authority. 17:14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them because He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Those with Him <i>are</i> called, elect, and faithful.”</p> <p>17:15 He said to me, “The waters upon which you saw the prostitute sitting are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages. 17:16 The ten horns that you saw and the beast will hate the prostitute, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire, 17:17 for God has placed into their hearts to carry out His purpose, to accomplish one purpose – to give their kingdoms to the beast until the word of God shall be completed.</p> <p>17:18 The woman that you saw is the great city that has sovereignty over the kings of the earth.”</p>	

Immediately after being cast from the heavenly dimension, Satan will transfer his “command and control authority” to a human agency symbolized by a red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, straddled by a prostitute. Thankfully, both Revelation and Daniel include enough explanation about this imagery that we can begin deciphering it with some measure of confidence.

CHART: Three Prophetic Dreams From The Book Of Daniel

<u>Parallel Dream Symbols</u> (Additional Information)	<u>Kingdom Indicated (Respective Date Ranges)</u> (Interpretation of Additional Information)
<p><i>b. From Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Daniel 2)</i> <i>c. From Daniel's First Dream (Daniel 7)¹⁹⁵</i> <i>d. From Daniel's Second Dream (Daniel 8)</i></p>	
<p>1a. Golden Head of Statue 1b. Winged Lion (Wings plucked) (Given heart of a man)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BABYLONIAN (605-539 BC)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Loss of glory and/or power?) (Belshazzar's terminal pride?)</p>
<p>2a. Silver Chest & Arms of Statue 2b. Bear (Raised on one side) (Three ribs in mouth) 2c. Ram with two horns</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MEDO-PERSIAN (539-330 BC)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Lopsided alliance between Medes & Persians) (Perhaps Cyrus' conquest of Lydia, Babylon & Egypt)</p>
<p>3a. Bronze Belly & Thighs 3b. Leopard (Four heads & four wings) 3c. Goat with a single horn (Four horns replace the single horn) (Horn growing from one of the four horns)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MACEDONIAN (330-63 BC)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(The rapid conquests of Alexander the Great) (The division of Alexander's empire after his death)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(The division of Alexander's empire after his death) (The Seleucid king Antiochus IV [175-163 BC])</p>
<p>4a. (Two) Iron Legs (Feet of Iron/Clay) (Ten Toes of Iron/Clay) 4b. Iron-Toothed Beast (Ten horns) (Three horns uprooted by one horn) (Horn wages war & wins victory over Saints) (Horn killed & thrown into fire) (Other beasts continue on, without authority)</p>	<p>ROMAN – Rome/Constantinople (63 BC- AD 395) (Decayed into Medieval Kingdoms [AD 395-1492]; developed into Modern Nations [AD 1492-Present]) (Final Government [Final three and a half Years]) A FINAL HUMAN EMPIRE (Final Government [Final three and a half Years]) (Final Dictator uproots three in coming to power) (Final Dictator wages war & wins victory over Saints) (Dictator killed & thrown into the Lake of Fire) (Some mortals continue into Messianic rule)</p>
<p>5a. Stone (Not quarried by humans) (Destroys statue by striking feet) 5b. Son of Man (Arrives with clouds) (Accepts authority from Ancient of Days) (Saints receive eternal kingdom)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MESSIANIC (Eternal) (Divine origin) (Defeats Final Government)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(2nd Coming of Jesus) (Throne given to Jesus by the Father) (Resurrected Saints reign with Jesus forever)</p>

¹⁹⁵ See **APPENDIX A** for more information.

Decoding “The Beast”

John was specifically told that the seven heads of this beast represented both seven mountains and seven kings. In the Old Testament, mountains sometimes represented the seats of governmental power, even as kings represented the kingdoms over which they ruled.

I think the best way to understand what John was told in Revelation 17:10 is as follows:

- The 1st Five were historical kingdoms which persecuted Faithful Israel in the past:
 - Egypt
 - Assyria
 - Babylon
 - Media/Persia
 - The Macedonian Greeks
- The 6th represented the persecutor of Faithful Israel in John’s time – Rome.
- The 7th represented a future and final persecutor of Faithful Israel.

Each of these seven heads bore a blasphemous name. This is probably indicative of the major point of contention that was common between all these kingdoms and Faithful Israel – a demand by the king(s) of each kingdom for worship and/or allegiance which genuine believers reserve only for “The Name,” i.e., *Yahweh*, the Creator of heaven and earth.

The beast which John saw appears to be a composite of the four beasts in Daniel 7 - Babylon (the winged lion), Media/Persia (the lop-sided bear), Macedonia (the winged, four-headed leopard), and Rome (the ten-horned, iron-toothed beast). This probably portrays the serial relationship we know existed between these four empires; each occupying a territory of ever-increasing size within the Mediterranean basin. I suspect that John’s Final Beast Kingdom will control the same parts of the world (Europe, the Middle East and northern Africa); and perhaps even more, since elements of those kingdoms/nations which came into existence by the collapse of the Roman Empire have now expanded into the “New World.”

John’s composite description also utilized some very specific aspects of Daniel’s four beasts. Certainly this was not coincidental.

The final beast had the body of a leopard (pointing back to Alexander’s Macedonian expansion), perhaps signifying the speed with which it will expand its sphere of influence. Its feet were like those of a bear (pointing back to the inflexible legal system of the Medes and the Persians), perhaps indicating the way in which it will not tolerate deviation from its legal directives. Its mouth was like that of a lion (pointing back to the glory of Babylon, which was the pride of King Nebuchadnezzar & Crown Prince Belshazzar), perhaps a sign of its unrestrained arrogance and braggadocio. Finally, it had iron teeth and an insatiable appetite (pointing back to the iron legions that first expanded, and then enforced, the “Peace of Rome”), perhaps showing the irresistible nature of its militaristic might.

There is another unusual feature about this final beast. One of its seven heads - the final enemy of Faithful Israel – appears to have died and been brought back to life; it had been to the abyss and back again. Even though this revitalized beast could be technically counted as an eighth kingdom, it will actually be a renewal or “resurrection” of the seventh.

It is widely believed that this Final Beast Kingdom will be a revival of the Roman Empire. I tend to agree. It is, I think, quite legitimate to suggest that the whole of European history and the development of what we now call modern Western Civilization to basically be the story of the collapse and attempted reorganization of the Roman Empire (Daniel 6:41-43). As you are probably aware, the European Union likes to style itself as a revival of that ancient empire.¹⁹⁶ In addition, most of NATO is made up of E.U. members, effectively making it the military arm of the E.U.¹⁹⁷

Along these same lines, we understand that the ten horns on the seventh head represent ten human kings or leaders at the top of this Final Beast Government. Daniel was told that an eleventh leader would rise among these ten by subduing three of their number. There is little doubt that this leader is the same conqueror we saw on the white horse in the breaking of the first seal. He will be Satan's "point man" throughout this final phase of the war.

We understand from Daniel 7:25 that this Final Beast Leader, supported by the other Beast Leaders from which he arose, will radically alter human society, changing both times and laws. I suspect that this means they will fully abandon the Christ-oriented, BC/AD calendar system, with its multitude of Christian holidays, along with what little remains of the Judeo-Christian ethic within the legal systems of western governments. In other words, genuine Christianity will be intentionally targeted for eradication by this Final Beast Government. Thankfully they will only be in power for a brief period of time – three and a half years.

Decoding the "Great Prostitute"

We next turn our attention to the "great prostitute" riding upon the back of this Final Beast Government. Like many Protestants before me, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that this prostitute must be - at least in her current form - the Roman Catholic Church (RCC).

I'm sorry if that statement and what I'm about to say to back it up comes across as an anti-Catholic diatribe. That is certainly not my intention. No doubt there are many individual Catholics who are very sincere in their faith. But sincerity is never really the issue; truth always is!

As a Bible teacher I am obligated to pass on the truth I find in the Bible. Those listening are then responsible to God for what they do with that information.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ For example, the Charlemagne Prize – named after the founder of the "Holy Roman Empire" (AD 962-1806), which was itself a revival of the western portion of the Roman Empire (27 BC – AD 476) – is awarded annually to persons who have excelled in support of Europe's unification.

¹⁹⁷ The United States, which is obviously not a member of the E.U., does provide ¾ of NATO's cash flow. However, the U.S.A. ultimately has its roots in Europe and makes a point of actively & officially participating in European affairs. When former President Bill Clinton accepted the Charlemagne Prize in 2000, he spoke of "our common dream of European union" and stated emphatically that "America must remain Europe's good partner and good ally."

¹⁹⁸ Ezekiel 33.

Here are some of the specifics mentioned within the text which led me in the direction of seeing the RCC as the prostitute:

- *The prostitute sat upon seven hills.*¹⁹⁹ The city of Rome, where the RCC is headquartered, sits upon seven hills.²⁰⁰
- *The prostitute is also called by the code name “Babylon.”* The Apostle Peter seems to have used “Babylon” as a designation for Rome.²⁰¹
- *The prostitute had prostitute daughters.* All of the most liberal Protestant denominations in existence today have historical roots connecting them to the RCC.
- *The prostitute sat upon a huge cross-section of humanity, even exercising authority over kings.* Since its inception during the 4th and 5th Centuries,²⁰² the RCC has used its influence to control human society and government within its sphere.²⁰³
- *The prostitute was clothed in purple and scarlet.* RCC Bishops wear purple cassocks, while the 70 members of the College of Cardinals wear scarlet cassocks.
- *The prostitute was adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls.* Throughout the centuries, RCC buildings around the world have been extravagantly adorned, often at the expense of her impoverished parishioners.²⁰⁴
- *The prostitute possessed a gold cup.* A gold (or at the very least, a gold-lined) chalice is a necessary and prominent part of the RCC Eucharist.
- *The prostitute was drunk with the blood of martyrs.* The RCC, as an official organization, has persecuted, tortured and murdered many millions of true believers whose only crime was to challenge the authority of the RCC.

Like it or not, the Roman Catholic Church bears little or no resemblance to the genuine Church portrayed in the pages of the New Testament, and way too much resemblance to the prostitute who riding the beast.

¹⁹⁹ Remember that the seven hills also represented seven successive kingdoms in the region of the ancient “Fertile Crescent.” These kingdoms also happen to have shared a common myth which focused attention upon a female deity who did great deeds for her husband and son. She began as Inanna, “Queen of Heaven,” within the mythology of Sumer (the very first civilization after the Flood). In Egypt she was Hathor or Isis; in Assyria and Babylon (and in nearby Phoenicia and Canaan) she was Ishtar, Astarte, Ashtoreth or Ashera; in Persia she was Anahita; in Greece she was Aphrodite; in Rome she was Venus; and eventually she morphed into non-other-than the greatly venerated “Virgin Mary” of the RCC. [By the way, every one of these goddesses were associated with the planet Venus, which is called *Hey-lel* in Hebrew and *Lu-ki-fer* in Latin (Isaiah 14:12). Evidently Satan has no qualms about a little “cross dressing” in order to accomplish his goals.]

²⁰⁰ Several centuries prior to John’s time, Rome was referred to as *Septimontium* (Latin: “Seven Hills”).

²⁰¹ 1 Peter 5:13. While some commentators try to place Peter in literal Babylon, the known movements of Peter, Silvanus, and John Mark all support his presence in Rome much better. The earliest Christian historians also cite Rome as the place from which this letter was written.

²⁰² I reject the RCC claim that she can trace her roots of apostolic authority clear back to Peter, whom she calls the first “Pope.” The RCC was actually conceived with the Roman Emperor Constantine’s “conversion” and subsequent government meddling in matters of Christian faith during the early 4th Century. It came to full term in the mid-5th Century when Leo I (who should probably be considered the real first “Pope” of the RCC) aggressively asserted his universal authority as Bishop of Rome.

²⁰³ There were times in history when the RCC actually appointed and/or removed European rulers.

²⁰⁴ The 17th Century construction cost just for St. Peter’s basilica in Rome is estimated to have been in excess of \$48,000,000. Anyone who has traveled in Europe and visited there the old cathedrals knows first-hand the massive amount of wealth incorporated into RCC architecture. In consideration of its world-wide physical assets alone, the RCC is probably the richest organization on the face of the earth.

Beyond these evidences, the Papacy also fulfils all key aspects of the prophesied “man of lawlessness” mentioned by the Apostle Paul.

2 THESSALONIANS

2:3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, because [the Day of Yahweh will not arrive] until the falling away first *arrives* and the man of lawlessness is revealed - the son of destruction, **2:4** the one opposing and lifting himself over all things called god or object of worship, so that he will seat himself in the sanctuary of God, displaying himself to be God.

2:5 Don't you remember that I was telling you these things when I was with you?

2:6 You now know the restraining thing, so that he will be revealed in his time, **2:7** for the mystery of lawlessness already works; only until the current restraining one is out of the midst. **2:8** Then the lawless one will be revealed, the one whom Lord Jesus will take away by the breath of his mouth; *whom* he will render powerless by the appearance of his arrival; **2:9** whose own arrival will be in accordance with the work of Satan, with all *sorts* of miracles, signs and false wonders, **2:10** and with every deception of unrighteous to those perishing, since they are those who didn't accept the love of truth in order that they might be saved.

- The Papacy came into existence during a time of apostasy within the Church.
- The Bishop of Rome (a.k.a. The Papacy) opposed all the so-called “gods” and “objects of worship” in Roman polytheism, eventually exalting his own role above that of all those pagan deities and their representative priests.²⁰⁵
- The Papacy claims to have a special “seat”²⁰⁶ within God’s “Temple” (i.e., “The Church”).²⁰⁷
- Popes have even allowed themselves to be blasphemously equated with our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.²⁰⁸
- The Bishop of Rome’s rise to supreme power as “The Pope” was inhibited by the authority structures of the Roman Empire with which Paul and the Thessalonians were familiar.²⁰⁹ Once the western capital of the empire was abandoned to the advancing “barbarians” during the 5th Century, the Bishop of Rome added civil authority to his already extensive religious authority, giving birth to the Papacy.
- “The False Prophet” (a title we have not yet come to in the Revelation text) will be removed from power and thrown into the Lake of Fire at the time of the 2nd Coming,²¹⁰ exactly as happens to this Man of Lawlessness. I believe they are the exact same person.

²⁰⁵ The Bishop of Rome very quickly took over the title of *Pontifex Maximus*, which had long been the designation for the official High Priest of the polytheistic Roman government, an office often held by the Roman Emperor himself.

²⁰⁶ The RCC even has the audacity to utilize the very language of this passage in its terminology; calling the territory of a bishop a *see* (French and Middle English for “seat”), designating the official throne of a bishop a *cathedra* (Latin for “chair”), referring to the building from which a bishop rules a *cathedral* (“of a chair”), calling official proclamations by the Pope *ex cathedra* (“from the chair”), and finally referring to the ordination of any bishop (and especially that of the pope) as his “enthronement.”

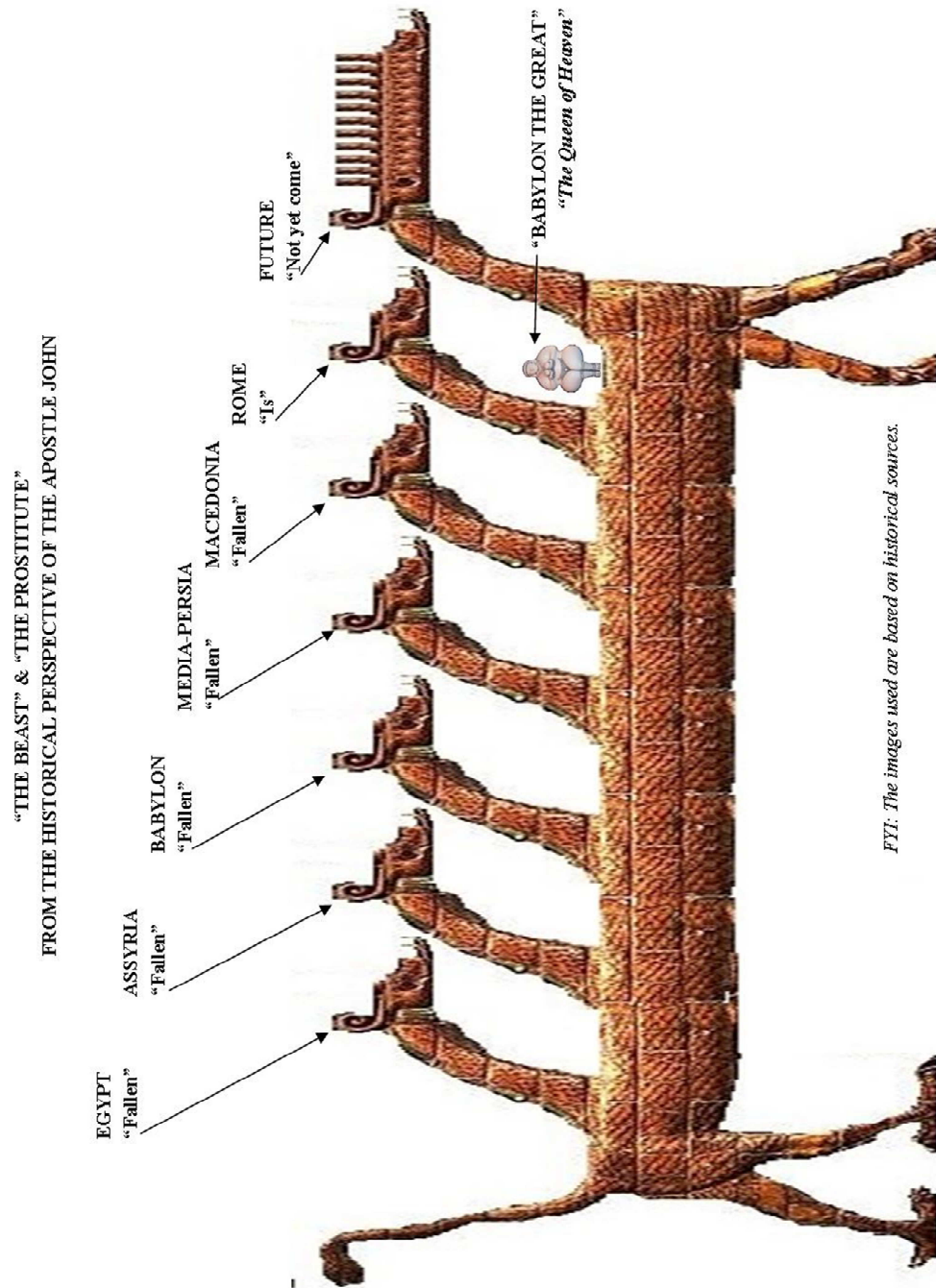
²⁰⁷ All the other places where Paul uses this word in his writings, he has the Church in mind (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21). I see no good reason for it to be understood otherwise here. By the way, this negates any need for a Jewish Temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem, as is so widely taught in Pre-Millennial Dispensational circles.

²⁰⁸ Saint Catherine of Sienna (14th Century) first addressed Pope Gregory XI as “sweet Christ on earth.” This term was still being used by Catholics in reference to the late Pope John Paul II, who apparently had no problem accepting such a blasphemous form of address.

²⁰⁹ In my opinion, the Roman government and the Roman emperor are respectively “the thing” (verse 6) and “the person” (verse 7) restraining the rise of this pseudo-Christian authority figure.

²¹⁰ Revelation 19:20.

