Endgame

By Chad J. McCoy

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Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to my father and spiritual mentor who taught me the meaning of diligence and to prepare an ark for the saving of my household.

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Preface

This book began life as a manuscript which was originally completed in 1987. Thirteen years later it was reborn and published primarily as a Bible study. Now in 2002, after two more years of refining, it is polished and available to the masses.

It has taken this author nearly two decades to be able to properly present this material, not because the mysteries of the book of Revelation and other endtime prophecies are extremely difficult to understand or that they reveal their treasures only after years of diligent study, but rather because the ability to comprehend a truth and then to relate that understanding to others in a clear manner is an acquired skill that improves as one grows in experience and maturity.

If one were to embark upon a personal expedition of study concerning the events of the endtimes, it would not require fifteen years to develop a solid foundational understanding, although the pursuit of eschatological truth can last a lifetime. Rather, the core substance can be deciphered rather quickly when using the Bible as an answer key.

The Bible, being the Word of God, contains all the information necessary to facilitate an understanding of spiritual matters. Therefore, as the attempt is made to interpret the symbology of Revelation, the major reference work consulted should be that of the Bible.

To that end, there are no references in this work that cite the beliefs of other prophecy authors, or the thoughts of various commentators. It is the belief of this author that the Bible is to be explicated literally unless scripturally directed to employ other methods of interpretation. When the Bible speaks symbolically, it makes the fact plain, and generally proceeds to explain the symbolism itself, if not in one particular passage, then in another.

The criteria used in writing this book was to first allow the Bible an opportunity to explain itself, a technique which proved to be most illuminating, as the inspired Word supplied ready answers to many of eschatology's most perplexing questions. When the Bible did not clarify a given enigmatic term, an English dictionary was then consulted, in a procedure which confined the study to matters of fact, rather than opinion. If the dictionary did not provide sufficient clarification, then a Bible dictionary was availed; again, remaining with references that deal in definitions and facts, rather than opinionated commentaries that can be in error.

The next step was to examine the expression from the original Greek language, and finally, if signification continued to elude possession, then a measure of prosaic perception was employed and the conclusions returned to the Bible to determine whether or not manuscript support could be strictly established.

In this manner, the results of this probe into the shrouded depths of abstruse scripture, unlike the subjective forays conducted by many prophecy litterateurs, are largely duplicable. In a subject replete with conflicting views where verity is customarily determined by whim or caprice rather than sound scriptural evidence, it is this substantiative quality which has the capacity to develop confidence that the evidence introduced here has been properly collated to present an accurate interpretation of the cataclysmic scenarios portrayed in the book of Revelation.

The bulk of this manuscript was written in the year 2000 (the recent changes made to this document were largely grammatical in nature, an improvement of the text rather than an update of the content), a year which brought with it much uncertainty.

With the sinister approach of the dreaded Y2K Bug, many citizens began to stockpile food, water, and ammunition in anticipation of a global economic collapse. Some installed power generators and others built underground shelters of refuge. Many wondered if financial and medical records would disappear from government and corporate computer systems, and experts added to the anxiety by theorizing the malfunction of traffic lights, pacemakers, automobiles, aircraft, nuclear reactors, and toasters; any device containing a computer processor with a date-keeping function.

As the date of January 1, 2000 dawned, however, the world gave a relieved sigh and shared a collective chuckle as the much-touted potential for disaster came and went without so much as a microseconds' worth of disruption in the lives of almost six billion people or to the myriad computer systems the world's population has come to rely so heavily upon.

Many believed that the Millennium Bug would act as a catalyst for the institution of a one-world government, a global economy, and a universal religion, setting in motion the calamitous events described in the apocalyptic book of Revelation.

Instead, the mechanism for change occurred just over one year and nine months later on September 11, 2001 when Middle Eastern terrorists flew two Boeing 767 jumbo jets into the World Trade Center towers in New York, USA.

The event has led to the creation of laws designed to strip United States citizens of their Constitutionally-guaranteed privacies and their freedoms of speech and religion. A newly-created branch of government, the office of Homeland Security (a title eerily reminiscent of Germany's national Gestapo police force) stands ready to vigorously enforce these regulations, enlisting the aid of U.S. citizens to spy and inform on other citizens in the name of proactive peace-keeping. The FBI and CIA agencies have been given great latitude to investigate and eliminate any suspected terrorist groups, or even those *thought* to be associated with terrorists.

On June 24, 2002, the Associated Press reported that for the first time since the Cold War, the FBI is visiting public libraries in an attempt to identify material considered threatening to the security of the United States and to locate individuals who have viewed such literature.

The searches were authorized in an obscure provision of the USA Patriot Act, which was quietly approved by Congress six weeks after Sept. 11, 2001, virtually without hearings or debate. The act also legalized an assortment of new Federal surveillance measures, including the surreptitious search of homes and an expanded monitoring of telecommunications and Internet. Under section 215, the FBI now retains the authority to seize library and bookstore records, as well as an extensive quantity of any additional documents that may be discovered during the course of investigations of international terrorism or secret intelligence activities.

Without the measure of protection afforded by standard search warrants, U.S. citizens are now at the mercy of an FBI that is no longer required to show that evidence of wrongdoing is likely to be found at a particular location before entering a residence or business, or to establish that the target of its investigation is associated with terrorism or espionage prior to arrest, interrogation, or physical searches.

The clandestine nature of these procedures does not instill confidence that such action is completely without malice. The searches are authorized by a court that convenes secretly, the search warrants are written in such a way as to prevent the reader from determining the purpose of the investigation, and both librarians and booksellers are prohibited, under threat of prosecution, from disclosing to anyone the fact that the FBI has visited the premises, including patrons whose records have been seized.

Furthermore, Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI director Robert Mueller have recently announced that, in addition to libraries and bookstores, they have sought and been given the power to go after churches, political parties and the Internet, as well.

Is there any doubt that the "Big Brother" society of Nazi Germany is currently being incorporated into the culture of the United States?

On May 1, 2002, two Virginia congressmen, Democrat Jim Moran and Republican Tom Davis, submitted legislation to standardize state-issued driver's licenses across the United States, mandating the licenses carry a computer chip and incorporate some kind of unique identifier such as a fingerprint. The bill would also mandate the integration of all state databases.

On November 25, 2001, the British Daily Telegraph reported the compilation of a secret database of children as young as three, whom law enforcement officials have targeted as potential future criminals. Youngsters who behave badly or commit trivial misdemeanors will be registered in the database for monitoring and supervisory purposes throughout childhood. The database entries are not restricted exclusively to those who have committed minor vandalism or nuisances, but will include, as well, any child who is thought by the police, schools, or social services to be at risk of committing a crime at some point in the future. Their progress will then be monitored at school and on the streets by special squads of police officers and social workers, even though the children have not committed a crime and will not have been warned that they are being watched.

There are serious libertarian concerns with such programs. For example, what kind of behavior will result in a child's inclusion into this database? Who will have access to it, and who will decide whether children are added or removed from it?

The establishment of a global surveillance society is the aim of one-world government proponents such as former Nebraska State Senator Peter Hoagland, who made the following statement in 1982.

"Fundamental, Bible-believing people do not have the right to indoctrinate their children in their religious beliefs because we, the state, are preparing them for the year 2000 when America will be part of a one-world global society, and their children will not fit in."

Neither will property owners, for on October 18, 2000, the "United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification" was ratified by the United States Senate, legislation which transferred sovereignty of fully seventy percent of U.S. land to the United Nations, including private property, for the U.N. makes no distinction between Federal land and that which is privately owned.

Surprisingly, it was the conservative Republican leadership of the Senate which provided the impetus necessary to pass this treaty. A companion treaty is now being developed by the U.N. Commission on Water for the 21st Century. The United Nations is, in fact, creating the structure in international law and through its extensive bureaucracies to control the use of all natural resources on earth.

Both the Republican and Democratic Parties have long been equally committed to the New World Order, and have been secretly cooperating to achieve it. Thus, a vote for either party is unfortunately still a vote for the New World Order and the dictatorship of the Antichrist.

In Boca Raton, Florida, on May 10, 2002, 14-year-old Derek Jacobs, his mother Leslie, and father Jeffrey, were implanted with VeriChips, making the Jacobs the first family in the world to be "chipped."

Applied Digital Solutions, which is trademarking the phrase "Get Chipped!" intends over the next few years to produce a VeriChip with sensors capable of recording vital signs such as pulse, temperature, and blood sugar, as well as a satellite receiver that can track the location of its host. The company makes a type of pager called Digital Angel that performs those functions, and its engineers are working to miniaturize Digital Angel's circuits into a package small enough to implant. Once realized, VeriChip will be very powerful, indeed.

The operation to insert the chip is simple. An antiseptic swab, a local anesthetic, an injection and a Band-Aid is all it takes. Once the skin heals, the fully biocompatible chip is completely invisible. Bodily fluids cannot penetrate the device, and no part of the circuitry can be loosened or work itself out of the skin.

ADS believes VeriChip could function as a theft-proof, counterfeit-proof ID, an electronic version of a state driver's license embedded under the skin. The company has signed a deal with the California Department of Corrections to track the movements of parolees using Digital Angel. They also suggest that the devices be implemented in the airline industry where crews would be required to wear them to ensure that terrorists do not infiltrate the cockpit in disguise.

Dr. Richard Seelig, the company's medical applications director, supports such proposals. "I travel quite a bit," he says, "and I want to make sure the pilots in that plane belong there."

Does an airline or government have the right to require pilots to get chipped? "I think we have a right to demand that," says Seelig. "Our lives are in their hands."

It sounds extreme, but there are precedents. In the early 1990's several states considered laws that would have required female child abusers and women on welfare to wear birth-control implants. The proposals were not very popular.

"There's a feeling that technology has outpaced the policy process," says Steven Aftergood, a senior research analyst at the Federation of American Scientists. "We aren't in a position to apply these new devices with the wisdom and prudence that is needed."

On July 10, 2002, the Associated Press reported in the Warren, Ohio Tribune Chronicle that the state of Ohio was preparing to assign an identification number to each of Ohio's 1.8 million public schoolchildren to help track and improve academic performance. The Department of Education says the Statewide Student Identifier System will be in place later this year. The system requires schools to collect eight pieces of identifying information, including a student's name, date of birth, place of birth, ethnicity and gender. The information is given to the New York-based PwC Consulting, which then assigns an identification number for each student.

Concerned about the governmental collecting and collating of such a vast amount of student information, the ACLU of Ohio has filed a public records request with the Education Department for all details concerning the project.

Other states are also creating such reporting systems. In June, Iowa education officials predicted they would have need of a similar identification number. Michigan is creating the Michigan Education Information System, although not without protest from some districts.

Under the guise of the Immigration Reform Act of 1996, the Welfare Reform Act, and the national Defense Bill, a resolution also known as Public Law 104-208, Part B, Title IV, was legislated upon the American public, requiring that every citizen be given a National ID card. Without hearings or discussion, and due to its covert inclusion into the above measures, the bill easily eluded the eyes of those alert to arresting the passage of such regulation.

Although not yet enforced, since October 2000, all United States citizens have been required by law to carry a Federal Identification Card which will be incorporated into State's Driver's Licenses, and for non-drivers into State Identification Cards. Social Security Numbers are to be used as the identifier. State Transportation Departments will be receiving Federal Money for incorporating this Identifier.

According to House Resolution 4633, also known as the *Driver's License Modernization Act of 2002*, "Not later than five years after the date of enactment of this section, each State shall have in effect a driver's license and identification card program under which the State meets the following requirements:"

The card will contain a magnetic strip on which will be encoded American citizen's names, dates and places of birth, mother's maiden names, Social Security numbers, gender, race, driving records, child support payments, marital status, hair color, eye color, height, weight, employment records, financial information, and anything else the Federal Government sees fit to include.

The card will be incorporated into all Federal Databases, including the FBI, Health Information, and Job Banks Databases. Citizens will have to present their Federal ID in order to engage in such activities as establishing a bank account, boarding an aircraft, completing a job application, visiting a hospital emergency room or doctor's office, enrolling in school, cashing a check, purchasing a firearm, collecting Government Welfare, Medicaid, Medicare, or Social Security benefits, and applying for medical, auto, home, life, renter's or any other type of insurance.

The House Resolution 4633 bill requires that "a State shall embed a computer chip in each new or renewed driver's license or identification card issued by the State." It further demands that "a computer chip embedded in a driver's license or identification card... shall: contain, in electronic form, all text data written on the license or card; encoded biometric data matching the holder of the license or card; encryption and security software or hardware (or both) that prevents access to data stored on the chip without the express consent of the individual to whom the data applies, other than access by a Federal, State, or local agency (including a court or law enforcement agency) in carrying out its functions, or by a private entity acting on behalf of a Federal, State, or local agency in carrying out its functions; accept data or software written to the license or card by non-governmental devices if the data transfer is authorized by the holder of the license or card; and conform to any other standards issued by the Secretary."

The inquisitive mind cannot help but question the authority by which the Secretary of Transportation is authorized to violate the Tenth Amendment, take control of a State's highways, and become empowered to issue "any other standards."

Initially, the chip will reside only in the license card. Once the population has been socially conditioned to accept these chips as part of the normal routine of daily modern life, the next step can be taken to install them in a location secure from the effects of theft, duplication, and illegal modification, namely, under the skin.

The bill goes on to declare that, "A State shall adopt and implement procedures for accurately documenting the identity and residence of an individual before issuing a driver's license or identification card to the individual."

Today, rural Idahoans have been issued residence identification numbers by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, without which they cannot currently vote. Any Idaho county government that applies for FEMA flood insurance, among other Federal aid programs, can collect compensation only after instituting in their municipalities this system of residence identification.

Title 18 of the United States Criminal Code is scheduled to be amended with a new chapter 125 which states:

"Whoever –

(1) falsely makes, forges, counterfeits, mutilates, or alters any driver's license or identification card or instrument purporting to be a driver's license or identification card, with intent that the license or card may be used,

(2) except by lawful authority, makes a template or similar device from which there may be printed a counterfeit driver's license or identification card,

(3) obtains or assists in obtaining a driver's license or identification card through willful misrepresentation of identity, presentation of falsified identity documents such as birth certificates or passports, or other fraudulent representation,

(4) tampers with, alters, or destroys a computer chip embedded in a driver's license or identification card or data contained on the computer chip, or

(5) except by lawful authority, accesses data contained on a computer chip embedded in a driver's license or identification card, shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than 20 years, or both."

Is twenty years of imprisonment a reasonable punishment for tampering with a driver's license? Will citizens be held responsible for the chip's malfunction if a few years in the wallet damages it? Suppose it inadvertently finds its way into the washer and dryer as many standard cards do at present? Will the scrambling of its data due to retailer degaussing counters be interpreted as an attempt at illegal procurement or alteration of Federal records? Can a populace expect to face two decades of incarceration for endeavoring to ascertain what information the government or a "private entity" has encoded on the chipped card which they must carry while traveling on the public highways? Suppose the encrypted data is inaccurate. How can an individual refute his personal report if he is not permitted to view it? Such a system which prevents the public from acquiring their own detailed records compiled by government and corporate entities is at odds with the premise of "government of, by, and for the people" upon which this country was founded.

How many people will be unable to document themselves under the Secretary's new "standards?" How many people will refuse to comply once they discover the types of records that will be maintained in this new citizen tracking device? Worse yet, how many compliant citizens will consider such a system necessary to the preservation of a

peaceful society and agree to relinquish a measure of freedom in return for the benefits of a perceived security?

Under the current state statute, driving without a license in Idaho is only a misdemeanor with a maximum of six months incarceration. Many Idahoans may therefore prefer to risk six months in prison for driving without a license than spend twenty years in a Federal penitentiary for driving with one that may have been "altered" by a stray magnet.

House Resolution 4633 facilitates the removal of vast numbers of undesirable citizens from society for a crime no greater than that of possessing improperly ordered "papers." Any system that permits the liberties of American citizens to be revoked at the terrorism roadblocks by any government agent with a magnet is an ominous threat to the present standard of living, possessed as it is of so great a potential for corruption. Under this resolution, society as a whole will have effectively been placed under house arrest.

How much will a nation surrender for the false promise of security? Where is drawn the line across which they will not traverse?

"What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" – Patrick Henry

If the future merely seemed uncertain in 1999, the future in 2002 appears enormously terrifying.

The United States has resigned itself to the eventual creation, over Washington's objections, of a United Nations International Criminal Court, also known as the World Court, which will be modeled after war crime tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Even if the United States does not ratify the treaty, American citizens will be subject to arrest and trial as the treaty document is now drafted.

The United States voted against creating the court, saying that the structure of the tribunal would not protect American troops from frivolous or politically motivated indictments and prosecutions, yet David Scheffer, Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues, acknowledged that the court is on track, even in the United States.

The court will prosecute allegations of war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity, and will do so without direct authorization of the U.N. Security Council, where the United States holds a veto.

In a move that borders on the blasphemous, a Satanic version of the Ark of the Covenant has been fashioned for the United Nations. While the ark Moses constructed contained the Ten Commandments, God's rules of conduct detailing His expectations concerning mankind's behavior in relation to Him and their fellows, the Ark of Hope is a symbolic pentagram, created as a place of refuge for the Earth Charter document, an international treaty for characterizing the disposition this world must adopt in order to establish a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. The Ark will be brought before the United Nations in 2002 and its Earth Charter presented for endorsement.

As the Ark of the Covenant housed supplementary memorial objects which served to remind the Hebrews of their heritage and responsibilities, the Ark of Hope, in addition to the Earth Charter, contains the Temenos Books: Images for Global Healing, Peace, and Gratitude.

This Ark was crafted from a single plank of German sycamore. The five painted panels that form the sides and top of the Ark each represent the flora and fauna of the world as seen through the images of the world's traditional artists. Each panel visualizes a season, a direction, an element, and a universal symbol. The ninety-six-inch carrying poles are described by its designers as "unicorn horns which render evil ineffective."

In the Old Testament, the purpose of the ark was to function as the throne of God, where the shekinah glory of Jehovah would rest. If Satan's counterfeit ark also duplicates the purpose of the original, then Satan himself will inhabit the vessel as it stands in the chambers of the United Nations in New York.

In Israel, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon approved on January 29, 2002, the construction of a seven-mile version of the German iron curtain, which would cordon off the Arab communities in Jerusalem so as to protect Jewish neighborhoods from terrorist infiltrations. Mr. Sharon referred to this plan as "Enveloping Jerusalem."

The proposal calls for more fences, roadblocks and video surveillance equipment, as well as large numbers of extra police to control access to the city from the Arab populated West Bank.

As Israel begins to isolate the Arab inhabitants of Judea and Samaria by defensive obstacles and to pursue the fight against terrorists on the other side of the barriers, United States President George W. Bush demands the creation of an Arab state within Israel.

On June 24, 2002, the President made the following statements: "The United States of America will support the creation of a Palestinian state… The Palestinian people are gifted and capable, and I am confident they can achieve a new birth for their nation… The Palestinian parliament should have the full authority of a legislative body. Local officials and government ministers need authority of their own and the independence to govern effectively. The United States, along with the European Union and Arab states, will work with Palestinian leaders to create a new constitutional framework and a working democracy for the Palestinian people. And the United States, along with others in the international community, will help the Palestinians organize and monitor fair, multi-party local elections by the end of the year, with national elections to follow… The United States, the international donor community and the World Bank stand ready to work with Palestinians on a major project of economic reform and development… If Palestinians embrace democracy, confront corruption and firmly reject terror, they can count on American support for the creation of a provisional state of Palestine. With a dedicated effort, this state could rise rapidly, as it comes to terms with Israel, Egypt, and Jordan on practical issues, such as security. The final borders, the capital and other aspects of this state's sovereignty will be negotiated between the parties, as part of a final settlement… A stable, peaceful Palestinian state is necessary to achieve the security that Israel longs for. So I challenge Israel to take concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable, credible Palestinian state. As we make progress towards security, Israeli forces need to withdraw fully to positions they held prior to September 28, 2000. And consistent with the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee, Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories must stop. The Palestinian economy must be allowed to develop. As violence subsides, freedom of movement should be restored, permitting innocent Palestinians to resume work and normal life. Palestinian legislators and officials, humanitarian and international workers, must be allowed to go about the business of building a better future. And Israel should release frozen Palestinian revenues

into honest, accountable hands… As new Palestinian institutions and new leaders emerge, demonstrating real performance on security and reform, I expect Israel to respond and work toward a final status agreement. With intensive effort by all, this agreement could be reached within three years from now. And I and my country will actively lead toward that goal."

President Bush has committed the United States, not so much toward the establishment of a peaceful Israel, but to the formation of a sovereign Palestinian nation carved out of the tiny region which is Israel.

Such events are but currents in a stream flowing inexorably toward One World Government and the establishment of a seven-year Israeli treaty which will afford the Jews the opportunity to construct their Third Temple.

Since 1987, a group of rabbinical researchers, designers, and craftsmen, under the direction of Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, have been creating in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem what they call a "Temple-in-waiting." Their efforts have resulted in a computerized visualization and blueprints for the Third Temple, and the production of ritually qualified vessels, garments, and other items necessary for a restoration of the Temple services.

Known as the Temple Institute, this organization has been at the forefront of the publication of Third Temple research. Among the items that have been or are in the process of being created are: apparel for the high priest (his eight-layered woven robe, the golden crown worn on his head, and his jeweled breastplate bearing the names of the tribes of Israel); priestly garments and the blue-purple die for the priestly fringes of the prayer shawls; the eleven sacrificial incense spices, urns, ewers, incense pans, forks, shovels, and carts for burnt offerings; the gold and silver vessels used to dispense sacrificial blood on the altar; the golden laver, flasks and measuring cups used in the libation offerings; vessels for the meal offerings; the lottery boxes for the Day of Atonement; the mortar and pestle and the stone vessels for grinding and holding the purifying ashes of the red heifer; the golden menorah; cleaving instruments and oil pitchers for replenishing the oil; silver trumpets for calling the assembly of Israel to the Temple; and the barley altar.

While a replica of the Ark of the Covenant is prominently displayed in the Temple Institute's visitors center, spokesmen for the Institute publicly state that they believe the original still exists in a secret chamber located under the Temple Mount beneath the site of the Holy of Holies. When access to the site is possible and all other ritual requirements have been met, they expect it to be recovered and take its place within the restored Temple. Elapsed time from the initial construction to completion of the Temple is estimated to require one year.

As the faithful turn watchful eyes skyward in eager anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ, their view is marred by the sinister presence of clandestine "black helicopters," a relatively new entry into the world of conspiracy, but no less an ominous phenomena for that.

The description of the machines by eyewitnesses is nearly universal: they appear to be sleek, state-of-the-art flying craft painted a deep black, allegedly to throw off radar tracking, and are usually devoid of markings or insignia. They are equipped with high intensity searchlights, and move through the skies with a silence thought impossible by today's level of technology. Their activities are equally inscrutable, for while they tend to be seen in remote areas, small fleets have been sighted flying across entire cities. The

black helicopters routinely break FAA regulations by failing to display an identifying green light and by flying below minimum height limits.

There have been reports of the helicopters pursuing citizens, and at times firing upon innocent civilians and law enforcement personnel. Witnesses have described these helicopter crews as being dressed in black uniforms, appearing as forbidding as the craft in which they travel. Sightings of the black helicopters occur throughout the United States, with a curious focus on Texas and Colorado. When asked about the origin of the airships, local authorities routinely claim they are Federal government or military craft, but until recently, the military has claimed to have no knowledge of them.

Although citing urban warfare training exercises as the purpose for their deployment, is it possible that these craft are being operated by members of the foreign militaries that have already been established in the United States?

Over thirty foreign military bases under the United Nations flag have been headquartered in the U.S. with the approval of special appointees in high Federal positions. These bases are already manned with over one million troops from Russia, Poland, Germany, Belgium, Turkey, Great Britain, Nicaragua, and Asian countries.

The purpose for their presence in the United States is due to their willingness to obey orders to fire upon U.S. citizens, orders which America's armed forces would have difficulty observing, according to the Combat Arms Survey given to U.S. Marines at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Training Center at Twenty-Nine Palms, California, on May 10, 1994. To that end, much of the United States military, as well as many National Guard and Reserve forces, are being deployed overseas.

The vacuum created by departing American soldiers has been filled by foreign military units similar to the more than two thousand Russian troops and tanks, military trucks and chemical warfare vehicles which began to arrive on the outskirts of Gulfport, Mississippi in January of 1994.

Others of the American military have been replaced by one hundred eighty foreign troops at Fort McClellan in Anniston, Alabama. Their ranks swelled to four hundred eighty on December 13, 1995, when another three hundred arrived via a large white Russian cargo plane.

As of 1995, there were more than ten thousand foreign troops at Fort Chafee, Arkansas, reportedly making preparations for twenty thousand "detainees."

Also in 1995, Russian and Eastern European troops were deployed under the United Nations flag at Fort Polk, Louisiana. German troops are known to be at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, and Fort Hood, Texas. Chinese troops are known to be at the Long Beach Naval Station in California.

There will not be any future conflict in which invading troops will arrive in the United States, for they are already here, as Al Cuppett, former Inspector for the Pentagon Joint Chiefs of Staff, attests.

"When martial law is implemented, these foreign U.N. troops will be policing our country, carrying out the plans of the New World Order.

"God is warning His people. There isn't much time before these events begin to take place. God's people need to prepare themselves in every way possible. It's not a time for fear. It's a time for prayer, preparation, and sharing our faith with a lost world."

Mr. Cuppett, a committed Christian, has, in addition to having worked for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, served nine years with the Department of Defense and twenty-two years in the United States military, including two years with the Air Staff. He holds the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, three awards of the Joint Service Medal, the complete series of Vietnamese awards, and the Joint Meritorious Unit Medal. Upon retirement, he was awarded the Secretary of Defense Civilian Service Medal. His work has taken him to thirty-one countries on four continents, and he is fluent in five languages.

The U.S. Government's policy for dealing with those opposed to the establishment of a New World Order, he describes as a blueprint for American Holocaust. He reveals that the infrastructure has already been set up to incarcerate and execute Americans, and that the locations of many of these facilities are known.

"There are at least one hundred thirty concentration camps; quietly modified facilities which have sprung up and continue to spring up across the country, seemingly devoid of activity, yet requiring strange accouterments such as barbed wire-topped fencing with the tops turned inward and helicopter wind socks. Most have good logistical supportability, with major highways and railroad transport facilities adjacent to the sites."

"These facilities, many in remote areas across our country, are set up to become concentration/detention camps, complete with gas chambers for resisters and dissidents. Generally speaking, they're set up for dissenters who will not go along with the New World Order. The 'resisters' are gun-owners who refuse to give up their weapons; the 'dissidents' are Christians, Patriots and Constitutionalists. These camps are set up. I've seen many of them."

Mr. Cuppett has revealed plans to dissolve the fifty states of America into an amalgamation of ten regions, and has exposed the existence of classified red and blue citizen lists that have been compiled for each territory.

"When you get picked up on a red pick-up, they'll take you from your home at night, probably around 4 a.m, and put you in a black van, then drive you to a helicopter waiting to fly you to an intermediate point. There, you'll be loaded onto a big sixty-four passenger CH-47 Chinook helicopter, all black, unmarked, and illegally operating under the Treaty on Open Skies.

"Then they'll fly you to one of thirty-eight cities where you'll board a 747, 737, or 727. You may be taken straight to a temporary detention facility. When you're red listed, you'll be taken to a red camp. Then you'll be executed.

"At some point, martial law will be declared. Martial law is when the writ of Habeas Corpus, to have a trial by jury, is suspended. Instead of going to the judge, you go straight to jail for a limited time. I suspect there will be a major outage, or some other crisis which will be the reason to declare martial law. At this point, the blue listed people will be picked up. At that time, the country will be regionalized into ten regions, which are already designated by FEMA.

"Be advised that it has been proven in Wyoming and at least one other location, that the black choppers have state-of-the-art radio frequency wideband jammers, and can jam cell phones and CBs while they're executing black operations missions in your area. This means that your cell phone could be jammed just before and/or during any action against you.

“In June of 1996, an FBI agent got hold of the Region Three Blue List from a CIA agent and found his own name on it, and those of several others he knew in Virginia. The Regional Blue List stated that the names on the Blue List would be picked up ‘within six weeks of the actual martial law declaration.’

“This parallels the Nazi Red/Blue List policy almost to the letter. The parallel Nazi plan was published by Heinz Hohne in his 1966 book, “The Story of the Nazi SS: The Order of the Death's Head.”

“People say, ‘It won't work.’ But it will work if the three hundred thousand Soviet troops which are already here can get the guns. The name of the game is to blackball the people to get the guns, make the militia look bad, make guns look bad, make everybody give up their guns. Once they get your gun, they've got you, unless you've got the angel of the Lord at your door. If you've got the angel of the Lord out there protecting you, it's another story.”

Are these nothing more than the neurotic ramblings of a conspiracy theorist? The sane mind certainly tends to lean in that direction when such claims are considered singly, but when taken with the other large body of evidence that has been presented here as a whole, one must consider it with at least a grain of salt, for it must be remembered that conspiracies and myths, when unveiled, are usually found to have contained a kernel of truth.

The undeniable truth is that this world is moving at great speed toward a global society in which personal freedoms and privacies will be made obsolete.

Toward that end, piercing the night with sudden shards of light, comes a new globe-girdling array of communications satellites known as Iridium. Presently hurtling across the Heavens, emitting brilliant flares from their super-reflective antenna panels, the Iridium satellite system is described as six necklaces of eleven satellites each, creating an electronically-beaded cage within which the world slowly revolves. There remains now no location, whether above the Earth or under it, from which a microchipped population will be able to hide from the omnipresent eye of the now operational Iridium satellite system.