CHART: "The Prostitute" & "The Beast" From The Perspective Of The Apostle John

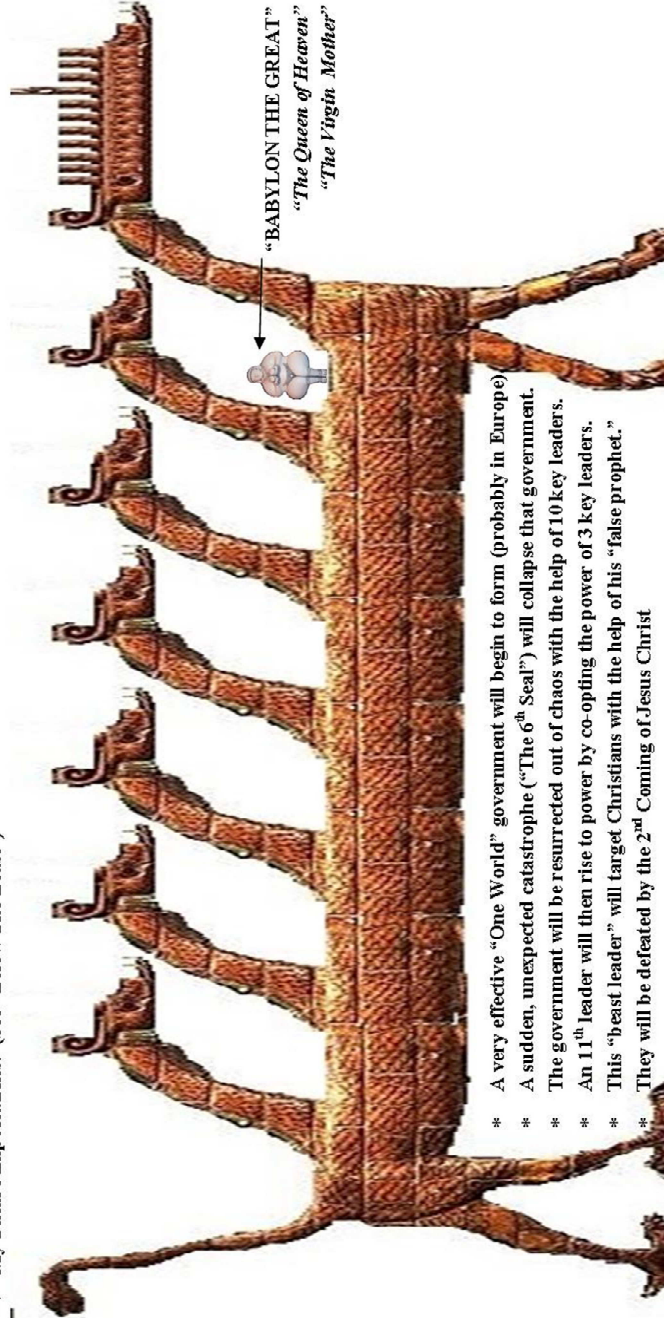


FTI: The images used are based on historical sources.

CHART: Focus Upon “The Beast” From The Perspective Of The Prophet Daniel

**“THE BEAST” & “THE PROSTITUTE”
FROM THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROPHET DANIEL**

- ⇒ BABYLON was absorbed by MEDA-PERSIA in 539 BC, which was then absorbed by MACEDONIA in 330 BC, which was then absorbed by ROME in approximately 60 BC.
- ⇒ ROME split into two empires in AD 285, the western of which deteriorated into smaller kingdom in conjunction with its fall in 476.
- ⇒ Many of those smaller kingdoms competed viciously with one another, especially after the discovery of the “New World” in 1492.
- ⇒ Various wars (including World Wars I & II) were a direct result of governmental alliances which arose out of that continued competition.
- ⇒ This resulted in ever-increasing calls for “One World” governance. (We currently live with this reality.)
- ⇒ My Future Expectations: (See “Below The Beast”)



- * A very effective “One World” government will begin to form (probably in Europe)
- * A sudden, unexpected catastrophe (“The 6th Seal”) will collapse that government.
- * The government will be resurrected out of chaos with the help of 10 key leaders.
- * An 11th leader will then rise to power by co-opting the power of 3 key leaders.
- * This “beast leader” will target Christians with the help of his “false prophet.”
- * They will be defeated by the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ

The Uneasy Relationship Between “The Beast” & “The Prostitute”

The “kings of the earth” - which would almost certainly include the Ten Leaders of the Final Beast Government - will “prostitute” themselves with the woman riding on the back of the beast (Revelation 17:2 & 18:3). This probably means that they will feel the need to ingratiate themselves with the RCC simply to gain control over the peoples under her influence;²¹¹ however, they won’t like having to do so.²¹² In reality, the leaders of the Final Beast Government will hate the woman. When the opportunity presents itself, they will strip, devour and burn her with fire. This sounds like the RCC as an organization, its headquarters at Vatican City, and perhaps even the city of Rome itself, will be plundered and destroyed by her erstwhile ally at some point before the 2nd Coming.

This destruction is the theme of Revelation 18, which follows the angel’s explanation about the prostitute first seen and explained in Revelation 17. It describes how the “Great City,” which once flourished, will be destroyed in a brief span of time.²¹³

I should note at this point that the mystical, papal prophecies made in 1139 by an Irish Catholic monk named Malachy have caused quite a stir among Catholics and non-Catholics alike as of late. Based on the usual calculation of these papal prophecies, some have come to believe that we have arrived at the time of the Final Pope; a man whom this prophecy says will be connected to the destruction of Rome. Here is the pertinent passage:

“In extreme persecution, the seat of the Holy Roman Church will be occupied by Peter the Roman, who will feed the sheep through many tribulations, at the term of which the city of seven hills will be destroyed, and the formidable Judge will judge his people. The End.”

While I do not look upon Malachy’s prophecies as if they were inspired Scripture, I am admittedly intrigued by how prescient some of his labels for popes – especially the more recent ones - have been & that his list culminates with the destruction of Rome itself. Will his final words come to pass as written? Only time will tell.

Now all this might raise the question in your mind – how can the RCC be destroyed by the Final Beast Government, and yet the False Prophet/Final Pope remain the partner of the Final Beast Leader right up to time of the 2nd Coming? Apparently, at some point near the end, the RCC will come to the conclusion that the Final Pope has betrayed her; or alternatively, the Final Pope will have no need for the RCC to support his position of authority. In either case, I fully expect the Final Pope to be complicit with the leaders of the Final Beast Kingdom in destroying “Babylon.”

There are some “Traditionalist Catholics”²¹⁴ have already indicated their willingness to abandon the Papacy & the official RCC structure supporting it whenever it openly challenges key elements of their faith. This is good to know, since Revelation 18:4 includes a clear call from Jesus for people associated with the RCC to abandon the pro-Beast Government stance taken by the Final Pope - “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues.”

²¹¹ At 48 %, Roman Catholicism is by far the majority belief system within the countries of the European Union. It is heavily represented among the common people.

²¹² At 23 %, Atheism/Agnosticism represents the second largest philosophical group within the countries of the European Union. It is heavily represented among the more elite people.

²¹³ In “one day” according to Revelation 18:8 & in “one hour” according to Revelation 18:10.

²¹⁴ Who typically reject the modernistic reforms brought on by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

SEEING PARALLELS BETWEEN THE TWO VISIONS OF JOHN

The time has now come for us to start pulling together things that are common to both of John's visions. We will begin with the kickoff of the long-anticipated "Day of the Lord," which appears to me to be equivalent with the breaking of the 6th Seal on the Scroll of God's Final Wrath.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-3

5:1 Brethren, you have no need to be written in regard to time periods and time events. **5:2** For you know very well that the Day of Yahweh comes like a thief in the night. **5:3** Even as they say, "Peace and stability!" then suddenly destruction will come upon them - like labor pains upon a pregnant woman. They will not escape.

Signs Connected with the Breaking of the 6th Seal

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 6</u></p> <p>6:12a I looked when he opened the sixth seal and there was a great earthquake, 6:12b the sun became black as hair sackcloth, the whole moon became like blood,</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>JOEL 2</u></p> <p>2:31 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and fearsome day of <i>Yahweh</i> comes.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MATTHEW 24</u></p> <p>24:29a Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give her light,</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 6</u></p> <p>6:13 the stars of heaven fell into the earth like a fig tree tossing its unripe figs when being shaken by a great wind. 6:14a Heaven was parted as a scroll being rolled.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ISAIAH 34</u></p> <p>34:4b All the stars will fall like leaves off a vine and as leaves fall from a fig tree. 34:4a Heaven Will be rolled as a scroll.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MATTHEW 24</u></p> <p>24:29b the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 12</u></p> <p>12:9 The great dragon... was ejected into the earth, and his angels were ejected with him...</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 6</u></p> <p>6:14b Every mountain and island was moved from its place. 6:15 The kings of the earth, the great <i>leaders</i>, the <i>military</i> commanders, the rich, the powerful, every slave, and <i>every</i> free person hid themselves within the caves and within the bedrock formations of the mountains. 6:16 They said to the mountains and to the bedrock formations, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One sitting upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" 6:17 For the great day of Their wrath came, and who is able to stand?</p>			

In my opinion, the breaking of the 6th Seal officially marks the beginning of “The Day of Yahweh” or “The Last Days,” as that term is widely understood. It will mark the beginning of a three and a half year countdown culminating with the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ.²¹⁵

As you can see (now that we have begun putting a few passages in parallel format), there will be lots of activity at the onset of this brief period.

First, Satan and his rebel angels will be ejected by Michael and his loyal angels out of their native spiritual environment and into our own physical environment. I think this radical “shaking” of the “heavenly” *status quo* will result in the spectacular “signs” that Jesus said would occur after the period of great tribulation (which, once again, we know began with the destruction of the Temple in AD 70) but before His 2nd Coming.

We know that both the loyal & rebel angels – often poetically referred to as “stars” within Scripture – exist in an unseen dimension called the “heavens” or the “heavenlies.” It is exceptionally rare for these other-worldly creatures to cross fully over into our earthly realm, taking on a material form by which they can interact here. In fact, it seems that the fallen angels have to depend heavily upon occult practices by humans (divination, channeling, use of hallucinogenic drugs, spirit quests, etc.) in order to effect matters here.

I have no doubt many of these evil angels will be “flying” around the world, taking care of their nefarious business in their own dimension which overlays our own, when the 6th Seal is broken. In an instant they will be ejected from their “heavenly” dimension right into our “earthly” one. When they “materialize” in our physical atmosphere, they will leave behind whatever rules of physics apply to their own dimension and become subject to those of our dimension. Consequently, they will no longer be able to “fly.” Plummeting toward the earth, their angelic bodies glowing from atmospheric friction, they will appear to be “falling stars.”

I like to call this dramatic event “*Angel Fall*.”

The cumulative kinetic energy released when myriads of angelic bodies hit the earth at terminal velocity (not to mention the unimaginable web of shockwaves triggered by their sudden materialization) might be a major contributor to a planet-wide seismic event such as has not been seen since the Flood. Mountains and islands will dramatically move out of position as the earth’s tectonic plates shift. Weaker man-made structures will no doubt collapse. Volcanic activity will spike. Perhaps the hundreds of volcanoes in the Pacific “Ring of Fire” will ignite simultaneously. Landslides and avalanches will occur. Tsunamis will hit coastal regions.

²¹⁵ Many teach that this final countdown will actually be seven years long, based on their mistaken belief that the “70th Week of Daniel” has not yet taken place. We’ve already seen that this is not the case. In truth, while the Book of Revelation makes extensive use of the number seven, it never mentions a seven year period; only a single three and a half year period, variously expressed.

It is even possible, I believe, that the sudden insertion of the unimaginable mass of these powerful angelic beings into our atmosphere could produce an immense energy surge that would manifest itself in the form of a world-wide Electro-Magnetic Pulse (EMP),²¹⁶ crashing the grid and sending our highly technological society back to a pre-1850 existence.²¹⁷

Military “hotspots” will most likely ignite into full-blown wars.²¹⁸ People at every level of society will panic, seeking shelter from the “end of the world” in caves and underground shelters. This will only be the beginning of the end.

Ash from volcanic eruptions will blot out the sun, moon and stars. Weather patterns will become chaotic. Crops will fail, driving up the price of food. Weeks, perhaps even months later, when particulate matter has begun to settle back to earth, the sun will still look like it’s inside a burlap bag & the moon will still be blood red because of the lingering haze.

Clearly, a lot of people are going to die in conjunction with the breaking of the 6th Seal. It seems likely that some significant portion of the 25 % population casualty figure cited in Revelation 6:8²¹⁹ will occur during this time.

²¹⁶ When material from a large coronal mass ejection hit the earth’s atmosphere in the summer of 1859, a natural EMP event occurred – “The Carrington Event.” Telegraph wires (the only high tech communication system of that time) became so supercharged with energy that they sparked and in certain cases caused fires.

²¹⁷ In 2001, Congress established a commission to study the effects of a manmade (weapon related) EMP event upon the United States. The 2004 report (http://www.empcommission.org/docs/empc_exec_rpt.pdf) paints a bleak picture of the impact any EMP event would have on a society, such as ours, that is highly dependent upon the electronic systems that would be damaged. To date, few of the Commission’s recommendations for civilian preparation have been acted upon.

²¹⁸ Some countries might misinterpret the beginning stages of “Angel Fall” as a surprise missile or artillery attack by their enemy and decide to respond with a counter-attack. Others might see the resultant chaos as their best chance to launch a military operation they had been so-far hesitant to initiate. In a similar fashion, militant political and religious groups might be emboldened or frightened into action against their governments.

²¹⁹ In connection with deadly activity of the characters introduced by the breaking of the 4th Seal.

The 144,000 – Marked for Martyrdom

Do you remember this passage from earlier?

6:9 When he broke the fifth seal I saw beneath the altar the individuals slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they were maintaining. 6:10 They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Until when, holy and true Master, will You *defer* judging and avenging our blood from those living on the earth?” 6:11 A white robe was given to each of them, and they were told they will rest a short period of time still until their fellow servants - their brothers and those about to be killed even as themselves - should be fulfilled.

Well, here now, are their “brothers & sisters” that are to be killed for their faith and whose martyrdoms will trigger God’s Final Wrath.

REVELATION 7

7:1 After this I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth so that they might not blow wind upon the land, the sea, or any tree. **7:2** I saw another angel rise up from the east with the seal of the living God. He cried out in a loud voice to the four angels to whom it had been granted to harm the land and the sea, **7:3** saying, “Don’t harm the land, the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the slaves of our God upon their foreheads!” **7:4** I heard the number of those sealed:

144,000 sealed from each tribe of Israel’s sons.

7:5 12,000 from the Judah tribe;
12,000 from the Reuben tribe;
12,000 from the Gad tribe;

7:6 12,000 from the Asher tribe;
12,000 from the Naphtali tribe;
12,000 from the Manasseh tribe;

7:7 12,000 from the Simeon tribe;
12,000 from the Levi tribe;
12,000 from the Issachar tribe;

7:8 12,000 from the Zebulun tribe;
12,000 from the Joseph tribe [*Ephraim, since Manasseh was already mentioned*];
12,000 from the Benjamin tribe.

Who exactly are these 144,000? That’s a very difficult question to answer. The figure could be perfectly symbolic;²²⁰ and yet, with Yahweh God involved, it could just as easily be literal. He certainly has the wherewithal to designate and assign to service a specific number of persons from a specific genetic background to a specific task.²²¹ With the citation of twelve specific Israeli tribes,²²² these future martyrs do seem to be Messianic, ethnic Israeli believers. Yet, in view of Paul’s observation that Abraham’s true descendants are determined by faith, not flesh,²²³ they could also be Christian martyrs of any ethnic background.

Ultimately, knowing who these believers are won’t really impact of our understanding of the role they play in the overall story. It is their martyrdom that triggers God’s wrath; we don’t really need to decipher their identity. That being said, I will admit that I do lean toward the idea that these are ethnic Israelis who will die for their faith in Jesus, their Messiah.

²²⁰ It is expressed as 12 x 12,000 [which is 12 x 1,000 (which is in turn 10 x 10 x 10)].

²²¹ Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness.” 2 Timothy 2:19 (NASB 1977)

²²² We can only guess why Dan is skipped in favor of including both tribes of Joseph.

²²³ Romans 9:6-8.

The Redeemed – Safe in God’s True Sanctuary

<p><u>REVELATION 7</u></p> <p>7:9 After this I looked, and behold, a great crowd - which no one could number – from all the nations, tribes, peoples, and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb, being clothed in white robes and palms in their hands. 7:10 They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation <i>belongs</i> to our God Who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!”</p> <p>7:11 All the angels who had taken a stand around the throne, the elders, and the four living beings fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, 7:12 saying, “AMEN! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength <i>belong</i> to our God into the ages of ages. AMEN!”</p> <p>7:13 One of the elders responded, saying to me, “Who are these clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?”</p> <p>7:14 I said to him, “My lord, you know.”</p> <p>He said to me, “These are those coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 7</u></p> <p>7:15 This is why they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His sanctuary. The One sitting upon the throne will tabernacle over them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 11</u></p> <p>11:1 A reed like a staff was given to me, saying, “Get up and measure the sanctuary of God, the altar, and those worshipping in it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 7</u></p> <p>7:16 They will no longer be hungry, and no longer will they be thirsty; neither may the sun nor any heat fall upon them, 7:17 since the Lamb at the center of the throne will shepherd them and will guide them springs of living water. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”</p>	

The identity of the incalculable, multi-ethnic group serving before God’s throne in heaven, described immediately after the sealing of the 144,000, is much easier to pin down. Revelation 7:14 tells us that they have come out of the “great tribulation” – the period between the 1st and 2nd Comings of Jesus. These are the deceased saints of the pan-ethnic Church era who are eagerly awaiting the resurrection of the righteous and the inauguration of the Millennium, especially now that Satan has been cast down to earth from heaven.

Meanwhile, Down on Planet Earth

<u>REVELATION 11</u>			
<p>11:2a As for the court outside the sanctuary, cast it out and do not measure it because it has been given to the ethnic groups. They will tramp upon the holy city...</p>			
<u>REVELATION 12</u>			
<p>12:13 When the dragon saw he had been ejected to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 12</u></p> <p>(12:6 The woman escaped into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God in order that He might nourish her there for 1,260 days.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 12</u></p> <p>12:14 The two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman so she could fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she was nourished there a time, times, and half a time, away from the serpent's presence.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 11</u></p> <p>11:2b for forty-two months.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 11</u></p> <p>11:3 I will give to my two witnesses</p> <p>and they will prophesy 1,260 days, having been clothed in sackcloth.</p>
<u>ZECHARIAH 4</u>		<u>REVELATION 11</u>	
<p>4:14 He said to me, "These are the two sons of oil standing beside the Lord of all the earth."</p>		<p>11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the Lord of the earth.</p>	
<u>REVELATION 11</u>			
<p>11:5 If anyone wants to harm them, fire comes out of their mouths and consumes their enemies. If anyone might wish to harm them, this is how they must be killed. 11:6 These have the authority to shut up the sky that rain might not rain during the days of their prophecy. They have the authority upon the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every blow as often as they might wish.</p> <p>12:15 From his mouth the serpent spat out waters like a river after the woman so she might be washed away, 12:16 but the earth aided the woman. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon spat out of his mouth. 12:17 The dragon was enraged over the woman. He went out to make war with the rest of her seed, <i>those</i> keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DANIEL 7</u></p> <p>7:25 He will speak</p> <p>words against the Most High, will wear out the Saints of the Most High, and will intend to alter times and custom.</p> <p>They will be given into his hand</p> <p>for a time, times and half a time.</p> <p>7:21 As I watched, that horn was making war with the saints and overpowering them...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 13</u></p> <p>13:5a It was given to speak great and blasphemous things...</p> <p>13:6 It opened its mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle – those dwelling in heaven.</p> <p>13:5b It was given authority to act</p> <p>for forty-two months.</p> <p>13:7a It was permitted to make war with the saints and to overcome them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 11</u></p> <p>11:2 Leave out the exterior court of the sanctuary that you might not measure it, because it was given to the nations and they will trample upon the holy city forty-two months.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 6</u></p> <p>6:2b He was given a victor's wreath and he went out overcoming and in order to overcome.</p>	

While transition to this final phase of the great spiritual war will be cause for celebration among the dead saints already serving Yahweh in the “Sanctuary of Heaven,”²²⁴ the same cannot be said for the saints still living and serving Yahweh in “Heaven’s Courtyard”²²⁵ here on the earth,²²⁶ where Satan has been marooned. Knowing that he now has “little time” to prepare for Jesus’ final invasion of his home territory, “the god of this world”²²⁷ will begin persecuting (ultimately attempting to annihilate) Faithful Israel.

Thankfully, Faithful Israel will find supernatural protection from total annihilation when “two wings” of an eagle are given to help her flee to a prepared place of nourishment during this final three and a half year period. As you should be able to see from my parallel format, I think these “two wings” are a reference to the “two witnesses” representing Yahweh.²²⁸

While the Bible nowhere identifies these two men, I’m going to give you my personal opinion. It doesn’t really matter in the long run, but I think my idea is kind of “cool.”

There are only two men in all of Bible history who never died.

- Enoch, who lived about 1,500 years after Creation and about 1,000 years before the Flood, was a prophet who had something to say about life in “The Last Days.”²²⁹ Because he was such a righteous man, God “took him” from the earth in the 365th year of his life so that he never died.²³⁰
- Elijah, who lived in the 9th Century BC, was also a prophet who never died, being carried away by a fiery chariot.²³¹ Many Jews, past and present, expect Elijah to appear immediately before the Messiah establishes His Kingdom.²³²

²²⁴ Which John was ordered to measure; probably as a symbol of God’s protection for those within it.

²²⁵ Which John was ordered not to measure; probably as a symbol of God’s coming wrath upon those within it.

²²⁶ Unlike Dispensationalists, I don’t think Revelation 11 is describing a 3rd Jewish Temple built at Jerusalem. Each and every other reference to the “Sanctuary” in the Book of Revelation is a reference to the genuine, Heavenly Sanctuary prefigured by the Tabernacle. [Check for yourself. Here are the references: Revelation 3:12; 7:15; 11:1,2,19; 14:15,17; 15:5-8; 16:1,17 and 21:22.] Without going into too much detail, the Tabernacle design was a symbolic representation of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9 & 10). The Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant (Yahweh’s throne) was located, represented the genuine throne room in Heaven. Beyond the veil, the Holy Place, with its Incense Altar (prayer), Table of the Bread of the Presence (fellowship), and Menorah (spiritual illumination), represented life within the pan-ethnic Church. Only the High Priest (Jesus) had the right to enter the Most Holy Place. The ordinary priests (Christians) had the right to serve in the Holy Place. Non-priests (non-Christians) could come no closer to the Sanctuary than the Outer Courtyard (the world), until they had gone through the initiation ceremony for priests (Leviticus 8). During their ordination rites they had to come to the Altar of Burnt Offering (the sacrifice of Christ), be washed in the Bronze Sea (immersion into Christ’s death and resurrection), be anointed with the blood and the oil (the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the indwelling Spirit), and put on the priestly clothing (putting on the life of Christ).

²²⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19.

²²⁸ During the Exodus, Yahweh was represented by Moses and Aaron. Exodus 19:3 actually compares the Exodus of Israel to that nation being carried to Yahweh “on eagle’s wings.” Throughout the history of the Israeli kingdom, Yahweh was represented by the King and the High Priest. During the building of the 2nd Temple, He was represented by Governor Zerubbabel and the High Priest Joshua. I see the two witnesses of Revelation 11 as a continuation of this dual pattern of representation.

²²⁹ Jude 14-15.

²³⁰ Genesis 5:23-24.

²³¹ 2 Kings 2:1-18.

²³² Malachi 4:5-6; John 1:19-28; Mark 6:14-16; Matthew 16:13-20; 17:1-13.

Here's what I think might have and/or will happen.²³³ Yahweh, the Eternal Creator Who exists outside the space/time continuum which He created, is perfectly capable of relocating persons in time and space. I think He may have pulled Enoch and Elijah forward in time – right past the present time we live in – straight into “The Last Days,” intending them to finish their earthly lives as His final witnesses to that world; especially to the ethnic Israelis who hold these two persons in very high regard.

I expect the Two Witnesses to arrive, presumably in or near the land of Israel,²³⁴ on the very chaotic day of “Angel Fall”. This will be Day 1 of their 1,260-day mission. They will be dressed in the traditional mourning garb of their own times, and will immediately begin calling ethnic Israelis to repent of their foolish rejection of Jesus as Messiah.

Even as in Elijah's former days as a prophet,²³⁵ anyone who tries to do harm to these two will die by fire falling from heaven in response to a simple command from their mouths. If they wish it to be so, there will be a repeat of the three and a half year drought of Elijah's time,²³⁶ perhaps this time on a world-wide scale. Eventually, when the Scroll of Wrath is finally opened, they will orchestrate the “Trumpets”/“Bowls” of God's wrath in much the same way that Moses and Aaron orchestrated God's “Ten Plagues” against Egypt.²³⁷

As anticipated by the Apostle Paul,²³⁸ many ethnic Israelis will finally accept Jesus as their genuine Messiah. This is the Faithful Israel whom Satan will attack shortly after his fall from heaven. Under the protective wings of the Enoch and Elijah, they will escape into a place of relative safety (The Old City of Jerusalem? or perhaps Petra?), where they will be nourished and protected throughout the remainder of the Two Witnesses' ministry.

Furious at being unable to touch this particular group of believers, Satan will put all of his efforts into trying to eradicate genuine Christianity throughout the rest of the world. Being “locked out” of the spiritual dimension, he will have to do this via his remaining human assets – the Final Beast Government, its Final Beast Leader and his False Prophet.

²³³ Time is a tough topic to pin down when dealing with prophecy.

²³⁴ I suppose they could show up anywhere in the world, either together or separately; but we know for a fact that they will eventually end up in Jerusalem, where they will be killed by the final beast leader.

²³⁵ 2 Kings 1:1-16.

²³⁶ 1 Kings 17:1- 18:46; cf. James 5:17-18.

²³⁷ Exodus 7-11.

²³⁸ Romans 11.

The Beast Leader & His False Prophet

REVELATION 12 & 13

12:17 The dragon was enraged over the woman. He went out to make war with the rest of her seed, *those* keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus. **12:18** He stood on the sand of the sea. **13:1** I saw a ten-horned, seven-headed beast rise out of the sea, with ten crowns upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. **13:2** The beast which I saw was like a leopard, its feet like *those* of a bear, and its mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave it its power, its throne, and great authority. **13:3** One of its heads *looked* as if it had been slain to death, and its death-wound healed. The whole earth marveled after the beast. **13:4** They worshiped the dragon because he gave authority to the beast, and worshiped the beast, saying “Who is like the beast?” and “Who is able to make war with it?” **13:5** It was given to speak great and blasphemous things. It was given authority to act for forty-two months. **13:6** It opened its mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle – those dwelling in heaven. **13:7** It was permitted to make war with the saints and to overcome them. *Authority* was given to it over all tribes, peoples, languages, and nations. **13:8** All who live upon the earth – the name of whom has not been written in the scroll of life of the Lamb having been slain from the foundation of the cosmos – shall worship it. **13:9** If anyone has ears let him hear! **13:10** If anyone *is to go* into captivity, into captivity he goes. If anyone is to be killed by the sword, he by the sword is to be killed. Here is the patience and the faithfulness of the saints. **13:11** I saw another beast rising from the earth. He had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. **13:12** He acts with all the authority of the first beast in his presence. He made the earth and those living in it to worship the first beast, whose death-wound had been healed.

REVELATION 13

13:13 He performed great **signs** - he could even make fire come down from the sky to the earth in the presence of men - **13:14** so he might **deceive** those living upon the earth by the signs that were given to him to do before the beast, telling those who live upon the earth to make an image of the beast who has a sword wound and lived.

2 THESSALONIANS 2

2:9 The arrival of whom is by the working of Satan with all sorts of false power, **signs**, and wonders; **2:10** and every **deception** of unrighteousness toward those being destroyed;

REVELATION 13

13:15 He was permitted to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast might speak, and that as many as did not worship the image of the beast might be killed. **13:16** He made everyone – the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the free and the slave – that a mark should be given to them upon their right hand or upon their forehead, **13:17** so that no one might buy or sell except the one having the mark of the name of the beast or the number of his name. **13:18** Here is wisdom: the one having a mind should calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is six hundred sixty-six.

The Final Beast Kingdom will arise from the chaos brought on by “*Angel Fall*.” It would appear to be the resuscitation of some human agency that existed prior to the opening of the 6th Seal; one with which we may already be familiar.

Perhaps it will be a reformation of the 10-member Western European Union (1954-2011), the former security arm of the E.U. Maybe it will be a reincarnation of the United Nations Security Council, this time with 10 Permanent Members rather than five. I suppose it might even be a meeting of the G-10 economic group and their associated International Monetary Fund which has met intermittently since 1962. Then again, it may be a completely new entity, forged in the fires of worldwide chaos after “*Angel Fall*.”

To the apex of this organization will arise a powerful human leader. On his way to the top, he will either subvert or subdue three of his ten companions. Even as the Final Beast Government will arise Phoenix-like from the ashes of chaos, so too this final beast leader may recover miraculously from a potentially fatal head-wound.²³⁹ This would certainly add to his mystique.

Because he really has no other options, Satan will have to invest all his command and control authority into this one human and the government over which he rules. Here is how I think the scenario might play out.

I suspect that Satan will appear to the leadership of the final beast government in his true form; that of the four-faced, four-winged, former *KHe·rub* of Eden.²⁴⁰ In doing so I fully expect him to portray himself and his earth-bound, angelic forces as “good” aliens engaged in a cosmic struggle, on behalf of humanity, against “bad” aliens (meaning Jesus, his angels and the deceased saints) who are preparing to invade the earth.²⁴¹ By this ruse, Satan, or the Dragon, will convince those in authority of an urgent and immediate need to commit all of humanity’s resources to stopping this imminent invasion.

More than likely, the Dragon will address the peoples of this world via mass media, promising all sorts of benevolent “good alien” assistance to the inhabitants of earth, once the “bad alien” invaders have been repelled, indicating his full support for the Beast Leader. Most of the public will swallow this lie whole, pledging their full allegiance to the Dragon and to the Final Beast Government in whom his authority has been placed; most, but certainly not all.

²³⁹ I can’t help but refer to Zechariah 11:17, right in the middle of a huge “Last Days” passage, which makes mention of “a worthless shepherd” (i.e., a wicked leader) whose arm & right eye will be harmed by “a sword” (i.e., military action). Might this be in reference to the Final Beast Leader and some fatal blow to the head from which he will miraculously recover?

²⁴⁰ Ezekiel 28:13-17; cf. Ezekiel 1 & 10.

²⁴¹ I think Satan has already laid the groundwork for this plausible lie, in the event that God actually does accomplish what is written in the Word about banishing him to the physical dimension. Hollywood (which is certainly under his sphere of influence) is constantly pumping out blockbuster movies on this very theme. The internet abounds with sites touting the reality of a great interstellar war between alien races, with the fate of earth hanging in the balance. More people now believe in extraterrestrial visitation of the earth than ever before. In fact, polls indicate that a substantial portion of Americans are convinced that the governments of the world are already in contact with alien entities; awaiting the appropriate time to reveal this astounding news.

In dealing with such “unbelievers,” the Final Beast Leader will have a very effective accomplice. John saw another beast rise up from the earth, looking like a lamb but speaking like a dragon. This is obviously the false Christian²⁴² leader, whom John will later identify as the “False Prophet.” He - not the Final Beast Leader, as is so commonly taught - is the so-called “antichrist” that John said was coming.²⁴³ He is the “man of lawlessness” whom Paul warned would come amidst all sorts of deceptive signs and wonders, including things that will appear to rival the work of God’s two witnesses at Jerusalem. He will probably be, as I have already asserted, the Final Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

I expect this man to reinterpret Christianity (and other world religions)²⁴⁴ in the light of events since “*Angel Fall*.” He will promote a universal spirituality that is supposedly at the core of all religion. He will use his considerable influence to persuade all religious peoples, in particular “Christians,” and most especially Roman Catholics, to accept the Dragon, the Final Beast Leader, and the Final Beast Government as the only real hope for humanity’s survival and its expansion beyond this tiny globe within a vast, alien-populated universe.

As such, he will be the chief developer and administrator of an economic control system intended to coerce individuals into accepting the authority of the Final Beast Leader. Here’s how I think he could use technology (most of which we already have) to pull this off.

The False Prophet will probably commission the swift adaptation of existing technological systems into a global, interactive computer network driven by an artificial intelligence (AI) using the image and voice of the Final Beast Leader. This will fulfill Revelation 13:15.

Tied into this “Image” AI computer system will be an embedded RFID (radio frequency identification) microchip system (or something similar) that will permit real time tracking of both people and products. This will fulfill Revelation 13:16-17.

When used with a network of strategically placed two-way computer/TV/surveillance network monitors in homes, businesses and public places, this “Image/Mark of the Beast”²⁴⁵ system will allow the false prophet to simulate a personal relationship between the final beast leader and billions of “chipped” users, simultaneously, all along the global net. This illusion of fatherly concern will awe low-tech individuals, but it will be just as effective in controlling high-tech persons who will understand all too well that “Big Brother” (or more accurately, “The Beast”) is monitoring their every move.

²⁴² He will be falsely associated with the lamb imagery of Christianity; the true lamb being Jesus.

²⁴³ 1 John 2:18. *Anti-* is a Greek prefix that can mean either “opposite of” or “in place of.” This false Christian leader will pretend to represent or even be Christ, when in fact he is of Satan.

²⁴⁴ Already, Christianity, Islam and Judaism are being presented as different facets of the same spiritual heritage. An abominable lie!

²⁴⁵ The code number John gave for the Final Beast Leader is 666. According to the early Christian scholar Irenaeus ([Against Heresies](#) 5.30.3, which was written in the 180’s), the numerical value of the Greek adjective “*Lateinos*” (“Roman”) is 666. If the Final Beast Government does end up being a reincarnation of the ancient Roman Empire, this would certainly make good sense. However, as Irenaeus pointed out, and as we have seen many times since, there are just too many possibilities to become dogmatic over this issue. Suffice it to say that the numerical coding will make sense when the Final Beast Leader is revealed, and that it will merely affirm what we already know about him.

With the survival of *homo sapiens* on the line, extreme measures will be authorized by the Final Beast Government (and tolerated by the citizens of Earth)²⁴⁶ in order to deal with those unconvinced by the Dragon's tale; those who resist taking the "Mark," and who consequently represent a societal threat.

Given past world history, unarmed resisters will most likely be rounded up and processed through "educational" facilities. Those who continue their resistance will be "euthanized" for the sake of humanity. Armed resisters will probably be hunted down and exterminated.

The deaths of these resisters will fill out what remains of the one fourth population casualty figure in Revelation 6:8.

Let's put some real numbers to this concept. Suppose that Earth had a global population of 8 billion when the 6th Seal is opened. That means 2 billion, a large portion of whom will be conservative Christians, will be dead in a period of less than three years (since the wrath of God will take up about six months of the final three and a half years).

144,000 Martyrs – A Major Precursor To God's Final Wrath

REVELATION 14

14:1 I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mt. Zion. With Him were 144,000 with His name and the name of His Father written upon their foreheads.

14:2 I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of a great thundering. The sound I heard was like lyrists playing on their lyres. **14:3** They sang a new song before the throne, and before the four living beings and the elders. No one could learn the song except for the 144,000 – those purchased from the earth. **14:4** These are those who have not tarnished themselves with women (they are virgins) following the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men as a firstfruit offering to God and to the Lamb. **14:5** No lie was found in their mouths. They are unblemished.

By the time that the False Prophet is ready to bring his "Image/Mark" system on-line, the 144,000 will have already been martyred. In Revelation 14, John saw them after their deaths, standing on the real Mt. Zion, located in the spiritual dimension of "heaven."²⁴⁷

You'll remember that I believe these young men will probably be Messianic Israelis who rise under the ministry of the two witnesses. Their deaths will likely occur when they leave the protective sphere around the two prophets in order to announce the "good news" about the returning King to the rest of the world.

As the "first fruits," i.e., the first martyrs for this final three and a half year period, they will have a special place of the kingdom of heaven. They alone will have the right to sing a special song of praise in the presence of Yahweh.

²⁴⁶ Think of the extensive, freedom curtailing actions taken in the United States since the 9/11 attack, then project that onto a world-wide scale.

²⁴⁷ Hebrews 12:22-24.

Public Service Announcement # 1 – A Final Call To Worship The True God

REVELATION 14

14:6 I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven with an eternal proclamation to proclaim to those sitting upon the earth – every nation, tribe, language, and people – **14:7** saying in a loud voice, “Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come! Worship the One Who made the sky, land, sea, and the springs of water!”

With the number of prophesied martyrs complete,²⁴⁸ the time for Yahweh’s wrath to be poured out has arrived. At this point several angel heralds will appear in Earth’s atmosphere with explicit warnings for the people of the world.

The first angel will warn that final judgment is approaching and that everyone needs to worship the Creator (Yahweh) rather than creatures (Satan and his human minions).²⁴⁹

Public Service Announcement # 2 – A Final Call To Abandon “Babylon” Before Her Fall

REVELATION 14

14:8 Another, second angel followed, saying, “**Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great – she who has made all the nations drink the wine of her passionate prostitution!**”

REVELATION 18

18:1 After this I saw another angel having come down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined by his glory. **18:2** He cried out in a loud voice, saying, “**Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great!** She has become a dwelling for demons; a haven for every unclean spirit; every unclean bird; and every unclean, hated beast. **18:3** Because **all the nations have drunk of the wine of her passionate prostitution;** the kings of the earth have fornicated with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich from the power of her wantonness.

REVELATION 18

18:4 I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out, my people, out from her, so that you might not share in her sin and so that you might not receive of her blows, **18:5** because her sins are cemented together as far as heaven, and God kept account of her unrighteous acts. **18:6** “Give her even as she has given; give her two times what her acts deserve; in the cup she mixed, mix her two times as much. **18:7** In as much as she glorified herself and lived wantonly, in that same way give her torture and mourning; because she is saying in her heart, ‘I am sitting as queen. I am not a widow. I will never see mourning.’”

REVELATION 17

17:16 The ten horns that you saw and the beast will hate the prostitute, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and **burn her with fire**, **17:17** for **God** has placed into their hearts to carry out His purpose, to accomplish one purpose – to give their kingdoms to the beast until the word of God shall be completed.