Those who have fallen asleep and are not alert to the machinations of Satan as he pulls the strings of governments and world leaders can believe that this new millennium bears a promise of hope and peace, within which mankind will finally rise above its petty differences to live in harmony with itself and with the planet. Such people regard the future with the carefree attitude of a blissfully ignorant trout that swims along lightheartedly, quite unaware that the morsel it is reaching for contains a hidden danger: a hook that will put an abrupt end to the easygoing life that it leads.

It is obvious, however, to those who are awake and carefully watching and waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the final season of this age has arrived and the days of Noah have now been made manifest.

The family unit is under attack in our society; divorce has risen over one hundred fifty percent since 1950 (taken from the 1995 *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 115th edition, and the 2000 *National Center for Health Statistics* report), and same sex marriages have increased an average of seven hundred percent from 1990 to 2000 according to the first set of U.S. Census 2000 figures on the subject as reported by the Associated Press and Amarillo Globe.

The economy is in dire trouble, with the U.S. government 6 trillion, 220 billion, 31 million, 461 thousand, 887 dollars and 37 cents in debt, as of September 23, 2002.
Global weather is becoming wildly unpredictable, with storms growing more frequent and more violent.

Technology is soaring ever closer to the realization of an international electronic accounting system capable of tracking the complete human inventory, a system which will assist the Antichrist in implementing his insidious Mark.

The demand for a One-World Government grows stronger with every passing month, as more and more citizens and government leaders view it as the only solution to curbing the widespread acts of violence perpetrated by rogue elements of tyranny.

A cashless society could be implemented at any time, as myriad financial consultants and economic professionals have affirmed.

Morals are crumbling quicker than the proverbial cookie, and children are committing so many appalling crimes that their behavior is no longer shocking.

Bible prophecy has been fulfilled, and is being fulfilled.

To the initiated, there is no question that humanity is now living in the lasciviousness of the endtimes, for the signs of this world's passing are in abundant supply.

"*Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When her branch is tender, and the leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is almost here. Just so, when you see all these things beginning to happen, you can know that my return is near, even at the doors. Then at last this age will come to its close.*" - Matthew 24:32-34

It is important, then, that believers give all diligence to making their calling and election sure, and that a lost world not neglect such great salvation which restores imperfect people to the perfection of a Mighty Redeemer and to the righteousness with which they were originally created. Although the plan of salvation is a topic for another study, searching souls would do well to begin by examining the scriptures of Acts 2:38, James 1:27, and Matthew 25:31-46.

This particular manuscript, however, deals with future events as foretold by the Bible, specifically as described by the book of Revelation.

With that in mind, let us proceed to explore that most fascinating aspect of the Bible that proclaims future events from over two thousand years in the past, and how its relevancy pertains to us today.

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." – Revelation 16:15

1. The Charge

Revelation 1:1-3

"*The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies of everything he saw – that is, to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*"

The paragraph which opens this most enigmatic book of the Bible validates the prophecies that are about to be revealed. It declares that this Revelation was presented to Jesus Christ by God, who in turn has permitted it to fall into the hands of mortal man in order to perpetuate a forewarned humanity with respect to the events relating to the end of the age.

Prior to the lecture or testimony from any given public speaker or expert witness, respectively, the forthcoming oration or deposition is first certified by an official declaration of the specialist's credentials, proving that he is qualified to give his opinion or discuss the topic at hand. The first three verses of Revelation chapter one are equivalent in nature to this method of authentication.

It is affirmed that this disclosure of future events is derived from no less an authority than Jesus Christ, and that he received it from God the Father.

This revelation then, is introduced with the highest of qualifications, and as such, its contents should be held in high regard. It is not a work of mendacity conjured up from the overactive imagination of malevolent charlatans. Neither the whole of the Holy Bible, nor any of its component volumes, are the fictional production of any man, nor can the concluding epistle in the collection of holy works be excluded from the sphere of legitimacy. It is an authentic message from God.

As Simon Peter avowed, in 2nd Peter 1:16, "*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*"

In its Heavenly origin it is found to be contemporary with the perfection of Almighty God rather than the mortal fallibility of man, and it is due to this association that its reliability is accredited.

Upon receipt of the message, John, too, acknowledges the fact that this message is to be taken earnestly. His first act is to testify to the veracity of everything he was shown. He immediately reaffirms that, indeed, this is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The impeccable credentials that accompany this manuscript are what enable us to be confident in our belief that the prophecies contained herein are the true and accurate words of God and the Revelation of Jesus Christ, as transcribed and notarized by John the Apostle.

Jesus alerts us to the fact that the time for the fulfillment of these words is near, and advises those who read them to consider themselves blessed of God.

Why should they regard themselves in this special way?

One obvious benefit is that to those who will take the time to read His Word, He will reveal the future. Chiefly, however, readers will be encouraged with the knowledge that although troublesome times may loom on the horizon, He will come and intervene in the events of this evil world, putting an end to them and establishing an eternal kingdom of justice and righteousness.

Indeed, not only those who read, but those who take to heart what they hear and prepare themselves and their families for the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ will be numbered among the blessed of the Lord.

It is essential that steps be taken to prepare our souls for eternity, for we have not obtained a promise from Heaven that guarantees an imperviousness to persecution. In fact, Jesus warned in Matthew 10:21-31 that "*Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

"So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Jesus has assured his followers that they will endure persecutions, for if he, the head of the house, has been called Satan, then the members of his household should not expect to escape the bearing of that same label.

To that end, the life of Paul is entirely instructive. He related his accounts of ill-treatment in 2nd Corinthians 11:23-29: "*I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?*"

Others of the original apostles, without doubt loved dearly by God, were refined by the fires of tribulation.

The first New Testament martyr, Stephen was stoned to death at the hands of his fellow Jews.

James, the brother of John and the son of Zebedee, was beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I.

Philip, who preached the gospel of Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch and baptized him before being caught up into the air by a whirlwind, received a fate similar to that of his Lord, as he was scourged, thrown into prison, and then crucified.

Matthew was speared to the ground and then beheaded with a halberd.

James, the brother of Jesus, was thrown from a tower. That not deemed a sufficient dispatch, his head was further bashed in by a blacksmith's hammer.

Matthias, the replacement selected for Judas by the Holy Spirit, was stoned at Jerusalem by his own countrymen and then beheaded.

Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross.

Mark was lashed to horses and then dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria.

Simon Peter, the one to whom Jesus had bestowed the keys to the kingdom of Heaven, was crucified upside down.

Jude, the brother of James was crucified at Edessa.

Bartholomew was cruelly beaten and crucified by pagan idolators in India.

Thomas was tortured by angry pagans in Calamina, India, run through with spears, and then thrown into the flames of an oven.

Luke, the doctor who had witnessed the many healing miracles of the Lord, was hung from an olive tree in Athens.

Let us not forget also the beheading of John the Baptist, and the eventual demise of the Apostle Paul, who was taken to the execution block in his beloved Rome and beheaded.

John, known as the disciple whom Jesus loved, was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil but was miraculously unharmed. As a result, the Emperor Domitian banished him to the isle of Patmos, where he wrote down the message given to him by God and Jesus Christ that today bears the title of "The Revelation." Of the inner circle of Jesus' handpicked twelve, he was the only apostle to escape a violent death.

This story of persecution is abhorrent to many professing Christians in America, for their social conditioning and fear of being dislodged from their realms of comfortable affluence prevents them from believing that God would permit 1st Peter 1:6,7 to be true, in which it states that believers in Christ will "*suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*"

It is this presumption of guaranteed well-being, unfounded in scripture, which is responsible for the recent theology of pre-tribulation rapture.

Persecution is a constant companion of those in third world nations, where the message of Revelation is viewed as one of hope and an assurance of justice and deliverance, yet a diametrically opposed view held by the world's minority elite, is that it is largely a promise of pain and violence by which they are terrified.

The pre-tribulation rapture theory cannot be invalidated due to the nature of its conception, yet an excessive fear of the biblical promise of Christian persecution is unhealthy for spiritual life, for Matthew 10:39 explains that "*by gaining his life a man will lose it; by losing his life for my sake, he will gain it.*" (NEB)

In Mark 8:34-38 this sentiment is echoed. "*If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps, he must give up all right to himself, take up his cross and follow me. The man who tries to save his life will lose it; it is the man who loses his life for my sake and the gospel's who will save it. What good can it do a man to gain the whole world at the price of his own soul? What can a man offer to buy back his soul once he has lost it? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in the Father's glory with the holy angels around him.*" (PME)

Christians must not allow themselves to be lead about by fear, creating theologies that serve no purpose save for the preservation of emotional securities.

Indeed, 2nd Timothy 4:3 tells us that "*the time will come when men will not listen to the true teaching, but will follow their own desires, and will collect for themselves more and more teachers who will tell them what they are itching to hear.*" (TEV)

If the import of the Revelation message is to be fully grasped by humanity, it must by necessity be studied without the supplementary inspiration of fears and pre-conceived ideas. It is essential that the correspondence of Jesus Christ be preserved in its entirety, with care taken to prevent the corruption of its content by those who would interpret it according to the dictates of a personal or corporate agenda. It is imperative that the text be permitted to mean what it says. Any troublesome implications which might then arise as a result must then be managed with the help of God.

Those persons who have read the book of Revelation and are sincere in discovering the true message of Jesus Christ are correct to consider themselves among the blessed. While liberty was earlier taken to determine the benefits that accrue to such a one as a result of the blessing, the specific quality of blessing that has been transferred to the recipient has not yet been ascertained.

In the English language, the word "blessed" is possessed of three distinct connotations. Chiefly, it means "religious." Secondarily, it denotes "divinity." Thirdly, it signifies "happiness." Thus, the faithful readers of the book of Revelation are to consider themselves either god-fearing, angelic, or joyful. What remains to be determined is which of the three meanings the Revelator had in mind as he penned the third verse of chapter one.

Would it be reasonable for readers to claim for themselves a nature equal to that of God or the angels simply because they have perused the book of Revelation? Such a claim would be absurd. Many who do not believe in Jesus or God have read the book of Revelation. The experience has yet to transform a single one of them into a divine being. Nor would it necessarily convert them into becoming believers of Christ.

However, those who read can take joy in the fact that the future has been made known to them. With this advance knowledge, any claims of ignorance concerning the laws of God or the consequences for violating them tendered at the time of the Lord's return will be insufficient to justify the actions of an unjust world. As such, it is a very joyous and grateful humanity who, having been alerted to these things beforehand, are preparing for the return of Christ in anticipation of being found ready and worthy of a crown of glory which will never fade away. It is occasion for joy, indeed, to understand that the book of Revelation is the true, certified word of God, and to know that the return of Jesus Christ is imminent!

In fact, the Greek word selected by John which has been translated into the English language as the word "blessed" is "makarios," a word meaning "happy," proving the above conclusion to be true and validating the use of the word in many other translations of scripture such as the TEV when it says that "*Happy is the one who reads this book, and happy are those who listen to the words of this prophetic message and obey what is written in this book! For the time is near when all this will happen.*"

The following question must be asked of any who would profess a belief in the only begotten son of God: "Do you derive joy from a reading of the Revelation scriptures?" If not, then a diligent introspection of your fears and priorities would be appropriate, for it was written to produce that express response.

"*John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

"*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.*

"*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." - Revelation 1:4-9

Here again, the book of Revelation produces its credentials. John declares his greeting to the recipients of this book, seven particular churches in the Roman province of Asia Minor, and relays further greetings from the document's authors, God and Jesus Christ, as well as the seven spirits which stand before the Heavenly throne.

With glory and praise, John exalts the Lord Jesus Christ, and brings to remembrance the fact that one day soon he will return in the clouds and be seen by all men.

From what possible location could the Messiah be observed by others from every vantage point all over the world? It is an interesting exercise to postulate how this feat will be accomplished. If it will be possible to view the Lord in the sky over North America, then it follows that he would not be able to be seen by those in Australia or Asia.

Whether he is able to be seen by all men due to remaining in the air for twenty-four hours, thus making himself known to the entire population of the world as the earth rotates on its axis, or whether Jesus returns in only one location, from which the event is broadcast by television and internet via satellite transmission to every corner of the world, the exact method by which the returning Messiah will achieve this effect is inconsequential.

It matters not how this will be accomplished. It is enough to know that it will occur.

Continuing the declaration of credentials, the author of Revelation identifies himself as the Alpha and Omega, the One who is, who was, and who is to come. The Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, as Omega is the last. In the concluding volume of the Bible these two letters are indicative of God the Father, and is in one

instance invoked as a special designation of Christ, signifying his role in the redemptive plan for mankind.

While mention is also made of seven spirits before the throne of God, it should be pointed out at this time that while this book endeavors to answer the majority of questions one might raise concerning the content of the prophecies of Revelation, it would be pointless to linger over portions of scripture which are irrelevant to the fate of mankind in relation to the end of the age. To do so would be to change the course of this manuscript and to frustrate the reader with exhaustive investigations into every minuscule element mentioned by the Revelator, such as the significance of the emerald rainbow and the identity of the living creatures. The space required to properly illuminate the nature of these seven spirits would not be justified given the objective of this book and as such, will not be explored in-depth here.

It must therefore suffice to say that they are symbolic manifestations of the Holy Spirit residing in each of the addressed congregations (see Matthew 18:20). In any event, the role of the seven spirits in the affairs of Revelation is exceedingly minor, for they are not mentioned after the point at which the judgments of God commence to falling upon an unrighteous planet.

It is worth noting that the Lord's return will not be greeted with joy and celebration, but will instead herald a time of mourning. The wicked inhabitants of the earth will realize that the God whose existence they had for so long denied or ignored has returned for His bride and left them behind. As many open their Bibles for perhaps the first time and turn to the book of Revelation, a world will begin to weep and shudder in trepidation of the judgment that is to come.

"*I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said, "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."*

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches." - Revelation 1:9-20

A magnificent silvery voice, rich in timbre like that of a trumpet, sounds from behind John, announcing that the glorious wonders about to be revealed are to be written down and sent on to the seven churches in the province of Asia.

The Revelator turns to see the breathtaking image of a man resplendent with shimmering brilliance, standing among seven blazing lampstands of fire which flicker and curl in the turbulence of a nonexistent wind. From one sparkling hand, an incandescent glory burns white hot with the crackling energy of seven stars which blaze through the clutched fingers of the apparition.

Images exploded in John's mind. The face of him who calmed a raging storm and walked upon the waters of Galilee floated before his eyes. A compassionate visage which had displayed mercy on a crowd of five thousand weary, famished people and had miraculously broken five loaves of bread and two fish into enough portions that the multitude's hunger was satisfied and twelve baskets of food were left over… A grief-stricken face that had wept over the death of Lazarus and then with authority had restored him to life through the power of his words… A stern countenance, angry with the Pharisees for turning his Father's house into a den of thieves… A smiling face which delighted in the little children which gathered around him along the hillsides of Judea… Tortured features which writhed in agony upon a Roman cross of crucifixion… The same face which now gazed at him with a noble majesty from among the seven golden lampstands.

With instant recognition of the glorious one standing before him, John's strength deserted him as joy flooded his heart and he collapsed at the feet of his Lord in reverent worship.

By his words, we too, recognize the Messiah, for while others of the human race were resurrected only to fall to the predator of death once more, there remains one unique soul who, having been restored from death, put on incorruptible life rather than a second robe of mortality. This one, who, while in the grave, came into possession of the keys to death and Hades, can be no other personality, for scripture reveals that when Jesus died, he descended into the lowermost parts of the earth and obtained those same keys before his resurrection. (Ephesians 4:8-10; 1st Peter 3:18-20)

As the risen Lord talks with his disciple, the seven lampstands are revealed as images of typology, representing the seven churches of the province of Asia. The seven stars in his right hand are representative of the seven angels of those churches.

The term "angels of the churches" is a curious designation. If its purpose is to identify Heavenly beings, then the implication is made that for every gathering of believers there has been assigned an angel. One must ask what objective would be accomplished by such an act?

If one were to indulge in a measure of speculation, a number of probable answers would likely result. Yet regardless of the conjectured answer, the phrase begs the question of why God, with a message for mankind, would choose to have that correspondence delivered to a number of Heavenly angels, rather than to the intended recipients of His words? It is clearly indicated that each of the seven letters are to be given to the angel of its respective church. It is also abundantly clear that the contents of the letters are intended for the rebuke and correction of the human associates of those churches who hold to the teachings of Balaam, Jezebel, and the Nicolaitans. Although destined for the fires of Hell, they have procured the grace of God through the blood of Jesus Christ to repent of their wickedness and to receive the crown of eternal life.

Such salvation was not secured for the angels, for Hebrews 2:14-16 tells us that it was not for the angels that Christ died, but for the descendants of Abraham, of whom Gentile believers have also become scions (Galatians 3:29).

Thus the paradox is made manifest, for though the message of Revelation was written to mankind, as Revelation 1:1 affirms, its letters were addressed unto beings known as "angels."

It is reasonable to expect a penned letter of correspondence to be addressed to the person toward whom the message has been directed. It is also reasonable to expect to find an appearance of the name of that same person in the salutation. The discrepancy of Revelation is that while it is a message written to humankind, it is addressed to seven specific angels.

If the expression "angels of the churches" is truly a designation of supernatural servants of God, the proverbial container of vermiculated annelids then becomes fully opened.

If it was God's desire for the message to be given to angels, why then would He not simply deliver it to them directly? What would be the significance of furnishing John with the information and designating him as the letter carrier? In what manner could a mortal be expected to contact a spiritual being?

On the other hand, if it was God's intention that it be given to mankind, what could His purpose have been in addressing His Revelation to the "angels of the churches?"

Seeing as how the language of the Revelation letters seems to contradict itself, a closer examination of the scriptures is justified. Allowing it to remain unexplained and defending such inaction by maintaining that this atypical behavior is characteristic of a God whose ways are far above the capacity of mankind to figure out, is to evade the issue.

Indeed, the incongruity can be explained without resorting to such tactics. At the root of the issue is the enigmatic "angel" indicator, which when analyzed under the microscope of the original Greek language, reveals a rather intriguing detail.

The word "angel" (from the Greek "aggelos") is a designation of "messenger" and is thus applied to represent any vehicle of God sent forth to accomplish His will. It is used of a human messenger (Job 1:14; 1st Samuel 11:3; Luke 7:24; 9:52), of prophets (Isaiah 42:19; Haggai 1:13), and of priests (Malachi 2:7). It is also administered to such impersonal agents as the pestilence (2 Samuel 24:16, 17; 2 Kings 19:35) and the wind (Psalm 104:4). The word does not denote the nature of the messenger, but only the office.

Paul's words in Ephesians 6:21, 22 are most illuminating: "*Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.*"

The letter to the Church in Ephesus was sent via Tychicus, a fellow servant of the Lord. Paul's letter was thus conferred upon his "aggelos" (messenger) to the Ephesians.

Colossians 4:7-9 is similar: "*Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.*"

Two messengers were charged with delivering the letter of Colossians to that municipality, namely Tychicus and Onesimus.

Note 1st Thessalonians 5:27: "*I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.*"

It was a courier of Thessalonika whom Paul charged with the delivery of his message to the congregation of believers dwelling there.

In Titus 3:12 Paul requested that, "*As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there.*"

In this instance, Paul was undecided as to who would be his "aggelos" to Titus.

The word "aggelos" simply denoted a messenger, whether divine or mortal, sentient or inanimate. Indeed, the NIV notes that Revelation 1:20 can be rendered, "*The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches.*" The Living Bible phrases it, "*the leaders of the churches.*"

Thus, the charge of dispatching the sacred scrolls to "the angels of the churches" is nothing more than the Revelator's commission to release the epistles into the care of human couriers with the instruction to deliver them to their designated locations. With John exiled on the island of Patmos, he was incapable of carrying out the directive himself, and thus the necessity of the messengers becomes evident.

In chapters two and three of Revelation are displayed the seven personal letters of Jesus Christ to his churches in Asia. While preliminary observations concerning these communiqués have been made in the initial chapter of this manuscript, the import of the correspondence and its relevance to modern society is made known only through extensive analysis. Such a report awaits the reader on the pages of a subsequent chapter.

2. Personal Correspondence

In Revelation chapters two and three, Jesus imparts a number of personal words for the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia Minor. Specifically, these are the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Before the study of these seven particular letters gets underway, there exists a remarkable state of affairs that one must bear in mind; an extraordinary phenomenon which when fully realized, staggers the mind and casts each letter in a fresh light. The marvel, when realized, is to comprehend the fact that these letters are nothing less than the personal transcribed assessments of spiritual maturity by Jesus Christ concerning seven specific groups of believers!

Were it routine for letters from Heaven to be received with regularity in today's society, it would be a markedly different world in which we live, for it would no longer be possible to deny the existence of sin in our lives. No longer would provisions be made for the inability of persons to take responsibility for their actions. Morality would no longer be defined by the situation or the self, and each individual would have the ability to distinguish without question their specific level of spiritual maturity.

Such would be the difference in our lives were we to benefit from Heaven's correspondence in the form of a parchment or audible word, yet mankind forgets that it is already in possession of writings from the Master; writings of encouragement and admonition that are ignored, or at the very least, esteemed at less than their full value by a humanity that longs for the spectacular.

God's personal letter to this world, the Holy Bible, should be regarded with the same devotion as would be ascribed to any acquaintance with a miraculous manifestation of His will. However, with humans being the temporal creatures that they are, tending to place their belief only in things that can be discovered with their senses or proven through their sciences, their desultory attempts to succeed in discerning the matters of the spirit are now and again met with failure.

With this being the case, it is readily comprehensible why mankind would take to heart a miraculously-delivered personal message from God, and take for granted His written word which was taken down by holy men of old as the Holy Spirit whispered into their minds and proclaimed through their very mouths.

Nevertheless, Jesus said in Matthew 12:39 that it is "*A wicked and adulterous generation"* [that] *"asks for a miraculous sign! ...None will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.*"

The Divine Spirit who coordinates this dynamic universe in which we live does not desire to prove His existence by forcing it upon us through miracles, visions, appearances, audible voices, and through the giving of supernatural powers to the extent that a world which would rather not hear has *no choice* but to believe in Him and His eternal kingdom. Rather, it is His will that He be accepted on the basis of faith.

"*The anger of God is being revealed from Heaven against all the impiety and depravity of men who keep truth imprisoned in their wickedness. For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them since God himself has made it plain. Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity – however invisible – have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made. That is why such people are without*

excuse; they knew God and yet refused to honor him as God or to thank him; instead, they made nonsense out of logic and their empty minds were darkened. The more they called themselves philosophers, the more stupid they grew, until they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for a worthless imitation, for the image of mortal man, of birds, of quadrupeds and reptiles. That is why God left them to their filthy enjoyments and the practices with which they dishonor their own bodies, since they have given up divine truth for a lie and have worshipped and served creatures instead of the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen!" – Romans 1:18-25 (JB)

"*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*" – Hebrews 11:1-3

"*…He has no wish that any man should be destroyed; he wishes that all men should find the way to repentance.*" – 2nd Peter 3:9 (PME)

Many there be which disqualify themselves from eternal paradise due to an unwillingness to believe in a Supreme Deity who has the temerity to judge the eternal souls of men according to their compliance with the standards of morality and spiritual maturity which He has defined and recorded in His Word.

In the eyes of the eternally blind, a God of love would never involve Himself with judgment and punishment concerning the "children" He has created out of the dust and brought to life by breathing within them the essence of His own Holy Spirit. Their concept of a God of love cannot also contain visions of a lake of fire, within which those judged to have missed the mark weep and gnash their teeth in an endless, eternal torment.

Unable to comprehend the seeming disparity, they choose to disbelieve in the very existence of such a situation. Thus, for many, Heaven and Hell are of no more substance than the vapors of a New England fog and God is regarded as nothing more than a psychological support for the emotionally impaired.

Such people neglect to realize that the God of love created His children only after first preparing for them a paradise called Eden, in which nothing existed that was not found to be good and lovely according to the standards of His perfection. It was not the God of love who altered that state of harmonious bliss, nor did He introduce the standard of "less than excellence" (also known as the word "sin") into the world.

For that, mankind has no one to blame except itself, for Adam and Eve, the progenitors of the human race, heeded the voice of the father of evil, entertained disobedient thoughts, and plunged themselves, their unborn offspring, and the earth itself into an abnormal, misshapen morass from which mankind has been forced to eke out a deplorable existence ever since in a fallen, imperfect condition that now scarcely resembles even a frail shadow of the former glory that had once been given to them.

But the God of love had compassion on His creations, and formulated a solution by which the imperfections could be remedied. We are now justified by faith and can once again achieve perfection, through the loving provisions of a compassionate God.

"*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" – John 3:16

Those who follow the recipe for restoration will be reinstated as sons and daughters of the King of Creation, co-regents with Christ, and heirs of eternal salvation.

Those who see the requirements as too restrictive will preserve their lives on earth only to lose them to the fires of judgment at the second death.

Indeed, the mundane man chafes at the cord of authority, and is forever in search of the blade that can sever it from him, or barring that, ascertaining a method by which the line may be played out to a point where it is no longer restraining. To believe in the very existence of a God is to imply that human beings are property belonging to the One who made them, and this concept does not rest comfortably around the neck of fallen man who is already engaged in an endeavor to break free of authority. Ownership implies rights, or more accurately from man's perspective, the lack of rights. Thus the very existence of God is rejected because to profess a belief in Him would be to acknowledge that He has a voice in the direction mankind would travel.

Rather, the world desires to receive all of the benefits of perfection while being permitted to remain in their imperfect state. To wish for the approval of God and the treasures of His Heaven without having to comply with His rules is to want your cake and to eat it, as well. That is childish, immature thinking by any standard you care to invoke.

The owner of a business sets down the rules of conduct for his employees. When those rules are contravened, punishment swiftly follows. An associate with a generous share of violations will eventually find his employment terminated. The same man who finds nothing strange or cruel about this behavior, inexplicably declares it to be just so when God takes exactly the same action.

The head of a household develops a code of conduct to be followed in his home and expects his children and guests to abide by it. To reject such a code established by the one in authority is to endure the punishment for the misbehavior.

Title-holders of automobiles are known to frequently proclaim such policies. Popular prohibited activities include smoking, eating, and making excessive noise, while a couple of common compulsory exercises involve the wiping of one's feet before entering the vehicle and the requirement for occupants to endure the radio frequency preferred by the driver.

Those who find the rules to be excessive, improper, or offensive are simply irrelevant, for the entitlement to make those determinations belongs solely to the owner. As the Creator, and thus, the owner of this world and its people, God is uniquely qualified to draft the requirements for conduct. Is it reasonable to expect God to allow His rules to be broken without imposing consequences for those actions? What then would be the purpose of establishing those rules at the outset? If there exists no behavior which will be subjected to punishment, then the establishment of a set of laws would be a futile exercise and complete waste of resources.

Those who would prefer a vacuum of morality to being held to the holy standards of the Bible would do well to remember the extent of their involvement in the formation of the universe, an involvement which was nonexistent.

"*Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone— while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?*" – Job 38:4-7

As even secular society affirms, it is permitted only the creator, owner, or legal authority to determine the fate of any particular object. God is the creator, Satan has become its owner, and Jesus Christ represents the legal authority concerning this world.

There exists no place for imperfect individuals in determining the course mankind will take, and in fact, the earth is under the rule of the Prince of Darkness, for the original Owner has given it to him. This explains why unfortuitous acts befall honorable people.

"*The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.*" – Luke 4:5, 6

One may ask why the God of love turned over His creation to an evil, sadistic lord, but the situation owes its existence to a mankind who chose to exercise his own free will apart from the wishes of his Creator. When Adam fell into his defective state, his imperfection infected the very fabric of the universe. Thus, two distinct milieus resolved out of the eternity of creation and became anathema to each other. One ambit was called Perfection while the other was known as Imperfection, and mankind was trapped in the latter of its own hand. Lucifer's place was no longer found in Perfection, for he, too, had developed a flaw, and his dominion became the realm of Imperfection, the only remaining abode he could possibly inhabit.

The God of love created a way for mankind to escape that kingdom of evil and be reconciled to Him, but the reunion cannot take place through the inaction of man. The formula for restoration must be followed; the regulations imposed must be obeyed. Those who place their heads in the sand of denial or rail about the standards to which they are held will accomplish nothing except to remain along with the demonic horde in the realm of Imperfection when the Creator restores his people to Himself and creates a new and perfect Heaven and Earth. At that time, when the final shred of the influence of holiness is removed from Imperfection, all who remain inside will be transferred to a perfectly designed habitat capable of containing imperfect souls in such a way as to eliminate the possibility of contamination.

The name of this facility is called Hell. The God of love does not wish for any mortal to take up residence inside it, and in fact, created it to contain the imperfection of the cherubim, rather than that of man.

"*Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*" – Matthew 25:41

The love of God for His creations is made manifest in His Word and the seven personal letters sent to mankind by Jesus Christ. The messages contained in these letters were deemed important enough by the Lord to have dispatched them in addition to the scriptures that mankind was already in possession of, and in addition to the measure of the Holy Spirit that was at work in the lives of the redeemed, leading and guiding them into all truth. What was this instruction that the ascended Master considered essential to underscore once again from his lofty home in Perfection? The revelation begins with the church in Ephesus.