REVELATION 18

18:8 Therefore, in one day her blows will come – death, mourning, and famine. She will be **burnt with fire** because the Lord **God** Who judges her is strong.

²⁴⁸ Remember that Yahweh told the martyrs of all ages who were asking for vengeance that they had to be patient until a specific number of additional martyrs had been reached (6:11).

²⁴⁹ Romans 1:18ff.

REVELATION 18

18:9 The kings of the earth, those fornicating and living luxuriously with her, will weep and will strike *themselves in grief* over her when they see the smoke of her burning. **18:10** They will stand at a distance in fear of her torture, saying, “Woe! Woe! The great city! The strong city Babylon! In one hour her judgment came.”

18:11 “The merchants of the earth will weep and will mourn over here, because no one buys their merchandise anymore. **18:12** Merchandise of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple fabric, silk, scarlet fabric, every *kind of* fragrant wood, every *sort of* ivory container, every *type of* vessel made of precious wood, copper, iron, marble, **18:13** cinnamon, amomum, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine wheat flour, wheat, work animals, sheep, horses, carts, and *the* bodies and souls of men. **18:14** The fruit of the desires of your soul went from you and all the dainty things and elegant things destroyed from you; none of these things shall be found.

18:15 “These wealthy merchants will stand at a distance from her due to fear of her tortures, weeping and mourning, **18:16** saying, “Woe! Woe! The great city! The one wrapped in fine linen, purple, and scarlet; gilded with gold, precious stones and pearls! **18:17** In one hour the great wealth is desolated. Each ship captain, each passenger and sailor, and as many as work the sea, stood far off **18:18** and were crying out, seeing the smoke of her fire, saying, “Who is like the great city?” **18:19** They threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and striking *themselves in grief*, saying, “Woe! Woe! The great city! By whom all those having ships in the sea became rich from her excellence. In one hour she was desolated.

18:20 “Be glad over her, heaven, saints, apostles and prophets! God has judged your judgment upon her.”

18:21 A strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw *it* into the sea, saying, “In this violent fashion the great city Babylon shall be thrown and be found no more.

18:22 “May the sound of lyre players, musicians, flutists and trumpeters no longer be heard in you. May each artisan and each craftsman no longer be found in you. May the sound of the mill no longer be heard in you. **18:23** May the light of the lamp no longer be seen in you. May the sound of the groom and bride never be heard in you. Because your merchants were the great men of the earth. Because you mislead all the nations by your sorcery. In you was found the blood of prophets, saints and all those slaughtered on the earth.”

The second angel will warn of the imminent fall of “Babylon,” i.e., the RCC headquartered out of Vatican City in Rome. I presume that once the “Image/Mark” system is operational, and the False Prophet, i.e., the Final Pope, is fully and irretrievably committed to the Final Beast Leader, he and the Ten Leaders of the Final Beast Kingdom will have no more use for the RCC. As prophesied earlier, it will only be a matter of time before they get around to destroying her, since they hate what (even in her perverse form) she stands for - Christianity.

Around this time there will be a clear call from heaven, “to come out from her, my people,” giving one last opportunity to anyone with genuine faith in Jesus as Messiah to abandon any relationship with the doomed RCC.²⁵⁰ Those that don’t will suffer with her.

²⁵⁰ This will probably be accomplished via the launch of the Beast Image/Mark system. No one with even the most rudimentary allegiance to Jesus Christ will be able to bring themselves to participate in that system.

Public Service Announcement # 3 – A Final Warning Not To Take The Mark

REVELATION 14

14:9 Another, third angel followed them, saying in a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and takes the mark upon his forehead or his right hand, **14:10** he will drink the wine of God’s passion which has been mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath, and he will be tortured in fire and brimstone before the angels and before the Lamb! **14:11** The smoke of their torture ascends into the ages of ages and they have no respite day and night – the ones worshiping the beast and his image, and anyone accepting the mark of his name!

14:12 Here is the endurance of the Saints, the ones keeping the commands of God and the faith of Jesus.” Most aspects of the seven final trumpets/bowls are exactly parallel, as you will be able to see for yourself. Differences that do occur are probably due to the perspective of the vision; the Trumpets come at the end of the Vision of the Scroll and highlight Yahweh’s control of the overall situation, while the Bowls focus more upon the wrath itself.

14:13 I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write, ‘How blessed by God are the dead dying in the Lord from now on.’”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “in order that they be given rest from their hard work, for their actions follow behind them.”

A third and final angel herald will pronounce an unambiguous and eternal curse upon anyone who worships the Final Beast Leader and/or his “Image,” taking his “Mark.” There are a few things I think should be clearly understood from this passage.

- The “Image/Mark” won’t be deployed until sometime during the final three and half year period. The “Mark of the Beast” doesn’t exist at the moment.²⁵¹
- No one will be able to take the “Mark” accidentally. The choice will be clear – one will take the “Mark” to be on the final beast leader’s side or refuse it.²⁵²
- Those who accept the “Mark” will be eternally condemned. The choice will be so clear that there will be absolutely no opportunity for repentance.²⁵³

The “Image/Mark” program will result in the deaths of many Christians. Even as a curse is pronounced upon those accepting the “Mark,” a blessing is pronounced upon those who will die rather than accept it.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ While the technology that will be used in the system may already exist, there is nothing intrinsically evil with any of it. Other than privacy issues that I think everyone should worry about, I wouldn’t get too worked up over modern technological advances. I guarantee you that a microchip in your debit card, in your ID or in your can of corn isn’t the “Mark of the Beast.”

²⁵² However, allowing a chip to be planted “in” your physical body is another matter entirely. I would advise everyone, but especially Christians, to refuse such implantations simply on principle. While the government now in power may guarantee that your privacy will be protected, remember that governments change. You can ditch inanimate objects like “smart cards” that contain traceable chips, but you can’t ditch yourself.

²⁵³ Lest you worry, I’m positive that forcibly implanted chips won’t count; as in the case of minor children who are taken into custody when their Christian parents are arrested and executed. This is all about free will.

²⁵⁴ Don’t be naive. You won’t be able to take the “Mark” just to utilize the “Image” system so as to survive the three and a half years, while staying true to Jesus “in your heart.” Read (and memorize) Matthew 10:32-33.

The Breaking of the Seventh Seal & The Beginning of Yahweh's Wrath

REVELATION 8

8:1 When He opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

8:2 I saw seven angels who had taken a stand before God. Seven trumpets were given to them.

8:3 Another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer. Much incense was given to him so he could offer up the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne. **8:4** The smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints went up from the hand of the angel before God.

REVELATION 14

14:14 I looked, and behold, a white cloud and sitting upon the cloud one like a son of man, and in his hand a sharp sickle. **14:15** Another angel came out of the sanctuary, crying out in a loud voice to the one sitting on the cloud, "Send your sickle and harvest, because the hour to harvest has come, since the harvest of the earth has dried up!"

14:16 The one sitting on the cloud sent his sickle into the earth and the earth was harvested.

14:17 Another angel came out of the sanctuary in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

REVELATION 8

8:5 Having taken the censer, the **angel** filled it with **fire from the altar**

and **threw it into the earth**. There were peals of thunder, sounds, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

REVELATION 14

14:18 Another **angel** (the one having authority over the **fire**) came **from the altar** and called out in a loud voice to the one with the sharp sickle, saying, "Send your sharp sickle and gather the clusters *from* the vine of the earth, because its grapes are at *their* prime.

14:19 The angel **sent** [literally "**threw**"] his sickle **into the earth** and gathered *from* the vine of the earth and **threw them** into the great wine vat of God's fury.

14:20 The wine vat was trod outside the city and blood went out from the wine vat as high as horses' bridles for 1,600 *stadia*.

REVELATION 19

19:1 After these things I heard *something* like the great voice of a crowd of many in heaven, saying, "Hallelu Yah! Salvation, glory, and power to our God, **19:2** for His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great prostitute who was corrupting the earth with her immorality and He has avenged the blood of His servants *shed* from her hand."

19:3 A second time they said, "Hallelu Yah! Her smoke ascends into the ages of ages."

19:4 The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God Who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen! Hallelu Yah!"

19:5 A voice came out from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His servants, those who fear Him, small and great."

REVELATION 15

15:1 I saw another great and marvelous sign in heaven: seven angels with seven final blows [*FYI: The Greek word here is the source of our English word “plague.”*], because in them God’s wrath came to an end. **15:2** I saw something like a glassy sea mixed with fire; and those overcoming the beast, his image, and the number of his name standing on the glassy sea with the lyres of God. They were singing the song of Moses, God’s servant, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are your works, Yahweh Tsabaoth. Righteous and true are your ways, King of nations. **15:4** Who should not fear you, Yahweh, and glorify Your name? Because you alone are holy; because all the nations will come and worship before you; and because your righteous actions have been made clear.”

15:5 After these things I looked, and the sanctuary of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened.

15:6 The seven angels with the seven blows came out of the sanctuary dressed in bright, clean linen, and their chests wrapped with golden belts. **15:7** One of the four living beings gave to the seven angels, seven bowls filled with the wrath of the God who lives into the ages of ages.

15:8 The sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power. No one could enter the sanctuary until the seven blows of the seven angels were completed.

When the final, 7th Seal is broken there will be a reverent hush of anticipation in heaven.²⁵⁵ On earth, having been clearly warned, the people must soberly consider whether or not to take the “Mark.” In heaven, with all seven seals now removed, the Final Wrath of God contained therein is now ready to be poured out upon the Final Beast Government.

It is at this point that John’s two vision streams really begin to coincide.

In the final portion of John’s Vision of the War Between the “Seed of Woman” and the Dragon, he saw Jesus as “the Son of Man,” sitting upon “clouds of glory,” the very form in which He will return to earth. John watched as the seated Jesus reaped the earth of a ripened “harvest.” Since we already know that the 144,000 martyrs were the “first fruits” of the final three and a half years, this “harvest” of souls will most likely be the blessed saints who will die rather than accept the “Mark.”²⁵⁶ Based on what we read earlier in Revelation 6:8, I imagine that these casualties will account for the bulk of those deaths attributed to the reign of the Final Beast Leader.

In the corresponding section of the Vision of the Scroll, John saw the prayers of all saints being offered up with much incense by an angel ministering at the heavenly altar. The prayers of these saints will probably be prayers for vengeance similar to those prayed by the martyred souls John saw under the same altar earlier. However, this time the prayers will be immediately answered. The offering angel will take fire from the altar and throw it into the earth, causing great signs and wonders.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ This brief silence may have paralleled what happened each day during the time of corporate Jewish prayer in connection with the morning and afternoon incense/sacrifice ceremony at the Jewish Temple.

²⁵⁶ If you haven’t already figured it out by now, I don’t support the notion of a secret rapture of believers prior to the final three and a half year period. I don’t see any Biblical support for the concept whatsoever. The only way out of this world for the majority of believers “living in the last days” will be death. It’s that simple.

²⁵⁷ Something very similar happened in Ezekiel’s story of the impending desolation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Ezekiel 10 & 11).

Returning to the harvest imagery, a second angel will then be ordered to follow up the reaping of martyred souls accomplished by the “Son of Man” with a “harvest of wrath” to be processed in the “wine vat of God’s fury,” just “outside the city.” In view of the near context of “mystery Babylon,”²⁵⁸ this city is probably Rome, and not Jerusalem, as many teach.

John saw the “blood” (perhaps a metonymy²⁵⁹ for “slain persons”) from the trampled “grapes of wrath” proceed from a single focal point, as deep as horses’ bridles (about 4 feet deep),²⁶⁰ for a distance of about 184 miles.²⁶¹ If this figure is used as the radius of a circle extending outward from Vatican City at Rome, the area affected covers much of central Italy. Even if this figure is used as the diameter of a circle centered upon Rome, while the area covered is considerably less, it nevertheless spans the central width of the Italian peninsula. Since we know that the leaders of the Final Beast Government will hate the prostitute and will end up burning her with fire, I think it’s possible that this imagery may refer to her destruction at their hands – the prophesied fall of mystery Babylon.²⁶²

In the Vision of the Scroll John next saw “Trumpets” issued to seven angels, while in the Vision of the War Between the “Seed of the Woman” and the Dragon he next saw “Bowls” issued to seven angels. As the former prepare to sound their trumpets as a signal for the latter to pour out their bowls,²⁶³ the Sanctuary of Heaven will be made “off limits.” I think this may be indicative of the fact that God’s Final Wrath is irrevocable at this point.

²⁵⁸ At Revelation 14:8.

²⁵⁹ A figure of speech in which one word stands for something else to which it is closely related; for example, “the crown” for an entire kingdom.

²⁶⁰ A similar reference to horses wading through the chest deep blood of sinners being punished in the last days can be found in the apocryphal Book of Enoch 100:1-4.

²⁶¹ 1600 *stadia* (@ 606.75 feet per *stadia*) = 970,800 feet (183.86 miles).

²⁶² Using an online calculator (<http://nuclearsecrecy.com/nukemap/>) I was able to see the likely effects of 50-megaton nuclear airburst above Rome. Not only would it obliterate the city, but it would also cast fallout across the full width of the central Italian peninsula to the NE.

²⁶³ Most aspects of the seven final trumpets/bowls are exactly parallel, as you will be able to see for yourself. Differences that do occur are probably due to the perspective of the vision; the Trumpets come at the end of the Vision of the Scroll and highlight Yahweh’s control of the overall situation, while the Bowls focus more upon the wrath itself.

PARALLELLING THE TRUMPETS & THE BOWLS
The First Four Trumpets/Bowls of Yahweh's Wrath

<u>REVELATION 8</u>	<u>REVELATION 16</u>
<p>8:6 The seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared themselves to trumpet.</p> <p>8:7 The first trumpeted,</p> <p>and there came into being hail and fire, having been mixed with blood, and was thrown into the earth.</p> <p>A third of the earth, a third of the trees, and all the green grass were burned up.</p> <p>8:8 The second angel trumpeted, and something like a great mountain blazing with fire was thrown into the sea.</p> <p>8:9 A third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures in the sea died - the things having souls - and a third of the ships were destroyed.</p> <p>8:10 The third trumpeted, and a great star, blazing like a lamp, fell out of heaven upon a third of the rivers and the springs of water. 8:11 The name of the star was called "<i>Absinth.</i>" A third of the waters became <i>absinth</i>, and many men died from the waters because they had been made bitter.</p> <p>8:12 The fourth angel trumpeted, and a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars</p> <p>were stricken, so that a third of them might be darkened, and the day might not shine a third of it, and the night likewise.</p>	<p>16:1 I heard a loud voice from the sanctuary saying to the seven angels, "Proceed. Pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath into the earth."</p> <p>16:2 The first came and poured out his bowl into the earth,</p> <p>and there came into being an evil and hurtful ulcer upon the men having the mark of the beast and worshiping his image.</p> <p>16:3 The second came and poured out his bowl</p> <p>into the sea,</p> <p>and it became like a dead <i>man's</i> blood, and every <i>kind of</i> living soul died - the things in the sea.</p> <p>16:4 The third poured out his bowl into</p> <p>the rivers and the springs of water</p> <p>and it became blood.</p> <p>16:5 I heard the angel of the waters saying, "You are just, One Who Is And Who Was, the Holy One, because You have judged all things. 16:6 Since they poured out the blood of the Saints, you have given them blood to drink. You are holy."</p> <p>16:7 I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Yahweh Tsabaoth. True and righteous are your judgments."</p> <p>16:8 The fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun. He was given <i>the authority</i> to burn men with fire. 16:9 The men were burned with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God having authority over these blows and didn't repent to give him glory.</p> <p>8:13 I looked, and I heard a single eagle flying in mid-heaven saying with a loud voice, "Alas! Alas! Alas for those living upon the earth due to the rest of the soundings of the trumpets of the three angels about to trumpet."</p>

Before we get started with our survey of the Yahweh's Final Wrath as demonstrated in the Trumpets/Bowls, I want to assure Christians that, if you happen to end up being alive during this period of time, you will not be harmed directly by any of these horrendous things. Remember that the "Ten Plagues" against Egypt were orchestrated by Moses and Aaron and never touched a single Israeli; as "God's People" they were immune. I expect these "Seven Plagues" to be directed against the Final Beast Government and those who have unwisely taken the "Mark." They will be conducted very carefully by the Two Witnesses, and not one saint will be directly touched by them. However, even as the Egyptian government reacted negatively against the Israelis for the work of Moses and Aaron,²⁶⁴ I expect that the Final Beast Government will attempt to punish the saints for the work of the Two Witnesses.

Yahweh's first judgment will be directed "into the earth." There will be a world-wide hailstorm, with the hailstones consisting in part of blood and mixed in with "fire" (perhaps meteors or lightning). One third of the earth's vegetation will be destroyed by this storm. At the same time, everyone who has accepted the "Mark" – despite an unambiguous angelic warning not to do so – will develop a painful sore, most likely at the site of the "Mark."

Yahweh's second judgment will be directed "into the sea." John saw something that he described as a "great mountain burning" thrown into the sea. Some have suggested that this will be a huge meteorite or comet that will hit the ocean. This would certainly cause a great deal of death and destruction. There is another possibility that intrigues me.

A few scientists are concerned that a volcanic eruption on the Canary Island of La Palma might cause a huge section of that island to slide into the Atlantic, triggering tsunamis that would cause a tremendous amount of damage throughout the northern Atlantic basin. Computer modeling predicts that waves resulting from such a collapse could be 300+ feet in height when they hit the coasts of NW Africa. Even after traveling for hours across the Atlantic, series of waves 30-75 feet high would inundate the coastlines of the Americas.

In such a scenario, damage from the tsunamis would extend several miles inland. Hundreds of port cities would be wiped out. Because the Atlantic is home to some of the world's most heavily trafficked shipping lanes, John's observation that a third of the ships at sea will be destroyed could very easily come true in the event of such a mega tsunami.

John also wrote that a third of the sea will become "blood" and that a third of its creatures will die.²⁶⁵ With all the effluvia of human civilization that exists along thousands of miles of heavily populated shorelines being suddenly backwashed into the ocean in connection with a monster tsunami such as described above, it is possible that an unprecedented "red tide" would be triggered all along the Atlantic basin. The toxic output of such an event could easily kill off a significant minority of the world's total sea life in a matter of days.

²⁶⁴ Exodus 5.

²⁶⁵ The presumed difference between the chapters 8 and 16 regarding the extent of this ocean die off can be explained by understanding that the former was focusing upon the totality of creatures while the latter was focusing upon the types of creatures affected. That is to say, every species experienced some die-off, but only about a third of the total sea creatures actually died.

Yahweh's third judgment will be directed against the fresh water sources. In the "Third Trumpet" account, a blazing star named Absinth²⁶⁶ will turn the fresh water bitter. In the "Third Bowl" parallel, the waters will be turned to "blood."²⁶⁷

As is the case in most of these final plagues, we can only guess at the mechanism that will be used by God to bring about this particular one. Maybe the Lord will cause a comet or asteroid to graze the atmosphere or to strike the earth's surface, thereby releasing noxious particles that will adversely affect the fresh water supply. Regardless, the point of the plague is fairly obvious - a third of the earth's potable water will become very difficult to drink.

In heaven, the angel who poured out the bowl, together with the dead martyrs under the altar of incense, will approve of the poetic justice of this blow upon sinful mankind – since they'd poured out the blood of the saints, God was making them drink "blood."

Yahweh's fourth judgment will be directed against the light sources/timepieces created by God back on Day 4 of the Creation Week.²⁶⁸ When the trumpet sounds and its attendant bowl is poured out, their brilliance will be diminished by a third. Since the light output of the sun, the moon and the stars are all affected equally, perhaps something will happen to the atmosphere, causing a third of their visible light rays to bounce back into space.²⁶⁹ And yet, while the visible light of the sun will be decreased, its ultraviolet rays will apparently show a marked increase; burning the unrepentant population,²⁷⁰ who will know beyond a shadow of doubt that Yahweh is the source of these punishments.

These first four blows could easily reach their peak effectiveness in a matter of days after the opening of the Scroll of Wrath.

At this point, an eagle will mourn for those who must undergo the remaining three blows of Yahweh's wrath. What will have happened up to this point is pretty bad, but the worst – believe it or not - is yet to come.

²⁶⁶ *Artemisia absinthium* is a bitter tasting plant native to Europe and the Middle East.

²⁶⁷ This is reminiscent of Yahweh's "First Plague" against ancient Egypt (Exodus 7:14-25).

²⁶⁸ Genesis 1:14-19.

²⁶⁹ Perhaps the mechanism for this plague will be closely tied to that of the previous one. Wouldn't an unusually high amount of particulate matter within the upper atmosphere (such as might be shed by the grazing of a comet or be raised by an asteroid strike) cut down on the amount of light reaching the earth's surface?

²⁷⁰ Could this be the result of a complete collapse of the protective ozone layer brought on by the intrusion of a large celestial body within the atmosphere?

The Fifth Trumpet/Bowl of Yahweh's Wrath

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 9</u></p> <p>9:1 The fifth angel trumpeted, and I saw a star having fallen from heaven into the earth, and the key to the well of the abyss was given to him. 9:2 He opened the well of the <i>Abyss</i>, and smoke went up out of the well like the smoke of a great furnace. The sun and the atmosphere were darkened by the smoke of the well.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 16</u></p> <p>16:10a The fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 9</u></p> <p>9:3 Locusts came out of the smoke into the earth. Authority was given to them like the authority the scorpions of the earth have. 9:4 They were told that they were not to harm the grass of the earth, nor any green <i>plant</i>, nor any tree – only the men not having the seal of God upon their foreheads. 9:5 They were given <i>authority</i>, not that they might kill them, but rather that they might torture them for five months. Their torture <i>was</i> like the torture of a scorpion when it stings a man. 9:6 In those days the men will seek death, and not find it. They will desire to die but death will flee from them.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 16</u></p> <p>16:10b They were gnawing their tongues out of pain. 16:11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pain and their ulcers, and did not repent of their actions.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 9</u></p> <p>9:7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses having been prepared for battle. On their heads were <i>things</i> like victory wreaths resembling gold. Their faces were like the faces of men, 9:8 their hair like the hair of women, and their teeth like the teeth of lions. 9:9 Their breastplates were like iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings was like many horse chariots running into battle. 9:10 They had tails like scorpions, including stingers. They had authority in their tails to harm men five months. 9:11 They had as king over them the angel of the <i>Abyss</i>. His name in Hebrew was <i>A-bad-dōn</i>, while in Greek he had the name <i>Ap·ol·lu·ōn</i>. 9:12 The first “Alas!” has gone. Behold, the second “Alas!” comes after these things.</p>	

Yahweh's fifth judgment will be directed against the people bearing the "Mark." One of the recently fallen "stars" will be permitted to unlock a place called the *Abyss*.²⁷¹

Thick smoke will immediately pour out of the opening into the *Abyss*, plunging the dominion of the final beast leader into a horrible darkness similar to that which occurred during the Exodus²⁷² and the Crucifixion.²⁷³

The opening of this deep shaft will also result in a "parole" of sorts, permitting numerous demonic beings who had been banished throughout history to move freely about the earth, creating havoc under the leadership of "Destroyer."²⁷⁴

Yahweh will place several conditions of release upon these locust-like, human-faced, long-haired, lion-teethed, iron-armored, scorpion-tailed monstrosities.²⁷⁵

- They may not harm the remaining vegetation.
- They may only attack people bearing the "Mark" of the final beast leader.
- They are permitted only to torture, not kill, their victims.²⁷⁶
- Their reign of terror will last only five months.

This is the only wrath event that mentions a specific time period. The rest seem to take up much less time. Perhaps this would be a good place for me to introduce information regarding a possible chronology for the final three and a half years.

²⁷¹ ἄβυσσος [*abussos /ab-us-sos/*] A word literally meaning "without a bottom." It was first applied to the unfathomable depths of the original pool of liquid out of which all things were created (Genesis 1:1-2). It was later used in reference to the unfathomable depths of the earth where rebel spirits ("fallen angels" or "demons") were confined (Luke 8:31) and where the spirits of dead humans were kept prior to their redemption or condemnation by Christ. The *Abyss* is therefore synonymous with the Hebrew word *She-ōl*, the Greek word *Hā-des*. Compare this location with what Jesus said in Matthew 12:40 regarding His presence in the "heart of the earth" during the time between His death and resurrection. I think it is possible that such a place of confinement may exist at or near the earth's center in the spiritual dimension (i.e., within the unseen world where spirit beings such as angels and demons naturally exist) where it intersects with the super-dense, super-heated, highly-magnetic, molten metal core that exists there within our own physical world. That would certainly be a nasty place of confinement for beings that cannot die.

²⁷² Exodus 10:21ff.

²⁷³ Matthew 27:45.

²⁷⁴ This may be another name for Satan, although I suspect it might instead be the name given to the most ruthless of these demonic "parolees."

²⁷⁵ I believe this is an accurate, literal description of what these demonic beings will look like. Perhaps they have "mutated" from their original forms during their long internment in the *Abyss*.

²⁷⁶ Some might ask, "Why would these demons, which have already rebelled against Yahweh once, adhere to these restrictions on their activities?" More than likely, violation of the parole stipulations would result in the offender being immediately returned to the *Abyss*.

The Prophetic Chronology of Jesus' 1st Coming

First of all, you need to understand that all the key events of Jesus' Atonement and His subsequent establishment of the New Covenant were prophetically preprogrammed into the first two of the three annual observances that every adult Israeli male was required to attend – Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.²⁷⁷ Not only that, but the key event actually took place on the day of the symbolic observation which foretold it.

- 10th Day of 1st Month
 - The Passover Lambs were selected.
 - Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Final Passover Lamb.
- 14th Day of 1st Month = Passover
 - The Passover Lambs were sacrificed.
 - Jesus was crucified as the Final Passover Lamb.
- 1st Day of the Week after Passover Sabbath = First Fruits
 - The “First Fruits” offering from the ripening grain was presented to Yahweh.
 - Jesus was resurrected as the “First Fruits” from the dead.
- 50th Day after Passover Sabbath = Pentecost
 - A special ceremony marked the official beginning for the grain harvest.
 - The Church was born.

I doubt any honest person would dare claim the timing of these events was coincidental. God obviously wanted the fulfillment to take place on the exact day of the symbol.

The Possible Prophetic Chronology of Jesus' 2nd Coming

So, here's the deal. The only mandatory observance left to be fulfilled is Tabernacles, along with its closely associated dates, all of which are very intriguing prophetically. I won't mince words here. I fully expect each of these prophetic events to be fulfilled on the exact day of the Jewish observance which foreshadowed them.

- 1st Day of 7th Month = Feast of Trumpets
 - A trumpet was sounded to mark the end of one year & the beginning of the next.
 - A trumpet will mark the 2nd Coming of Jesus.
- 10th Day of 7th Month = Day of Atonement
 - The people had to repent of their sins & accept the sacrifice of their High Priest; otherwise, they had to die for their own sin.
 - The unrepentant people of Earth will die in the bloody war of *Har Ma-gēd-dōn* because they refused to accept the sacrificial death of the High Priest Jesus.
- 15th Day of 7th Month = 1st Day of the Feast of Tabernacles
 - The people celebrated their blessed life in the Promised Land, thankful they were no longer in the wilderness.
 - The resurrected saints will celebrate their blessed life in the new earth, thankful they are no longer in the fallen world of sin.

²⁷⁷ Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:1-17.

On the next few pages I've provided an example Jewish calendar that reflects how things might occur chronologically. Please understand that **this is not a prophecy**; I am simply projecting how things might occur chronologically, based on how they've already occurred. I won't be upset if it happens differently (although, to be honest, I would be a bit surprised).

YEAR ONE = 384 DAYS LONG (A "long" Jewish year)²⁷⁸

1 st Month = MAR/APR							2 nd Month = APR/MAY						3 rd Month = MAY/JUN										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		1	2	3	4	5	6			1	2	3	4				
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25			
29							28	29	30					26	27	28	29						
4 th Month = JUN/JUL						5 th Month = JUL/AUG						6 th Month = AUG/SEP											
				1	2	3							1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8	9	10	11	12	13	14			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	19	20	21			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26	27	28			
25	26	27	28	29	30		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	29	30								
7 th Month = SEP/OCT						8 th Month = OCT/NOV						9 th Month = NOV/DEC											
		1	2	3	4	5				1	2	3							1	2			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	17	18	19	20	21	22	23			
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29			24	25	26	27	28	29	30			
10 th Month = DEC/JAN							11 th Month = JAN/FEB						12 th Month = FEB/MAR										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		1	2	3	4	5	6			1	2	3	4				
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25			
29							28	29	30					26	27	28	29	30					
Second 12 th Month																							
					1	2																	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9																	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16																	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23																	
24	25	26	27	28	29																		

PROBABLE EVENTS:

1*1

- "Angel Fall" will occur. Widespread chaos will ensue.
- The Two Witnesses will begin their 1,260-day²⁷⁹ ministry.

During the Year

- The Ten Horn Leaders of the Final Beast Government will begin their rise to power, attempting to bring order into the chaos.
- The Two Witnesses will provide protection from Satan for a select portion of the saints.
- The Final Beast Leader will begin his rise to power.

²⁷⁸ Most Jewish years consist of 12 lunar months of either 29 or 30 days in length. Approximately every three years a second 12th Month is observed in order to keep the upcoming 1st Month in sync with the Spring Equinox.

²⁷⁹ Any 3 ½ year period on the Jewish calendar will be 1,270 days in length. Apparently, the ministry of these Two Witnesses will terminate ten days prior to the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ.

YEAR TWO = 355 DAYS LONG

1st Month = MAR/APR							2nd Month = APR/MAY							3rd Month = MAY/JUN						
						1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		1	2	3	4	5	6
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	29							28	29	30				
4th Month = JUN/JUL						5th Month = JUL/AUG						6th Month = AUG/SEP								
			1	2	3	4						1	2							1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
														30						
7th Month = SEP/OCT						8th Month = OCT/NOV						9th Month = NOV/DEC								
	1	2	3	4	5	6				1	2	3	4					1	2	3
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
28	29	30					26	27	28	29				25	26	27	28	29	30	
10th Month = DEC/JAN						11th Month = JAN/FEB						12th Month = FEB/MAR								
						1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	29	30						27	28	29	30			

PROBABLE EVENTS:

- The Final Beast Leader will consolidate his power.
- The Two Witnesses will continue their ministry.

YEAR THREE = 354 DAYS LONG

1st Month = MAR/APR							2nd Month = APR/MAY							3rd Month = MAY/JUN						
				1	2	3						1	2							1
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29			24	25	26	27	28	29	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
4th Month = JUN/JUL							5th Month = JUL/AUG							6th Month = AUG/SEP						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5				1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
29	30						27	28	29					26	27	28	29	30		
7th Month = SEP/OCT							8th Month = OCT/NOV							9th Month = NOV/DEC						
				1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		1	2	3	4	5	6
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29							28	29	30				
10th Month = DEC/JAN							11th Month = JAN/FEB							12th Month = FEB/MAR						
			1	2	3	4						1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29						

PROBABLE EVENTS:

During the Year

- The Final Beast Leader will almost certainly have consolidated his power by this time.
- The False Prophet will have begun work on his Image/Mark system.
- The Two Witnesses will continue their ministry.

Before the End of the Year

- The 144,000 will have all been martyred.
- God will warn Earth’s population against participating in the Image/Mark system.
 - Those who resist the Image/Mark system will face execution.
 - Those who accept the Image/Mark system will face the Second Death.
- 1/4 of the population will have died since Angel Fall.
 - Some will have died in the chaos connected to Angel Fall.
 - Others will have died in the consolidation of the Final Beast Leader’s power.
 - The balance will have died for resisting the Image/Mark system.

FIRST HALF OF YEAR FOUR = 177 DAYS LONG

1 st Month = MAR/APR						2 nd Month = APR/MAY						3 rd Month = MAY/JUN								
	1	2	3	4	5	6				1	2	3	4					1	2	3
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
28	29	30					26	27	28	29				25	26	27	28	29		
4 th Month = JUN/JUL						5 th Month = JUL/AUG						6 th Month = AUG/SEP								
				1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		1	2	3	4	5	6	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29							28	29	30				
7 th Month = SEP/OCT																				
		1	2	3	4	5														
6	7	8	9	10	11	12														
13	14	15	16	17	18	19														
20	21	22	23	24	25	26														
27	28	29	30																	

PROBABLE EVENTS:

During the 1st Month

- The Image/Mark system will be fully initiated.
- Babylon the Great (Rome) will be destroyed.
- The Seventh Seal will be broken & the Final Wrath of God will begin
 - Trumpets/Bowls 1-4 have no specific time designation.
 - Trumpet/Bowl 5 goes on for five months.

6*20 = Day 1,260 since Angel Fall

6*21 = Day 1,261

- The Two Witnesses will have finished the days of their ministry.
- They will be killed at Jerusalem by the Final Beast Leader.

6*24 = Day 1,264

- The Two Witnesses will be resurrected & will ascend into heaven.
- 7,000 people will die at Jerusalem during a great earthquake.
- The Mount of Olives will split in half, forming a brand new valley.
- The saints remaining at Jerusalem will escape via this brand new valley.

SEVENTH MONTH OF YEAR FOUR = KICKOFF TO THE MILLENNIUM

7 th Month = SEP/OCT						
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

7*1 = Feast of Trumpets

- The Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled by the Final Trumpet.
- The Resurrection/Transformation & Rapture of the Saints will occur.

7*10 = Day of Atonement

- The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled by the Battle of Armageddon
- The Battle of Armageddon will occur in the brand new valley at Jerusalem.

7*15 = Feast of Tabernacles

- The Feast of Tabernacles will be fulfilled by the beginning of The Millennium.
- The 1st Feast of Tabernacles in The Millennium will occur at Jerusalem.

The Sixth Trumpet/Bowl of Yahweh's Wrath

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 9</u></p> <p>9:13 The sixth angel trumpeted, and I heard one of the horns of the golden altar before God</p> <p>9:14 saying to the sixth angel having the trumpet, "Release the four angels who have been bound upon the great river Euphrates."</p> <p>9:15 The four angels – who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year – were released so they could kill a third of men.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 16</u></p> <p>16:12 The sixth poured out his bowl</p> <p>upon the great river Euphrates, and its water dried up so that the way of the kings of the east might</p> <p>be prepared.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ISAIAH 11</u></p> <p>11:15b He will wave his hand over</p> <p>the river with his mighty wind and beat it into seven streams so that one crossed it in sandals.</p>
<p><u>REVELATION 9-10</u></p> <p>9:16 The number of cavalry units was two hundred million. I heard their number.</p> <p>9:17 This is how I saw the horses in my vision, including those sitting upon them: they had fire-<i>red</i>, hyacinth-<i>blue</i>, and brimstone-<i>yellow</i> breastplates; the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and from their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.</p> <p>9:18 A third of men were killed by these three blows - by the fire, the smoke, and the brimstone coming out of their mouths, 9:19 for the authority of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails, since their tails were like serpents having heads by which they did harm.</p> <p>9:20 The rest of men – those not killed in these blows – did not repent of the actions of their hands, that they might not worship demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood which can't see, hear, or walk.</p> <p>9:21 They did not repent of their murders, their sorceries, their <i>acts of</i> sexual immorality, or their thefts.</p> <p>10:1 I saw another strong angel coming down from heaven, having been wrapped in a cloud. The rainbow was upon his head, his face was like the sun, his feet like pillars of fire, 10:2 and he had in his hand a little scroll that had been opened. He placed his right foot upon the sea and the left upon the land, 10:3 and cried out in a loud voice, as if a lion roared. When he cried out, the seven thunders spoke.</p> <p>10:4 When the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write when I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders said, and do not write them."</p> <p>10:5 The angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land raised his right hand into the sky,</p> <p>10:6 and swore by the One who lives into the ages of ages – the One who created the sky and the things in it, the land and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it – that there would be no more time <i>given</i>.</p> <p>10:7 Instead, in the days of the sound of the seventh angel, when he is about to trumpet, the secret of God was completed as it was proclaimed by His servants the prophets.</p> <p>10:8 The voice that I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go take the little opened scroll in the hand of the angel that is standing upon the sea and upon the land."</p> <p>10:9 I went to the angel, saying to him, "Give me the little scroll." He said to me, "Take and eat it. It will be bitter in you stomach, but in your mouth it will be sweet like honey." 10:10 I took the little scroll out of the angel's hand and ate it. In my mouth it was sweet like honey, and when I ate it, it made my stomach bitter.</p> <p>10:11 They were saying to me, "You must again prophesy over peoples, nations, languages, and many kings."</p>		

Yahweh's sixth judgment will be directed "upon the great river Euphrates."

According to the information revealed in the "Trumpet" vision, there will be four angels "having been bound" at the Euphrates. While I'm not certain as to whether these are rebel angels who have been "secured" as criminals²⁸⁰ or loyal angels who have been "restricted" in their activity,²⁸¹ I tend to lean more toward them being the loyal executioners of Yahweh.

Regardless, I am absolutely positive that these angels will be the leaders of the 200 million cavalry unit army which John described. Furthermore, I am convinced that they are the "kings of the East" mentioned in the "Bowl" vision, based on the following:

- The "Trumpets" & "Bowls" are obviously parallel visions.
- The Euphrates River is prominent in both visions.
- The Euphrates River is located in "The East."²⁸²
- The word "king" is a synonym for the word "ruler," and we know that angels have been described in such terms.²⁸³
- The "Trumpet"/"Bowl" event will permit these "angels"/"kings" to take action.

John's detailed description of these units also indicates that they are supernatural, not natural in form, and that their military commanders are angelic, not human. Finally, their task is very specific – the swift²⁸⁴ and systematic execution of a third of humanity still living²⁸⁵ and following the final beast leader despite repeated, crystal-clear warnings from Yahweh not to do so.²⁸⁶

Following these executions, another angel will announce that time is up;²⁸⁷ that the long-term plan of Yahweh to effectively deal with the angelic/human rebellion against His rule that began in Eden (i.e., the gospel²⁸⁸) was about to come to its climax. It was this "bitter-sweet" gospel message that the Apostle John was to ingest²⁸⁹ and pass on to the people of his time. This is the same gospel that we ought to be sharing with the people of our time.

²⁸⁰ As Satan will be in Revelation 20:1-3.

²⁸¹ Such as the four angels of God mentioned in Revelation 7:1-3. Perhaps they are these four angels.

²⁸² I know that it is fairly common for "prophecy experts" to associate these 200 million cavalry units with a Chinese-led invasion of the Middle East, but that simply doesn't make sense. "The East" is the normal Bible term for the Mesopotamian region, not the Orient.