3. The Letter to the Church at Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

"*To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*"

The ascended Lord directs his attention first to the congregation at Ephesus, revealing the testimony that he has proclaimed unto the Father concerning them. The declaration begins with magnificent words of endorsement.

They have been found to be an indomitable assembly; persistent, unyielding standard bearers of Christ and vigorous stanchions of the faith. They cannot endure the stench of wickedness, and with revulsion have cast uncleanness from their presence, finding even the clothing stained by sin to be insufferable. Those of the community proclaiming to be adherents of Christianity are closely scrutinized in order to determine their degree of devotion to Christ and whether or not the beliefs they espouse are at unity with the teachings of scripture. In this manner, many liars and false believers have been unmasked as seditionists and servants of their own carnality.

With an unswerving loyalty, the Ephesians remained committed to the faith even while suffering much persecution for the sake of their Lord, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ with an unrelenting energy. The source of their indefatigable strength lay in the tribulations themselves, ordeals which impelled them further from attempts at self-reliance and ever closer to an unconditional trust in the eternal Father. The words of God were deemed by these first century Christians to be more precious than life, and in this manner was glory found in infirmity.

On its surface, this congregation appears to be mighty in the faith, yet the testimony of the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand is not without accusation.

From beneath the flurry of good works, a small although not insignificant transgression has been hidden which has corrupted their souls and tainted their worship with iniquity. It is an offense which, if not remedied, will result in the removal of their lampstand.

Jesus previously explained in Revelation 1:20 that the lampstands were symbolic images of the seven churches of Asia. When the symbolism is removed from the scripture, it becomes evident that this is a warning to the Ephesus church that it is in danger of being removed from its place.

"*If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your* [church] *from its place.*" – Revelation 2:5

What is the "place" of the church, if it is not in Heaven at the side of Jesus Christ as his bride? (Revelation 19:6-9; 21:2-4)

For the Ephesians to lose their place, then, would be to lose their position in Heaven and to take up residence along with the five foolish virgins of Matthew chapter twenty-five in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

Even if the term "place" is a reference to the earthly location of the city of Ephesus, to say that the church will be removed from that place is to say that no godly presence will exist in that region by any means; a distinction which places the inhabitants of Ephesus on the wrong side of Heaven at the end of the age. The end result of this latter interpretation, then, is identical to the former, and indicates that unless repentance springs anew from the hearts of this congregation, they will abide eternally in the place of torment created for the devil and his angels.

The implications for the modern world are sobering, as they present for mankind's consideration the fact that in the eyes of a Creator searching for perfection, a host of good deeds cannot outweigh even a solitary sin. The presence of imperfection, regardless of how slight, renders the creation worthless, and the defect, like kindling, is fit only to be burned in the fire.

If this action is perceived as unjust, excessive, or monstrous behavior on the part of a holy God, then what is mankind to do about it? Who is Man to ascend to the judgment seat and place God on trial? Where are God's peers that would comprise a jury? Or would Man deprive God of even the justice that he accords his fellows, and convict Him without due process? Should Man find his Creator guilty, how would the sentencing be executed upon the Almighty?

Rather than dwell on these useless thoughts, mankind would do well to consider the question asked of God in Hebrews 2:6.

"*What is man that you should spare a thought for him, the son of man that you should care for him?*" (JB)

The fact is that bad deeds cannot be outweighed by a sufficient quantity of good works. If this is a difficult concept for the world to accept, what will its course of action become? Will humanity pray that the Lord would help them to accept what they cannot change, or will they choose to reject the law as well as the One who gave it? If the latter option is selected, then in the words of the Apostle Peter, where will they go?

"*Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life.*" - John 6:68 (TEV)

The interaction between evil goods and moral ballast is explained in Haggai 2:10-13.

"*On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Haggai:*

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Ask the priests what the law says: If a person carries consecrated meat in the fold of his garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, oil or other food, does it become consecrated?'

"The priests answered, "No."

"Then Haggai said, "If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?" "Yes," the priests replied, "it becomes defiled."

Almighty God asked the supercilious priests a question. "Does the touch of holiness sanctify unclean things?" The priests correctly answered that it did not.

God deigned to make a second inquiry of His priests. "Does the touch of wickedness defile holy things?" Again the clerics answered correctly, this time in the affirmative.

Even in the natural, this law can be illustrated through the employ of a spotless white glove and a muddy field. When the glove is placed in the mud, does the field then become clean? The answer is of course not. Does the white glove become soiled from the contact of the miry earth? It most certainly does.

In this manner, holiness is nullified by uncleanness. Although the Ephesians possessed an apron full of good deeds, their virtue was negated and made unrighteous by the one unclean article that also resided in the apron.

The holy objects did not cause the unclean item to become holy. On the contrary, the unclean thing had the effect of corrupting the pure objects with filth that a perfect God could not accept.

Galatians 5:9 – "*A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.*"

A remarkable truth is revealed in 1st Peter 4:18: "*And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*"

The righteous, who have not a single unclean item in their apron, will not achieve salvation by any great margin. If the blameless are scarcely saved, where does that leave the blemished?

Isaiah 64:6 illuminates the issue more clearly when it says that "*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*"

The Ephesians have permitted a single uncleanness to remain among them, a sinful defect that will bar their entry into Perfection if it is not removed.

The abnormality is not the crippling effects of slander. It is not the diseased condition of fornication. They have not been blinded by a murderous rage, nor is blasphemy a festering sore upon their brow. The vomit of idol worship has not stained their clothing, nor have their mouths been twisted into lying sneers.

Rather, the defect is one of the heart, for the accusation against them is that they have forsaken their first love. A directive of God had been discarded like driftwood upon the sands of life, and the mighty Ephesians were found guilty of imperfection.

The lesson to be learned from the congregation at Ephesus is one of importunity. In this, Matthew 7:7 is most illuminating.

"*Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking [reverently] and [the door] will be opened to you.* " (Amp)

The desired attitude is one of diligent persistence. As Matthew Henry so beautifully puts it, "Pray; pray often; pray with sincerity and seriousness; pray, and pray again; make conscience of prayer, and be constant in it; make a business of prayer, and be earnest in it. Ask, as a beggar asks alms… Ask as a traveler asks the way… Seek, as for a thing of value that we have lost, or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls… Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door… We must not only ask, but knock; we must come to God's door, must ask importunately; not only pray, but plead and wrestle with God; we must seek diligently; we must continue knocking; must persevere in prayer, and in the use of means; must endure to the end in the duty."

The kingdom of God must be sought with persistence. The door of Heaven must never cease to reverberate with the sound of knocking. A barrage of prayers should never cease to cascade from the lips of the servants of the Most Holy.

Complacency is a devil that whispers encouraging words of rest to the importune, developing the impression that the act of striving diligently towards perfection is equal to the perfection itself. Those caught in its snare are deluded into believing that they have achieved the coveted goal of excellence, forgetting that perfection is a destination inaccessible to the soul encased in imperfect flesh (1st Corinthians 13:9-12). In their error, those trapped in Satan's lie cease to work toward the objective, and understandably so, for what is the sense of continuing to pursue that which is already possessed?

Christians must guard against the temptation to become complacent, for in complacency lies the perception that the spirit has reached the pinnacle of sanctity and is now required only to maintain the position. This has the effect of reducing the force of effort put forth for the purpose of securing favor in the eyes of the Lord, diminishing it to the point where the output previously expended while endeavoring to overcome the summit becomes many times greater than the expenditure now emanating from a self-righteous soul lounging on a plateau of perceived accomplishment.

Without controversy, the law of God is comprised of commands varying in degrees of magnitude.

"*Alas, for you, scribes and Pharisees, you utter frauds! For you pay your tithe on mint and dill and cummin, and neglect the things which carry far more weight in the Law – justice, mercy, and good faith. These are the things you should have observed – without neglecting the others.*" - Matthew 23:23 (PME)

"'*Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*"' - Matthew 22:36-39

Although a number of regulations were imputed a worth exceeding that of other commandments, the directives of God are to be obeyed regardless of their legislative stature. Indeed, the lesser matters are not trivial issues which can be accepted or rejected at the discretion of mortal man, but are royal decrees to which obedience is compulsory.

A divine law does not cease to become such due to the fact that it is dwarfed in significance by other declarations.

James 2:10 asserts that all of God's law must be obeyed, for to fail in one area is to fail in them all.

"*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*"

The neglect of the Ephesians to persist in the affairs of their first love was transgression sufficient to pull this mighty church down from perfection, their obedience to the greater commandments notwithstanding.

The lesson to be learned from the Ephesus situation is then one of importunity. The servant of God is to continue to put into practice his knowledge of the scriptures. He is not to rest from his works, but must continue to run with perseverance the race that has been marked out for him. He must fix his eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Disciples of Christ must consider him who

endured such opposition from sinful men, so that they will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

The warning of Jesus is clear: It is imperative that the Christian not grow weary of his righteous acts, for to lose heart will result in the forsaking of the first love, a condition in which the hairline fracture of imperfection will further grow and crack until the beautiful vessel is split in pieces and worthy only to be thrown into the furnace and burned. Instead, the encouragement from the Lord is to press on.

4. The Letter to the Church at Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11

"To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death."

Jesus begins his letter to the Smyrna church by empathizing with their situation. The congregation at this location suffers from disease and poverty, yet their poor condition is not the result of a lack of faith or an abundance of sin. It is with comforting words that the Lord assures them of the continuing presence of the Father.

It was perhaps with a gentle smile that Jesus spoke his words of encouragement, for while his own human spirit had felt abandoned by God at Calvary and had cried out to Heaven for an explanation of the desertion, the Almighty had not forsaken His only begotten Son, and neither has He forsaken the downtrodden saints of the city of Smyrna.

While prone to sickness, disease, and debilitating injury, they were also afflicted with the crippling infirmity of poverty, and thus were unable to afford adequate medical care. Mark 5:25, 26 tells us that doctors were no more affordable in ancient times than they are today, when it says that "*Among them was a woman who had suffered from haemorrhages for twelve years and who had gone through a great deal at the hands of many doctors, spending all her money in the process.*" (PME)

Unable to work in the fields due to the hindrance of a withered hand, a twisted leg, or a vomitous constitution, they could not depend on themselves to affect a change in their situation. Unable to work, they received no wage, which resulted in their inability to afford a physician. Without medical attention their condition would not improve, and of course in their afflicted state they were unable to work in order to earn the necessary currency. Thus the Smyrnans endured a vicious cycle.

They could not depend on their fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord to relieve their suffering, for each of them was in the same dire situation. Trust could not be placed in the Roman government to meet their needs, for the Christian church in the first century was a persecuted body and to request assistance from that quarter would have been to invite further abuse.

Without the means to reverse their circumstances, their only recourse was to place complete trust in God, the Great Physician, and to pray that their needs would be met according to His riches in glory.

The result of such total dependence on God was the accumulation of an abundance of Heavenly treasure, for having been tested in the furnace of life, they were found as pure gold in the sight of the Lord.

Smyrna was a city robed in devilish deception, and the saints of God were surrounded by many wolves disguised as harmless lambs. These pretended to be Jews and professed a kindred spirit, but their tongues were forked arrows with which they launched an assault of falsehood in an attempt to mask their true beliefs and heritage. Yet the one who holds the seven stars in his hand was not fooled and exposed their true nature as a congregation of Satan.

Paul, initially known as Saul, once worshipped in the tabernacle of Satan, as well, arresting Christians and executing them upon the altar of the infernal one. A fierce adherent to Judaism, Paul believed that the will of God was being served by the annihilation of the insolent Jews who had rejected the law of Moses and were encouraging others to do the same. It was Paul who held the clothes of those who murdered Stephen, and watched the grisly spectacle with approval. (Acts 7:58; 8:1)

Having obtained warrants for the execution of believers in Damascus, Paul was on his way there with an armed contingent of angry Jews when the Lord hauled him from the saddle and tossed him to the ground like a sack of wheat. As his eyes were blinded in a blaze of glorious light, he was excoriated by a voice that reverberated like thunder, and the dazed Pharisee discovered that he was in serious error.

In his sincerity to please God, Paul turned from his murderous ways and became a temple of worship directed to the one true God, yet in the city of Smyrna there was no such sincerity in the hearts of the church of Satan.

The alarm is sounded by Jesus Christ that a period of great suffering is about to befall the pure in heart, for the church of Satan, which to this point has been content to dwell together peacefully with the saints of God under a mask of fellowship, will reveal its true nature and begin a cruel and sadistic campaign of terror against them.

Believers will be dragged out of their homes and pursued throughout the city; those captured will be beaten and jailed in torturous prisons; families will be torn apart and their possessions will be taken from them, as will many of their lives.

Through intense suffering, after the manner of Job's testing, Satan will assess the strength of the saints' resolve to remain true to their Lord and attempt to capture their souls for himself.

Is it unfair of God to allow such tragedy to befall the righteous? Is it an incomprehensible injustice that is perpetuated when He allows the poor to become poorer? Is it horrific and appalling that He permits the downtrodden to become crushed to dust?

Oh, how the soul of man longs to disbar God from the judgment seat and retire Him to the witness stand where He can be interrogated and made to serve sentence!
Isaiah 55:8,9 explains that the reasoning of God is beyond the ability of mankind to figure out.

"*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*"

A world ill at ease with the knowledge that God may apportion calamity or consent to its dissemination for the purpose of accomplishing His exalted will, can take comfort in the fact that He is a God of love and is concerned for our well-being, as Matthew 7:9-11 affirms.

"*Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*"

Yet when the temporal realm comes into conflict with that of the spirit, the desirable earthly gifts must be set aside in order that the greater work be accomplished, the effects of which mankind cannot always ascertain.

The full value of these trials are known only unto the Lord, whose tests develop perseverance and bring about righteousness (James 1:2-4), yet a partial understanding can be grasped through scriptures such as Hebrews 12:5-11.

"*And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.*

"Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!

"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Almighty God regards the concern for eternal souls as greater than the concern for the comfort of temporary bodies diseased with the imperfection of sin, although mankind frequently prefers to reverse the equation. In point of fact, it is not His desire that a single soul remain in its imperfect state.

2nd Peter 3:9 – "*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*"

Matthew 10:28 is a reminder that life is fleeting and of value only in its preparatory capacity for eternity.

"*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*"

Without a proper relationship with God, adversity will tend to go unrecognized as a professor of righteousness and peace, being regarded as nothing so much as even a cultivation of perseverance, but rather a dreadful affair which a righteous and loving God should have prevented. Until there exists in an individual's life something that corresponds to the spiritual state of being, he will be incapable of discerning along lines other than those pertaining to his own earthly situation.

Conversely, a close relationship with God reveals that to endure tragedy is a valued privilege, for the stumbling blocks of life have been strategically positioned to develop strength in the spirit as they are hurdled. The justification of man aligns death in proper perspective, for it is not an enemy to be feared, but a foe which has been defeated, as well as a welcome corridor to paradise.

2nd Timothy 1:10 – "*but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*"

1st Corinthians 15:54,55 – "*When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*"

2nd Corinthians 12:9,10 – "*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*"

2nd Timothy 2:3 – "*Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*" (Darby)

Acts 5:41 – "*The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*"

Those who remain faithful to the point of death will be assured of not only a place in the Kingdom of Heaven, but of much treasure, as well.

In a region that boasted seven churches of Christ in those early days of persecution, the congregation at Smyrna was numbered among only two that were found to be without fault. With an approval rating of only twenty-eight percent, a close scrutiny to determine the manner in which faithfulness was achieved by the pair is entirely instructive.

In this particular case, one cannot help but take notice of the physical and material indigence and its inverse relationship to the abundance of spiritual wealth that had been acquired. The question then, is whether the former condition is significant in the result of the latter.

In other words, is it necessary to be in short supply of material possessions in order to be awarded a crown of eternal life? Evidence which would support such a conclusion has not been discovered by this author. What *is* obvious is that a total reliance on God to provide for the needs of His people is necessary to promote a close relationship with the Almighty, for if mankind deems itself fully capable of supplying its own necessities, what need do they have of a God?

As a wealthy man, Abraham's example proves that the possession of worldly goods is not disqualification for eternal riches, yet the example of the aristocrat in Luke 18:18-23 who was saddened to learn that he must sell his fortune and provide for the poor, proves that the pursuit of money certainly has the potential to mislead souls from the straight and narrow path which leads to Heaven.

In fact, a potential for inadvertent spiritual neglect exists due to the simple fact of mankind's need to manage the innumerable affairs of daily life which demand from the stores of finite existence an expenditure of irreplaceable portions of time.

The average individual will forever find that the lawn needs trimmed, the automobile needs washed, the clothes need laundered, dinner needs to be prepared, the roof needs mended, the children need assistance with their homework, a few extra hours of overtime is necessary at work this week, the house needs cleaned, the dishes need done, groceries need to be bought, doctor appointments need to be made, bills need to be paid, the car needs gas, the lawnmower needs gas, the wasp nest under the deck needs to

be eradicated, the back steps need repaired, the grill needs more propane, a ceiling fan needs adjusted, the windows need washed, the leak under the sink needs fixed, this weekend is a family reunion, Wednesday is a son's soccer game, Friday is a daughter's band concert, Sunday is church, Thursday is church, and where in the world can the time be found to read the Bible, pray, and minister to fellow participants in the frantic race known as "life?"

It is small wonder then, that with such a wide range of issues that lay claim to the time, so many individuals find it a struggle to reserve anything more than a token measure of attention for fellowship with the Lord.

The impoverished church at Smyrna did not own a quantity of possessions sufficient to demand the greater part of their attention, and thus their lives were free of the asset-created confusion that so often obscures the significant matters of the spirit and relegates God to a less than primary status.

1st Timothy 6:10 – "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*"

In addition to a lack of belongings that slowed their pace and allowed for a less cluttered lifestyle, they were an afflicted people with no means of affecting a change in their physical condition. As detailed previously, this congregation had virtually no choice but to rely on God and place their full trust in Him, for they certainly could not depend on the altruistic nature of their neighbors who belonged to the church of Satan, nor could they afford health care.

The mighty Ephesians, with their apron full of good works, had ceased to be passionately intimate with their first love and their salvation was in jeopardy. The church at Smyrna was found blameless in the eyes of the Lord.

In an effort for modern Christians to pattern their lives after the church at Smyrna and to receive the endorsement of Heaven that they acquired, is it necessary that vows of poverty must be sworn, possessions must be sold, and medical insurance be canceled?

Such an extreme is by no means necessary, but if earthly possessions are producing blindness with respect to things eternal and hindering the efforts to seek after the Kingdom of God with all passion, intellect, spirit, and might, then perhaps the severing of such things are essential, after all.

Mark 8:36 – "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*"

Matthew 5:29, 30 – "*If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*"

If material goods are obstructing the path to eternal life, it is vital that they be razed and paved over, regardless of how intimately they may have been incorporated into the essence of one's own spirit. If the Lord can be sooner surrendered than hobbies, outings, or loved ones, then the soul is not yet worthy of Him.

Matthew 10:37 – "*Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*"

Luke 14:26 – **"***If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.*"

The introspective question must be asked by every individual: "Are there things on this earth that I am more interested in keeping or gaining than keeping the laws of God written on my heart or gaining eternal life for my soul?" If the query is answered in the affirmative, then Matthew 5:29,30 must be given extensive consideration.

It is worthy to note that when Jesus dispatched his disciples to the cities of Israel, he sent them as destitute laborers, without the benefit of suitcase, food, extra clothing, or money.

Matthew 10:5-20 – "*These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of Heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.*

"Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

What could have been the reason for the prohibition of such an innocuous possession as a walking stick? What purpose was served by denying them access to public accommodations? What was accomplished by forbidding them to prepare words in their own defense if arrested by the authorities?

Could it be possible that the underlying reason for these directives originated in the fact that Jesus, being human, understood the human condition? Could it be that he knew that if the disciples were allowed every kind of comfort and given a great deal of latitude as to the manner in which they accomplished their tasks, it would result in a faith of self-reliance? Is it possible that he was aware of the fact that their ministries would become less effective if this attitude were permitted to take root? Truly, the self-made man believes himself capable of resolving every form of difficulty through the strength of his own ingenuity.

By evangelizing in poverty, the disciples became fully dependent upon God to meet their every need, as did the saints of Smyrna.

Matthew 6:25-34 instructs believers not to worry about the securing of basic necessities, explaining that the Lord has promised to provide the requirements of life to His people if they will first seek after the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

"*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?*

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Scripture teaches that a consistent routine of fasting will produce much gain, yet at its most basic, fasting is a denial of the body's most essential needs. What benefit could possibly be derived from such a practice?

The advantage, of course, is a spiritual one and is best illustrated by the incident in which the disciples of Jesus attempted to cast a demon out of a young boy. They had met with success in casting out demons previously, but in this case they were greeted with defeat. When the boy was brought to Jesus, the evil spirit was rebuked and it departed immediately. Upon expressing perplexity as to the reason for their failure, Jesus answered by explaining that some classes of demons would respond only to those who were committed to prayer and fasting.

Matthew 17:14-21 – "*And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.*

"Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." - KJV

Thus it becomes evident that fasting can accomplish powerful things in the realm of the spirit. The denial of self and complete reliance on God can accomplish powerful things.

The church in Smyrna excelled at this manner of living and received the crown of eternal life for doing so.

The lesson, then, to be learned from the lives of the saints in Smyrna is that more emphasis must be placed on the ability of God to meet the needs of the flesh, and less importance attached to the aptitude of mankind.

John 3:30 – "*He must become greater; I must become less.*"

Philippians 4:19 – "*And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*"

5. The Letter to the Church at Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-17

"*To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.*"

The letter addressed to Pergamum has been composed according to the pattern established by the previous two letters, in which Jesus identifies himself at the outset in order to place the saints at ease, confident in the knowledge that the message which follows is accurate and true. His statement of identification, which is the declaration that he is in possession of the sharp, double-edged sword, is a reference to Revelation 1:16 where he appeared to John in this manner.

The Lord begins his correspondence by saying that he understands their situation. Indeed, Hebrews 4:15 says that "*we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.*" In fact, the Christians in this region are living in a hornets nest of wickedness, for Pergamum is the city in which Satan himself has chosen to take up residence.

Their address notwithstanding, the Lord reveals his pleasure in them, for they have remained true to him and have not renounced their faith even in the face of intense acts of persecution that have been performed in the enemy's own capital.

In this, they seem to have shared in the sufferings of their brothers at Smyrna, but while the Smyrnans were persecuted, imprisoned and executed by those who belonged to the church of Satan, those in Pergamum were the recipients of Satan's personal attacks.

In the city where Satan had set up his command center and assembled together his most nefarious devils, in the very center of his wicked machinations, there blazed a burning beacon of righteousness in the form of a man named Antipas.

Antipas was a man greatly respected by the believers and was a spiritual mentor, perhaps even an elder of the church.

Once again, as was the case in Smyrna, Good and Evil existed side-by-side. In such a situation, the two will not continue together peacefully. The holiness and the righteousness of the Almighty God cannot co-exist with the wickedness and the depravity of Satan. When the two come into contact with each other it results in a reaction, just as glass powder and red phosphorous when brought together produce a chemical reaction that results in a spark of fire that consumes them both and vaporizes anything in close proximity.

This roiling mass of spiritual tension erupted and Antipas, that great witness for the Lord, was executed. Satan refused to allow such allegiance to the Almighty to be displayed in the citadel where he had placed his throne, and lifted up a standard against it. The ugliest hordes of devils were dispatched from Satan's right hand to strike down this Antipas who refused to bow his head before the Lord of Darkness, and in a manner reminiscent of a chess master who permits a valuable piece to be taken in order to achieve victory later on, the Lord allowed him to be removed from the board of life.

The emotional impact of such an action can be well imagined. In their inability to fathom the reason darkness had been permitted to triumph over light, some of the church might have been tempted to question God, or even their faith.

"After all," they might have said, "isn't God greater than Satan? Isn't it impossible for darkness to extinguish light? Why is it that wicked men prevailed over godly Antipas? Are we not sincere enough in our walk with the Lord?"

These are thoughts that could have weakened them and caused them to stumble, but the Bible records that the death of Antipas did not cause them to renounce their faith. They did not allow doubt to gain a foothold in their minds. They refused to be shaken from the solid rock on which they stood.

Thus far, they continue to resemble the righteous saints of the church at Smyrna, yet you will see as we continue that they were not without their faults.

The personal correspondence of Jesus Christ reveals serious failings in two specific areas. It must be pointed out that not all of the members of the church at Pergamum were being rebuked by the Lord, but there were two factions that had driven him to anger.

Of these, Jesus demands repentance, lest he himself come against them and strike them down with the sword of his mouth.

One group has drawn the ire of the Lord by following after the teachings of Balaam. What were these teachings that the Lord found reprehensible?

Firstly, they displayed an unhealthy inclination to consume food that had been sacrificed to idols. For this to be considered a transgression will no doubt be puzzling to some, since Paul taught in 1st Corinthians 8:1-13 that an idol is nothing.

"*Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God.*

"So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in Heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

"But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been

sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall."

Paul affirms in this passage of scripture that idols are nothing, and that due to the knowledge of Christ, believers are permitted to eat any food offered to such an idol. Yet written into the constitution of freedoms permitted the followers of Christ, Paul reveals a disclaimer clause that identifies a specific situation in which the partaking of such food is considered sin. That situation is described in verses 10-12.

"*For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.*"

Suppose a Christian were to travel to the rainforests of Peru to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the native villagers. In these remote localities in which there are no modern restaurants, the missionary will be obliged to partake of whatever cuisine is indigenous to the menu of the aboriginal population.

With that thought in mind, consider the following scenario: At mealtime the man of God is escorted into a grass hut where meat is being smoked on a flat stone table by a man with his face painted white and an odd bone necklace draped over his shoulders. As he watches the man bow to a grotesque wooden statue in the center of the room, he realizes in horror that the cook is the village high priest and the stone table is an altar. In fact, the hut he is sitting in is a primitive type of temple!

Panic sets in and he begins to cast about for an idea of what to do, furtively eyeing the exit with brief, nervous glances. He looks around to see if there is any available meat that has not yet been offered to this false god, but the only other kind in evidence is still wandering around the village on four legs. The Christian eyes the tall grass and the small red berries on a nearby bush, but is not at all sure if they are safe for consumption.

In any event, to refuse the hospitality of the high priest would be to incur the wrath of the villagers, and if he declines to eat the meal that has been prepared for him, the next sacrifice to be offered upon the stone altar may be that of a certain minister, whose white flesh gives the Skewered Reverend Flambé delicacy its distinctive taste.

Should he resist to the point of death? Or should he eat the offered food and make reparations with the Lord later? If he understands the freedom that is afforded believers in Christ as Paul understood it, then his decision will be an easy one. He knows that there is only one true God and that the idol is nothing more than a piece of carved wood. Since the idol is irrelevant, there is then no offense committed by reclining in a temple dedicated to a stick of wood, or with consuming food offered to this nonentity.

A new character is now introduced to the scenario: a member of a neighboring village who was earlier freed from the bondage of Paganism, accepting the Gospel and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, in part due to the efforts of this self-same missionary. This brother for whom Christ died does not understand that idols are nothing, and in fact, believes them to be malevolent demi-gods capable of destroying anyone not protected from their wicked machinations by the shed blood of Jesus.

Having learned of the minister's itinerary, this brother who does not have a complete knowledge of the freedoms imparted by Christ, arrives in expectation of hearing the preaching of the Word and sees the man of God sitting in an idol's temple eating food that has been offered to a false god.

Seeing his mentor participating in a pagan ritual, he is shocked and assailed with doubts. Is the Christian a fraud? Or is it acceptable to participate in ceremonies of the pagans? One of two possible developments may result.

Shocked and confused by what he perceives as an all-inclusive lifestyle, the man may fade silently back into the undergrowth of the jungle and return to his village in humiliation, believing himself to have been the victim of a slick charlatan. As a result, he returns to the practice of pagan worship with more passion and greater determination than ever before; his heart now irrevocably hardened toward any future purveyor of righteousness.

Or, he may join the group in the temple where the missionary catches his eye and smiles in greeting, recognizing him as a recent convert. Although the Christian gives it not a passing thought, his seeming approval indicates to the one who is but an infant in Christ, that belief in the one true God does not preclude the participation of pagan rituals. Armed with the perception that "all is lawful," he returns to his own people and falls back into pagan practices including sexual orgies, human sacrifice, worship of idols, and self-mutilation.

In both instances, one man's freedom caused a brother to stumble and sin. Without repentance, it is not just the weaker brother who will perish in everlasting flames, however, for Paul warns that those who wound the conscience of their weaker brothers in this way by failing to exercise good judgment have not only sinned against their brother, but against Christ, as well.

In order to duplicate this particular illustration in the modern age, one must journey to the ends of the earth in search of primitive cultures that still practice idol worship. Yet in the age of the New Testament church, Paganism and idolatry were rampant. The portrait Paul painted in order to illustrate the responsible implementation of spiritual knowledge was not a farfetched example.

The point to be made is that the members of the church of God are all at different maturity levels. There will forever be those who do not have the knowledge that others have. With this being the case, it behooves the saints to carefully discern the body of Christ and to refrain from engaging in activities that other believers may perceive as evil, for it may lead them to question their faith or to join in behavior they believe to be sin.

1st Thessalonians 5:22 – "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*"

The difference lies in each person's individual level of spiritual maturity. While one believer may understand that the idol is nothing, another brother may believe that the idol is evil. If a man participates in behavior he believes is immoral, even if God does not regard it as such, he sins and is destroyed because his conscience is no longer pure. The one who causes his brother to stumble has also sinned; against him and against Christ.