²⁸³ Daniel 10:13 and Ephesians 6:12.

²⁸⁴ Their work will be accomplished during a divinely appointed hour, day, month and year.

²⁸⁵ This means that in less than three and a half years, half of the world's population will have died – a fourth of the original population will die under the rise and rule of the final beast leader, with a third of those remaining (a fourth of the original population) perishing on this day.

²⁸⁶ Since there is nothing in the text about the seven thunders, there's really no reason to comment on them at all

²⁸⁷ "Time shall be no more." I'm afraid that the use of this memorable line in the marvelous 1894 hymn, When The Role Is Called Up Yonder, has led to a very widely held misunderstanding of this phrase from Revelation 10:6. The angel is not saying that chronological reckoning will come to an end, but rather, that Yahweh's gracious patience (2 Peter 3:9) has finally come to an end.

²⁸⁸ So well defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1ff.

²⁸⁹ This sounds very much like what happened with Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:8-3:11).

The Death, Resurrection & Ascension of the Two Witnesses

REVELATION 11

11:7 When they [the two witnesses] finished their testimony, the beast rising out of the *abyss* did battle with them, overcame them, and killed them. **11:8** Their corpses *were* upon the street of the great city that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also their master was crucified.

11:9 The corpses were seen by peoples, tribes, languages, and nations for three and a half days. Their corpses were not allowed to be placed in a tomb, **11:10** and those living on the earth celebrated over them, were merry, and gave gifts to one another, since these two prophets had tortured those living on the earth.

11:11 After three and a half days the spirit of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet. Great fear fell on those who were watching them. **11:12** They heard a great voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” They ascended into heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.

11:13 In that hour a great earthquake occurred and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand men were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

11:14 The second “Alas!” has gone. Behold, the third “Alas!” comes quickly.

ZECHARIAH 14

14:4b The Mount of Olives will be split by a huge chasm, from the east to the west; half of the mountain will slope toward the north and half of it will slope toward the south.

REVELATION 16

16:13 I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the beast, and the mouth of the false prophet, **16:14** for these are the demonic spirits that perform signs which go out upon the kings of the entire inhabited earth to gather them together to the battle of the great day of God *Tsabaoth*.

16:15 (Behold, I come like a thief. How blessed is the one who is watching and keeps his clothing, so that he might not walk naked and his shame be seen.)

ZECHARIAH 12

12:10b They will look to me whom they pierced and they **will mourn** for him as one mourns for the only son and weep for him as one weeps for the firstborn.

MATTHEW 24

24:30a Then the sign of the Son of Man shall be made to appear in heaven. Then all the tribes of the earth **will mourn**.

ZECHARIAH 12

12:11 In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at the pomegranate orchard in the plain of **cutting**.

ZECHARIAH 14

14:2a I will **gather** all the nations to Jerusalem for war...

REVELATION 16

16:16 He **gathered** them together into the place called in Hebrew *GHar Ma·gēd·dōn* [Mount **Cutting**].

ZECHARIAH 14

14:5a You will escape *via* the valley of My mountain (for the valley of the mountains will extend to Azel); you will escape just as you escaped in the face of the earthquake during the days of Uzziah, King of Judah...

As you may remember from the sample calendar provided earlier, the 1,260 days set aside for the work of the two witnesses is just 10 days short of three and a half years on a Jewish calendar system. We know that Yahweh's two prophets will be killed at Jerusalem²⁹⁰ after they finish their work. Their deaths will set off a worldwide celebration among the peoples of the world, since these two godly men will be seen by them as the cause for all the mayhem of the recent past. Like infamous criminals their bodies will be displayed for all to see; more than likely broadcast on live media. It will appear as if the dragon, his human agents and followers had won.

Then, three and a half days later, they will suddenly be resurrected and will ascend into heaven. Their ascension will be associated with an earthquake that will destroy a tenth of Jerusalem and kill an estimated 7,000 persons in the affected area.

I have come to believe that this earthquake will also result in the splitting of Mt. Olivet and the formation of a brand-new valley leading to the Dead Sea region, as described by the prophet Zechariah.²⁹¹ The few remaining saints in Jerusalem will escape down this valley toward the east. Presumably they will then head south toward the vicinity of the ancient city of Bozrah, located approximately 25 miles SE of the Dead Sea in the modern Kingdom of Jordan. We'll come back to this information later.

Meanwhile, at the demonic instigation of the dragon and his human minions, the armies of the world will begin gathering to Jerusalem in order to repel the imminent invasion of Jesus. They will assemble in the valley formed by the splitting (or "cutting") of Mount Olivet – now called "Mount Cutting" or "Mount Gash." This is the true location of "Armageddon" and not near the city of Megiddo some 56 miles north of Jerusalem.²⁹²

Everything will then be in place for the sounding of the seventh and final "Trumpet" and the pouring out of its attendant "Bowl." This will be the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ.

²⁹⁰ Jeremiah 23:14 specifically likens Jerusalem to Sodom.

²⁹¹ Eventually the east flowing branch of the "River of Life" will run through this valley, bringing life to that region (Zechariah 14:8; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; cf. Revelation 22:1-2).

²⁹² I stumbled across this information when I was doing some translation work in Zechariah 12. I noticed that the Hebrew scholars who translated this passage into Greek during the 3rd Century BC didn't use the proper noun "Megiddo" in verse 11 like our English versions do. Instead, they actually translated the Hebrew with a Greek participle meaning "of being cut out". When I started looking more closely at the Hebrew, I discovered that the word in question actually had a different ending than that which was used every other time the city of Megiddo appears in the text, which would certainly explain why the Septuagint translators chose not to treat it as if it were a reference to the city – it wasn't. In Revelation 16:16, John used a Greek transliteration of this same Hebrew word, simply prefixing it with the Hebrew word for mountain - *GHar Ma-gēd-dōn*. By using the Septuagint's translation of the Hebrew word, and keeping in mind it was John's inspired designation for a specific site, I came up with the name "Mount Cutting" or "Mount Gash."

The Seventh Trumpet and Bowl = The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MATT. 24</u> 24:30c They shall see</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and much glory.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DAN. 7</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:13and behold, there was coming with the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ZECH. 14</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">14:5c Yahweh my God will come, and all his saints with him.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REV. 19</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">19:11a I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse and sitting upon it One...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1 TH. 4</u></p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">4:16a The Lord himself will come down with a shout;</p>
<p><u>REVELATION 19</u></p> <p>19:11b ...called Trustworthy & True. In righteousness He judges and wars. 19:12 His eyes were like flames of fire and upon His head <i>were</i> many diadems, with a name written upon <i>them</i> which no one knew but Himself.</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ISAIAH 63</u></p> <p>63:1 Who is this coming from Edom; from Bozrah with red garments; this One clothed gloriously with great strength? “I am the One declaring righteousness and judgments of salvation. 63:2 “Why are your garments red?” 63:3 “I am treading the wine vat alone. There is not a man from the nations with me. I trod them in my fury, and trampled them in wrath. Their blood spattered on my clothes, and all my garments were defiled. 63:4 For the day of vengeance is in my heart and the year of my redemption has arrived.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>1 THESSALONIANS 4</u></p> <p>4:14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, <i>we</i> also <i>believe</i> that God will bring those who have fallen asleep in Jesus with him.</p>			<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 19</u></p> <p>19:13a He was wrapped in a garment</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">dipped in blood.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">His name had been called the Word of God. 19:14 The armies in heaven were following him upon white horses, having been clothed in clean white linen.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REV. 11</u></p> <p>11:15a The seventh angel</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">trumpeted,</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MATT. 24</u></p> <p>24:31a He will send his angels with a great trumpet,</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1 COR. 15</u></p> <p>15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, with the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound,</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1 TH. 4</u></p> <p>4:16b with <i>the</i> voice of the archangel; With the trumpet of God,</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REV. 16</u></p> <p>16:17a The seventh poured out his bowl upon the air,</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Excerpt from 1 CORINTHIANS 15</u></p> <p>15:52c and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be transformed, 15:53 for this corruptible must put on incorruptibility and this mortality must put on immortality.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Excerpt from MATTHEW 24</u></p> <p>24:31b and they will gather together his chosen ones from one extremity of the heavens unto the other...</p>			<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Excerpt from 1 THESSALONIANS 4</u></p> <p>4:16b and the dead in Christ will rise first,</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">4:17 thereafter, we who are still living will simultaneously be caught up with them into clouds in a meeting with the Lord in the atmosphere.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 11</u></p> <p>11:15b and there were great voices in heaven saying, “The kingdom of the world has become <i>the kingdom</i> of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign into the ages of ages.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 16</u></p> <p>16:17b and there came a great voice from the Sanctuary, <i>that is</i>, from the throne, saying, “It has happened.”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 11</u></p> <p>11:16 The twenty-four elders sitting before God on their thrones fell down upon their faces and worshiped God, 11:17 saying, “We thank you, Yahweh Tsabaoth, Who is and was, because you have taken your great power and ruled. 11:18 The nations were made angry, and the time for your wrath has arrived; <i>the time</i> for the dead to be judged, <i>the time</i> to give wages to your servants – the prophets, the saints, and those who revere you name, both small and great, and <i>the time</i> to defile those who have defiled the earth.”</p> <p>11:19a The Sanctuary of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen in his Sanctuary,</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 11</u></p> <p>11:19b and there occurred flashes of lightning, noises, thunders, an earthquake,</p> <p>and great hail.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 16</u></p> <p>16:18 There occurred flashes of lightning, noises, thunders; and there was a great earthquake, it was so great an earthquake, that such has not occurred since man came to be upon the earth. 16:19 The great city fell into three parts and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the Great was remembered in God’s presence, to give her the cup of the wine of his wrath. 16:20 Every island fled and mountains could not be found. 16:21 Great hail, about a <i>talentos</i> [a weight somewhere between 50 and 100 pounds] <i>each</i>, fell from heaven upon men. Men blasphemed God from the blow of hail, because the blow of hit was so very great.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 19</u></p> <p>19:6 I heard <i>something</i> like the sound of a great crowd and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of strong thunder saying, “Hallelu Yah! Yahweh Tsabaoth ruled. 19:7 Let us rejoice; let us celebrate; and let us give Him glory, because the wedding of the Lamb has arrived and His bride has prepared herself. 19:8 She was given <i>the ability</i> to clothe herself in white, clean linen, for the linen is the righteous activities of the Saints. 19:9 He said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding dinner of the Lamb.’” He also said to me, “These are the true words of God. 19:10 I fell before his face and worshipped him. He said to me, “See you don’t <i>do that!</i> I am a fellow slave with you and your siblings that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” 19:15 A sharp sword came from his mouth so that by it he might strike down the nations. He treads the wine vat of God Tsabaoth’s furious wrath. 19:16 He has upon his garment, <i>that is</i> upon his thigh, a name written, “King of kings” and Lord of lords.” 19:17 I saw one angel standing in the sun, shouting in a loud voice, saying to all the birds flying in the midst of the heavens, “Come, gather together for the great dinner of God, 19:18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings, commanders, mighty men, horses, and those sitting upon them; the flesh of everyone, free, slave, small, and great.” 19:19 I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, their armies having been gathered together to make war with the one sitting upon the horse and with his army.</p>	

When the “Seventh Trumpet” sounds and the “Seventh Bowl” is poured out, Jesus will arrive as the victorious King of kings and Lord of lords. In keeping with the symbolism of the ancient Israeli calendar previously discussed, I personally believe that He will come on the first day of the Seventh Jewish Month – a date also called the Feast of Trumpets.²⁹³

In the prophecy of Isaiah, He is pictured as “coming from Edom; from Bozrah,” covered in the blood of His enemies. This makes me suspect that Jesus will re-enter our world in the sky above that vicinity; either rescuing the remnant of believers who escaped from Jerusalem a few days earlier, or possibly avenging their recent massacre by the peoples of that region.

Interestingly enough, Edom is specifically cited as the object of Yahweh’s extreme wrath in Isaiah 34, where Yahweh’s “day of vengeance” is also mentioned. In that passage Edom is described as being turned into a place of eternal burning and desolation as “payback” for actions taken against Zion.

The “Seventh Trumpet” is also called the “Last Trumpet.” By it He will dispatch His angels to gather believers to Himself. First, the bodies of the righteous dead will be resurrected and their spirits, which returned with Jesus, will be placed inside.²⁹⁴ At that same time, the bodies of the righteous living will be transformed instantaneously. Afterward, all these “Immortals” will be caught up to meet Jesus “in the air” above the Middle East.

With the terminal wrath of God coming to a close, the heavenly Sanctuary will be opened once again. Inside will be the Ark of the Covenant – the earthly throne of Yahweh.²⁹⁵

Meanwhile, on Earth, there will be absolute chaos. The people will be terrified by the sudden appearance of Jesus in the sky, amidst great sights and sounds similar to those that occurred when Yahweh descended upon Mt. Sinai. The resurrection and transformation of myriads of saints around the globe and their subsequent flight *en masse* to the Middle East will certainly unnerve the assembling armies at *Har Ma·gēd·dōn*.

All these things will be attended by an unprecedented global earthquake and hailstorm that will destroy cities all over the world.

Planet Earth will also be getting its long-anticipated²⁹⁶ makeover.

The Day of Yahweh will come like a thief. During [that day] the sky will disappear with a whistling sound, the basic elements will disassemble²⁹⁷ amidst intense heat, and Earth and the things accomplished in her will be found out. Since all these things will be released in this way, what sort of *people* ought you be in holy behavior and piety, anticipating and urging on the arrival of the Day of God by which the blazing heavens will be loosed and the basic elements will dissolve amidst intense heat? But we are anticipating new heavens and a new earth according to his promise; one in which righteousness dwells.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ Leviticus 23:24-25 & Numbers 29:1-6.

²⁹⁴ Perhaps Ezekiel 37 – the famous “dry bones” passage - describes this resurrection of the righteous.

²⁹⁵ Regardless of unsubstantiated stories to the contrary, the Ark hasn’t been seen since around 620 BC. It simply vanished. Is it possible that the reason it disappeared shortly before the 1st Temple was destroyed was so that it could be kept on reserve in the heavenly Sanctuary until Jesus could use it as His Millennial throne? I think that very likely.

²⁹⁶ Romans 8:19.

²⁹⁷ The Greek word so often translated into English as “destroy” literally means “loose” or “release.”

²⁹⁸ 2 Peter 3:10-12.

It appears that Earth and its atmosphere will be renewed on a subatomic level. Whatever entropic “code” Yahweh “programmed” into its elemental structure as “The Curse” upon Creation for the sin of Adam and Eve will be removed.²⁹⁹ The elements will disassemble and reassemble with a sudden burst of energy, expressed as heat. More than likely, this will take place so fast and so smoothly that it will appear instantaneous; even as the transformation of the mortal bodies of the living saints will take place in the “twinkling of an eye.”

Major geological changes will happen in the Middle East around this time.

Zechariah wrote that when Yahweh becomes King of the whole earth, “living waters” will flow out of Jerusalem, splitting into two branches - one into the eastern (Dead) sea and one into the western (Mediterranean) sea; flowing all year round.³⁰⁰

In a vision of the glorious Temple that should have been built after the Israelis returned from Babylonian captivity (but wasn’t),³⁰¹ Ezekiel saw a river flowing from the vicinity of the Sanctuary on Mt. Zion. Lining its banks will be various fruit trees, producing a crop of fruit each month and continually putting out leaves which have healing qualities.³⁰²

I fully expect to see this river of life begin flowing around the time of 2nd Coming. It will originate beneath the area on Mt. Zion where Jesus’ throne will sit, flowing directly eastward (apparently through the new *Har Ma-gēd-dōn* valley) into the valley where the Dead Sea is currently located, giving life to that body of water.

In order for the Dead Sea to become (and remain) fresh, it will need an outlet southward into the Gulf of Aqaba arm of the Red Sea. This will necessitate the entire Jordan Valley being raised as much as 1,400 feet. In my opinion, this will be the reversal of what happened when it was “overturned” during the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Prior to that catastrophic event, it was described as being like the Nile Delta, or the Garden of Eden, with absolutely no mention of the Dead Sea.³⁰³

If, as I have proposed, the 2nd Coming ends up fulfilling the remaining observances of ancient Israeli calendar, then there will be a total of ten days between the 2nd Coming of Jesus on 7*1, and the final bloody battle at Jerusalem on 7*10. I imagine that the resurrected saints will pass the time in a celebration³⁰⁴ referred to as the “Wedding Dinner of the Lamb.”³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ Genesis 3:17-19 and Romans 8:18-25.

³⁰⁰ Zechariah 14:8-11.

³⁰¹ During the reconstruction of the Temple, after the Israel’s return from Babylonian Captivity, the prophet Haggai said that the Second Temple seemed like “nothing” when compared to the First Temple (Haggai 2:3). 500 years later, when Herod the Great laid out his plans for renovating the Second Temple, he gave as one of his reasons the fact that the reconstruction was considerably inferior to the First Temple (Antiquities 15.11.1). If the detailed plans given in Ezekiel 40-48 had been followed to the letter, this would not have been the case. Yahweh’s glorious presence would have filled the 2nd Temple after the Israelis returned from Babylon and reestablished the theocracy (43:1-5) and the chronology of events culminating in the coming of Messiah, His Atonement for sin and the subsequent presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles of the world would have been considerably different.

³⁰² John described a very similar scene in New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:1-2).

³⁰³ Genesis 13:10; 19:29. We’ll catalog more of these changes when we come to the Millennium.

³⁰⁴ I think that Isaiah 25:6-9 has a very interesting description of this celebration.

³⁰⁵ In a sardonic twist of scene, the scavenger birds will be invited by an angel of God to a feast of their own; a feast of corpses to be served when the Battle of *Har Ma-gēd-dōn* takes place.

The Battle of Har Ma·gēd·dōn

<u>ZECHARIAH 14</u>		
14:4 His feet will stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem on the east.		
<u>REVELATION 19</u>		
19:14 The armies in heaven were following him upon white horses, having been clothed in clean white linen.		
<u>2 THESSALONIANS 2</u>	<u>DANIEL 7</u>	<u>REVELATION 19</u>
2:8b Yahweh will destroy him by the breath of his mouth and put an end <i>to him</i> by the appearance of His arrival.	7:11b [As I was watching] the beast was killed and its body given into the burning fire.	19:20 The beast was apprehended, and with him the false prophet who had performed the signs before his presence, <i>the signs</i> by which he had deceived those taking the mark of the beast and worshipping his mage. The two were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.
<u>REVELATION 19</u>		
19:21 The rest were killed by the sword that came from the mouth of him sitting upon the horse, and all the birds were satiated with their flesh. 20:1 I saw an angel, coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and a great chain in his hand. 20:2 He overpowered the dragon – the ancient serpent who is <i>Diabolos</i> and <i>Satan</i> – and bound him for one thousand years. 20:3 He threw him into the Abyss, shut it, and sealed it over him, in order that he might not deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed. After these things, it will be for him to be released for a short time.		

We know that Jesus and His army of immortal saints will “touch down” in the area formerly called Mount Olivet. The assembled armies of the Final Beast Government will be wiped out by Jesus in the “Valley *where* Yahweh Judges.”³⁰⁶ Zechariah 14:12-14 describes how the soft tissue of these soldiers will begin to liquefy. Blind and mute, they’ll panic and begin attacking one another.³⁰⁷ Scavenger birds will begin feasting on the bodies strewn upon the ground.