There were those of the church at Pergamum who were exercising their freedoms in Christ to the detriment of their weaker fellows. They were eating food sacrificed to idols while there were those present who, as infants in Christ, were unwitting of the fact that the practice violated no moral code. Paul declared that if by eating meat offered to an idol he offended a brother, he would refrain from eating meat for the rest of his life. The

church at Pergamum was observing no such restraint and the result was Christian casualties.

Jesus exposed this behavior and exhorted the Pergamum church to repent, lest they find themselves torn asunder by the sharp, double-edged sword of his mouth.

Another of Balaam's teachings was the advocating of sexual immorality. Although it may be difficult to comprehend how such a practice could ever be viewed by God-fearing Christians as acceptable behavior, there were those in Pergamum who were deceived into believing that the God of love approved and encouraged the performance of sexual acts outside the precincts of marriage. Sexual perversions were so much a part of pagan worship that new converts to Christ were easily led to believe that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also required worship through sexual activity.

Those of the church at Pergamum who followed after the teachings of Balaam were involved in sexual immorality.

The second faction that had angered the Lord were following the teachings of a sect called the Nicolaitans. In his letter to the Ephesians, Jesus had declared that the practices of the Nicolaitans drove him to fury.

The precise nature of the Nicolaitans is a mystery. Some scholars view them as a sect that practiced sexual immorality and openly professed to be Christians while actually despising the followers of Christ. One particular practice among them was said to be the sharing of wives.

The difference between Balaam's teachings of sexual immorality, and the sexual immorality of the Nicolaitans seems to be that while Balaam taught that simple fornication was acceptable, the Nicolaitans held to all manner of evil doctrines and immorality.

Others claim that the Nicolaitans were the first to divide the church into the categories of clergy and laity. The word "Nicolaitan" is made up of two words from the Greek language.

"Nikao" means "to conquer or overcome," and "laos" means "people." (The modern "laity" is derived from this ancient Greek "laos.") Taken together, they denote "the destruction of the people" and some say it is a term that refers to the earliest form of clergy, which later on in church history placed all believers into one of two classifications; either the spiritual rulers or the laymen. This clerical system supposedly developed later into the papal hierarchy of priests and clergy which ruled over the laity.

Indeed, the Council of Trent stated that, "If anyone shall say that there is not in the Catholic Church a hierarchy established by the divine ordination, consisting of bishops, presbyters and ministers, let him be anathema." This very idea is said to have been taken over by the Protestants with their own corruption of church leadership. Thus it is said that the Nicolaitans ruled over the people in contradiction of Jesus' command in Matthew 20:25-28.

Still others see the word as being derived from the false goddess "Nike." A root of "Nikolaites" is "nike," Strong's number 3529, which is the name of the Greek winged goddess of victory, and also the name of one of the biggest modern manufacturers of athletic shoes, who adorn their products with the pagan wing symbol. Thus it is thought by some that the church at Pergamum was involved in worshipping this goddess in some way.

Regardless of what this group taught, it is obvious that although the church at Pergamum may have followed after some of the teachings of Christ, they also followed after the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus warned of the danger inherent in attempting to serve more than one master.

"*No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.*"

It was not the entire church at Pergamum who were found guilty of committing these transgressions. Jesus said that there were *some* among them that were holding to these false teachings, indicating that not all of them were defiled. Even though this was the city in which Satan lived, there were those in Pergamum who had not bowed their knee to the regime of Satan and were found righteous before the Lord.

It is imperative that believers in Christ display an immovable faith, after the manner of the Smyrnans and some of the church at Pergamum, in order to resist being shaken from the straight and narrow path by the storms and tremors of Satan and his church.

The lesson to be learned from the letter given to the Pergamum church is the simple truth that a man is incapable of serving more than one master. One cannot follow the teachings of Christ and simultaneously follow the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. The scriptures tell us that the Lord requires the total devotion of those who would be His servants. He must be served with all passion, intellect, spirit, and ability.

Luke 10:27 – "*He answered:* "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind*".

Exodus 34:14 – "*Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*"

Deuteronomy 6:14,15 – "*Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.*"

Joshua 24:15 – "*But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.*"

6. The Letter to the Church at Thyatira

Revelation 2:18-29

"*To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:*
These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

"Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

"Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come. To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The church at Thyatira appears to be rather proficient in the performance of good deeds, as evidenced by their display of godly love, great faith, generous service, and unwavering perseverance. Unfortunately, a quiver full of wonderful qualities is not sufficient for salvation if the mark of excellence has been missed in other areas. As documented earlier, the Lord does not weigh the deeds of Man on a cosmic balance to determine whether or not the good activities outweigh the bad.

How, then, can Man attain eternal life? It is a prize that can be secured only through the perfection of Jesus Christ, who, having been conceived of God rather than Man, did not inherit a nature of sin.

"*But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*" - 1st John 3:5

"*He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.*" - 1st Peter 2:22

"*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" - 1st Corinthians 5:21

There was no sin to be found in Jesus Christ. Although the sin of Man is intrinsic to his birth, those who have been created a little lower than the angels have, through grace, been given the ability to overcome it through the justification of the blood of the Savior.

"*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*" - Romans 5:9

Easton's Bible Dictionary defines justification as "a forensic term, opposed to condemnation. As regards its nature, it is the judicial act of God, by which he pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as

righteous in the eye of the law, i.e., as conformed to all its demands. In addition to the pardon of sin, justification declares that all the claims of the law are satisfied in respect of the justified. It is the act of a judge and not of a sovereign. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the strictest sense; and so the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law (Romans 5:1–10).

"It proceeds on the imputing or crediting to the believer by God himself of the perfect righteousness, active and passive, of his Representative and Surety, Jesus Christ (Romans 10:3–9). Justification is not the forgiveness of a man without righteousness, but a declaration that he possesses a righteousness which perfectly and for ever satisfies the law, namely, Christ's righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:6–8)."

Justification is not the forgiveness of sin, it is a declaration that there exists no sin to forgive. Since this justification is attainable through the grace of God, there can then be no excuse for the presence of sin in human lives. The presence of many good attributes will not outweigh or erase any sin that has been allowed to also take up residence in the temple of the body. Mankind must be found to be without sin.

The Lord explains that his rebuke is not intended for all of the believers at Thyatira, when he says near the end of his letter that there are those who have not followed after false teachers and have kept themselves from unrighteousness. Those who have not risen above their sin, however, are adhering to the teachings of a woman named Jezebel whose course is leading into the depths of a bottomless abyss.

Jezebel came to the believers at Thyatira claiming to be a prophetess of the Lord and promising to share with them the deep secrets of the spiritual realm that God had revealed to her.

In his letter, Jesus exposes her as an impostor from the Father of Lies, and admonishes his saints to discontinue the evil practices of Satan.

By calling herself a prophetess, Jezebel has been misleading many sincere Christians into believing that the Lord is speaking to them through her. As a result, she is leading them to engage in sexual immorality and to commit the sin of eating food sacrificed to idols.

Jezebel espoused the same immoralities that Balaam taught, and due to the region's overwhelming influence of pagan sexual customs in worship, the Gentile believers at Thyatira accepted them as activities that the God of the Jews approved of.

Due to its mandatory inclusion in the pagan religions they had practiced formerly, it was easy for Christians in the first century to be mislead into believing that sexual immorality was acceptable. In Paganism, it was necessary for both men and women to have relations with temple prostitutes in order to ensure the blessing of their god upon their lives. When a man presented an offering to his god, he was also required to perform a sexual act with a temple priestess to ensure that his gift would be accepted.

This behavior was not only socially acceptable, it was religiously mandated, and converts from Paganism were so indoctrinated in the rituals of sexual immorality that they found it neither unusual nor immoral. Indeed, they believed it to be proper religious behavior. After converting to Christianity, then, there was no reason to doubt the word of one who claimed to be a prophet or prophetess when they instructed believers that the performance of sexual relations outside the bounds of marriage was a behavior encouraged by the Lord.

It is obvious, then, that many early Christians were easy prey for apostate leaders or cultists seeking to gain a following. To that end, the precepts of God were dismissed and replaced with the dogma of Paganism, resulting in the formation of a religious system in which the voice of authority became that of a man, rather than Christ.

In the first century, as it is today, it was vital for Christians to practice discernment and to "know them that labor among you," (1st Thessalonians 5:12) rather than to warmly welcome the teachings of any professing believer who visited the assembly.

Indeed, the practice of verifying any given teaching by evaluating it against scripture was action judged as commendable according to Acts 17:11. The passage relates the reluctance of the Bereans to accept the words of even so great an apostle as Paul, until such time as an investigation could be concluded to determine the veracity of his declarations.

The presence of sin in the church at Thyatira was directly attributable to the toleration of the teachings of Jezebel. Rather than purging the sin that was tabernacled among the saints of God, the congregation, in a state of apathy, permitted it to co-exist.

Had the assembly at Thyatira been as concerned with scriptural accuracy as were the Bereans, they would have comprehended the wickedness of their actions from the book of Deuteronomy and learned of God's commandment that those involved in sexual immorality must repent.

"*She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father's house.* ***You must purge the evil from among you.*** *If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die.* ***You must purge the evil from Israel.*** *If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife.* ***You must purge the evil from among you***." - Deuteronomy 22:21-24

Had the church at Thyatira diligently searched the scriptures, they would have read in Exodus of God's position concerning the practice of allowing evil to co-exist with righteousness: "*Do not allow a sorceress to live.*" – Exodus 22:18

The congregation at Thyatira did not purge the evil from among them, but allowed it to remain. Truly, righteousness cannot hold the hand of iniquity and both walk down the same path, for "w*hat harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?*" – 2nd Corinthians 6:15, 16

If righteousness comes into contact with uncleanness, will the unclean thing be infused with virtue and become holy, or will the stench of the unclean object taint the righteous thing and cause it to become unclean also? The priests answered the Lord correctly in Haggai 2:11-13, when they indicated that uncleanness would defile righteousness.

By tolerating the sin rather than purging it from among them, the souls of the Christians at Thyatira will be forfeit unless they repent and cut off the branch of iniquity that has been allowed to grow up in their midst. Those who choose to disregard the warning of Jesus Christ and ignore their opportunity to become reconciled to the Lord are

promised the intense suffering of the lake which burns for eternity with fire and brimstone.

Those of the church at Thyatira who have not engaged in the activities encouraged by the false prophetess Jezebel are applauded for their spiritual growth. Previously as infants in the faith, they were deficient in many things, but time and effort have brought forth maturity and they are continuing to grow. No other burden will be imposed on them other than that which they have already been given.

Thus, the mercy of God is compassionately displayed, as described in the scriptures:

"*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*" - 1st Corinthians 10:13

"*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*" - Matthew 11:28-30

It would appear that the believers in Thyatira are not capable of bearing much weight. Jesus does not describe them as a bastion of spiritual power, as he did the Ephesians. In fact, his highest commendation is that they are no longer as weak and confused as they once were. They are not exhorted to rise up like a flood against the powers of darkness, to storm the ramparts of Satan, or to shake the foundations of his citadel. Rather, like a general favoring a weakened and ill-armed regiment, the Lord instructs his Thyatira division to continue to hold out and occupy until he returns to evacuate them.

There are two lessons that can be learned from the letter to the church at Thyatira. Firstly, it is important to understand that sin is not to be tolerated, let alone embraced. Secondly, if the servants of the Most High are faithful to Him to the best of their ability, then God will be faithful not to put upon the shoulders of His servants that which is beyond their ability to bear.

7. The Letter to the Church at Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

"*To the angel of the church in Sardis write:*
These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

"Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

In the previous four letters, Jesus has established a pattern of composing his introductory remarks with regards to the commendable qualities of the specified congregation and then smoothly transitions to the issues in need of development.

It is a pattern which is disrupted by the letter to the church at Sardis due to the inability of the Son of God to detect a single praiseworthy element in the composition of this lackluster assemblage.

There is found no redeeming value in the lives of the believers at Sardis and nothing at which they excel, save the ability to convincingly present themselves to the world as something they are not.

They enjoy a reputation throughout the region as a powerful, righteous force dedicated to advancing the cause of godliness in a world of corruption and avarice, yet the letter received from John the Revelator and dictated by Jesus Christ exposes this congregation for the valley of dry bones that it has become.

Matthew 23:27, 28 masterfully describes the spiritual condition in evidence at this locality.

"*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*"

The church at Sardis had become as proficient in the cultivation of outward appearances as the Pharisees and were as equally dead in their hearts, being spiritually anemic and somnolent.

Frailty, death, slumber, and deficiency are not among the admirable characteristics of a model church. Be that as it may, a ray of hope continues to burn for their souls, for as a man who expires can be resuscitated due to the small amount of energy left in him, so also can this dead church be revived if they will awake and strengthen the trace of virtue that remains within them. In this endeavor, they are urged to

exercise all possible speed, for the infinitesimal spark of rectitude is about to perish ineradicably.

Comparable to the biblical illustration of a man, who, after having perused his reflection in a glass, goes away and is promptly unable to recall the distinctive details of his appearance, the church at Sardis has entirely failed to recall the purpose for their assembly. The admonishment given them is to reacquire the measure of truth that was once possessed, and by extricating themselves from the sin that has so severely entangled their feet, to proceed along the narrow path of righteousness afresh.

These were Christians in name only, for by their thoughts and actions they failed to significantly bear any further resemblance to Christ. The Bible warns that those who repent of righteousness, having once believed, are no longer fit for service in the Kingdom of Heaven.

This principle is well illustrated by the wife of Lot in Genesis chapter nineteen. Two angels had come to warn Lot against the coming destruction of the city of Sodom in which he was living, and counseled him to gather his family and flee to the mountains.

"*As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!...But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.*" - Genesis 19:17, 26

"*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."* - Luke 9:62

There remains in the city of Sardis a remnant of believers who have not soiled their clothing with the sin of desertion, and with these Jesus has no quarrel. However, to those who have wandered from the path of godliness and fallen to the periphery of the road in slumber, the return of Christ will occur as unexpectedly as the arrival of a stealthy thief who suddenly and without warning creeps into homes in the wee hours of the night. His entrance darkens the window sill of a household whose head is impervious to the fact that his home is being plundered. Realization will not arrive until sometime in the morning when the intruder has long departed, and the abundance of security measures then implemented will be employed too late to prevent the mischief he has already wrought.

In such a manner, Christ will find the Sardis congregation sleeping upon his return and will pass them silently by in the night.

"*But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.*" - Luke 12:39

What possible lesson are the dead congregants at Sardis capable of teaching the vibrant body of Christ? Perhaps the moral intended to be grasped is one that can be discerned only after viewing their condition through the eyes of Heaven. This insight encourages the soul and warms the heart, for as lifeless as this congregation had become, the Lord, of whom the father in the parable of the prodigal son was a representation, remains ever eager to accept them once more into his sheltering arms.

It is profitable to be in possession of the knowledge that, regardless of its delinquent condition, the Lord will never reject a sincere soul.

"*A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*" - Psalm 51:17

"*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*" - Psalm 34:18

"*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*" - 1st John 1:9

"*I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them.*" - Mark 3:28

Finally, there is one truth that blazes forth with an undeniable intensity which wicked and deceitful men have sought to extinguish. That verity is quite simply this: that the doctrine of Eternal Security, whereby men claim that righteousness, once attained, cannot be revoked, is in serious error. Such a tenet provides its subscribers with a license to sin.

"*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*" – Romans 6:1, 2

In order to share in the divine nature of God, believers must give all diligence to strengthening their faith and adding to it the purity of modesty. In the exercising of virtue, a knowledge of spiritual subjects must be cultivated alongside the development of self-control in order to teach discernment concerning the appropriate words to speak, the manner in which to speak them, and to prevent arrogance. To this must be added patience, which will bring about a reverence for the things of God and a fervent desire to seek His approval in every thought and activity. That, in turn, must have in it the quality of brotherly affection, which must lead on to Christian love.

If a generous supply of these characteristics are possessed, the believer will find himself securely established in the faith and tempered against becoming an ineffectual or unproductive member of the body of Christ. The man whose life fails to exhibit these qualities will find his vision impaired, a condition that will only worsen over time until at last he is incapable of identifying righteousness.

The people of God have been called a holy nation and chosen to become a royal priesthood. They must therefore work all the harder to justify such an appointment. The edification of the spirit in the manner prescribed will eliminate any danger of falling from grace. Only by following this daily regimen will the Christian be granted admittance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. (2nd Peter 1:3-11)

He must pray without ceasing (1st Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18), and clothe himself with the armor of God in order to resist evil in its day of power (Ephesians 6:13). He must renew his strength through faith in the Lord in order to march without fainting (Isaiah 40:31). He must also divest himself of the sin which wraps so tightly around the feet in order to continue running steadily in the race he has begun (Hebrews 1:1) and to receive a crown of glory that will never fade away (1st Peter 5:4).

In the parable of the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13), the five foolish maidens were indeed virgin pure, yet in falling asleep, their oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit, had been lost.

A Christian is not released from the precepts of godliness upon his initial adoption into the kingdom of Heaven. As an infant in Christ, he must "go on unto perfection" (Hebrews 6:1) and become mature, setting aside the milk of the Word and feeding upon its solid meat (Hebrews 5:13,14).

He must strive to remain alert and alive, for failure to give all diligence to the things of the Lord will result in slumber and in death; the two qualities which the Lord Jesus Christ declared the Sardis congregation most adept at demonstrating.

8. The Letter to the Church at Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

"*To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:*
These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of Heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Very little insight is afforded into the lives of the Philadelphian church, save for the fact that they are possessed of little strength, yet have not denied the name of Jesus.

In this, they share in common the excellent traits displayed by the church at Thyatira, and receive the same directive as the unsoiled saints in that locality, namely to persevere until his return.

In what appears to be a disturbing trend, this congregation, along with the saints at Smyrna, must contend with a faction openly professing to belong to the body of Christ while remaining covertly loyal to a denomination of devils.

For their excellent display of good deeds, obedience, loyalty, and patience, three commendations are awarded.

Firstly, the blessings of Heaven have been poured out upon them in the form of an open door that is beyond the ability of any mortal to obstruct.

Secondly, the members of Satan's synagogue will be made to submit before them and in their presence acknowledge that the God of Jesus Christ is the only true Sovereign.

Thirdly, for their demonstration of patient endurance, they have been given the promise of refuge from the hour of trial that will be coming upon the whole world.

The "hour of trial" is a period of approximately two weeks just prior to the event of the rapture of the church. It will be a time of tribulation such as the world has never before experienced and the saints of God will be refined in the fires of intense persecution by Satan's Antichrist.

This hour of trial will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter. Presently, it is sufficient to know that the assembly at Philadelphia was not required to experience this period of suffering.

One might very well point out that, if the Philadelphian church was not subject to the events of the rapture and its preceding two weeks of tribulation, then neither were the other six congregations of Revelation, nor any other persons living in that generation.

Such a promise, then, would appear to have been an empty one, but for an understanding of the Christian mindset in the era of the first century.

The early church received two promises of Jesus Christ. Firstly, that he would send the Holy Spirit comforter that would lead and guide them into all truth, and secondly, that he himself would return to establish an earthly kingdom of righteousness that would never pass away.

Both promises were expected to be fulfilled within their lifetime.

In John 16:7 the promise of the Holy Spirit was given.

"*But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.*"

In Acts 1:4, 5 the Apostles were given reason to believe that the Holy Spirit would be given soon.

"*On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*"

The promise of the Lord's return was made by both angels and Christ.

"*"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into Heaven.*" – Acts 1:11

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

While the Holy Spirit was given within days of the Lord's ascension, in nearly two hundred years, his return has yet to occur. In relation to man's impression of time, the former promise was fulfilled in short order. In the same manner, the latter promise was also expected to be realized soon.

Peter dealt with the growing impatience of the church to see the return of their master in 2nd Peter 3:9 when he said "*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*"

The early church believed that they would witness the return of Jesus Christ, and as time and persecutions continued to progress without the occurrence of such an event, they began to become impatient for deliverance, believing that their current sufferings were precursors of the winnowing fire of tribulation which would blaze throughout the world in preparation for Christ's return.

The fact that Jesus promised to preclude them from that ordeal was proof positive that the aforementioned hour of trial had not yet begun.

Moreover, as a reward for the patient endurance of the church at Philadelphia, it was revealed to them that the most dreadful period of persecution the world would ever experience would not be an ordeal through which they would ever have to suffer.

In this, the minds of the saints were put at ease, for they now possessed the knowledge that the Great Tribulation would not occur in their lifetime, as they had previously supposed. (Although popular modern scholarship teaches that the church will be raptured prior to the Great Tribulation, the theory is of recent conception. The early church did not hold to it.)

While the disclosure was a source of personal relief for the Philadelphia congregation, knowing that the Lord's return would not take place in their lifetime, they had obtained no such guarantee for their children, and so passed down to succeeding generations the admonition that the return of Christ was imminent.

Although not a powerful dynamo of energy brimming with spiritual gifts, the church at Philadelphia was found faithful to the utmost capacity of their modest strength, and having been found faithful in little, were therefore made stewards of much.

"*Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.*" - Luke 16:10

Thus, the lives of the believers in Philadelphia are exemplary illustrations of the scriptural promise that those who are trustworthy in all things to the best of their ability will secure much favor with God.

9. The Letter to the Church at Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

"*To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:*
These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The antithesis of the church at Smyrna, the Laodicean assembly exhibits the poorest spiritual health of the seven particular congregations in the province of Asia Minor. In contrast, the Smyrnan church is afflicted and poor, yet spiritually wealthy, whereas the believers at Laodicea enjoy a profusion of costly articles, yet are spiritually insolvent.

The Laodiceans were strangers to adversity, as were their fellow brothers in Sardis, who had nearly forgotten the expectations and objectives of adherents to Christianity.

Paul said in 1st Timothy 6:10 that "*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*," and the axiom is well illustrated in Laodicea and Sardis where this attitude led to the tepid and frosty temperatures of faith. Indeed, Paul goes on to warn of such a result when he says, "*Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*"

The Laodiceans have grown comfortable in their programs and routines, perhaps forgetting that the church is not a building made of wood and stone, but is an assembly of human beings in whom the Holy Spirit has taken up residence; an edifice made up of *living* stones. (1st Peter 2:5; 1st Corinthians 6:19)

Serving the Lord has been reduced to monotonous routine, a mechanical worship performed without full attention or comprehension. Rather than assembling for the purpose of enriching the body of Christ, the objective of their gathering is to satisfy a requirement; an exercise designed to calm their offended consciences when on occasion they plead for substance, value, and meaning to be present in their relationship with the One who has called them to righteousness.

It is probable that these believers are considered good people according to the world's standard of measure, but they have been found disgraceful in the eyes of the Lord for their lack of passionate service.

A cold and dead deportment would at least draft a truthful parallel between their observable outward actions and the sentiments and intentions of their hearts, but a lukewarm interest in seeking after righteousness while affecting an apparent form of zealous godliness is a deceitful practice that a God of integrity finds distasteful.

Rather than running the race set before them with perseverance, the Laodiceans are leisurely ambling along, stopping to inspect this interesting object that has caught their eye, or that fascinating display that has captured their attention. Indifferently meandering all over the track, they wander about in circles one moment with their head in the clouds, and then turn about to traipse backwards the next, sauntering back and forth across the way of righteousness according to the dictates of whim and fancy in a blasphemous display of service to the King of Heaven and Royal Majesty of all Creation.

In a righteous exhibition of fury, Jesus declares them to be wretched, poor, pitiful, blind, and naked. Of the seven churches in Asia, none succeeded in kindling his anger into such a blaze as was ignited by this lukewarm congregation.

The Lord is quick to point out that although the rebuke is a harsh one, he only rebukes the ones he loves, and asks them to become passionate for him. His promise if they will comply, is to provide them with clothing to hide their nakedness, to lavish upon them the blessings of Heaven, and to heal the blindness of their eyes. In a beautiful depiction of love, he stands knocking at the entrance of their hearts, ready to forgive and restore them to their previous position if they will but heed his voice and open the door.

The final lesson to be learned from the seven assemblies of Asia corresponds to that which was derived from the church at Ephesus, namely, to refrain from becoming complacent or idle. In the stead of slothfulness, perseverance must endure. The faith must be kept and the race must be completed. To that end, it is advantageous to consider the following words of Christ, who encountered such determined opposition from sinful men and yet overcame their evil designs to sit down at the right hand of the throne of God:

"*Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning.*" - Luke 12:35

If such admonishment is heeded, the Christian will not grow weary and lose heart.

10. A Glimpse of Heaven

In 1st Corinthians 2:9 it is asserted that "*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him*."

Yet the next verse and conclusion of that sentence declares, "*but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*"

The mansions of Heaven spoken of by Jesus in John 14:2 are so glorious that no mind has ever been able to envision them. Indeed, Isaiah 55:8, 9 affirms, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*"

Yet mankind has been given the ability to learn of them through the power of the Holy Spirit, for even the hidden wonders of His Almighty Majesty are revealed to those with whom the Spirit communes.

"*Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him.*" - Romans 16:25, 26

"*And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in Heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*" - Ephesians 1:9, 10

"*My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" - Colossians 2:2, 3

Scripture reveals that the mysteries of God are comprehensible to Man through the work of the Holy Spirit. In Revelation chapter four, John is given such a glimpse of the wonders of Heaven through the power of the Holy Spirit and was commanded to record his vision for the benefit of all mankind. Let us join him in the Throne Room of Heaven as preparations are made for the opening of the seven seals.

Revelation 4:1-11

"*After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in Heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."*

"At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in Heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

"From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

"*In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.*

"*Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

Upon the completion of the seven letters to the churches of Asia, the Lord assumes the form of an open door, a role in which Jesus previously explained he would function (John 10:7-9), and bids John to enter.

As he does so, the first thing to capture his eye is a magnificent throne upon which, through a blinding light, appears to sit the indistinct figure of a man. A mirror that reflects the brilliant rays of the sun becomes intensely radiant, and in like manner, this royal majesty blazes with a dazzling light of such intensity and searing temperature that it would have blinded the eyes of John an instant before his incineration had his body been present along with his spirit.

As John looks closer, he sees that the reflected light from the body on the throne is not simply an incandescent white or a blaze of golden-orange, but a spectrum of several colors.

In an attempt to describe this glorious king of light through the indeterminate medium of language, John portrays him as having the appearance of precious stones, namely jasper and carnelian.

Such an inadequate description, but then how does one describe something that is too wonderful for human comprehension?

Jasper is found in colors of dark red, green, brown, blue, yellow, white, and transparent, while carnelian is a flesh-colored stone. John saw a being whose very skin appeared to glitter and flash and spark and shimmer as a gem does when viewed at various angles under intense light, and the glory of his raiment cast jeweled rays about the Heavenly throne room in majestic reds, greens, blues, yellows, and whites.

Ezekiel related an experience similar to John's, in Ezekiel 1:26-28.

"*Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.*"

Ezekiel saw the same indistinct, enthroned figure of brilliant light which sparkled with all the colors of the rainbow; a jeweled light that reminded John of the many-hued jasper.

Although not yet explicitly identified, it is obvious that this potentate who sits upon the Heavenly throne accepting gifts of worship and praise is El Shaddai, Adonai of Creation, for none other could possibly radiate such glory and magnificence.

Above the throne is a shimmering rainbow in shades of jade, olive, lime, and sea spray. It, too, sparkles like a jewel and John compares it to a faceted emerald.

What could be the significance of such an arch? Does the lowly mind of Man dare to attempt to comprehend the things of God?

It has been established by scripture that the deluge rainbow was the symbolic representation of a promise.

Genesis 9:12-17 – "*And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.*"

The rainbow is a sign of the covenant God has instituted between Himself and all life on the earth. Green can be viewed as a color symbolic of life. Could it be that the emerald rainbow in Heaven signifies a new promise and a new covenant with regard to eternal life? Concerning this theme, the mind can only engage in subjective analysis.

As John's eyes shift from the throne and emerald rainbow and begin to take in more of the throne room, he is surprised to see that surrounding the throne are an additional twenty-four occupied thrones.

Those seated upon the thrones are classified as elders. The Greek word that has been translated as the English "elder" is the word "presbuteros," and means "elder in age," "advanced in life, an elder, a senior," "forefathers," or "members of the great council or Sanhedrin (because in early times the rulers of the people were selected from elderly men)" according to Easton's Bible Dictionary.

An elder, as John understood the term, was an elderly man. Since he described these twenty-four as such, it is reasonable to assume that they looked like old men, with all of the characteristics that come with advanced age. It is probable that white and silver hair was in evidence, and likely that their faces were weathered and lined.

As for their identities, the Bible does not name them, but there are a sufficient number of clues from which a hypothesis may be constructed.

One indicator that favors human beings over angels with respect to the office of elder is the possession of golden crowns and white raiment, for scripture indicates that these are awards given to a redeemed mankind for their unwavering faith and righteous service.

"*Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*" - 2nd Timothy 4:8

"*Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.*" - 1st Corinthians 9:25

"*For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?*" - 1st Thessalonians 2:19

"*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*" - James 1:12

"*And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*" - 1 Peter 5:4

"*Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.*" - Revelation 6:11

"*Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.*" - Revelation 3:4, 5

There is not one recorded instance in scripture of a crowned angel. Indeed, 1st Corinthians 6:3 declares angels to be in subjection to the authority of Man at the end of the age, rather than vested with judicial authority themselves. "*Do you not know that we will judge angels?*"

Hebrews 1:5-8 indicates that it is not angels who will share in the sovereignty of God, but Man. "*For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.*"

God has not appointed the angels to sonship. The angels are made to be winds, spiritual creatures of service that blow to and fro across the celestial plane wherever ministry is needed, but the son of God was created for the purpose of government; a monarch who reigns from a throne and with scepter. Although this passage is specifically referring to Jesus Christ, those who have been called according to righteousness are also sons of God and the same destiny has been appointed unto them.

"*...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*" - Romans 8:14-17

"*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*" - Galatians 4:4-7

Scripture affirms that the saints of God are co-heirs with Jesus Christ. A glance back at the twenty-four elders will reveal an assembly of crowned beings sitting upon thrones, ruling and reigning with God.

"*Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.*" - 2nd Timothy 2:11,12

"*…with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.*" - Revelation 5:9,10

Thus, it is not the angels who will rule and reign with Christ, but a redeemed mankind.

Having established that the elders are men, their identity and origin remain open to debate. There are those who believe that the presence of these men in Heaven, already occupied in their appointed judicial duties prior to the opening of the first seal in chapter six, is indicative of a pre-tribulation rapture.

Such a view, however, is derived from only a cursory examination of the facts, for the data pertaining to the origin of the elders is suggestive of several other possibilities. In addition, the idea that their presence lends credence to a premise of pre-tribulation rapture is a theory proved invalid by scriptures that pinpoint the occurrence of the rapture as transpiring at a time subsequent to the opening of the first seal, rather than prior to it. These scriptures will be detailed in a later chapter.

One possible explanation for their identity and origin is given in 1st Chronicles 24:1-19.

"*These were the divisions of the sons of Aaron: The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father did, and they had no sons; so Eleazar and Ithamar served as the priests. With the help of Zadok a descendant of Eleazar and Ahimelech a descendant of Ithamar, David separated them into divisions for their appointed order of ministering. A larger number of leaders were found among Eleazar's descendants than among Ithamar's, and they were divided accordingly: sixteen heads of families from Eleazar's descendants and eight heads of families from Ithamar's descendants. They divided them impartially by drawing lots, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of God among the descendants of both Eleazar and Ithamar. The scribe Shemaiah son of Nethanel, a Levite, recorded their names in the presence of the king and of the officials: Zadok the priest, Ahimelech son of Abiathar and the heads of families of the priests and of the Levites-one family being taken from Eleazar and then one from Ithamar. The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, the fifth to Malkijah, the sixth to Mijamin, the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzez, the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, the twenty-first to Jakin, the twenty-second to Gamul, the twenty-third to Delaiah and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. This was their appointed order of ministering when they entered the temple of the Lord , according to the regulations prescribed for them by their forefather Aaron, as the Lord , the God of Israel, had commanded him.*"

King David instituted twenty-four divisions of the priesthood. It is possible that the twenty-four elders that John saw in Heaven may have been the first generation of these priestly divisions, namely Jehoiarib, Jedaiah, Harim, et al.

Another possibility exists in that the twenty-four positions of elder may be Heavenly offices of which the earthly priests were only a pattern. As revealed in Hebrews 8:3-5, the temple and its priesthood were models of a structure in Heaven which predated them. Thus, it is conceivable that the twenty-four Heavenly elders are not the same men who were appointed as leaders of the priestly divisions by David, but instead number among their ranks any persons so chosen by God to fill the office, or such heroes of the faith as Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets.

Although their identities cannot be proven and the nature of their origin can only be supposed, there is no reason to believe that the twenty-four elders are anything other than men, or that their arrival in Heaven coincided with a pre-tribulation rapture.

The appearance of souls in Heaven is not proof of a pre-tribulation rapture, for in Revelation 7:13-15 the Bible reveals that an incalculable number of saints will remain upon the earth even after the commencement of the Great Tribulation.

"*Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*"

The timing of the rapture will be addressed in a later chapter, but the fact that it occurs at a point subsequent to the Great Tribulation should not come as a horrendous shock, for in Matthew 24 Jesus affirmed to his disciples that such would be the case.

"*And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them… 'For then shall be* ***great tribulation****, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Immediately* ***after the tribulation*** *of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken:* ***And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in Heaven****: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.'* " – Matthew 24:3, 4, 21, 29-31 (KJV)

From the throne of God comes flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder as John's ears are assaulted by the sound of immeasurable power, his body shaken to the bone. The celestial storm of glory raging from the throne causes a flame to flicker and dance at the periphery of his vision, and with his curiosity piqued, he turns from the ring of smaller thrones to locate the source of the flame.

At the foot of the throne of God is a blazing menorah of seven lamps whose light had gone unnoticed in the greater brilliance of the glory of the Lord and as such, can only be seen from an angle. The lamps are representative of the seven portions of God's Holy Spirit that abide in His living church at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

"*For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*" - Matthew 18:20

When the body of the Lord assembles together, the Holy Spirit is present as well, for having entered the bodies of the believers, it resides within them. Thus, the Lord is present with His body in Ephesus, and He is there with His body in Smyrna. Wherever a congregation of believers exists, He is there in their midst.

Had John looked closely at the individual flames, he might have seen that the first lamp was burning powerfully and brightly, but not as bright or as tall as the second vessel's flame. The third may have been a bit dimmer than the first, although comparable to the fourth. The fifth might have been the shortest and dimmest of all, and had John noticed, it may have even appeared to be on the brink of going out altogether. The sixth could have been as bright as the second, while the seventh of only mediocre size and intensity.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Jesus warned that a congregation found to be in short supply of the oil of the Holy Spirit would have their lampstand removed from its place, for a lampstand without oil is useless, unable to perform the task of providing light for which it has been designed.

A congregation that permits the measure of Holy Spirit oil within them to grow cold, or to be mingled with impurities, or to be allowed to burn at less than full intensity will have their lampstand removed from its place and the Lord's presence will no longer dwell among them. As the desire for righteousness wanes in the hearts of believers, so also does the fire of the Lord's presence.

The seven lamps represent the seven specific churches to whom the Lord's message of revelation was given, which John was to document for the edification of believers the world over. Had there been an eighth church or only four or five in the region of Asia with whom Jesus desired to share personal correspondence, the menorah would have held a respective number of lamps.

As John's eyes track downward, he discovers that he is standing at the edge of a lake of water so clear and placid that it resembles the lower portion of a solid sphere of glass that has been cut in half. Yet the surface is flashing and shimmering with millions of reflected rays of glory, and with this iridescence it more closely resembles crystal than glass.

Finally, he notices four extraordinary creatures at each corner of the throne. Each being is distinctive from the others, but two particular traits common to all are six wings and an abundance of eyes which cover every square inch of their bodies like scales.

One creature has the appearance of a lion, another resembles an ox, one has the countenance of a man, and the last visage seems to have the characteristics of an eagle.

These remarkable creatures are a manifestation of cherubim; spirit entities composed of the shekinah glory of God which are able to alter their appearance at will. In this locality each has chosen to portray the features of a single creature, but scripture reveals that in a previous encounter with the prophet Ezekiel, each one assumed the form of a being which possessed all four of the man/animal characteristics.

Ezekiel 1:10 – "*Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle.*"

Ezekiel 10:14 – "*Each of the cherubim had four faces: One face was that of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.*"

When Ezekiel was granted an audience with the cherubim, they appeared in the shape of men, with four wings and four faces each; man, lion, ox, and eagle. A myriad of eyes covered the whole of their bodies, including their backs, hands, and wings, and they were burning brightly, like coals of fire or torches.

Concerning John's encounter, the four cherubim had taken a form which was comprised of one face and six wings each. One cherubim wore the face of a lion, another an ox, another adopted the face of a man, and the last appeared as an eagle. All were covered with eyes, front and back, and even under their wings.

The cherubim, as purely spirit entities, have the capability to assume different forms, sometimes affecting one face, other times more; sometimes appearing with six wings, while other times four. In some instances they appear as awesome-looking men, and at other times they are brilliantly illuminated as if by the sun. They can also appear as unremarkable men, unworthy of note and ordinary in countenance.

One may be curious as to the purpose for the cherubim's adoption of the faces of men, lions, oxen, and eagles.

The traditional explanation, according to Zondervan's New International Bible Dictionary, is somewhat lacking in substance and births more queries than resolutions: "The four faces of the cherubim stand for the four 'excellencies' of the created order: the lion, the greatest of the wild beasts; the eagle, the greatest of the birds; the ox, the greatest of the domestic beasts; and man, the crown of creation."

Even if it could be proven that there exist four exclusive orders of creation, and that these particular creatures are ranked at the pinnacle of their respective orders, the question of why the cherubim would choose to assume such forms would remain. However, this interpretation is a problematic conclusion drawn from highly subjective data.

For example, for what act of savagery is the lion considered the greatest of wild beasts? This may be a widely accepted notion in the heads of those who have been reared on a diet of such popular literature as "The Wizard of Oz," "The Lion King," and similar literary works which refer to the lion as the king of beasts, but is it a biblical truth?

On what has this perception been based? In reality, the male lion is an indolent beast that prefers to recline in the sun, content to be dominated by the females of the pride.

The lion is not even deemed Africa's fiercest animal, for it is quick to give the honey badger a wide berth. The Honey badger, or ratel, as it is also known, is a tenacious small carnivore that has a reputation for being, pound for pound, Africa's most fearless animal despite its small size.

If supreme status is bestowed due to ferocity, one may wish to withhold judgment on the matter until the outcome of a match between a lion and Grizzly bear, or a gorilla, or Inland Taipan snake can be determined. Without such a tournament system to establish the matter, the definition of fiercest animal will remain a subjective process.

If the honor of commanding the foremost position among the order of wild creatures is granted due to size, the lion must be excluded from consideration, for it is not the largest land animal, nor it is the largest *wild* animal. At their greatest size, lions weigh

in at a massive 550 pounds, yet at 1,750 pounds, Grizzly bears are more than three times that weight, according to Encarta Encyclopedia.

A case can be made for claiming that the tiger is equally qualified to receive the "King of the Jungle" nomenclature, since according to Encarta, "Lions rival tigers for the title of biggest cat. In fact, lions and tigers are so similar in their physical features that without their distinctively colored fur, even scientists have trouble telling them apart."

To return, then, to popular perception, even were the title to be awarded through a contest of literary distinction, the lion is rivaled by the tiger as "King of the Jungle" by such illustrious minds as Rudyard Kipling, who conferred the trophy upon Shere Khan in "The Jungle Book," and E. Cobham Brewer in the 1898 "Dictionary of Phrase and Fable," where he defined the phrase "King of the Jungle" as "a tiger."

According to the Bible, the king of all beasts is the crocodile. Job 41:1, 34 – *"Can you catch a crocodile with a hook or put a noose around its jaw? Of all the creatures, it is the proudest. It is the king of beasts.*" (NLT)

The appellation "King of Beasts," then, seems to have been derived solely from the lion's regal-looking mane and not through superior size or ferocity.

Thus it is hardly accurate, let alone biblical, to say that the cherubim assumed the form of this animal due to its superiority over all other wild animals.

One could continue to test this theory with respect to the other animals. In the same manner as the lion, the eagle holds a superior position in general perception with respect to all other birds, but is it truly lord of the skies?

Is it the fastest flying creature in the Heavens? Although it boasts a remarkable top diving speed of approximately 100mph, it is unable to keep pace with the Peregrine Falcon which travels at a blistering 200mph.

Has it been blessed with the best eyesight? Able to spot prey up to a distance of three miles from an altitude of 1,000 feet over open country, its vision is nevertheless not the equal of the Peregrine Falcon which is believed to be able to spot a pigeon from a distance of more than five miles away under ideal conditions.

Is it possessed of the greatest wingspan? A magnificent creature at seven to eight feet, it is not the largest bird in the skies. That honor goes to the Albatross, with a wingspan of over eleven feet.

Does it fly at the highest altitudes? During migration, the eagle can soar between 5,000 to 8,000 feet, but the highest-flying avian is the Ruppell's Griffon Vulture. One documented case described a collision with an airplane off the Ivory Coast in 1973 at a range of 37,000 feet.

The Turkey Vulture, not the eagle, is the most graceful soaring bird in the world. Although a large bird with a wingspan of six feet, it nevertheless weighs an astonishing three pounds, allowing it to follow the thermals and updrafts with an instinct admired by experienced glider pilots. It can "feel" the air as it plays updrafts and minor variations with its wing-tip fingers, much as a pianist plays classical music on a Steinway. They are easy to identify because when soaring they hold their wings in a dihedral or "V" shape and they seldom flap. Most other large birds hold their wings level and flap frequently.

The Great Horned Owl, not the eagle, is known as the most veracious of all raptors, as it feeds on a very wide variety of prey including water fowl, rabbits, squirrels, marsh birds, rodents and occasionally eagles.

What is it that pronounces the eagle "Greatest of Birds?" Even if there is reason for the eagle to be judged worthy of this classification, is it a sufficient accomplishment to explain why the cherubim have assumed such a likeness?

The ox is declared to be the greatest of the domestic animals, a premise which does not enjoy even the support of popular opinion, for, as the axiom declares, the domesticated quadruped canis familiaris is Man's best friend. To question this presumption further, in what way can a domesticated yak be considered to be greater than a tame elephant? The reason, then for the ox's inclusion as a form of class excellence eludes comprehension. What criteria was used to determine the definition of "greatest domestic beast?" Certainly the ox is not a calmer, or more compliant creature than the cow, the cat, or the dog.

Finally, if the four great orders of creation include wildlife, domesticated beasts, fowl, and humans, why is it that all sea-life is curiously absent from the list, such as the great whales, the sharks, the barracuda, and the piranha? Is there not a fifth class of creation among the earth's creatures? If so, why were they excluded from having their features replicated by the cherubim of God?

Surely, there must be another reason for the cherubim to assume these forms. Would it be unreasonable to assume that the Bible is capable of answering this question? The results are worth consideration.

The Lion

The Bible refers to Jesus as the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah" in Revelation 5:5: "*Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.*"

The plethora of scriptures is too numerous to completely list, but when invoking the lion in a symbolic manner, the Bible associates it with great power and majesty.

Genesis 49:9, 10 – "*You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs.*"

Numbers 23:24 – "*The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion that does not rest till he devours his prey and drinks the blood of his victims.*"

Deuteronomy 33:20, 21 – "*About Gad he said: "Blessed is he who enlarges Gad's domain! Gad lives there like a lion, tearing at arm or head. He chose the best land for himself; the leader's portion was kept for him.*"

2nd Samuel 17:10 – "*Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.*"

The cherubim's depiction of the lion, then, symbolizes the royal majesty and power of God.

The Eagle

The Bible declares that God's ways are as far above the ways of Man as the Heavens are higher than the earth.

Isaiah 55:8, 9 – "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*"

The eagle is a symbol of power and intelligence that is far above the ability of Man to comprehend.

Deuteronomy 28:49, 50 – "*The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young.*"

In this scripture, the eagle represents a great distance (a nation far away, from the very ends of the earth), and a manifestation of incomprehensibility (its language is unintelligible).

Job 39:27-40:1 – "*Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high? He dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is his stronghold. From there he seeks out his food; his eyes detect it from afar. His young ones feast on blood, and where the slain are, there is he." The LORD said to Job: "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?*"

The course of the eagle is far beyond the grasp of mortal man to order. No command can be given that would be binding on his part, for he makes his dwelling in an unapproachable realm. His eyes can detect food from a great distance.

The eagle is a representation of God, Himself.

The Ox

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*"

The ox was a beast of burden and an object of sacrifice. It is difficult to find mention of an ox in the Bible that is not being used in a sacrificial capacity.

Thus, the ox represents the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross, and the resulting easy yoke and light burden that has been made available to mankind.

The Man

The Bible refers to Jesus as the second Adam.

1st Corinthians 15:45-47 – "*So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from Heaven.*"

As a man, Jesus was able to identify with the weaknesses of humanity.

Hebrews 4:15 – "*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.*"

As a mortal, Jesus died.

1st Corinthians 15:3 – "*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*"

Jesus commonly referred to himself as "the Son of Man."

John 9:35-37 – *" Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"*

"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

"Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

In the form of a man, flesh born of a woman, the Savior endured every temptation common to man, yet remained untainted by iniquity. Due to the unblemished nature of his righteousness, he became the sacrificial offering for sin in place of the customary ox.

1st Timothy 2:5, 6 – "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.*"

Hebrews 9:15 – " *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*"

He was a human mediator between humanity's sin and God's righteousness.

From a scriptural standpoint, it is obvious that the symbols of lion, eagle, ox, and man are collective symbols of God Almighty; symbols of His majesty and power, His righteousness and wisdom, His compassion and sacrifice, His understanding of the human condition, and His plan whereby He would restore an imperfect mankind unto Himself.

The cherubim assumed these symbolic forms for the purpose of identifying themselves as the preeminent of God's chosen agents, the duly authorized ministers before His throne who physically form His royal chariot (2nd Samuel 22:11; 1st Chronicles 28:18, 19).

There is never a time that John sees them cease to give glory, honor, and thankfulness to the One who sits upon the throne. In this they are joined by the twenty-four elders, who, casting their crowns at His feet, fall prostrate before the King of all kings in an unbounded display of heartfelt worship.

Such is the glimpse of Heaven that John was given through the power of the Holy Spirit. Almighty God is sitting upon His throne, canopied by a magnificent emerald rainbow. At each point of the throne sit four cherubim, continuously offering up gifts of resplendent adulation. Between the throne and crystal lake blaze seven golden lampstands, fiery representations of the measure of Holy Spirit oil corresponding to the congregations of Asia Minor.

Surrounding the throne in a vast semi-circle and completing the central portion of God's Heaven are twenty-four smaller thrones, occupied by twenty-four elders who, to the accompaniment of the thunder and lightning emanating from His Majesty's throne, are busily engaged in recounting the meritorious qualities of an illustrious and sapient King, the eternal, immortal, and invisible God, to whom honor and glory, majesty, dominion, and power is due for the balance of eternity.

Preparations now begin for the opening of the seven seals. In His right hand, the Almighty holds a closed scroll secured by seven royal seals. In awe, John watches the drama unfold.

Revelation 5:1-14

"*Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in Heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.*

"Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

"Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

"And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

"Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

"Then I heard every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

"The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped."

Stepping forward and addressing the assembled multitude with a loud voice, an angel appeals for a worthy individual to break the seals and thus open the scroll. To John's consternation, it seems as if such a one cannot be found, until from out of the glorious light a champion in the form of the Son of God appears, standing with a commanding, yet graceful presence in the center of the room.

His appearance is as a lamb recently slaughtered, which is to say that his wool was not brushed and immaculately radiant as would befit an august prince, but was instead matted and covered with the fresh blood of sacrifice.

Accepting the scroll from the outstretched hand of his Father, the cherubim and elders begin to worship him, testifying to his worthiness to open the scroll.

His sigils of authority consist of seven horns and eyes that bear witness to his relationship with the Father, for they symbolize the seven spirits of God that reside in the churches of the province of Asia Minor and prove that where the Father is, the Son abides, also (John 14:11; 1st John 2:23).

Upon receipt of the sealed seven-fold scroll, Jesus accepts the worship of the Heavenly host as golden bowls of incense, representing the prayers of the saints, are distributed throughout the assembly. One hundred million angels file in and encircle the throne, joining in the worship of the one who owns the keys of Hell and death.

The four cherubim conclude the commemoration by intoning a mellifluous "Amen," and the twenty-four elders fall down and worship God.

The coronation ceremony of the Lamb thus consummated, the time of harvest for the inhabitants of the earth draws inexorably nearer as the Risen Lord begins to open the first of the seven seals.

11. The First Seal

Revelation 6:1, 2

"*I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.*"

Upon Christ's opening of the first seal, one of the cherubim calls John's attention to the approach of a white horse with rider. With poise and dignity it approached the assembled throng, a majestic-looking animal without a single blemish to mar its radiant coat. Pure white and moving with a stately grace, it carried a rider who also held himself with a regal bearing.

"Surely, a magnificent dignitary of some kind," John may have thought, only to frown a moment later as he noticed a bow slung over the princely shoulder.

It was not uncommon for a king or prince to include exquisitely-fashioned weapons as part of his royal uniform while conducting parade inspections or performing ceremonial functions, but the customary accessory was a sword, not a bow.

A sword symbolized a leader, one who would wade into the thick of battle to personally mete out justice, and thus it was an excellent symbol for a king or a prince to be associated with.

A bow, however, was a weapon used by men who concealed themselves behind thick parapet walls far removed from the front line of combat. It did not bespeak of a leader. It did not betoken strength. It suggested a man reluctant to become involved in the affairs of his people, one who would rule at a distance and with a weak hand, perhaps easily swayed by the opinions of strong-willed advisers.

Even were these connotations not associated with the bow, it was an impractical weapon to be wielded by a horseman, for the horse's gait would throw off an archer's aim and render his attack ineffective. In close quarters, the bow would be useless to defend its wielder against melee weapons such as swords and battle axes, and if the archer removed himself from the field of battle, taking refuge behind ramparts and bulwarks, he would have no need of a horse.

Such thoughts may have run through John's mind as he attempted to fathom the meaning and purpose of the rider and his steed. He watched as the rider was given a sparkling crown and then galloped away like a conqueror riding to victory.

There are four elements of this affair that must be analyzed: the horse, the color white, the bow, and the crown.

The significance of the color white will be determined first. To do so, one can use many different instruments of measure. The merits of a man can be judged politically, personally, spiritually, or socially. One who makes an unpopular political decision may not be a disagreeable personality nor a spiritual reprobate. Another possessed of myriad character flaws may function splendidly in office. A man may be judged a failure in one area while hailed as a genius in another. The parameters of the test are what define the person. Adjust the parameters and the definition can be changed.

In the same manner, one might choose to define the color white through the lens of politics, religion, history, etymology, or psychology, with the interpretation afforded through one lens differing drastically from the view observed through another.

As it was God who created the vision, God who enabled John to view it, and God who intended it to be comprehended by others, it is imperative that it be examined though the use of God's economy, namely the Bible.

The words "white" and "whiter" occur collectively in the New International Version of the Bible sixty-five times. Fifteen of those are found in the book of Revelation. An examination of the remaining fifty passages will enable a determination to be made concerning the meaning that should be ascribed to the word in this particular instance.

In the majority of these passages, the word is used simply to indicate color.

Genesis 30:35 – "*That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons.*"

Genesis 30:37 – "*Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches.*"

Exodus 16:31 – "*The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.*"

Leviticus 11:17, 18 – "*the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey.*"

Esther 1:6 – "*The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones.*"

Apart from its primary function to indicate color, the word is used only in one other manner: to indicate righteousness, holiness, and purity.

Ecclesiastes 9:8 – "*Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil.*"

Isaiah 1:18 – "*"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*"

Psalms 51:7 – "*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*"

When employed symbolically in the Bible, the color white is in every instance a representation of holiness. If in every case outside of the Revelation manuscript the color white is understood to be a hued illustration of moral purity, then there exists no biblical grounds upon which to claim that it is not a representation of such in this case, as well.

Easton's Bible Dictionary concurs.

"White — a symbol of purity (Ps. 51:7; Isa. 1:18; Rev. 3:18; 7:14). Our Lord, at his transfiguration, appeared in raiment "white as the light" (Matt. 17:2, etc.)"

Those possessed of dissenting opinions must keep in mind the parameters of the test. There is not a single biblical example of the word "white" being utilized to signify impurity or false righteousness. Only by setting the Bible aside can one define the term as "peacefulness" which is its significance according to modern social understanding,

"Catholicism" as portrayed by the religious community, or "one-world government" as is viewed through the eyes of the global political milieu.

God's terms must be defined by His own lexicon, i.e. His Word, the Holy Bible.

At this stage of the analysis, one fact that has become enormously obvious is the white horse's predisposition for holiness.

Now that we have glanced briefly at the equine, let us turn our attention to its rider. The bow that he carries is perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of the symbolism in this vision, having for so long been interpreted by so many through the lenses of sentence structure and the language rules of grammatical correctness rather than through the Bible medium.

The mistake is made through a literal reading of the passage, which makes no mention of notched and feathered projectiles. Thus, it is wrongly concluded that the rider is ill-equipped for the battle he has ridden to enjoin. The logical thought that depends from this false notion is that he must therefore be conquering with a weapon of peace.

Peace is then married to the socially-perceived definition of the color white, creating the illusion that the pieces of the symbolic puzzle are beginning to fit together. Further substance is credited to the mirage when it is realized that a connection can also be made to the Catholic Church in its efforts to unite the planet under a flag of peace. The image is pronounced complete with the incorporation of the international political view concerning the symbolism of the white qualifier: a general picture of global religious and political conquest achieved without the assistance of coercive violence, and a representation of Antichrist in particular.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. By using worldviews as a measuring stick rather than the benchmark of the Bible, the representation of Antichrist is the end result of the belief that the rider of the white horse is not armed.

Permit me to advance the theory that he is.

The passage in question is Revelation 6:2.

"*I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.*"

According to the literal rules of grammar, this rider is missing half of his ordnance. The arrows are absent and the rider is equipped solely with a bow. However, a quick look through the lens of scripture will prove that this grammatical omission is insignificant.

Genesis 48:22 – "*And to you, as one who is over your brothers, I give the ridge of land I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.*"

The nation of Israel wrested a parcel of land away from the Amorites in the course of battle. It was achieved through weapons of warfare and military prowess, not due to a confrontation that resulted in a peace treaty ceding the land to Israel.

The bow is specifically mentioned here and the arrows are not. Yet, it is understood that the bows were used properly after the method of their design. They were fitted with arrows, not used as clubs with which they assaulted the enemy over the head.

By neglecting to specifically mention the arrows, the author of Genesis was not attempting to relate a deep truth. The use of the arrows was meant to be inferred and an inclusion in the text would simply have been superfluous.

Joshua 24:12 - "*I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow.*"

Again, it is understood that the bow referred to here was used to sling arrows.

2nd Kings 9:24 - "*Then Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow pierced his heart and he slumped down in his chariot.*"

In this passage, the arrow is specifically mentioned as the instrument of death. In some cases, the mention of arrows is included in the biblical texts, but due to their close association with the bow, the Bible does not deem it necessary to refer to them in every instance.

1st Kings 22:34 - "*But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, "Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded.*"

In this passage, the arrow is not mentioned. Due to its exclusion from the text, is one to believe that this someone drew back his bow and clubbed the king with it?

Certainly not. The use of the arrow was meant to be inferred. Thus, when examining the passage in Revelation concerning the rider with his bow, the fact that his arrows are not mentioned is not proof of an absence of ammunition.

When compared with and defined by scripture, the meaning is plain that when bows are mentioned in the Bible without a corresponding reference to arrows, it is to be understood that the arrows are present as well.

Even in the natural, ammunition is so closely associated with its method of deployment that it is often not referred to at all. A common enough example is frequently heard in a variation of the words, "In local news, last night, a teenager entered a convenience store on West 150th street and pulled out a gun, holding it on a frightened clerk and six customers for three terrifying hours before police were able to intervene."

After hearing such a report, is it customary for the news audience to indicate confusion as to the reason such an event was deemed worthy enough to be reported on the evening newscast? Do they scratch their heads and say, "Not a word was mentioned about any bullets." Of the six customers unfortunate enough to have been in the store, did the statement, "I've got a gun!" uttered by a crazed and nervous teenager instill fear in any of their hearts and motivate them to find cover, or did they need to hear the corresponding, "…and it's loaded!" before taking such action?

It is understood that the weapon is loaded with bullets. It is unnecessary to hear a proclamation of such.

Truly, the rider of the white horse is armed and dangerous. He is not impotent in his ability to wage war.

It is peculiar that a horseman would be armed with a bow rather than with a sword or lance. Is the bow, then, as a specific article of weaponry, significant as a symbol?

A bow is capable of inflicting damage from a distance while a sword is effective only at close range. Is this indicative of anything in particular?

To answer this question one must look to the scriptures.

2nd Kings 13:17 – "*"Open the east window," he said, and he opened it. "Shoot!" Elisha said, and he shot. "The LORD's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" Elisha declared. "You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek."*

The arrow is referred to here as "the Lord's arrow of victory." Through the arrow, God would bring triumph. In this sense, the arrow is a vessel of the Lord; it contains His victory.

In this passage, the Bible has invoked the arrow as a symbol of transport.

Isaiah 49:1-6 - "*Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.*

"He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor. He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."

"But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God."

"*And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength— he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.*"

Isaiah declares that he has been made into a polished arrow and hidden in the quiver of God for the purpose of bringing Israel back to Him and testifying of Him to the Gentiles.

Isaiah was the Lord's servant. A prophet, his mouth contained the word of the Lord, and through him God would restore His people and grant salvation to the world.

To that end, Isaiah is likened as an arrow. As an arrow flies through the air, so also will Isaiah fly true to his intended targets.

In this scripture, the Bible has made use of the arrow to symbolically represent a delivery device. The arrow does not represent an assault on a city or the death of a people, but instead is portrayed as a messenger of sorts.

Jeremiah 9:8 - "*Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks with deceit.*"

The tongue is a deliverer of deceit. Malice can be brought to bear through the instrument of the tongue.

Zechariah 9:14 – "*Then the LORD will appear over them; his arrow will flash like lightning.*"

This passage refers to the tribe of Ephraim as the Lord's arrow going forth against Greece. They were the Lord's chosen messengers of judgment.

Through these scriptures, the Bible has associated the arrow with message bearing; it is an object traveling in a precise direction for the express purpose of delivering a package, whether that payload be victory, testimony, or deceit.

In contrast, the sword is used in the Bible to represent violence (Genesis 27:40), war (Leviticus 26:6), death (Deuteronomy 13:15, Joshua 8:24), defense (Deuteronomy 33:29), sharpness (Proverbs 5:4, Ezekiel 5:1), and agony (Luke 2:35).