³⁰⁶ Joel 3. The name “Jehoshaphat,” which appears in many versions is not a reference to the king of that name, but rather to the literal meaning of that name: *ye-hō-sha-fat* “Yah judges.”

³⁰⁷ Zechariah 14:12-13. This reminds me of how Yahweh gave victory to the Judean people in the days of Jehoshaphat, when they needed only stand by and offer praise while God caused the invaders to attack one another (2 Chronicles 20:22-25).

After Yahweh's victory the battlefield will be littered with stinking corpses.³⁰⁸ These remains will be gathered into an open, mass grave not far from Jerusalem (in Edom?³⁰⁹), where maggots will continually consume and fire will constantly burn.³¹⁰ This location will serve as a vivid reminder to the remaining mortals (who have to regularly visit Jerusalem in order to pay tribute) of the fate awaiting anyone who opposes the King of kings and Lord of lords.³¹¹ Jesus will consign the Final Beast Leader and his False Prophet to this Lake of Fire.

Afterwards, according to Isaiah 11:11-16, the army of the immortal saints gathered by Jesus when He comes, will spread out into the ancient Promised Land, taking over the territory once held by ancient Assyria (modern Iraq) to that once held by ancient Egypt (including modern Sudan). [After the first celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in the new earth, I expect this "Holy Zone" will be parceled out by King Jesus to His holy saints in appropriate allotments, fulfilling His prophecy "the meek...will inherit the earth."³¹²]

Meanwhile, an angelic soldier will track down and capture Satan. Presumably, other angel soldiers will be doing the same with the rest of the rebel angels. Satan (and his angels) will then be bound and thrown into the *Abyss*, which will then be resealed.³¹³ This marks the beginning of the period generally called the Millennium.

³⁰⁸ Isaiah 34:1-3.

³⁰⁹ Isaiah 34 and Ezekiel 35. Will "Hell" be located in Edom?

³¹⁰ Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:42-48

³¹¹ Isaiah 66:23-24.

³¹² Matthew 6:5.

³¹³ Remember that it was unsealed during the fifth wrath event.

THE MILLENNIUM
The Administration of the Surviving Mortals

<u>DANIEL 7</u>			
<small>7:12</small> <i>As for the rest of the beasts, their rule was transferred, and an extension of life was given to them until the appropriate time.</i>			
<u>PSALM 2</u> 2:9 He will shepherd them with an iron rod,		<u>REVELATION 19</u> 19:15b He will shepherd them with an iron rod.	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DANIEL 7</u></p> <p>7:9 I was watching until thrones were set up. The Ancient of Days was sitting. His clothing was snow white and the hair of his head like processed wool. His throne was a blaze of fire and its wheels were blazing with fire. 7:10 A river of fire was being drawn out before him. Thousands of thousands were serving him, and ten thousands of ten thousands were standing before him. A court sat and books were opened.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>REVELATION 20</u></p> <p>20:4 I saw thrones. They sat upon them and judgment was given to them. The individuals beheaded due to their testimony about Jesus and the Word of God; those who did not worship the beast or his image; who refused to take the mark upon their forehead or upon their hand; these came to life and ruled with Christ a thousand years. 20:4 The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MATTHEW 19</u></p> <p>19:28b In the restoration, whenever the Son of Man sits upon the throne of his glory, you who have been following me will yourselves sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>LUKE 22</u></p> <p>22:28 You are those who have remained with me during my tests, 22:29 even as my Father appointed me a kingdom, I am appointing you 22:30 to eat and drink with me at my table in the kingdom. You will also sit upon twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MATTHEW 8</u></p> <p>8:10 I tell you, many will come from the east and west and will be reclined with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens, 8:11 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into outer darkness.</p> <p>in that place there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>LUKE 13</u></p> <p>13:28 In that place there will be weeping and grinding of teeth,</p> <p>whenever you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom, but with you being thrown outside.</p> <p>13:29 They will come from the east, west, north, and south, and will be reclined in the kingdom of God.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>EZEKIEL 34</u></p> <p>34:23 I will set over them one shepherd and he will shepherd them – my servant David; he will be their shepherd.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>EZEKIEL 37</u></p> <p>37:24 My servant David will rule in their midst, and he will be one shepherd for all.</p>

There will apparently be some sort of hierarchical structure during the Millennium.

Obviously Jesus will be the “High King” of the eternal kingdom. Those martyred on His behalf will have a special place in His kingdom. As promised by Jesus, the twelve apostles will sit upon twelve thrones exercising some sort of administrative leadership over resurrected Israelis. They would therefore be half of the twenty-four enthroned elders we saw throughout John’s visions. Perhaps Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are three of the remaining twelve, since Jesus connects them prominently to the eternal kingdom. While it’s possible that the mention of David as the shepherd of Israel may be symbolic of Jesus, the “Son of David” and the “Shepherd of Israel,” I see no reason to rule out the possibility that the resurrected King David may be literally intended, as Jesus’ chief administrator of the resurrected Israelis.

As for those of Gentile extraction among the resurrected righteous, I’m of the conviction that we Gentile believers will have place within the resurrected Israeli nation.³¹⁴ After all, Jesus did say that many from outside ethnic Israel would be welcomed at the table of the covenant while many ethnic Israelis will be exiled for their disbelief.³¹⁵

But why would the structure of government, which God formulated to keep chaos under control,³¹⁶ be needed in Paradise? The answer to that question brings us to the very puzzling impression that not every aspect of the old creation will pass away at the time of the 2nd Coming. Some parts of the final beast government will be granted an “extension of life” that runs parallel to the millennial kingdom.

³¹⁴ Galatians 3:29.

³¹⁵ Matthew 8:11-12.

³¹⁶ Romans 13.

Zechariah informs us that the mortal survivors of the final beast kingdom will be required to present themselves before Yahweh Tsabaoth each year during the Feast of Tabernacles. If they do not do so, God will withhold rain from their region of the world as punishment for their disobedience.³¹⁷ These are the nations which Jesus will shepherd with a rod of iron and over which the resurrected saints of the millennial government will reign.

Here are some possibilities:

- We know that at least 50 % of the original population will die during the final three and a half years. More will die at The Battle of *Har Ma·gēd·dōn*. At any given moment, about 30% of the world population is under 15 years of age. Perhaps the “Millennial Mortals” will be young people whom God gives the opportunity to grow up in a perfect world under the perfect reign of Jesus.³¹⁸
- It is possible that many non-Christians living on Earth during the final three and a half years will refuse to worship the final beast leader for reasons of their own. Yet, they may not appreciate Jesus’ reign either. Perhaps the “Millennial Mortals” will be people whose sinful, self-centered independence needs to be highlighted.
- Perhaps the “Millennial Mortals” will be a mixture of these two groups.

³¹⁷ Zechariah 14:16-19.

³¹⁸ Is it possible that Jesus might resurrect all those who, throughout history, died in the womb or in childhood without a chance to choose for themselves and then let them do so during the Millennium?

A Selection of Old Testament Passages about Life in the Millennium

The Old Testament has lots of prophecies about Yahweh's final, perfect kingdom. Here are just some of them.³¹⁹

Amos 9:11-15 (8th Century BC)

- The context begins with a prophecy that Gentiles³²⁰ will be part of a renewal of the Davidic Kingdom.³²¹
- An extremely prosperous agricultural system will exist.
- Faithful Israel will be returned permanently from captivity to an inheritance in the land.

Hosea 1:10-11 (8th Century BC)

- This is the source of the prophecy that those, both Jew and Gentile, of whom God once said, "You are not My people," will later be called "sons of the living God."³²²
- Faithful Israel "will be gathered together" as is later described in Mark 13:27 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1.³²³
- The two kingdoms of Hosea's day will acknowledge a single leader over both.
- They will "go up from the earth."³²⁴

Hosea 2:14-23 (8th Century BC)

- Agriculture mentioned.
- The animals will become tame and people will cease all warfare.
- Faithful Israel will be married forever to Yahweh.

Micah 4:1-8 (8th Century BC)

- This passage begins with a prophecy about righteous Gentiles.
- Implements of war will be converted into implements of agriculture; warfare training will become obsolete and an easy agricultural lifestyle will become the norm.
- "Gathered together" mentioned.
- Yahweh will reign forever from Mt. Zion.

³¹⁹ This list is intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. There are other "Millennial" texts that can be found by using these passages as a starting point.

³²⁰ Where the Masoretic text has "remnant of Edom" in verse 12, the Septuagint has "remnant of Man." This is because "Edom" and "Man" look exactly the same in ancient Hebrew. "Man" makes much more sense.

³²¹ Quoted by James during the so-called 1st Jerusalem Council on Gentile inclusion (Acts 15:13-29).

³²² Romans 9:22-33 and 1 Peter 2:9-10.

³²³ The ancient Hebrew word is קִבּוּץ [qabats /kaw-bats/] – compare the modern word **Kibbutz**, an Israeli community and/or the houses of which it is comprised – while the ancient Greek is συναγωγή (*synagomai*), συναγωγή (*synagō*) – compare the modern word **Synagogue**, a congregation and/or the building where it meets.

³²⁴ The original language wording in this passage struck me as odd. Is this a reference to the resurrection? Furthermore, the name יִזְרְעֵאל, יִזְרְעֵאל [Yizrâ'e'l /yiz-reh-ale/] means "God sows." Read how Paul described the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:42-49.

Isaiah 11:1-12:6 (8th Century BC)

- A Davidic leader mentioned.
- Peaceful animals mentioned; carnivores will become herbivores.
- Gentiles becoming part of the kingdom.
- “Gathering together” mentioned.
- There will be major geologic events
 - If the Jordan Valley does rise up as I suggested earlier, the Gulf of Aqaba,³²⁵ which is part of the same fault line, (perhaps the Gulf of Suez, too) may just simply disappear.
 - The Euphrates will become a shallow system of seven streams.
 - Together, these two topographical changes will permit the establishment of an Assyria-Egypt highway (the “Highway of Holiness”).

Isaiah 25:6-27:13 (8th Century BC)

- Yahweh will prepare a great feast on Mt. Zion.
- This is the source text for death being “swallowed up”³²⁶ forever.
- The judgments of Yahweh mentioned.
- Here is an unambiguous prediction of the resurrection of the righteous.
- Yahweh will punish Satan, a.k.a. “Leviathan” (*Liw·yah·than*), the Dragon.
- “Gathering together” mentioned; specifically by the sound of a trumpet.

Isaiah 35:1-10 (8th Century BC)

- Water will begin flowing in the Arabah,³²⁷ bringing it to life.
- Blindness, deafness and lameness will be removed.
- The “Highway of Holiness” will be traveled by saints heading to Jerusalem.
- There will be no “wild” animals.

Isaiah 43:1-44:8 (8th Century BC)

- “Gathering together” mentioned.
- A “desert highway” and “streams in a desert” mentioned.

Isaiah 65:8ff (8th Century BC)

- Faithful Israel will inherit the Promised Land, while the unfaithful will be punished.
- Yahweh will create a new heavens and a new earth, in which sorrow and death are completely unknown.
- Peaceful animals mentioned.
- “Gathering together” mentioned.

³²⁵ I think this is probably what is meant by the “tongue of Egypt.” The Gulf of Aqaba separated ancient Egypt’s Sinai territory from the land of Midian (later southern Edom).

³²⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:50-57.

³²⁷ This region stretches along the entire Jordan Valley/Dead Sea depression, from just south of the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Aqaba (the very area I expect to be raised above sea level), as well as throughout the entire Sinai Peninsula, south of Israel.

Joel 3:17-21 (7th Century BC)

- This text follows an extensive passage about the “Day of Yahweh” (3:1-16).
- Agriculture mentioned.
- A spring on the Temple (which waters the region of the Dead Sea) mentioned.
- Judah and Jerusalem will be inhabited forever after Yahweh avenges Faithful Israel.

Jeremiah 30:18-31:14 (7th Century BC)

- Faithful Israel will be led by one of her own.
- Agriculture mentioned.
- “Gathering together” mentioned.

Jeremiah 32:36-33:26 (7th Century BC)

- “Gathering together” mentioned.
- A Davidic leader mentioned.
- Faithful Israel restored forever.

Ezekiel 40:1ff (6th Century BC)

- The Temple described in this text was to be built by those returning from Babylon, if they had repented of their rebellion; they had not, so it was not (43:1-12).
- Presumably, if it had been, Messiah would have come sooner; dealt with sin in a manner different than what actually happened; the gospel would have gone out to the Gentiles; and the Millennium would have started much earlier.
- The river of life originating from Mt. Zion will flow during the Millennium (47:1-12).

Zechariah 14:1-21 (6th Century BC)

- Water flowing from Mt. Zion mentioned.
- Reign of Yahweh mentioned.
- There will be mortals left after a great war against Jerusalem who must attend the annual Feast of Tabernacles.

Zephaniah 3:8-19 (6th Century BC)

- Reign of Yahweh mentioned.

CHART: “The Highway of Holiness” & The Rebel Regions of Ezekiel Chapter 38



Satan's Final Coup Attempt

<u>REVELATION 20</u>	<u>EZEKIEL 38</u>
<p>20:7 Whenever the thousand years has been completed,</p> <p>Satan will be released from his detention.</p> <p>20:8 Going out, he will deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gōg and Magōg – in order to gather them for war; their number being as the sand of the sea.</p> <p>20:9 They went up upon the wide expanse of the land surrounding the encampment of the saints, the beloved city.</p> <p>Fire came down from heaven and devoured them.</p> <p>20:9 The slanderer misleading them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet <i>had</i> and <i>been thrown</i>, and they will be tortured day and night into the ages of ages.</p>	<p>38:8a After many days you will be summoned; in later years you will come into a land that has put away the sword, having been gathered from all the nations into the land of Israel.</p> <p>38:2a Son of man, set your face against Gōg, the land of Magōg...</p> <p>38:9 You will go up like a rainstorm. You will arrive like a cloud obscuring the land; you and all those with you – the many nations with you.</p> <p>38:18 “It will be in that day, when Gōg comes upon the land of Israel,” says Yahweh God, “My anger will arise in My face.”</p> <p>38:22 I will judge him by pouring upon him and those with him – the many nations with him – death, blood, torrential rain, hail stones, fire and brimstone.</p>

As you probably know, many prophecy teachers (typically Pre-Millennial Dispensationalists) turn the invasion of the Promised Land described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 into a Russia-led invasion of the modern state of Israel.³²⁸ Even after hearing and reading their many explanations for doing so, I am still dumbfounded that they have somehow overlooked the blatantly obvious indication this Scripture is perfectly parallel to Revelation 20:7-20!

³²⁸ Modern Israel must never be confused with Faithful Israel. Modern Israel is a secular government with some Jewish religious minority elements; it does not - in any way, shape or form - acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. Even though Paul makes it clear that God loves and is concerned about ethnic Israelis, he and other New Testament (Jewish) writers also make it plain that anyone - Jew or Gentile - who rejects the Son is left without the Father as well. God has no covenantal relationship with or obligations toward the modern state of Israel.

Let's consider just a couple of these conspicuous points.

- Both prophets write about a war centering on the actions of *Gōg* and *Magōg* against Israel. What are the odds they're writing about two different wars 1,000 years apart?
- The modern state of Israel has only been around since 1947 and it has had to fight or be on the defensive nearly every day of its existence. In no way does it resemble the people of Israel in Ezekiel 38, "living securely" (vs. 8) in "unwalled villages" (vs. 10). To the contrary, modern Israel has wisely built a security barrier to keep terrorists out.

Without going in to a huge amount of detail, this is what I think will happen to trigger the War of *Gōg* and *Magōg*.

As the Millennium continues, many of the mortals (whoever they are) will tire of honoring Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. It won't matter to them how perfect the world around them is; they will chaff just at the thought of not being their own boss.

These hard-hearted types will have already taken up residence outside the "Holy Zone," defined by the "Highway of Holiness" as being from the territory of ancient Assyria (modern Iraq), down through the modern countries of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and into the territory of ancient Egypt (which included modern Sudan). But because they still had to present themselves before King Jesus each year at the Feast of Tabernacles (perhaps paying Him tribute from their agricultural produce) they couldn't migrate more than a couple weeks journey (by low tech means) away from Jerusalem. This would locate them exactly where Ezekiel 38 locates them – in the ancient territories of Magog, Mesech and Tubal (in the Caucasus region between the Black and Caspian Seas); in the ancient territories of Persia (modern Iran), Ethiopia (same name) and Put (modern Libya); in the ancient territories of Gomer and Beth-togarmah (modern Turkey and Armenia); and with allies located in the ancient territories of Sheba (modern Yemen) and Dedan (western part of modern Saudi Arabia) and among the famed merchants of Tarshish who once operated nautical trade routes in the eastern Mediterranean and in the Red Sea.

Over time I expect some of the more radical individuals will quit making that annual trip to Jerusalem altogether. As more and more rebels refuse to make their mandatory presentation before King Jesus, Yahweh will start invoking the negative conditions of Zechariah 14:17-19. The perfectly lush homelands of these sinners will begin drying up from lack of rain. While they might be able to overcome such effects in the short term - via irrigation and trade - in the long-term it will become a matter of survival.

If Satan were to come to them at such a time, they would certainly be ripe for his suggestion that they invade the bountiful lands of the saints, overthrowing King Jesus in the process.

Of course their plans will come to nothing. Yahweh will destroy them without effort, tossing Satan into the lake of fire, where he will remain for eternity.

AFTER THE MILLENNIUM – REVELATION 20:11ff

For the sake of brevity, and since we've already covered our target topic of "Living in the Last Days," I want to just touch on the remainder of the book of Revelation. After God has decisively put down Satan's attempted, Post-Millennial coup, the saints will clean up the mess left behind. According to Ezekiel 39:9-16, it will take the saints seven months to clean up the bodies and seven years to burn up all the war equipment. Presumably the perfect Earth will regenerate itself and reverse the drought affects brought on by the rebellion of the Millennial mortals.

It is at this time that Yahweh will resurrect the unrighteous dead in order for Jesus to judge them. Their damnation is already certain, otherwise they would have been resurrected in the previous resurrection - the resurrection of the righteous. This "white throne" judgment is much more like a sentencing hearing. They'll be assigned a specific place in the eternal lake of fire based on what the records reveal. But they will be sent there primarily because they have no relationship with the Son.

Who really knows how long this process will take. With potentially billions of sinners from all ages being hauled before the tribunal of King Jesus it may take many thousands of years.³²⁹ But since everyone has eternity before them, what difference will it make?

After all this, the city of New Jerusalem will descend from heaven. The descriptions of the city seem to refer back to Old Testament prophecies.

- The eternal presence of God's "sanctuary" among His people comes from, among other places, Ezekiel 37:26-28.
- The city being built of precious materials goes back to Isaiah 54:11-17.
- The arrangement of the gates sounds like Ezekiel 48:30-35.
- The River of Life will flow through the city as described in Ezekiel 47:1-12.

Obviously Yahweh will make some adjustments to the new earth in order to make room for this massive structure. It is so large that it will completely cover the entire eastern end of the Mediterranean basin. This fact alone emboldens me to state with great confidence that the New Jerusalem will not be put in place until after the Post-Millennial coup attempt, for its presence would not leave space for the territories from which the rebels will come.

The most natural reading of the text would make the city a perfect cube, as was the Holy of Holies, towering well above the reaches of our current atmosphere. The city will be the capital for the eternal Kingdom of Yahweh. In and out of it will move the Immortal Saints, doing whatever they will do for all eternity.

And what will that be? Well, that's so speculative that even a lifetime of seminars would not be sufficient to exhaust the subject. Let us simply be satisfied to say, "We shall see."

³²⁹ Just by way of illustration, let's use our current time reckoning. If Jesus pronounced judgment on one person per minute, 24 hours each day, year round, He could deal with 525,600 sinners per year. Even at that rate it would still take over 19,000 years to judge 10 billion people.

APPENDIX A: ANCIENT IMAGES RELEVANT TO UNDERSTANDING DANIEL 7



Winged Lion = Babylonian Empire

The winged lion was a very ancient Mesopotamian symbol associated with the goddess Inanna/Ishtar. In this Sumerian depiction, Inanna is standing upon one of her winged lions.

This second winged lion (the wings extend backward from its front shoulder and mane) is one of many that lined the walls of “Processional Avenue,” just north of the “Ishtar Gate,” in Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon.



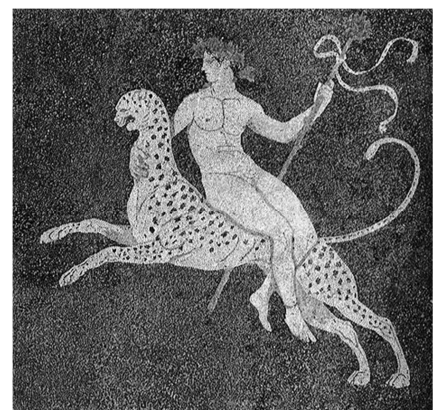
Lopsided Bear = Median/Persian Empire

As shown in this ancient Iranian artwork, the brown bear (*ursus arctos*, a species which includes our North American “Grizzly”) has been hunted as sport for thousands of years. Its huge size and tremendous strength were perceived as the perfect challenge for Median and Persian warrior/hunters.

Four-headed & winged Leopard = Macedonian Empire

Alexander the Great is figuratively portrayed as Dionysus in this late 4th Century BC floor mosaic from his hometown of Pella, Macedonia. His whirlwind conquest of the East made him like Dionysus in the minds of his subjects.

Dionysus was the Greek god of wine production (a.k.a. the Roman god Bacchus), who supposedly traveled into “The East” (Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Persia and India), spreading his art of vintage making, while amassing many followers and great wealth. He then returned home in an ivy-covered chariot pulled by leopards.





Ten-Horned, Iron-Toothed Beast or Dragon = Roman Empire

The dragon often appears in ancient Mesopotamian mythology. The patron god of the city of Babylon was Marduk [a.k.a. “Bel” or “Master” (cf. the Canaanite “Ba’al”)]. He supposedly slew Tiamat, the great dragon of Chaos (the primeval ocean out of which everything was created), creating the world from her corpse. He is shown here, on this 9th Century BC cylinder seal, accompanied by his own horned dragon.

During the 6th Century BC, the horned dragon of Marduk was incorporated into Babylonian wall decorations by King Nebuchadnezzar.



Through a long series of contacts between Mesopotamia (the world of the Babylonians, Medians and Persians) and southern Europe (the world of the Greeks and Romans), the dragon imagery eventually attached itself to the Roman Empire.



Trajan’s Column in Rome (AD 113) includes this image of a captured *draco* – a dragon-headed windsock apparently used by the horse archers of the western Asian peoples (whom Trajan had recently defeated) in order to gauge wind speed and direction.

The Roman cavalry of the early 2nd Century very quickly adopted the use of the *draco* as their own military standard. By the 4th Century, the *draco* had all but displaced the Eagle as the military standard of the entire Roman army. In fact, army standard bearers were simply called “dragon bearers.”



The dragons found in European literature, art, architecture, etc. [such as this Welsh flag, which is tied to 5th Century legends about the British-Roman leaders Ambrosius, Uther & Arthur Pen-Dragon (“Head Dragon”)] are merely vestiges of the Roman Empire’s symbolic dragon heritage.

APPENDIX B: ANNOTATED NASB (1977) TEXT OF DANIEL 10-12³³⁰
{Embedded notes (primarily chronological) by Thomas J. Short}

10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia **{535 BC}** a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and *one of* great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.

10:2 In those days I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. **10:3** I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all, until the entire three weeks were completed. **10:4** And on the twenty-fourth day of the first month **{THU/FRI 11/12 APR 535 BC}**, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, **10:5** I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with *a belt of* pure gold of Uphaz. **10:6** His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

10:7 Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. **10:8** So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. **10:9** But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

10:10 Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. **10:11** And he said to me, “O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

10:12 Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding *this* and on humbling yourself before your God **{SAT/SUN 23/24 MAR 535 BC}**, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. **10:13** “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia **{the fallen angel in control of the Persian region}** was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael **{“Who Is Like God?”}**, one of the chief princes **{the top leadership tier among God’s loyal angels}**, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

10:14 “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*.”

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10:15 And when he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. **10:16** And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, and said to him who was standing before me, “O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength. **10:17** “For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.”

10:18 Then *this* one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me. **10:19** And he said, “O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!”

Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, “May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”

10:20 Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia **{the fallen angel in control of Persia}**; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece **{the fallen angel in control of Greece}** is about to come.

10:21 “However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these *forces* except Michael your prince **{God’s loyal angel responsible for the righteous Jews}**.

11:1 “And in the first year of Darius the Mede³³¹ **{538 BC}**, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.

11:2 “And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia **{Cambyses (529-530 BC); Pseudo-Smerdis (522 BC); and Darius (521-486 BC)}**. Then a fourth **{Xerxes (485-465 BC), who was married to Esther}** will gain far more riches than all *of them*; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole *empire* against the realm of Greece **{Xerxes attempted a massive but miserable failure of an invasion into Greece in 479 BC}**.

11:3 “And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases **{Alexander the Great (336-323 BC)}**.

11:4 “But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his *own* descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded; for his sovereignty will be uprooted and *given* to others besides them **{After Alexander’s death, his empire was eventually divided into four Greek kingdoms, each ruled over by former leaders in his army. Two of them ended up bracketing Judea - Ptolemy in Egypt & Seleucus in Syria}**.

³³¹ Darius the Mede was another name for Cyaxares II, the uncle of Cyrus the Great.

11:5 “Then the king of the South **{Ptolemy I (323-285 BC) – hereafter in the text, “king of the south” always references a Ptolemaic ruler in Egypt}** will grow strong, along with *one* of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain *will be* a great dominion *indeed* **{Seleucus I (312-280 BC) started out as a subordinate of Ptolemy I, but his kingdom soon became much larger than that of Ptolemy – hereafter in the text, “king of the north” always references a Seleucid ruler in Syria}**.

11:6 “And after some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South **{Bernice, daughter of Ptolemy II (285-246 BC)}** will come to the king of the North **{Antiochus II (261-246 BC)}** to carry out a peaceful arrangement.

But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in, and the one who sired her, as well as he who supported her in *those* times. **{ Laodice, whom Antiochus II had divorced in favor of Bernice, conspired to have both Bernice and Antiochus II killed.}**

11:7 “But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place **{Bernice’s brother, Ptolemy III (246-222 BC)}**, and he will come against *their* army and enter the fortress of the king of the North **{Seleucus II (246-226 BC)}**, and he will deal with them and display *great* strength **{Ptolemy III got rid of Laodice}**. 11:8 “And also their gods with their metal images *and* their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from *attacking* the king of the North **{Seleucus II}** for *some* years.

11:9 “Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South **{Ptolemy III}**, but will return to his *own* land.

11:10 “And his **{Seleucus II’s}** sons **{Seleucus III (226-223 BC) & Antiochus III (223-187 BC)}** will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his *very* fortress.

11:11 “And the king of the South **{Ptolemy IV (221-203 BC)}** will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North **{Antiochus III}**. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but *that* multitude will be given into the hand of the *former*. **{Ptolemy IV defeated Antiochus III in 217 BC}**

11:12 “When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail. 11:13 “For the king of the North **{Antiochus III}** will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment.

11:14 “Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South **{Ptolemy V (203-181 BC)}**; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down. **{A Jewish rebellion was crushed in 200 BC}**

11:15 “Then the king of the North **{Antiochus III}** will come, cast up a siege mound, and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South **{Ptolemaic Egypt}** will not stand *their ground*, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand. **11:16** “But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will *be able to* withstand him; he will also stay *for a time* in the Beautiful Land **{Judea}**, with destruction in his hand. **{Antiochus III gained control of the region which included Judea by 197 BC}**

11:17 “And he will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it **{Antiochus III’s daughter, Cleopatra I, was married to Ptolemy V in 194 BC}**. But she will not take a stand *for him* or be on his side.

11:18 “Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. **11:19** “So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more. **{Antiochus III died in 187 BC while trying to plunder a pagan temple treasury.}**

11:20 “Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of *his* kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though neither in anger nor in battle. . **{Seleucus IV (187-175) died in a conspiracy carried out by his finance minister, who had recently attempted – unsuccessfully – to take funds out of the Jewish Temple.}**

11:21 “And in his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. **{ Seleucus IV’s brother, Antiochus IV (175-164 BC) simply took control of the kingdom rather than permit his young nephew, Demetrius (10 yrs), to come to the throne.}**

11:22 “And the overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. **{Perhaps a reference to the High Priest Onias III, who was murdered in 170 BC}**

11:23 “And after an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small *force of* people. **11:24** “In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest *parts* of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty, and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but *only* for a time.

11:25 “And he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South **{Ptolemy VI (181-146 BC)}** with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him. 11:26 “And those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain. 11:27 “As for both kings, their hearts will be *intent* on evil, and they will speak lies *to each other* at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still *to come* at the appointed time. 11:28 “Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be *set* against the holy covenant, and he will take action and *then* return to his *own* land. **{Because the Ptolemies were threatening to seize control of Southern Syria (including Judea) Antiochus IV invaded & conquered Egypt in 169 BC, but withdrew without keeping control of Alexandria}**

11:29 “At the appointed time he will return and come into the South **{in 168 BC, Antiochus IV reinvaded Egypt}**, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. 11:30 “For ships of Kittim **{Roman ships operating within the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea}** will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened **{Antiochus IV chose to withdraw after a Roman ultimatum that he do so}**, and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action **{Antiochus IV began his systematic elimination of Judaism in 167 BC}**; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant **{Secular Jews willingly assisted Antiochus IV in his anti-Judaism campaign}**.

11:31 “And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice **{the twice-daily sacrifices in the Jewish Temple were first interrupted on Pentecost (SAT/SUN 3/4 JUN 167 BC) and were completely stopped by the final day of the 7th Jewish Month (FRI/SAT 20/21 OCT 167 BC)}**. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. **{A Greek-style altar was set up on top of the Jewish altar on 9*15 (WED/THU 6/7 DEC 167 BC). The Greek-style altar was dedicated to Zeus with the sacrifice of a sow on 9*25 (SAT/SUN 16/17 DEC 167 BC).}**

11:32 “And by smooth *words* he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant **{describing Antiochus IV’s relationship with the secular Jews}**, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action **{describing the resistance movement begun by Matthias, the priest of Modein }**.

11:33 “And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, for *many* days. 11:34 “Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. 11:35 “And some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make them pure, until the end time; because *it is still to come* at the appointed time. **{After three years of armed resistance, the religious Jews captured & rededicated the Jewish Temple on 9*25 (SUN/MON 13/14 DEC 164 BC). Eventually, the leaders of that movement established an independent Jewish dynasty that combined the “kingship” with the high priesthood.}**

{Antiochus IV died during the winter of 164/163 BC, after naming his young son, Antiochus V (164-162 BC), as his successor, but leaving the actual administration of the kingdom to a trusted officer. Another officer attempted to seize control and a mini civil war broke out.}

{While many commentators teach that the verses from 11:36 onward cannot be applied to past historical events, insisting they will be carried out by some future persecutor of Israel, I strongly disagree and provide the following application.}

11:36 “Then the king will do as he pleases **{Demetrius I (162-150 BC), whom Antiochus IV had usurped 13 years earlier, upon learning of the death of his uncle and the subsequent turmoil regarding the matter of succession, came to Syria from Rome (where he had been sent as a hostage) in order to claim the throne for himself}**, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

11:37 “And he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any *other* god; for he will magnify himself above *them* all. 11:38 “But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor *him* with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures. 11:39 “And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with *the help of* a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge *him*, and he will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price. **{Demetrius I, like his uncle before him, aggressively opposed religious Judaism, making use of secular Jews.}**

11:40 “And at the end time **{the end of anti-Jewish persecution³³²}** the king of the South **{Ptolemy VI}** will collide with him **{Demetrius I}**, and the king of the North **{Alexander (153-145 BC), who claimed to be the son of Antiochus IV}** will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow *them*, and pass through **{Alexander defeated & killed Demetrius I in 150 BC}**.

³³² The official end of the Macedonian oppression of the Jews came in 142 BC, during the 3rd year of Demetrius II and the 1st year of the Simon Maccabaeus (142-135 BC), which marks the beginning of the independent Hasmonean Kingdom of Israel (142-37 BC).

11:41 “He will also enter the Beautiful Land **{in an effort to gain his support, Alexander honored Jonathan the Jewish High Priest as “First Friend” at the port city of Ptolemais in 150 BC }**, and many *countries* will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon **{none of these areas ever came under Alexander’s control}**.

11:42 “Then he will stretch out his hand against *other* countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 11:43 “But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians *will follow* at his heels. **{He accomplished this by marrying Cleopatra Thea, the daughter of Ptolemy VI. }**

11:44 “But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. 11:45 “And he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain **{In 145 BC, while Alexander was in Phoenicia, Demetrius II (145-138 BC), the son of Demetrius I, came from Crete to Syria in order to take the throne for himself}**; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him. **{Ptolemy VI originally marched to Syria in order to assist his son-in-law, Alexander; however, when he discovered a plot by Alexander to have him assassinated, he immediately divorced Cleopatra from him & offered her in marriage to Demetrius II, promising a military alliance as well. Seeing that his kingdom was lost, Alexander fled to Nabataea, where he was killed and his head sent to Ptolemy VI.}**

12:1 “Now at that time **{during the post-Macedonian period}** Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people **{God’s loyal angel responsible for the righteous Jews}**, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time **{this is the very passage quoted by Jesus in his “Olivet Discourse” in reference to the impending destruction of Jerusalem}**; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. **{The Atonement took place & the Gospel was preached to Israelis prior to the Temple’s destruction.}**

12:2 “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life **{this verse clearly jumps ahead to the “First Resurrection” of the righteous dead (Revelation 20:4-6)}**, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt **{then it jumps ahead another thousand years to the “Second Resurrection” of the remaining dead (Revelation 20:5; 11-15)}**.

12:3 “And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven **{loosely quoted by Jesus in Matthew 13:43 }**, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

12:4 “But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time **{until the time of the events described herein}**; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

12:5 Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river, and the other on that bank of the river. **12:6** And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long *will it be* until the end of *these* wonders?”

12:7 And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half *a time* **{a Hebrew idiom for 3 ½ years}**; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these *events* will be completed.

12:8 As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what *will be* the outcome of these *events*?”

12:9 And he said, “Go *your way*, Daniel, for *these* words are concealed and sealed up until the end time **{until the time of the events described herein}**.

12:10 “Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

12:11 “And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there will be* 1,290 days **{this represents the period from Pentecost (SAT/SUN 3/4 JUN 167 BC), when the regular sacrifices were first interrupted until the Temple was rededicated on 9*25 (SUN/MON 13/14 DEC 164 BC)}**.

12:12 “How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days! **{This probably represents the death date of Antiochus IV on 11*10 (TUE/WED 26/27 JAN 163 BC) . We know for a fact that he died at some point during the winter of 164/163 BC, after learning that the Jews had recaptured & rededicated their Temple. }**

12:13 “But as for you, go *your way* to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise *again* **{be bodily resurrected}** for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”

APPENDIX C: THE ISRAELI SEVEN-YEAR SABBATICAL CYCLE

Shortly after Israel entered the land of Canaan in the spring of 1416 BC, the *manna* on which they had subsisted for the past forty years ended (Joshua 5:12), necessitating the planting of their very first crops during the fall of that year. This meant that the 1st Sabbatical Year began on 7*1 in the 47th Year of the Exodus. Subsequent Sabbatical Years began in the 7th Month of the following years:

1410	1403	1396	1389	1382	1375	1368	Jubilee 1 =	1367
1361	1354	1347	1340	1333	1326	1319	Jubilee 2 =	1318
1312	1305	1298	1291	1284	1277	1270	Jubilee 3 =	1269
1263	1256	1249	1242	1235	1228	1221	Jubilee 4 =	1220
1214	1207	1200	1193	1186	1179	1172	Jubilee 5 =	1171
1165	1158	1151	1144	1137	1130	1123	Jubilee 6 =	1122
1116	1109	1102	1095	1088	1081	1074	Jubilee 7 =	1073
1067	1060	1053	1046	1039	1032	1025	Jubilee 8 =	1024
1018	1011	1004	997	990	983	976	Jubilee 9 =	975
969	962	955	948	941	934	927	Jubilee 10 =	926
920	913	906	899	892	885	878	Jubilee 11 =	877
871	864	857	850	843	836	829	Jubilee 12 =	828
822	815	808	801	794	787	780	Jubilee 13 =	779
773	766	759	752	745	738	731	Jubilee 14 =	730
724	717	710	703	696	689	682	Jubilee 15 =	681
675	668	661	654	647	640	633	Jubilee 16 =	632
626	619	612	605	598	591	584	Jubilee 17 =	583
577	570	563	556	549	542	535	Jubilee 18 =	534
528	521	514	507	500	493	486	Jubilee 19 =	485
479	472	465	458	451 * ³³³ *	444	437	Jubilee 20 =	436
430	423	416	409	402	395	388	Jubilee 21 =	387
381	374	367	360	353	346	339	Jubilee 22 =	338
332	325	318	311	304	297	290	Jubilee 23 =	289
293	276	269	262	255	248	241	Jubilee 24 =	240
234	227	220	213	206	199	192	Jubilee 25 =	191
195	178	171	164 * ³³⁴ *	157	150	143	Jubilee 26 =	142
136 * ³³⁵ *	129	122	115	108	101	94	Jubilee 27 =	93
97	80	73	66	59	52	45	Jubilee 28 =	44
38 * ³³⁶ *	31	24	17	10	3 BC	AD 5	Jubilee 29 =	AD 6
AD 12	AD 19	AD 26	AD 33	AD 40	AD 47	AD 54	Jubilee 30 =	AD 55
AD 61	AD 68	AD 75	AD 82	AD 89	AD 96	AD 103	Jubilee 31 =	AD 104

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1972	1979	1986	1993	2000	2007	2014	Jubilee 70 =	2015
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³³³ Indicated by the public reading of Deuteronomy during the 7th Month (Nehemiah 8:1ff; cf. 2:1; 6:15ff).

³³⁴ Specifically cited in 1 Maccabees 6:49,53 (cf. 1 Maccabees 6:20-63).

³³⁵ Specifically cited in Antiquities 13.8.1-2 (cf. 1 Maccabees 16:14ff).

³³⁶ Specifically cited in Antiquities 14.16.

³³⁷ If, like me, you're curious as to where we're at on this cycle today, here's the information.

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