When speaking of the sword figuratively, the Bible does not speak of it as a delivery system per se. In a somewhat different manner, it symbolizes the death or the agony itself, rather than an amoral delivery system capable of delivering whatever message is deemed necessary to dispatch.

The figurative arrow in the Bible could contain victory, deceit, testimony, or prophecy. Whether meant for good or ruin, the arrow was an envelope whose purpose was only to deliver a package.

The sword is a harbinger of death, violence, agony, and sharp torment. It is capable of delivering nothing else. It is a worthless tool to the surgeon who works to

mend torn flesh, it is useless to the architect who builds magnificent edifices, and it is impotent in the hands of an ambassador seeking to create peace.

It can only tear down. It can not build, heal, or edify. It is a symbol of calamity.

As the depiction of the white horse and rider of the first seal is examined, it is obvious that the rider does not carry a sword. He is therefore not a symbol of death, war, or agony. He carries a bow, the biblical symbol of a courier.

The righteous purity of the horse indicates a righteous, godly purpose, an impression reinforced by the fact that God bestowed a crown upon the rider's head.

Scripture reveals that faithful believers in Christ will receive a crown of victory (2nd Timothy 2:5) from their Lord when their time on earth is ended. The Bible also describes it as a crown of righteousness (2nd Timothy 4:8), a crown of life (James 1:12; 1st Corinthians 9:25), and a crown of glory (1st Peter 5:4).

This rider has received such a crown. He is a faithful and true son of God, and His purpose is just and righteous. His purpose is to effect a delivery.

As the final remaining element is analyzed, namely that of the horse, the meaning of this vision will become clear.

The symbolism of the horse can be defined through various methods, interpreted as the embodiment of strength, speed, or perseverance, but the definition given through the Bible medium is quite different.

"*Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane? Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? He paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray. He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; he does not shy away from the sword.*

"The quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance. In frenzied excitement he eats up the ground; he cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds. At the blast of the trumpet he snorts, 'Aha!' He catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry." - Job 39:19-25

"*A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.*" - Psalms 33:17

"*The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD.*" - Proverbs 21:31

"*...Each pursues his own course like a horse charging into battle.*" - Jeremiah 8:6

"*My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the LORD Almighty will care for his flock, the house of Judah, and make them like a proud horse in battle.*" - Zechariah 10:3

The Bible associates the horse with battle. Indeed, horses were employed in ancient Israel only in times of war. In times of peace, it was the donkey that was utilized. It was due to this symbology that in John 12:14, 15 Jesus entered Jerusalem astride a donkey rather than a horse, for the Son of God symbolized peace and eternal life rather than war and death.

Easton's Bible Dictionary agrees.

"Horse — always referred to in the Bible in connection with warlike operations, except Isa. 28:28. The war-horse is described Job 39:19–25. For a long period after their settlement in Canaan the Israelites made no use of horses, according to the prohibition, Deut. 17:16."

Thus, the horse is a symbol of war. Specifically it is a white horse, which is to say that it represents holy battle.

As the rider was crowned by God, he therefore carries His authority and approval. He is a holy messenger, and regardless of whether he rides forth to do great good, or to deliver punishment, it is clear that his motivation is godly.

From the fact that the rider is armed and rides forth to do battle on a horse of combat, it is clear that a war will be waged. But exactly what is the nature of this war, and against whom will he ride?

The final shreds of mystery fall from the white horse as its identity is fully revealed in Revelation 5:6.

"*Then I saw a Lamb,* ***looking as if it had been slain****, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.*"

According to Revelation 13:8, Jesus Christ was the Lamb who was slain. He was slain at Calvary and ascended to Heaven after his resurrection (Luke 24:51; Ephesians 4:10).

His first act upon arrival is entirely illuminating, detailed as it occurred in Acts chapters one and two, and foretold by the Messiah in the following scriptures:

John 15:26 – "*When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.*"

John 16:7 – "*But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.*"

The initial action of Jesus Christ was to send forth the Holy Spirit into the world.

A glance at Revelation 6:1, 2 reveals the first official act of the Lamb to be the opening of the first seal.

With its white wool spattered by fresh blood, the Lamb is the crucified Christ who ascended into Heaven, and by opening the first seal, dispatched the Holy Spirit into the world to conquer evil and the hearts of men!

Thus, the meaning of the white horse is made manifest. It is a representation of the Holy Spirit which has begun to wage a war for the souls of humankind.

Such a powerful passage of scripture gives hope, encourages, and uplifts the spirit! In a book so full of doom and gloom, and judgment and damnation, and torture and horror, there can still be found rays of sunshine, comforting words, and cheering assurances of salvation and deliverance.

Great comfort can be derived from the fact that before any of the tragic events described in the book of Revelation could befall the inhabitants of the earth, the Lord sent forth his Spirit to gather his children unto him that they might not be subject to the fury of the ultimate tribulation that is to come. Spiritual battles are presently being fought and his angels stand ready to assist the crowning achievements of God's creation in a war between Good and Evil for the souls of mankind, that they might be spared from the second death and the wrath of God that is reserved for Satan and his angels.

Before a single dispatch of judgment, before the wrath of God is made manifest, before the advent of the inevitable horror that will be visited upon mankind, Jesus Christ sent his Holy Spirit to redeem a lost and dying world and to restore them unto the Father. He loves with an immeasurable passion and he does not wish that even a single soul be lost (Matthew 18:14).

The book of Revelation is not solely a herald of death and disaster. It is also a story of hope and triumph, the assurance of an ultimate victory over evil, and a guarantee of eternal life in paradise. It's an action-adventure with a fairytale ending.

"*...And they will reign for ever and ever.*" - Revelation 22:5

In summation, the color white is a biblical symbol of holiness. The crown is a biblical symbol of authority. Taken together, this represents a Holy Authority. The symbol of the horse indicates that a war will be fought, and the bow represents the delivery system of this Authority.

This is not a picture of Antichrist, for the antithesis of holiness is not purity. Satan's chosen one is evil, vile, and full of abomination. There can be found not a single biblical example of these qualities associated with the color white, for false righteousness is not pure. It may *appear* as white to those with undiscerning spirits, as 2nd Corinthians 11:14 declares, but its nature is not white.

The horse of the first seal was, indeed, white. Its rider received a crown of glory that will never fade away. It did not work a deception by seeming to appear holy, for it was holy indeed; the Spirit of Jesus Christ which was promised to believers in John 14:18.

It is a wonderful conclusion to have reached, but is it a position tenable by other scripture? If the white horse is truly the Holy Spirit which was sent into the world by Jesus Christ, conquering over long range with spiritual arrows, there should be corresponding scripture that bears witness of the fact. Evidence must be found that reveals the arrows piercing their targets.

If such evidence is to be found anywhere, it certainly should be located at the scene on earth to which the Holy Spirit was first dispatched.

Acts 2:37, 38 – "*Now when they heard this,* ***they were pricked in their heart****, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"

They were *pricked in their hearts*! The arrows of the Holy Spirit are certainly in evidence at this time, for they are piercing the hearts of men just prior to releasing their spiritual payload of the Holy Spirit, acquiring their first captives.

Lest the word "pricked" be considered a denotation of merely a deep expression of emotion, the Greek word in this instance was "katanusso," which means "to pierce thoroughly," "sting to the quick," or "to prick."

Immediately after their hearts were "pierced completely through" by missiles of the Holy Spirit, mankind becomes profoundly inquisitive as to the procedure for obtaining eternal life. To that end, they were instructed by the Apostle Peter in the matters of repentance and baptism, a formula which when followed, resulted in the delivery of the Holy Spirit, a gift readily available to all whom the Lord our God shall call.

Not only did a profuse outpouring of the Holy Spirit commence in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, there transpired a second outpouring that crashed over the souls of men like a flood in a period of relatively recent origin. Such a twofold inundation of the Spirit was promised by God when He spoke through His prophets of a former and a latter rain of the Spirit.

Deuteronomy 11:13, 14 – "*And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.*" (KJV)

This is understood to be a prophetic reference to two distinct outpourings of the Holy Spirit; one earlier and one later.

Hosea 6:1-3 – "*Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him. And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.*" (KJV)

In this passage, the prophetic references are inescapable. This is an allusion to the body of Christ that would be crucified and resurrected after two days. Once this has come to pass, the scripture invites the reader to follow on after Jehovah who will appear in the form of a rain, even a latter rain.

This scripture was fulfilled in Jerusalem two thousand years ago and at Azusa Street, California, in 1906, in a performance that trumpeted the beginning of the latter days.

Zechariah 10:1 – "*Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.*" (KJV)

Believers in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries became convinced that in order for churches to be true to their calling, it was necessary to duplicate the experience of the early disciples, and they hearkened to the counsel of Zechariah. They began to seek after a baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord responded in showers of rain.

This was not a small, isolated event. People from all over the nation came to Azusa Street to be filled with the Holy Ghost, and it was from this outpouring that the entire Charismatic movement was born.

James 5:7 – "*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.*" (KJV)

James spoke of a long period of time in-between the two outpourings, and declared that those who sought for its precious fruit would need long patience until both the early and the latter rains were received into the earth. Haggai, however, had prophesied that the prize would be well worth the wait, for the glory of the latter outpouring would greatly exceed that of the former.

Haggai 2:9 – "*The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*" (KJV)

Not only has the Holy Spirit of the first seal been dispatched into the earth to unloose its initial hail of arrows, but the fulfillment of both the early and latter rains has been realized today.

It is positively staggering to realize that the answers to the symbolism of Revelation have been contained within the pages of the Bible all along. Understanding

this, then, everything previously thought to be true must be re-evaluated in the light of scripture rather than the darkened beams of politics, culture, or religion.

It is interesting to note that it is through scripture that the white horse of the first seal is revealed to be the Holy Spirit of God. It is only thought to be representative of Antichrist when viewed through the lenses of man-made, satanically-influenced institutions and ideas.

If one desires to discover pure truth, one must use a pure textbook. Praise the Lord for making a way for mankind to escape the wrath of the endtime judgments!

12. The Second Seal

Revelation 6:3, 4

"*When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.*"

As the echoes of the white horse's hoof beats fade away, another stallion gallops into view as the second seal is opened. Its color is fiery red and it, too, supports a rider to whom an article is given; a warrior whose objective is to manipulate mankind into destroying itself. He is not appointed to royal office through the anointing of an august crown, as was the previous rider, but is instead issued a large sword with which he will appropriate peace from the earth.

As previously elucidated, the horse is a symbol of war. The rider's large sword and bloody vocation serve well as underscores of this concept.

When the Bible is consulted with regard to the significance of the color red, it provides two delineations.

"*This is a requirement of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke. Give it to Eleazar the priest; it is to be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence.*" - Numbers 19:2, 3

As a requirement of the Mosaic law, God demanded that propitiation ceremonies be performed through which the iniquity of sinful individuals would be transferred to an animal sacrifice. The sacrificial creature was specifically mandated to be a red heifer. Consequently, the heifer became a symbol for sin; and not a quotidian bovine, but specifically a red one. Other scriptures such as Isaiah 1:18 affirm that red is a biblical symbol of sin:

"*Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*"

The color is not an exclusive denotation of sin, however, for other scriptures exist in which it is implicative of blood.

2nd Kings 3:22, 23 – "*When they got up early in the morning, the sun was shining on the water. To the Moabites across the way, the water looked red—like blood. "That's blood!" they said. "Those kings must have fought and slaughtered each other. Now to the plunder, Moab!*"

Accustomed to the conventional palette of nature, the human mind, when confronted with a divergent depiction, will attempt to define the prodigy in lexis with which it is au fait.

Thus, a green-tinted water would most likely be interpreted as an imbalance in water chemistry due to the infestation of a minute, unattractive unicellular algae, or blanket weed.

Given that the standard hue of water is customarily a blue-green, the Moabites, when confronted with the aberration of a scarlet-tinted sea, interpreted the anomaly

according to what they considered to be the most plausible explanation, namely, that the crimson tinge of tide indicated the presence of a bloody contaminant.

Isaiah 63:2, 3 – "*Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing.*"

These red garments represented the spattered blood of the nations of the earth.

Nahum 2:3 – "*The shields of his soldiers are red; the warriors are clad in scarlet.*"

The terrible might of these warriors is expressed through a metaphoric donning of scarlet appurtenances, an emblematic portrayal of the effusively spurted blood of an enemy. With shields and clothing symbolically drenched in blood, their military prowess is effectively communicated.

Revelation 6:12 – "*I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red.*"

Again, the color red is expressed in the Bible as a bloody color.

Thus, God has in His inspired Word both represented blood and symbolized sin with this particular hue.

Indeed, an association between the two is made in Romans 6:23 and James 1:15 where the Bible declares that the wages of sin are death and that lust, when it is mature, produces a plethora of inanimate matter.

To summarize at this point, the color red can be interpreted according to the Bible as representative of either sin or blood; the sword is a biblical symbol of death, violence, and agony; and the horse is an emblem of war.

Whatever the appellation of this entity, it is clear that it is possessed of a violent nature. The opening of the second seal has unleashed a red horse upon the earth whose rider has been given a large sword and the prerogative to deduct peace from the lives of men. Note that the manner in which it dispenses death is not consistent with that of a duly authorized agent of God who would overtly effect the slaughter according to a righteous dictate and by his own hand, but rather provokes mankind to beget its own destruction.

1st Chronicles 21:11-30 records that in the time of King David, the angel of death struck down seventy thousand Israelites with a sword until the prayers of David caused God to withdraw His anger. The enemies of Israel were also decimated by the sword of the death angel in 2nd Kings 19:35 when it killed one hundred eighty-five thousand Assyrians in a single night.

To contrast, the rider of the red horse will not by his own hand take the lives of men, after the manner of a properly certified envoy of God, but will instead influence men to bring a murderous rage to bear upon his fellows.

It is not God who provokes men to wickedness, but Satan (James 1:13). The strategy employed by Satan has long been known to be one of manipulation. The fall of Adam from perfection was not achieved through a direct strike at man's progenitor. Nor did the Lord of Darkness engineer the infusion of sin into the human race by plucking the forbidden fruit from the tree himself and providing it to Eve. Rather, he manipulated her into taking it for herself, and through her, the seed of man was contaminated. A

surreptitious manipulator, the Bible describes Satan as a great red dragon (Revelation 12:3).

In the same manner as the red dragon, the red horse does not kill men outright, but seeks to provoke mankind into destroying itself. The sword of its rider does not slice through flesh and bone, but through the minds of mortals, antagonizing men into killing each other and thus taking peace from the earth.

Whereas the white horse was dispatched into the earth with a godly purpose, the agenda of this evil horse and rider is dark with cruel intent. It wields not just a sword, but a *large* sword, which indicates that the spilling of blood will be copious throughout the earth.

In God's perfect Eden, creation was at peace. The element of war was introduced by the father of enmity, who thought it not improvident to rage against even the Almighty.

"*And there was war in Heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in Heaven.*" - Revelation 12:7, 8

The atrocity of murder was inculcated in man by a stealthy, manipulative Beelzebub.

Genesis 4:8 – "*Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.*"

As scripture reveals, the original murder was performed due to the influence of the Evil One, who, crouched at Cain's door, provoked him to kill his righteous brother.

Genesis 4:6, 7 – "*Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.*"

1st John 3:12 – "*Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.*"

From the beginning of time and throughout the course of history, war has been a constant companion of sorrow to the human race. If the red horse was merely a spirit of war, it would have traveled unnoticed through this world of perpetual hostility. If it was just another in an endless horde of evil, swarming spirits, then its purpose here in Revelation would be inexplicable. Apart from its great sword, the red horse symbolizes nothing more than the typical spirit of war that has been so prevalent in human society for millennia. The element that distinguishes it from centuries of the familiar is the large sword, signifying great destruction.

With the factors of horse, large sword, and the color red biblically interpreted, the vision of the red horse represents an evil spirit of great war, a spirit which galloped onto this planet in 1914 when it instigated the global conflict named after itself: the Great War, or World War One, as it has come to be known. That performance was followed by an even greater encore, in an event known as World War Two.

If the first seal is indeed the Holy Spirit sent forth into the world, then it should be possible to establish a relationship between the red horse of Revelation and the Great Wars of the twentieth century by evidence proving that a spirit of great war descended upon this planet at a time subsequent to that of the Holy Spirit outpouring.

If it can be proven that wars began to increase in frequency and ferocity, involving huge masses of combatants at a time prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then the interpretation of endtime events as presented here can be proven false due to the numerical position of the red horse in relation to that of the white. However, if said quickening can be determined to have commenced at a point subsequent to the preliminary Pentecostal experience, then the analysis thus far can be deemed a match for the sequential profile as set forth in the Bible.

To that end, a characterization of war prior and subsequent to the resurrection of Christ must be established with the results evaluated to determine whether or not a disparity exists precisely at that demarcation.

Interestingly enough, history records the transpiring of but three major wars in the roughly four thousand years of human existence before the advent of Christ.

1. The Persian Wars: a fifty-one year conflict fought between Greece and Persia from 500 – 449 B.C.
2. The Peloponnesian Wars: a twenty-seven year hostility sustained between the city-states of Athens and Sparta from 431 – 404 B.C.
3. The Punic Wars: fought between the cities of Rome and Carthage, of which there were three subsets:

- War 1: a twenty-three year campaign which lasted from 264 until 241 B.C.
- War 2: a seventeen year war beginning in 218 and culminating in 201 B.C.
- War 3: a three year battle from 149 to 146 B.C.

Although innumerable skirmishes between opposing factions have been fought in antiquity, many of which received the designation of "war," history labels only the aforementioned three as major in scope throughout a period of approximately four thousand years.

Allowing for the theory so prevalent in modern scholarship, however flawed with respect to the biblical account, that declares the age of the earth in units of billions or trillions of years, the figure of four thousand can be revised by a generous measure. Restated, there have occurred no more than three major wars within the antediluvian period of five hundred years prior to the time of Christ.

These wars can be characterized by their long duration, and the fact that they were fought between two combatants acting alone. To contrast, the past one hundred years of modern history have seen the effects of five major wars.

1. World War One, aka The Great War: a four-year struggle involving thirty-two nations from 1914 to 1918
2. World War Two: a six-year war involving forty-one nations from 1939 to 1945
3. The Korean War: a three-year confrontation involving twenty nations that persisted from 1950 to 1953
4. The Vietnam War: a sixteen-year struggle involving over forty-five nations from 1959 to 1975
5. The Gulf War: a battle with a duration of less than one year, involving twenty-five nations in 1991

There have been countless other clashes between opposing militaries in the last century, as the war zones of Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, and Croatia can attest, yet the hostilities raging in those regions are not regarded as major conflicts.

The variance is obvious. In the first five hundred years of a timeline spanning more than two millennia, only three major conflicts were observed to erupt; three campaigns waged between two single combatants. The journey through a fog-encompassed vortex of eons to the other end of the timeline which stretches upward through the misty vapor of centuries reveals a startling change. In a smaller segment of time, namely the last one hundred years, the earth has been ignited in violent conflict, having experienced five major wars involving the entire planet.

It is apparent that a catalyst for change has been introduced at some point after the time of Christ.

The disciples of Jesus once inquired as to the signs that would herald the end of the age. The Master supplied the following answer, beginning in Matthew 24:6:

"*You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.*"

Jesus warned of an abundance of war in the centuries to come, and that rumors of wars would be on many lips, but he declared that simple war would not portend the end of the age.

In Matthew 24:7, 8, he continued by saying that in the intervening years between his resurrection and reappearance, a solitary nation will rise against a solitary nation, and a single kingdom would take up arms against a single kingdom. Famines and earthquakes will be manifested in various places, yet these times of struggle are but the beginning of birthing pains. They are indicative only of the fact that the process has begun, not that its end is at hand.

In verses 9 and 10, believers are told to expect persecution and death on such a scale as to cause many to forsake the gospel. Even so, Jesus discloses, the time of the end is not yet.

In verse 15 he begins to speak of a time of great adversity, unequaled from the beginning of the world and never to be equaled again.

In verses 29 and 30, he reveals the sign his disciples asked for. *Immediately after those days of severe tribulation*, the nations of the earth will see him returning on the clouds of the firmament with mighty power and great glory.

The sign of his return is not the continuance of military engagements, nor the rumors of further hostilities, for those will abound. Rather, the initial signal that serves to herald the end of the age is an outbreak of great war such as the world has never seen. Jesus placed the event in a future period with respect to the Holy Spirit outpouring, thus it should be sought after in an era subsequent to the release of the white horse of the first seal.

On the far end of the timeline, a sample period of five hundred years can be analyzed in which only three major wars were fought, each involving only two enemies. At the near end of the spectrum, *five* major wars have been sustained by a much smaller sample period of one hundred years, campaigns of which the participant nations have numbered in the dozens.

Nations have risen against nation, and kingdoms have borne arms against kingdom.

What element is responsible for this change? Why is it that today's wars are occurring with more frequency and involving an increasing number of the world's nations?

At some point in the intervening nineteen-hundred years, and specifically after the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1906, a force began to exert its influence upon the world, manipulating mankind into a position from which it could begin to destroy itself on a large scale. That mechanism has been the red horse of Revelation's second seal.

Consider the following words recorded by Jay M. Winter of Cambridge University, concerning World War One:

"The First World War is a detective story with no resolution for a very simple reason. It's what converts a controlled explosion into a monumental explosion which is the real question.

"Why Austria-Hungary wanted to punish Serbia for the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand is a question that we can answer. On the Sixth of July, there was a German-Austrian understanding about how Germany would support Austrian attempts to annihilate Serbia.

"We know that. That's not the detective story. The story is how did you get from there to the First World War, and who wanted that small explosion to become a big one? And, the answer is almost impossible to define.

"There are those who say that the German military and navy wanted it for years. This was their grasp for world power. This is the moment of truth, when they finally get what they should have gotten because of their economic industrial power. That means it's all malice aforethought, and the whole story is cooked up in Berlin.

"There are other people who say they wanted a small scale war, and got a big scale war instead, and lost it. But there's a third view that it is, as it were, a collective failure. As you said, the collective failure is that individuals who are diplomats, and with the intention of stopping these conflicts from getting out of hand simply didn't take it seriously enough, on both sides of the line.

"I would have thought that the best way to understand this question of who was responsible for the outbreak of the First World War is to eliminate those of lesser responsibility.

"Nobody in London, nobody in Paris, nobody in St. Petersburg wanted the small war to turn into a big war. That conversion of the Balkan War into the Great War was not conjured up anywhere other than in Berlin and in Vienna. If there is a smoking gun, it's in one or the other of those capitals. But the jury's still out. The trial has yet to be concluded."

It was the rider of the red horse who desired for the small blast to become a great detonation.

As children whose mischievous actions so often create a bewildering chain-reaction of repercussions for which they can give no satisfactory account, so also the world was stunned at the rapidity with which events spiraled out of control, unable to precisely explain their arrival at the meridian of Great War.

By all accounts, the conflict should have been confined to Austria and Germany, as was typical of history's earliest skirmishes involving but two solitary enemies. Yet, in

some way, the tension in Europe was escalated, manipulated into the event which became World War One.

Mankind is unsure as to how or why it happened, unaware as it is of the spiritual force at work among them, taking peace from the earth and causing men to kill each other.

Max A. Forsythe of Tulip Academy, in the Western Civilization Public Education Course of Study text entitled "The Great European and World War," remarks, "Just as the Nineteenth Century really began after Waterloo in 1815, so may we understand that the real history of the twentieth century began in the post-war era, after the first of what came to be known as two world wars. Almost every social, political or economic conflict of this century can be traced back to the incredible blood letting on the battlefields of the Great War. Its memory framed the political posturing of several generations of diplomats, politicians and generals. The gross failures of the war-making powers generated and fed a century of rebellion against any rightful authority systems and monarchial systems of government in particular."

The red horse was riding hard in the early twentieth century, molding the minds of men and the shape of governments for generations to come.

History records that "The specific cause of the Great War involved the assassination of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary on June 28, 1914 by a Serbian radical who hoped to pave the way for a greater Slavic state separate from the Dual Monarchy." - Forsythe

The precise action which ignited the firestorm of great war was an assassination. One man was compelled to murder another. To those alert to such things, the red horse can be observed manipulating, provoking, and strategizing just beyond the ethereal curtain of the spiritual realm.

The Great War would be just the beginning, not the end, of its evil machinations. Twenty-one years after the first global conflict, the red horse instigated another. MSN Encarta defines World War Two in these words:

"**World War II**, global military conflict that, in terms of lives lost and material destruction, was the most devastating war in human history. It began in 1939 as a European conflict between Germany and an Anglo-French coalition, but it widened to include most of the nations of the world."

Note the words "the most devastating war in human history," and the fact that like its great predecessor, the second greatest war began in modest fashion, but was manipulated into becoming a dispute of global proportions.

History texts declare that, "Never has there been a war that could have been avoided more easily than the one that has just destroyed (1939 - 1945) whatever was left of the world after the previous confrontation (1914 -1918)." – "The World at War, History of WW 1939-1945", Wilfried Braakhuis, Associate Professor of History, University of Twente.

World War Two should have been the most easily avoidable war in the history of the world. But it wasn't avoided, for mankind was not in complete control of the events in which it partook. Behind the mortal coil galloped the hoofs of a red horse whose rider brandished a large sword, taking peace from the earth, and causing men to kill themselves.

Braakhuis declares that, "From 1939 to 1945, Germany's military machine struck out and conquered most of Western Europe, swept into deserts of North Africa and drove deep into the hinterlands of Russia. In time, however, the Allies gathered strength and eventually crushed the German Army and Axis powers with **a display of brute force that has remained unmatched to this day**."

These were the ravaging effects of war such as the ancient world had never seen. With the majority of eyes closed to spiritual matters, mankind did not understand what was happening to them, or why; ignorant of the Words of Life which foretold of such things.

The rider of the red horse has not ceased to ride throughout the nations of this earth. He is only gaining the momentum needed to bring together the armies of the world against Jerusalem at a plain called Megiddo, where the Lord Jesus Christ will return to intervene and destroy them with the sharp sword of His mouth.

"*The story is how did you get from there to the First World War, and who wanted that small explosion to become a big one? ...the answer is almost impossible to define.*" - World War One

"*Never has there been a war that could have been avoided more easily...*" – World War Two

The red horse has been taking peace from the earth by provoking men to kill each other.

Simple war has admittedly existed for millennia. It is only recently that it has metamorphosed into a super class of creature. The ancient Israelites may have fought against the Hittites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Amelekites, and the Assyrians, but they did not engage in a five-front war to assault them in unison as a collective, single opponent.

In those days, war could be characterized as a clash between two distinct forces, just as in the five hundred-year period before Christ, Athens had fought against Sparta, Carthage against Rome, and Greece against Persia.

Although from time to time a nation would enter the battlefield bolstered by the military might of an ally, a massive coalition of nations was unheard of. There was never a war which pitted the Assyrians, Philistines, Hittites, Ammonites, Amelekites, Amorites, Canaanites, and Moabites against the Israelites, Egyptians, Medes, Persians, Perezzites, Jebusites, Hivites, and Sidonians.

This particular flavor of coalition warfare was introduced by the rider of the red horse sometime after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Prior to that time, the nature of war held little variety, involving as it did no more than a handful of combatants, whose dispute was generally limited to a relatively small portion of the world.

One notable exception is the campaign of Alexander the Great, whose thirst for dominance affected the known world. It must be pointed out, however, that Alexander achieved his successes without the aid of a global coalition.

Today it is accepted that if a particular nation is to be dealt with militarily, it will be set upon by a coalition of a dozen nations. Such is the result of the red horse's journey throughout the earth as it gathered together the ingredients of global war and brought them to a boil after the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit as symbolized by the white horse of the first seal.

Echoes of twentieth century war ring as haunting testimonies to the presence of the red horse of great war and its devilish rider.

"The Great War… 200 billion dollars in expenditures… 8 million human casualties… 21 million wounded… 80 Allied aircraft shot down by a bloody red baron named Manfred Richthofen…"

"World War Two… 14.5 million military casualties… 13 million civilian lives lost… 1 trillion dollars in expenditures… 800 billion dollars in property damage… 27% of all ships destroyed…"

Each statistic an echo of the galloping red hoof beats, a creature whose ride will conclude outside Jerusalem where it will one day maneuver the nations of the earth in battle against Almighty God.

"*The angel swung his sickle on earth and cut off its grapes. He threw them into a pit where they were trampled on as a sign of God's anger. The pit was outside the city, and when the grapes were mashed, blood flowed out. The blood turned into a river that was about two hundred miles long and almost deep enough to cover a horse.*" - Revelation 14:19, 20 (CEV)

The ultimate objective of the red horse is to bring the combined force of the world's military might to bear against Jerusalem, the city of God. In preparation for this supreme act of aggression, it has begun to accustom the nations of the world to the idea of massive coalition forces of war. When the time comes to assemble a global army in the plain of Megiddo, it will be accomplished quickly and efficiently, for the spirit of great war has been conducting drills for a hundred years.

Mankind lives in a world where the phrases "going postal," "road rage," "terrorist activity," and "guns in schools" are familiar expressions.

Men are killing men, and for what reason? What can be done to bring an end to the slaughter? The ranks of law enforcement have been increased, soldiers have been equipped with better technology, and security guards have been placed in schools and places of employment, yet the killings continue.

Parents kill their children. Children kill children. Blacks kill whites, and Muslims kill Serbs. Deluded into believing that mankind is in complete control of its own destiny, the world searches for a solution, declaring one-world government the only avenue of escape.

And the smirking rider of the red horse continues his journey through the earth, taking peace from the earth with his large sword and causing men to kill each other.

One might question God's purpose in loosing such a spirit upon the world. Scripture metaphorically reveals it to be an endtime incarnation of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is the fire through which mankind will be tested, and refined to become pure as gold. It is that which will burn up the tares of iniquity, leaving only the burgeoning wheat (Matthew 13:24-30).

"*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*" - 1st Peter 4:12, 13

A choice must be made. A lord must be chosen.

Am I an atheist, whereby the armed men coming down the street will leave me alone, or am I a Christian whom they will torture and slay?

"*But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD*." - Joshua 24:15

13. The Third Seal

Revelation 6:5, 6

"*When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.*

"Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, 'A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!'"

As the red horse of great war rides off into the distance, John is amazed to see the approach of yet another equine, this one black. Thus far he has seen the personification of both holy and terrible war. Now he beholds another type of war, symbolized by the color black.

While the first rider waged war with a hail of spiritual arrows, and the second raged with a great sword that slashed through the minds of men and provoked them to annihilate each other, the third rider carries a pair of scales with which to do battle.

John's attention is drawn back to the group of four cherubim as a voice from among them begins to deliver a statement that sounds remarkably similar to a stock report. The New Testament in Modern Speech version of the Bible translates this report as, "*A whole day's wage for a loaf of bread, a whole day's wage for three barley cakes, but do not damage the oil or the wine.*"

Three of the four elements of this vision (the color black, the significance of the scales, and the meaning of the stock report) will need to be deciphered. The symbol of the horse has already been shown to be a representation of war.

The biblical definition of the color black will be determined first.

There are sixteen instances in the New International Version of the Bible where the word "black" is used, and eighteen instances in the King James Version. In these occurrences, the color black is used in three different ways.

It is used to indicate darkness, as regards to an absence of light, as in Exodus 10:13-15.

"*So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and the LORD made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts; they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail—everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt.*"

It is used to denote color, as in Leviticus 11:13-19.

"*These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.*"

It is used to indicate the presence of disease, as in Job 30:30.

"*My skin grows black and peels; my body burns with fever.*"

Whether an absence of light, a shadowy color, or diseased skin, to invoke the black tone is to describe a very dark color; something that produces or reflects comparatively little light and has no predominant hue.

It is important to note that in the aforementioned scriptures, black was not used to represent disease, but rather was the negative result of the presence of that agent. The cause of temperature and disease resulted in scorched, peeling skin that became drained of color. The high temperature of disease was not referred to as the "black fever." The color did not modify the disease. It described a specific condition: a darkening.

History records the ravaging effects of the "Black Death," but that was a cultural nom de plume for the Bubonic Plague, not a biblical reference. The biblical definition of the color cannot be described as disease, any more than it can designate the locusts of Exodus chapter ten.

When employed biblically, the color is symbolic of nothing more than a darkened object or nature; something that is in shadow or does not have light shining on it in full measure.

Easton's Bible Dictionary concurs, saying that in the Bible, black is "properly the absence of all colour."

It would thus be wise not to infer great import from this color or to depend a complex and specific significance from it. Whatever the vision of the third seal represents, the fact of its dark nature is assured.

The color of the white horse indicated a purpose of holiness. Likewise, the color of the red horse indicated an objective to spill much blood. Thus, the intention of this beast to beget darkness is an objective that can be determined from its black color.

With that in mind, let us proceed to an investigation of the scales that its rider held.

Any biblical mention of scales refers to the use of an instrument that measured lengths or weights.

Consider the following verses:

Leviticus 19:35, 36 - "*Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.*"

Proverbs 11:1 - "*The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.*"

Proverbs 16:11 - "*Honest scales and balances are from the LORD; all the weights in the bag are of his making.*"

Proverbs 20:23 - "*The LORD detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please him.*"

Ezekiel 45:9-12 - "*'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have gone far enough, O princes of Israel! Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing my people, declares the Sovereign LORD. You are to use accurate scales, an accurate ephah and an accurate bath. The ephah and the bath are to be the same size, the bath containing a tenth of a homer and the ephah a tenth of a homer; the homer is to be the standard measure for both. The shekel is to consist of twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels plus twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels equal one mina.*"

Hosea 12:7 – "*The merchant uses dishonest scales; he loves to defraud.*"

Amos 8:4-7 – "*Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?"— skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat. The LORD has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done.*"

The Lord hates dishonest scales! A continuation of these passages describe the punishment that God has destined for those who cheat others out of their hard-earned money.

Scales represent buying and selling, and are therefore symbolic of the economy. God's joining of economy and darkness is therefore an illustration of global economic collapse.

The fact that this dark cloud emanates from a horse, the symbol of war, means that this inexorable force will be mightily brought to bear against the citizens of the earth; a deliberate, calculated destruction of the world's financial system that will unmercifully force humanity to its knees, crushing many under a massively oppressive weight.

The extent of its brutality can be gleaned from the valuation report.

"*A whole day's wage for a loaf of bread, a whole day's wage for three barley cakes, but do not damage the oil or the wine.*"

The voice that spoke these words came from among the four cherubim that are before the throne of God. Prior scripture revealed that it was the Lamb of Christ who stood among the four beasts.

Revelation 5:6 – "*Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.*"

Jesus declared a loaf of bread to be equal to an entire day's wage. How much is a day's wage? If, on average, a person makes $10 per hour, then a day's wage for eight hours of work would be $80. An $80 loaf of bread would certainly indicate an enormous darkening of the world's economy.

In addition, the price of three barley cakes is also said to cost a day's wage.

The Greek word of measure translated here as "three cakes" is "choinix," and according to Strong's, is a dry measure, containing cotlyae or two setarii; measures that equal less than one quart, and an amount that would sustain a man of moderate appetite for one day.

If the cost of sustaining the average appetite of one man for a single day will reach the dizzying height of $80, then the end of the week will have seen an expenditure of $560! When that figure is divided by forty hours, a man would need to earn $14 per hour just to afford groceries for himself, to say nothing of providing for his family and other needs.

A family of four would cost $2,240 per week, and the hourly wage required to meet the nutritional needs of such a group would be $56!

In such difficult times, the parents would no doubt consume as little as possible so as to provide more for their children. Yet even if the two children together consumed only one adult portion between them and the parents reduced their intake by half, the amount of food necessary to sustain them would still equal two moderate adult portions, and the numbers work out to $1,120 per week and a $28 per hour wage.

Bear in mind that this amount of income does not cover the cost of housing, clothing, medical care, transportation, or anything else. When the economy of this world comes apart, it will have been by design, and its effect will be severe.

The final portion of the stock report is intriguing.

"*...but don't damage the oil or the wine.*"

The word translated as "oil" is the Greek "elaion" and refers to olive oil.

The rider of the black horse has been instructed to bring about great economic collapse while simultaneously ensuring the preservation of olive oil and wine.

This results in a seemingly puzzling state of affairs. What benefit would olive oil and wine convey to a population that cannot afford to buy anything else?

The nature of economics is such that the price of any given commodity or service will escalate when the demand for product is greater than supply can equal. Thus, a scarcity of products that once were enjoyed in abundance is one possible scenario through which the world economic crash could be brought about. Famine has been popularly theorized as a possible vehicle for such change.

If the rider of the black horse has been commanded to inflate prices, yet to leave the oil and wine unmolested, then it is possible that the command is an injunction against destroying those particular commodities.

From one perspective, it would appear that the world will experience a dearth of produce and manufactured goods, yet an abundance of oil and wine will remain.

The question that must be asked is why the Lord has spared these particular commodities. It is difficult to fathom the benefit that could be derived from an affordable, readily available source of olive oil at such a time of crisis. If bills have soared astronomically, and families are unable to afford to feed their own children, if the cost of transportation has increased exponentially, and the price of heating a home has exploded skyward, who is going to appreciate the fact that they can get olive oil at a great price?

This view supposes that most commodities will be in short supply, yet the Bible does not state any such thing.

Much time can be spent in an attempt to decipher the benefit of an abundance of olive oil and alcohol to a world whose economy has been devastated, yet it would be wasted effort, for such a riddle can have no answer. There is no benefit that a world could receive from these minor products at a time when extreme economic upheavals have rendered the major commodities invisible.

In order to make sense of this command of Jesus Christ, the text must be read literally, without the addition of personal assumption. One must not attempt to postulate the methods that the black horse might utilize in carrying out its orders. Rather, the Bible must be permitted to speak for itself without the inclusion of extraneous material.

John sees a black horse and rider appear. The horse is to travel throughout the earth, making war on the value system of humankind. The rider is ordered to establish the price of a loaf of bread or three cakes of barley as equal to a whole day's wages.

Then Jesus issues another order: "Do not hurt the oil and the wine."

The Greek word translated as "hurt" in the King James Version of the Bible is "adikeo," and means "to hurt, damage, or harm." In other words, the rider has been ordered not to damage, cause injury to, ravish, harm, or ruin the oil or the wine.

Jesus commanded insanely-high values to be assigned to the world's commodities, but he also commanded that those same commodities be preserved.

Thus, the theory that goods are damaged or stricken by famine is proved false by scripture. Although it is clear that Jesus gave orders specifically protecting the oil and the wine, it is also obvious that he did not order the ruin of any product whatsoever.

In reading the command to inflate prices, one would be wrong to assume that this will be accomplished by an injury to all commodities excluding oil and wine.

The Bible does not state how this will be accomplished. What it *does* say is that prices will soar, but the food supply will remain undamaged.

It can be difficult to see that olive oil and wine are representative of food until those terms are taken back to the Bible for definition.

Deuteronomy 11:13-15 - "*So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul— then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.*"

The Lord says that He will assist His people in harvesting their crops by sending the rain and by providing an abundance of grass.

What exactly is it that the people are harvesting? They are gathering grain, wine, and oil.

This scripture should cause your brow to furrow. While it is possible to go out into the fields and harvest a grain crop, a person cannot possibly harvest wine or oil.

Wine does not grow on trees. Grapes can be plucked from their vines, and from them the beverage can be produced, but wine is a finished product. It must be created.

There is a process for changing grapes into wine. It cannot be collected from the fields any more than butter can be collected from a cow. Butter cannot be planted or harvested. Rather, one must procure the milk from which butter can then be made.

In Deuteronomy 11:13-15, the crop actually being harvested is grain and grapes, yet the grape is referred to as wine. The Lord is telling His people to gather in the produce from their vineyards, and He calls that produce "wine."

The people are also harvesting oil. Again, one cannot go to the fields and gather in olive oil. It does not seep out of the ground like dew, waiting to be collected into barrels. Olive oil is a finished product, made from squeezing olives.

It is the olive that the people are gathering, from which they will make the oil.

Thus, the scripture is describing the harvest of grain, grapes, and olives, and referring to these crops as grain, wine, and oil. These must be gathered from fields, vines, and olive trees, which are living, growing plants – outgrowth that has been placed under the protection of Jesus Christ. Grain, grapes, and olives are a biblical designation of food.

The wording is the same in Revelation as it is in Deuteronomy. It does not mean that oil and wine *prices* are to be spared, but that the olive trees and grape vines themselves are to be protected from ruin.

There is great significance in the fact that the grapes and olive trees will not come to harm, for it means that the earth will not be struck by famine.

Although famine is a popular interpretation of the black horse, the Bible reveals that it cannot possibly be!

The scripture says that a loaf of bread will cost an exorbitant amount of money, but it does not say that its high price will be caused by damage to the agriculture. In fact, it says that the agriculture will be preserved.

Whatever possible catalysts capable of triggering a devastating economic collapse, one stimulus that can be ruled out as the activator in this case is the event of world-wide famine.

The first two riders each rushed upon the earth armed with a weapon; a bow and great sword, respectively, and both of them rode out to conquer.

However, the rider of the black horse does not carry any discernible weapon. Instead, he bears a scale. Armed with only a weighing device, this rider is impotent in his ability to wreak destruction upon anything save a numerical system of imputed value.

Given the evidence, the purpose of this horse is brought squarely into focus. Its rider does not traverse the earth with the intention of destroying grain, grapes, olives, or cattle. Rather, his mission is one of value substitution, an assignment carried out with relish, effectively plunging the world into economic collapse.

Without availing oneself of the option of famine, how could such a collapse be brought about?

There are many possible factors, of which the following are only a few:

1. An extremely unequal distribution of income can limit the consumer goods market, and if severe enough, could trigger a collapse. An example of such a condition can be characterized by a population majority unable to afford the very goods they work to manufacture.

2. An enormous amount of fraud and corruption in big business and in the marketing of stocks and bonds. If the paper of Wall Street is not backed by real wealth, a plummeting economy will soon result.

3. A banking structure that exercises poor judgment in making loans. If a bank cannot call in loans, many people will forfeit their savings.

4. Nations that borrow money from wealthy countries and are unable to repay their loans. This, coupled with high trade barriers, will damage the economies of borrower nations because they will not be able to sell their exports at a profit.

History records that even the Great Depression of 1929 was not caused by a famine. What *did* cause the Great Depression?

The 1999 Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia says:

"The depression of the 1930's shook capitalism to its foundations and shaped the public attitudes of people for generations. The shock was so great because it contradicted long-held beliefs in the unlimited possibilities of expansion. The depression made the Western world ripe for revolution as every political faction in society looked frantically for a cure. Finding a cure without determining the causes, however, was difficult. In fact, no economist has ever thoroughly explained why the disaster of 1929 to 1932 came about."

Here is seen the calling card of the principalities and powers of the spirit world. Just as the cause of World War One cannot be explained, nor can reasons be given for the failure to avoid World War Two, so also does the Great Depression's event of origin elude mankind.

While not the ultimate event that the rider of the black horse seeks to inflict upon the world, the Great Depression was the beginning of the stratagems of its rider to manipulate circumstances in accordance with its diabolical agenda.

As Compton's Encyclopedia states:

"There had been financial panics before, and there have been some since, but never did a collapse in the market have such a devastating and long-term effect. Like a snowball rolling downhill, it gathered momentum and swept away the whole economy before it. Businesses closed, putting millions out of work. Banks failed by the hundreds. Wages for those still fortunate enough to have work fell precipitously. The value of money decreased as the demand for goods declined."

Never did a collapse in the market have such a devastating and long-term effect. It came out of nowhere to ravage the people of the earth.

And it *was* a global problem, for as Compton's Encyclopedia affirms, "…the Great Depression of 1929 to 1940… began and centered in the United States but spread quickly throughout the industrial world…

"The international structure of world trade collapsed, and each nation sought to protect its own industrial base by imposing high tariffs on imported goods. This only made matters worse.

"By the fall of 1931 the international gold standard had collapsed, further damaging any hope for the recovery of trade. This started a series of currency devaluations in several countries, because these nations realized that a devalued currency posed at least a temporary advantage in the struggle to find markets for their goods."

In fact, it was such a bleak period, devoid of the hope of future prosperity, that in 1931 alone, more than 20,000 Americans committed suicide.

If the black horse and rider truly represent the spirit of economic disaster, then one would expect its arrival to occur subsequent to the first related events of the red horse, namely World War One.

The Great War began in 1914, and the Great Depression began fifteen years later in 1929, providing circumstantial evidence that the interpretation of the black horse is correct. Had the Great Depression occurred prior to the advent of World War One, the puzzle pieces would not match and the interpretation would be faulty.

However, no such problem exists.

As stated previously, the Great Depression was hardly the culmination of everything the black horse was working to achieve.

For one thing, the prices were not inflated to the point the Bible indicates. As Compton's Encyclopedia explains, wages and prices went down, but there was not a large enough disparity between the two to cause the extreme financial chaos that Revelation 6:6 describes.

"For anyone with a few dimes, depression America was a shopper's paradise. A new home could be bought for less than $3,000. A man's suit cost about $10, a shirt less than 50 cents, and a pair of shoes about $4. Milk was 10 cents a quart, a pound of steak only 29 cents, and a loaf of bread a nickel. For a dime one could go to the movies, buy a nickel bag of popcorn, and even win prizes given away by the theater. That was for those who had dimes. Not many lucky enough to be working had much change to spend after paying rent and buying food."

The price of bread in those days was a nickel, a far cry from a day's wages, even in those trying times.

Rather than an ultimate expression of its ability to wreak economic havoc, the Great Depression was a mere flexing of the black horse's muscles; a simple run around the block, as it were.

When it finally gallops across this planet in a thundering fury, the precarious house of cards that constitute our global economy will come crashing down and be trampled under the powerful hooves of the spirit of fiscal disaster.

Such events will serve to usher in the pale horse of the fourth seal, and lay before it a red carpet of liberty.

Businesses will collapse and governments will fall, yet the grain will remain undamaged. The grapes will continue to grow, and the olive trees will flourish.

Unemployment will skyrocket and crippled food processing centers will produce less and less fare. The grain will not get made into as much bread as previous yields, and the grapes will not be mashed to produce as much wine. There will be less olive oil because there will be a shortage of workers to press the olives.

The crops themselves will not be damaged, but mankind's ability to harvest them *will* be.

This horse has declared war on humanity's global monetary system, and as such, its actions will not be confined solely to agricultural affairs. Transportation, electricity, water, housing, and many other aspects of daily life will be affected as well.

Economic chaos abounds in this world, much of it occurring independently of the black rider's actions, for fallible men also contribute to the instability of financial systems the world over.

In order to determine what specific activity is a result of the presence of the black horse, it is essential to identify its methods. One method that it has been forbidden to employ is the use of famine.

The collapse of the economy will not be engineered through famine, but rather through the assigning of astronomic value to the most common of commodities, for reasons inexplicable to human beings.

Has the black horse begun its ride in earnest today, preparing for that ultimate crash? The journey of the black horse can be tracked by any event that negatively impacts the economy while preserving nature's capacity for growth. One particularly effective gauge may be the rising price of gas. Another, the amount of financial damages incurred by computer viruses that do irreparable damage to "productivity," rather than component wares.

Indicators would include costs that skyrocket for reasons that have nothing to do with man's ability to grow food, his proficiency in drilling oil, or his capacity to manufacture computer chips, automobiles, or houses.

Although its ultimate act of irreparably crashing the global economy has yet to be realized, the spirit of financial ruin is already galloping throughout the earth, replacing the golden foundations of financial security with paper-thin cards of plastic which will topple like dominoes at the appointed time.

Make no mistake. The black horse is presently riding among us.

14. The Fourth Seal

Revelation 6:7, 8

"*When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.*"

The final horse approaches and is given authority to destroy a fourth of the earth. It is a pale horse, a colorless, doughy, bleached color. It is employed in the Bible to describe a death-like appearance.

Jeremiah 30:6 – "*Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor, every face turned deathly pale?*"

Daniel 10:8 – "*So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.*"

Compton's American Heritage Dictionary defines "pale" as "feeble; weak," a definition that matches the biblical usage of the word in the above scriptures.

Upon seeing a patient with a pale complexion, it is a common practice for doctors to perform a blood test for anemia, as pasty skin can be an indicator of illness.

Of course, the linguistic and medical definitions would be of no value if they did not match the biblical definition, but in this instance, they correspond perfectly. Thus, the pale color represents sickness, weakness, or death.

This meaning, coupled with the symbol of the horse, represents a war on the physical well-being of one-fourth of the world's population.

What is unique to the pale horse is that while its three companions bore nameless spirits, this rider has been christened "Death."

Hence, the pale horse will gallop throughout one-fourth of the earth, waging a war of death through the deployment of weapons, famines, diseases, and wild animals.

Make no mistake, the pale horse has not been sent into the world to release a mere flu epidemic.

The highest casualty figures due to type A influenza virus, a record set by what came to be known as the Spanish flu of 1918, were approximately twenty million over the course of a few months. With a world population of six billion, the figure of twenty million is less than four-tenths of one percent. Furthermore, today's vaccines for influenza types A and B have a sixty to seventy percent success rate, meaning that even if twenty million persons were infected, only six to eight million would be unable to recover; a percentage of one-tenth of one percent.

Imagine a world-wide pandemic of such a highly infectious disease as Ebola, which has an eighty to ninety percent mortality rate.

According to Compton's Encyclopedia, Ebola hemorrhagic fever is the third deadliest infectious disease known to man, after HIV (the virus which causes AIDS), and rabies. There is no vaccine against the Ebola virus, nor is there a cure once the disease has been contracted.

The onset of the disease is rapid. Symptoms can occur within two to twenty-one days after infection. Once symptoms begin to show, death can occur within days or after a week at most.

The first symptom is usually a headache, followed by steady fever. The virus causes an unusual combination of clots and hemorrhages. The clots lodge throughout the body, filling capillaries and shutting off blood to parts of the internal organs, especially to the brain, liver, and spleen. This causes the affected organs to begin to decay. Blood begins to leak through the capillaries and into the tissues, but by this point the blood will not clot. The connective tissues lose their elasticity and become mushy. The body's internal cavities fill with blood, and blood leaks from all orifices and through the skin, which becomes easily torn.

As the disease progresses, the victim develops a fixed and expressionless face, probably as a result of hemorrhages within the brain. Death comes from excessive blood loss and shock. The Ebola virus saturates all of the fluids flowing from the body, and there is evidence that the Ebola virus can be spread through the air.

The combined forces of such plagues as Ebola, Marburg, Lassa Fever, Dengue, AIDS, and Malaria would be quite capable of returning three hundred billion pounds of human flesh back to the dust from whence it came.

Consider this statement, made by the Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima in 1996:

"We are standing on the brink of a global crisis in infectious diseases. No country is safe from them. No country can any longer afford to ignore their threat."

The pale horse is a spirit of death that has been given the authority to commit genocide. Unlike the red horse of great war which manipulated men into killing each other, this horse will strike down whole nations by its own hand.

Plague is only one of four methods it will employ in the course of accomplishing its mission. It will also dispense death through the vending machines of weaponry, famine, and wild animals.

The fallout of war is inevitable death, a manufactured by-product of such global conflict as was produced by the red horse of the second seal. Yet the demise of one-fourth of the world will not be a side-effect of the journey of the pale horse, but the main product.

It will dispense death through disease, starvation, rioting, lions, scorpions, and wild dogs in a tragedy that will relieve the earth of the weight of one billion, five hundred million people.

As the tortured souls of the earth depart this nightmare, and hence their bodies, they tumble into the Abode of the Dead, a spiritual holding place for departed spirits, also known as Hades.

The King James Version of the Bible fails to distinguish between the lake of fire and the abode of the dead, referring to both as "Hell." However, the word the King James scholars translated as "Hell" is actually "Hades," the place of departed souls.
Scripture explains the difference between the two.

James 3:6 – "*The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*"

The word translated as "Hell" here, is "Geenna", a word referring to the place of the future punishment called "Gehenna" or "Gehenna of fire." This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and the dead animals of the city were thrown out and burned. It was an appropriate symbol of the wicked and their future destruction.

2nd Peter 2:4 – "*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment…*"

The word "Hell" in this context is "Tartaroo," the deepest abyss in Hades, and also used to mean "to incarcerate in eternal torment." It is also called "Tartarus."

Hell is the destination to which the wicked are sent, along with Satan and his devils. It is a final resting place, as is Heaven, but between the two is an oft-overlooked dwelling place known as Hades. The King James Version of the Bible notwithstanding, it is of this staging area that Revelation 6:8 speaks.

The following scriptures refer to Hades:

Matthew 16:18 – "*And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*"

Revelation 1:18 – " *I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*"

Revelation 20:13, 14 – "*The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.*"

In each of these passages, "Hades" is the same word used in Revelation 6:8, although some translations do not handle it correctly.

Hell refers to a pit of eternal fire and torment, and is sometimes called the lake of fire. In Revelation 20:13, 14, Hades is cast into Hell, which proves that the former is not just another term for the latter, but that they are two separate locations.

Hell is a final destination, while Hades is but a temporary place of transition. Hades will not contain souls for eternity, but will give up to Hell whomever remains inside after the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation chapter twenty.

A look at a few different translations of Revelation 6:8 will prove illuminating.

"*Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him.*" - NIV

The New Testament In Modern English version of the Bible says "*...the grave followed close behind him*." Sometimes the expression "grave" is used in place of Hades. When a soul dies, it does not remain eternally in the grave, but will go on to its reward, whether that be Heaven, or whether that be Hell. The grave is but a resting place; it is not the spirit's final destination.

The Twentieth Century New Testament version of the Bible translates it as "*...the Lord of the Place of Death rode behind him*."

There exists a place of torment and punishment, a place of delight and reward, and a place of death where departed souls await their final disposition.

This latter dwelling is the abode of Hades, and as the pale horse of death gallops across the earth dispensing famine, plague, and atrocity, the Lord of the Place of Death follows behind to collect the disembodied spirits and convey them to the invisible realm of Hades where they will await their judgment.

Some will be judged righteous and will enter into the inheritance prepared for them by their Father before the creation of the world. Others will be judged as evildoers and their place will be found in Hell along with the devil and his angels.

The word "Tartarus" indicates that there are different levels in the Place of the Dead; higher levels, lower levels, and levels in between, for it means "the deepest abyss of Hades." If there is a "deepest" level, then there must be levels that are not as deep and one that is also the highest.

2nd Peter 2:4 is an example of scripture that mentions Tartarus. The New International Version renders it "hell", but the original Greek word is "tartaroo."

"*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.*"

This scripture reveals that the deepest level of Hades has been reserved for the fallen angels, and that Hades is, in fact, a place where spirits remain until judgment day.

Ostensibly, omniscient God, who already knows the eternal destination of every being, has placed souls who are more deserving of Hell into the lower waiting rooms, while the righteous are permitted to inhabit the upper levels.

The deeper the level, the more the atmosphere resembles the fiery torment of Hell, while the higher regions, referred to in the Bible as "the Bosom of Abraham" (Luke 16:22), are similar to Heaven.

This explains why the rich man in the parable of Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), was tormented in flames, and yet he was not in Hell, but in a lower level of Hades.

Had the rich man been dwelling in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, he would have been weeping and gnashing his teeth rather than conversing rather calmly with the patriarch Abraham.

The intensity of the fires of Hell are at least as hot as an earthly flame, and what man can maintain a conversation while engulfed in an eight-hundred degree blaze?

Such a man would be in no condition to converse or argue as did the rich man with Abraham. Truly, the rich man was tormented, but in reality, considering the scope of Hell, he had not yet begun to feel torment. He had not yet arrived in the place of torment, but was abiding only in Hades.

It is not a trivial distinction, for if Hell, rather than Hades, were following the pale horse, then everyone receiving a mortal blow from the fourth horseman would be eternally damned.

However, the fact that departed souls are being snared by Hades indicates that this ordeal will not befall the damned exclusively. In clearer language, the Church will not be spared this tribulation.

By the time Hades is disposed of in Hell (Revelation 20:13), the righteous have gone on to their Heavenly reward and the only souls still remaining inside are those whose names have not been found in the Lamb's book of life.

King David spoke of Hades in Psalms 114:17.

"*It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to silence…*"

If the dead have gone down into silence, then they have not entered the place of torment where there is wailing, screaming, and the gnashing of teeth.

Nor have they entered Heaven, where there would be singing, praising and the worship of God with loud voices.

Only in Hades can silence reign, and it follows silently behind the fourth horse of death.

While the red horse caused global military conflict, the pale horse will instigate civic fury in the form of gang violence, urban warfare, and rioting on a grand scale. A one-world government will likely rise from the ashes of such chaos to restore order and authority, issuing each citizen a mark necessary for participation in the reconstructed economics of the new world order.

Thus, the pale horse will usher in the kingdom of Satan in a display of unprecedented annihilation that will exterminate one-fourth of the population of the world and cause many Christians to question their faith, unable to believe that the Lord would allow His Church to remain on the earth in the face of such tribulation.

Yet that is exactly what He will allow.

Matthew 24:9, 10 – "*Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other.*"

1st Peter 4:12-19 – "*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

"If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

"However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, 'If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'

"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

This spirit does not appear to have manifested itself thus far, but it will have been present on this earth for a period of time preceding its first episode of expression, as it inconspicuously begins to set events in motion that will lead to riotous violence, endemic plague, and large-scale mauling by feral creatures.

Can it be that the horse of death rides among us unnoticed, even now? A force of some kind is certainly working to ensnare humankind in a garrote of wild beasts.

According to the Humane Society of the United States, an estimated seventy thousand dogs and cats are born every day in the U.S. due to uncontrolled breeding. Despite such high numbers, only twenty states have laws requiring the sterilization of such animals. As a result, packs of stray dogs run wild in most large cities.

The Springfield News-Leader reported on April 26, 2002 the attack by a pit bull on letter carrier Daniel Miller, the fourth attack in three months in the Springfield, Missouri city.

The city and county animal control supervisor, Buford Wilson, is puzzled as to why so many attacks have occurred in such a short period of time, having gone on record as stating, "I've been here twenty years, and this is the most I've ever seen in this amount of time."

Ron Boyer, environmental services administrator for the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, agrees, saying, "We seem to have had a considerable increase in pit bull and Rottweiler attacks."

In November of 2001, the San Francisco Chronicle reported the attack on Margaret Jordan by a Cane Corso one day after another woman, Diane Whipple, was fatally mauled by a Presa Canario. Both attacks were unprovoked.

Commenting on the attack, Cane Corso breeder Kathy Letourneau expressed surprise, saying "I've never heard of that before." Cane Corso dogs are "usually aloof with strangers; they don't care one way or another. They pretty much just go along with whatever you want them to be," she puzzled.

The South Bend Tribune on July 9, 1998 detailed an Indiana community's concern over an increase of attacks made by wild dogs. Neighbors of Camp Ray Bird near Lydick say they've lived with attacks of wild dogs for the last few years, yet the killing of fourteen petting zoo animals discovered at the camp on the 6th of July was the largest reported incident of its kind in recent years.

"I've lived in this area for about twenty-five years," said resident Doris Buck, "and this problem has increased during the last three years. Now why is that?"

Sarah Sparks, who runs the Windy Hill Riding Farm, has had goats killed and her horses attacked. Dogs broke through a barn window four feet high to get at the four goats.

Resident Kathy Parker confided that, "Since we moved into the area four years ago from Chicago, we've had cats come up missing. These dogs seem to be getting more bold in how close they come to the houses."

Doris Buck agrees. "One time I saw two wild dogs aggressively pursue my two cats that I was taking care of," she related. "Fortunately, they jumped up on the roof." She noticed that the larger of the two dogs wouldn't leave, so she tried to wave it off. "The dog didn't budge. As I turned back toward my house, the dog pursued me. Luckily, I made it into the house." Her neighbor's animals have been attacked and some have been killed.

On February 20, 1997, Sports Afield published an article titled "Wild-Animal Attacks Appear on the Rise." It contrasted the current statistics of attacks by wild animals with those of twenty years ago, saying "Wildlife attacks on humans appear to be on the increase. Twenty years ago people felt lucky just glimpsing a mountain lion in the wild. Attacks or even close encounters were rare. Exact numbers are hard to come by, yet the numbers that are available and the anecdotal news accounts indicate wildlife attacks are on the rise."

Such observations are beginning to be made by many. Just prior to 1990, reports of lion sightings began to appear. In Montana, cougars were observed at rest under boat docks, passing through rural yards, and encountered on urban walking paths. Pets began to be mauled and killed. In 1989, a four-year-old boy was fatally attacked while playing in his back yard.

What is strange is that even animal species with a history of non-violent behavior have recently begun to set upon humans. For instance, bison in Yellowstone Park have caused more human injuries than all other species combined, including bears.

The Sports Afield article elaborates:

"In the last fifteen years, more than fifty-six people have been injured, and two killed by these seemingly placid beasts… People have been butted, thrown into the air, gored and trampled."

The Associated Press reported on July 30, 1998 a story about a coyote that attacked a three-year-old boy as he played in his backyard in Sandwich, Massachusetts. The boy's mother told police she had to pry the coyote off her son. Peter Trull, a coyote researcher, said it's the first documented coyote attack on a human in Massachusetts.

The Detroit Free Press reported on September 28, 2002, that DNA evidence taken from scenes of a series of attacks on horses and other animals at two Kalkaska County farms indicates that wild cougars are to blame. Separate DNA evidence testifies to the existence of cougars in five other Michigan counties, as well.

Allen Strouse, of Kalkaska County, says the reports are accurate. "I've seen them twice pretty close, and a lot of other people have seen them, too. There are two of them, and if the big one is four to five feet long, then the smaller one is three and a half to four feet."

Penney Melchoir, a Department of Natural Resources biologist in Cadillac, said track evidence, sightings and scars on horses are proof that "we're dealing with a very large feline, probably a cougar."

Wildlife Ecology Professor Paul Beier is on record as saying, "Cougar attacks have clearly increased during the last two decades, despite some possibly undocumented nonfatal attacks during the early years. There were more fatal attacks during the last twenty years (5) than during the previous eighty years (4). Also, C. Hart Merriam documented only three attacks (1 nonfatal, 2 fatal) in the twenty-three years from 1909 to 1932 versus thirty-six attacks (31 nonfatal, 5 fatal) reported during the last twenty-one years."

On September 5, 2001, the BBC News Online commented on a spate of shark attacks off America's east coast, "While 2001 may not break any records, in the long term there is no doubt that the number of shark-related incidents is on the increase."

The Norwegian Aftenposten newspaper reported November 18, 2002 that wolves have killed four times as many sheep in Norway as they did last year at this time. Ranchers are up in arms, while state officials are urging them to fence in their flocks.

On April 26th, 2000, in what may be the first report of a wolf attacking a human in Alaska, a radio-collared wolf repeatedly bit a six-year-old boy playing in a grove of alders at a logging camp northwest of Yakutat.

"This is exceedingly rare, and I don't know of any other cases like this in Alaska," said Matt Robus, former Junea-area biologist and now deputy director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation.

State wildlife biologist Mark McNay said he knew of no documented reports of healthy wolves killing people in North America. He couldn't recall any reports of wolves attacking humans in Alaska.

The Associated Press reported on July 6, 2000 that Scott Langevin was recovering in Victoria General Hospital in British Columbia after an extremely rare wolf attack on a human. He required fifty stitches to close a wound on his head. A third of his scalp was shaved to allow for a crisscross of gashes to be treated.

In Vargas Island Provincial Park, Scott was asleep outside his tent early on the first morning of the month when he was awakened by a dark-colored wolf tugging at the foot of his sleeping bag.

"I yelled to try to spook it off, and I kicked at it," he said. "It backed up a bit, but then it just lunged on top of me, and it started biting away through my sleeping bag." As he rolled over in an attempt to get the campfire between him and the wolf, the animal jumped on his back and began biting his head.

Bill Woodhouse, a recreation officer with British Columbia Parks, stated, "Wolf attacks on humans are extremely rare. There has never been a wolf attack in a park. Wolves normally stay away from man."

On June 24, 2001, the San Francisco Chronicle reported a strange story of bear encounters in the San Francisco, California area.

"The Bay Area's most shocking wildlife story in fifty years has been verified by two residents who saw a bear only five miles south of San Francisco that had been hit by a car…

It is the first verified black bear sighting within a fifty-mile radius of San Francisco in the past thirty-nine years."

Three weeks previous, an identical report had been made of a black bear that had been struck by an automobile in that same area. In the past fifty years, there have been eleven documented bear sightings in the Bay Area region, and of those, nine have come in the past five years.

The July 9, 2001 edition of the Detroit News carried a disturbing story of wild animals overrunning the city. Animal control officials and commercial pest-control companies reported that they are receiving more requests than they can manage for the removal of animals from residential areas.

Jerry McNair, supervisor for Oakland County Animal Control declared that, "With the amount of calls we're getting, we can't service the entire area for dogs and cats and deal with all the wildlife, too. It becomes overwhelming."

In the Royal Oak community, there has been an extensive incursion of opossums. In western Wayne County, car collisions with deer are increasing. Oakland County animal control officers have received more than sixteen coyote reports in a period of five months. In Plymouth Township, animal removal companies are fielding more calls than ever concerning problem skunks. In Dearborn, deer have been spotted darting across Michigan Avenue near Ford Motor Company's world headquarters on their way through the Rouge River valley.

According to University of Michigan biology professor Orin Gelderloos, coyotes were not found in southeastern Michigan even a few years ago. This year, Oakland County has been inundated with the creatures.

Alpha Omega, an animal removal company based in Plymouth Township, traps more than four hundred raccoons and two hundred skunks a year, according to office manager Craig Wroblewski. Only six months into the year, however, they have caught ten times that amount.

The increase of collisions with deer in western Wayne County include "four occurring in the past two weeks," said John Roach, spokesman for the county roads and maintenance department. "That is a higher number than anyone around here can

remember," he marveled. "Collisions are definitely increasing, especially in the southwestern areas of the county."

Cleveland News Channel Five reported on January 31, 2002 that "A pack of wild dogs is on the loose, looking for food and holding entire neighborhoods in fear."

News Channel Five's Joe Pagonakis reported that wild dogs have become an increasing problem on the east side of Cleveland which the dog warden has been unable to solve.

Video of one particular pack showed the animals running down a bustling avenue, creating snarls in the rush hour traffic and continuing unchallenged through a neighborhood heavily populated with young children.

"We're worried about all of the kids, (and) the people (who) work here," said Deborah Thompson of the area's Hitchcock Center for Women. "Some people are afraid to go to their cars, because dogs have been at their cars."

Citizens in the vicinity of Rockefeller Park are concerned as well. Danita Smith, one such resident and mother of three children, worried, "They need to clean up those dogs; the kids are scared to go out. I have to peek outside to see if more are out there." She noted that parents in the community have been apprehensive for weeks about allowing their children outside.

Such reports reveal an increase of wild animal residency among the human populace, and therefore an increase in attacks. It is the preparatory journey of the pale horse of Revelation's fourth seal that is responsible for the quickening.

As the economy collapses and mankind can no longer afford to feed his pets, he will find himself a prisoner in his own home; prey to the four-legged savagery that will possess the streets in rabid, ravenous packs.

Those inevitably wounded by such creatures will find themselves delirious with contagion, and a frightened population will discover that rabies is the world's deadliest infectious disease.

Accounts of violent strains of infection have begun to surface in the broadcast and print media.

In August of 2002, thirteen cases of West Nile virus were reported in Texas and Mississippi, with four fatalities documented in Louisiana. After Governor Mike Forest declared a state of emergency on August 1, Louisiana health officials confirmed that the virus had infected a total of fifty-eight people, including the four who succumbed to the disease.

Eight people in Texas and five in Mississippi have now come down with West Nile encephalitis, a potentially fatal swelling of the brain, and the most serious effect of the virus.

The virus has also been found in birds and other animals in Oklahoma, Nebraska and the Dakotas. A dead crow carrying the virus was even found on the White House Lawn.

Dr. Susan McLellan, who works in conjunction with the infectious disease departments at Tulane University School of Medicine and Tulane's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, stated, "I think it's no surprise that West Nile virus is going to become endemic across the country."

Dr. Stephen Ostroff, acting director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Infectious Diseases, agrees. “There's really nothing that would limit the ability of the virus to move southward.”

John Roehrig, chief of the arbovirus diseases branch of the CDC in Fort Collins, Colorado, believes it inevitable that the West Nile virus will infect every state in the nation.

“That'd be my bet,” he said. “I don't know when it will get to California, but eventually it probably will.”

Since 1999, the virus has been discovered in thirty states. In 2001, a total of sixty-six cases were documented, with eighty-eight recorded so far this year.

July of 2002 saw Britain’s worst ever outbreak of Legionnaires’ Disease, with one hundred thirty-one confirmed cases of infection and four deaths. The statistics in Japan as of August 19, 2002 included two hundred fifty-two suspected cases and six deaths. A record-setting outbreak has ravaged Spain, recording three hundred fifteen confirmed cases between the dates of June 26 and July 16, 2001, with two deaths. In the fall of 2000, nineteen cases were documented in Rennes, France, along with five deaths. Authorities in Australia confirmed one hundred one cases between the 11th and 25th of April, 2000, with two confirmed deaths in the largest outbreak of Legionnaires’ Disease in that country. Dutch health authorities confirmed two hundred forty-two cases and twenty-eight deaths at Amsterdam in the spring of 1999.

These statistics are but a small sampling of the reports documenting a sudden increase in Legionnaires’ Disease worldwide. Locations within the United States that have been infected recently include Massachusetts, Vermont, California, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Ohio, Washington D.C, Virginia, and Maryland, which combine for a total of fifty-seven cases of infection and nine deaths.

Over the last several years, reports of a flesh-eating bacteria have become known. The bacteria dissolves muscles and skin, leading to amputations and death. According to Dr. Gabe Mirkin, M.D, the disease may be caused by taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofin, aspirin, Motrin and Tolectin while infected with a beta strep germ. A report in the New Zealand Medical Journal revealed that five out of seven cases of flesh-eating bacteria occurred in people who took these pain medicines.

The infection causes certain white blood cells, called macrophages, to produce a chemical called tumor necrosis factor, which travels to the brain and causes the body to produce prostaglandins that cause fever and shut off the tumor necrosis factor. Aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs block the production of prostaglandins, causing the white blood cells to continue producing tumor necrosis factor. This can allow the bacteria to spread throughout the body, producing toxins which dissolve tissue, causing shock and death.

According to Janice Okubo, a Hawaii health department spokeswoman, Hawaii sees five to seven cases of the disease, officially known as necrotizing fasciitis, each year. However, by April of 2002, Hawaiian health officials had already confirmed an outbreak of six cases of the flesh-eating bacteria on the island of Maui, and issued an alert. The disease claimed the lives of three people.

According to Michael Curtis, an epidemiologist for the Washington State Department of Health, cases of the disease were less common prior to 1980. “Something

about the organism has changed in the last decades, but at this point, what is anyone's guess," he said.

Today's headlines read like the pale rider's resume. "Deadly liver cancer on the rise in the United States," (News Net Five), "Heart diseases on the rise in South Asia," (Health List), "Zambia: Infectious diseases on the rise," (Integrated Regional Information Network), "Sharp rise in sexual diseases," (BBC News), "Infectious diseases on the rise," (BBC News), "Foodborne diseases are on the rise in Europe," (World Health Organization Press Release), "Communicable diseases rise in South Australia," (ABC Adelaide), "Vegetable seedling diseases on the rise in greenhouses," (Michigan State University), "Water diseases on rise," (Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security), "Diseases on the rise," (The Hindu), "More Americans facing blindness than ever before – diabetic retinopathy and other eye diseases on the rise," (National Eye Institute), "Rabies on the rise," (Healthfinder), "Wildlife infections on rise." (ABC News).

A small number of polio cases in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti constitute the first polio outbreak in the western hemisphere in almost a decade. Studies indicate that it is originating from the polio vaccine itself, having mutated into a deadly form that can be spread contagiously. An enormous vaccination program has been launched to contain the outbreak, but the peculiar occurrence has engendered concern with regards to the vaccine that has been used extensively since the 1960's.

Some infections, like tuberculosis, which were previously thought to have been eliminated, are now re-emerging. Tuberculosis has increased by ten percent since 1998.

Over the last twenty years, a series of completely new infections have begun to pose a problem, including HIV, E.coli O157 and Hepatitis C, and new problems are being presented by nosocomial antibiotic-resistant infections. The Public Health Laboratory Service of England reported that in 1991, only two percent of bloodstream infections with staphylococcus aureus were caused by methicillin-resistant strains. By 2000, this figure had risen to over forty percent. Penicillin and other antibiotics, once considered quite effective in inhibiting disease, are now seemingly losing their efficacy.

In a sinister series of orchestrated events, many United States citizens have begun to fall ill from chemtrails of noxious compounds being released into the atmosphere by hundreds of aircraft.

Chemtrails are long, white vapor-like trails released from high altitude aircraft. Unlike normal jet emissions which disappear within a few minutes, or harmless skywriting plumes which dissipate within a short time, chemtrails remain in the air for up to several hours.

Frequently, chemtrails are released in grid-like patterns and expand to cover a wide area.

They have been observed with increasing frequency in all areas of the United States over the past few years. Hundreds of people across the country have reported sickness after the release of chemtrails and scientists such as Richard Hoagland have expressed concern that chemicals released by jets may be harmful to the environment or humans.

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D) of Cleveland, Ohio has referenced "chemtrails" in *HR 2977 IH*, a bill which he put before Congress that proposes a ban on the weaponization of space. One of the weapons systems listed in the bill is "chemtrails."

The purpose of chemtrail activity, as revealed by Al Cuppet, former Inspector for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is Plan B in a strategy designed to relieve United States citizens of their weapons in a door-to-door seizure. It is understood that those unwilling to divest themselves of arms will open fire on the military and police forces sent to apprehend them. The warzone of Los Angeles' 1992 riots will pale in comparison to the violent pandemonium that will ensue between armed patriots and lawless squads of enforcers. Thus, Plan B.

"The U.N. wants to take our guns. They are prepared to eliminate us one way or the other. They realize they may not get us to give up our guns, so they are ready to spray," Cuppet explained, saying that the spraying has thus far served to advance various experiments; tests which will enable the enemies of the United States to spray lethal biochemicals when the time is deemed appropriate.

The stage is presently being set for the dispensing of death by wild animals, plague, and automatic weapons. The Lord has only to rescind His protective decree concerning the soil, and the world will be stricken with famine, as well.

This world is thus revealed as a chessboard upon which pieces are being arranged for endgame. Victory belongs to God and His chosen ones, yet many will be removed from the game prior to its conclusion.

Seals one through three have been opened, and it is possible that the fourth horseman has been loosed, as well, for something is at work arranging the board into a configuration that resembles the results of the fourth seal.

The fact that both the black and pale spirits can be seen at work in the world simultaneously while their respective objectives have yet to be realized, indicates that the fourth seal climax will succeed the third in rapid fashion. Both are working to effect their goals, and both will conclude their work at approximately the same time. Thus, the consequences of global economic failure will briskly give rise to a vicious class of uncontrollable canine predator, virulent disease, and urban warfare.

There is no time left to lose. Lukewarm Christians must choose whom they will serve. Others who have been putting off making a decision for Christ must put it off no longer. Committed Christians must ensure their loyalty to Christ, for many believers will renounce the faith and seek to save their own lives.

Mark 8:35 – "*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.*"

Matthew 10:32, 33 – "*Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in Heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in Heaven.*"

The futility of saving one's mortal life at the expense of eternity is best illustrated by a true story of Christian persecution from the third century, as recorded in The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Nichomachus, a faithful Christian, but fearful of death, was brought before Optimus, the governor of Asia. Ordered to offer sacrifices to an assortment of idols, he answered, "I cannot pay the respect to devils that is due only to the Almighty."

His reply earned him a place on the rack of torture, a device which in short order succeeded in altering his religious views. The instant he was released, his body was wracked with intense paroxysms and he lifelessly fell to the ground.

Observing what appeared to have been the judgment of God, a sixteen-year-old female observer named Denisa, cried out, "Oh, unhappy wretch! Why would you buy a moment's ease at the expense of a miserable eternity?" For her outburst, she was beheaded.

The early church believed that if appointed to persecution, God would either lessen the intensity of the pain, or provide them with the strength to endure it. In these last days, persecution is a fact of which Christians can be assured.

"*If men call the master of the household the 'Prince of Evil', what sort of names will they give to his servants?*" – Matthew 10:25 (PME)

So as Paul instructed, take heart and count it all joy if you are judged worthy of sharing in the sufferings of Christ. For the glory of this world cannot compare to the riches that are awarded to believers in Christ Jesus.

Take notice of how others of the faith entered into their inheritance, and seek to emulate their courage and unswerving loyalty.

Acts 7:54-60 – "*When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to Heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*

"Look," he said, "I see Heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

"Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep."

Ignatius, the overseer of the church at Antioch, was sent to Rome in 110 A.D. for his Christian teachings. It is recorded that from his bonds and between guards, he preached the Word of God in every city throughout which they traveled, and sent a letter ahead to the church at Rome that they not make the attempt to rescue him. He wrote:

"Now I begin to be a disciple. I care for nothing of visible or invisible things so that I may but win Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil, come upon me; be it so, only may I win Christ Jesus."

Upon his sentencing to be torn to pieces by the roaring lions close at hand, he cried, "I am the wheat of Christ! I am going to be ground with the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread."

Fausines and Jovita, two brothers of whom it was discovered held to the Christian faith, were tortured in the second century. They endured the agony with such composure that a pagan observer named Calocerius was moved to cry out with wonder, "Great is the God of the Christians!" He quickly joined them in their tortures.

In the third century, a godly minister named Lawrence served the Lord's church in Rome. After being ordered to reveal the hiding place of the church's goods by Marcianus, the governor of Rome, Lawrence requested three days with which to collect them for presentation.

The third day saw Lawrence stretch his arms over a poor, bedraggled assembly of Christians, and declare, "These are the precious riches of the church. They are the

treasure in which faith in Christ reigns, in whom Christ has his dwelling place. What more precious jewel can the church have, than those in whom Christ promised to dwell?"

Seemingly possessed of a demon, Marcianus raged, "Light the fire, do not spare the wood! This villain has tried to deceive the emperor! Away with him! Away with him! Whip him with scourges, jerk him with hooks, buffet him with fists, brain him with clubs! Does the traitor joke with the emperor? Pinch him with fiery tongs, wrap him in burning plates, bring out the strongest chains, and the fire-forks, and the grated bed of iron! Put the bed on the fire and when it's red hot, bind the traitor on it hand and foot and roast him, broil him, toss him, turn him! Torment him every way you can or you will be tormented yourselves!"

The torments fell upon him before the maniacal echoes could die away, and he was eventually laid on his fiery bed. Through the grace of God, however, it was as soft as feathers, and the godly Lawrence laid there and passed away after the manner of Stephen, as if in slumber.

In 1558, a man named Walter Mill was sentenced to execution for his Christian faith in Scotland. When taken to the stake, he addressed the crowd with the following words:

"Dear friends, the reason why I am to suffer this day is not because I have committed any crimes, although I consider myself a most miserable sinner before God, but it is for the defense of the faith of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Old and New Testament for us. It is that faith for which godly martyrs have offered themselves gladly before, being assured of eternal happiness. So this day I praise God that He has called me to be among those servants, and seal up His truth with my life, which I received from Him, and willingly offer it back to Him for His glory.

"Therefore, if you wish to escape the second death, do not be seduced by the lies of priests, monks, friars, abbots, bishops, and the rest of the sect of Antichrist. Depend only upon Jesus Christ and his mercy, so that you will be delivered from condemnation and receive eternal life."

As he spoke these words, the hearts of the assemblage were pierced with conviction and they began to weep and travail openly. As Walter was lifted up onto the stake and the kindling was lit, he shouted his final words above the roaring of the flames, "Lord, have mercy on me! Pray, people, while there is yet time!" In this manner, his soul departed to be with the Lord.

The final chapter in the volume of such stories has not yet been written, for a period of intense persecution is just ahead, and it will not be experienced by Christians exclusively, but by every citizen of the United States, who will feel the torturous piercing of its crushing iron jaws.

Those who believe in the right of a nation's citizens to keep and bear arms, according to the second amendment of the Constitution; those who have enrolled their children in school at home; those who read their Bibles; those who speak out against the government; and those who refuse to comply with national identification procedures are all targets of the New World Order.

In the house-to-house search and seizure of arms, the raiders will not be concerned with your well-being. In many cases, gang members from Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York have been trained, equipped, and uniformed under Federal funding to function as the initial judicial arm of the New World Order's edict of martial

law; expendable forces that will be employed to bear the brunt of the deadly confrontation.

These youths are being exploited in the exact same manner as the criminal element in Germany during the 1930's, which was manipulated to serve the ends of Adolph Hitler, who released from prison the thugs, murderers, and rapists and organized them into a fighting contingent called the Brown Shirts. They were deployed from house to house for the purpose of search and seizure, the same as the Crips and the Bloods of today's inner city gangs.

The force that surrounds your home will not be concerned about legalities and propriety. It will be a mob with a license to rape, torture, murder, and destroy, and if vast numbers of atheistic, pro-government citizens are slaughtered along with the Christians and resisters, who is going to notice, much less interfere on their behalf?

If destiny has marked you for death in any event, regardless of your personal position on politics and religion, why not be prepared to depart this earthly existence washed in the blood of the Lamb, that you might be received into the arms of the One who has prepared a place for you in an eternal kingdom of life where you will judge angels and rule alongside Him?

Taking the mark of the beast will not protect you from eternal torment in Hell, nor will it afford protection from the wrath of the Antichrist and his New World Order, which will annihilate millions of a compliant, marked populace as evidenced by Revelation 9:15, 16. For that matter, the mark will not protect you from the wrath of God while your soul lives out its final, pitiful existence in the mortal Kingdom of the Beast (Revelation chapter sixteen).

The time to prepare your soul, and the souls of your family, is now!

15. The Fifth Seal

Revelation 6:9-11

"*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.*"

As the fifth seal was opened, John may have looked expectantly into the distance, anticipating the approach of yet another horse and rider, but the Throne Room of Heaven was surprisingly silent in the absence of galloping hooves.

Puzzled, John may have looked questioningly at the Lamb, the throne, and the cherubim before noticing an altar off to one side that he had not noticed previously. From the base of the altar came an effervescent glow which shimmered and sparkled with a sound like that of a thousand angelic voices humming in subdued harmony.

It intensified to a glaring dazzle of silvery radiation and the golden base of the altar began to metamorphose into a brilliant yellow opaque glass, then an intense white translucence, and finally a crystal-clear transparency through which could be seen the souls of men in the Bosom of Abraham who had been tortured and executed because of the Word of God and the stand they had taken.

As the blood of righteous Abel cried out to the Lord for justice in Genesis 4:10, so also do the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven who have been persecuted, hated by all nations, and put to death for His Name's sake, cry out to God for justice to be served.

They are given white robes, sigils of righteousness and holiness which they have earned for remaining faithful and persevering under trial, and are told to wait patiently for just a little longer.

When the Plan of God, the Logos through which all things were made (John chapter one), reaches fulfillment, the books of judgment will be opened, the wicked will be condemned, and the age will be brought to a close. For the holy martyrs, that time is close at hand, even at the doorway, but it is not yet, thus they must continue to wait patiently.

No further punishment is loosed upon the earth, no additional horses are dispatched, and no judgments are handed down at this time. The only forces plaguing the earth's remaining embodied souls are the influencing spirits which have already been unleashed and are continuing to deploy their instruments of war, chaos, and death.

The opening of the fifth seal is a commemoration of the fallen saints, an acknowledgment of injustice, and a guarantee of redress.

There will be no earthly sign to announce the fact that the fifth seal has been opened. Only when the world experiences the effects of the sixth seal will it know that the fifth has been opened.

16. The Sixth Seal

Revelation 6:12-17, 7:1-17

"*I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.*

"Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'

"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.

"*Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."*

Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

"*Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?"*

"I answered, "Sir, you know."

"And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, 'they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at

the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

As Jesus Christ opens the sixth seal, an ominous rumbling reverberates throughout the Heavens and John turns to see the earth shaking uncontrollably as if clutched in the hand of a giant fist.

As the earth trembles, all of mankind is shaken from its feet, and every prince, every general, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and free man is forced to lie prostrate before the King of Kings. On their knees, they crawl toward caves, mountains, and places of refuge as they attempt to hide themselves from the face of the One who sits on the throne and from the Lamb.

The phrase "every slave and free man," effectively designates "all mankind," for the entire population of the world can be placed into one or the other of these two categories.

As the earth is shaken violently, the sun will turn black, plunging the earth into the darkness of night.

While the sun darkens, the moon will turn the color of blood and stars will fall to the earth as violently as figs that are forcefully torn from their branches and hurled to the ground by a powerful windstorm.

It is necessary to investigate further into these stars that violently impact the earth; to search for the true meaning hidden beneath the surface text which the translators were so obviously unsuccessful in discovering, as any astronomer can attest. If even one star, let alone many, were to hit the earth, it would result in a vaporization of this planet.

Stars vary greatly in size and in color, ranging from giant stars, which are much larger than the sun, to dwarf stars, which can be much smaller than the sun. In color they range from whitish-blue stars with very high surface temperatures (more than 53,500 degrees Fahrenheit) to relatively cool red stars (less than 5,840 degrees Fahrenheit). Earth's sun is of a type common in the Milky Way, a yellow dwarf star with a surface temperature of about 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Although the sun is a rather ordinary star, it is the source of virtually all of the Earth's energy, yet the Earth receives only half a billionth of the energy that leaves the sun. Because the sun's energy is so intense, there are considerable dangers in studying it. The intense heat of the sun's rays can destroy the eye's retinal cells, causing blindness, and for this reason the sun cannot be viewed directly. Astronomers do not view the sun through an ordinary telescope, for even smoked glass gives no protection from such a great concentration of heat and light. The only safe manner in which the sun may be studied is by projecting its image through a pinhole or a telescope onto a white screen.

If only half a billionth of the energy emitted by Earth's relatively cool 10,000 degree sun is so destructive, imagine the effects that a complete absorption of its solar radiation would produce. If even one star such as the sun were to smash into the earth, let alone several of even greater magnitude, this planet would be incinerated long before the moment of impact due to temperature alone.

The sun's radius is about 432,500 miles, or 109.3 times the radius of the Earth, giving the sun a volume of about 1,306,000 times the volume of the Earth. It has been calculated that the sun's mass is 333,400 times as great as the Earth.

Not only would the earth vaporize from close proximity to a star's extreme temperature, but it would be engulfed and consumed by the massive body like a mosquito overcome by a nuclear blast.

Thus, when the Bible says that "*the stars in the sky fell to earth,*" it is a statement worthy of closer inspection.

The word translated as "star" is the Greek word "aster," meaning "a strewn star." The word "aster" has its origin in the word "stroo," which means "to spread - as a carpet; as in making a bed; furnishing; spread; strew."

In other words, an "aster" is a spreading star. It is also the root of the modern "asteroid." The flavor of the word (spreading, as if to spread out a carpet or blanket) is descriptive of comet or meteor phenomena.

A meteor, according to Compton's Dictionary, is "a bright trail or streak that appears in the sky when a meteoroid is heated to incandescence by friction with the earth's atmosphere. Also called *falling star, shooting star.*"

Similarly, the dictionary defines a comet as, "a celestial body, observed only in that part of its orbit that is relatively close to the sun, having a head consisting of a solid nucleus surrounded by a nebulous coma up to 2.4 million kilometers (1.5 million miles) in diameter and an elongated, curved vapor tail arising from the coma when sufficiently close to the sun."

The word "comet" is a combination of two Greek words, "aster," which means "star," and "kome," which means "hair." From these two words the Greek "kometes" is derived, meaning "long-haired star."

Thus, the "aster" phenomenon described in Revelation 6:13 is not a self-luminous celestial body consisting of a mass of gas held together by its own gravity in which the energy generated by nuclear reactions in the interior is balanced by the outflow of energy to the surface, and the inward-directed gravitational forces are balanced by the outward-directed gas and radiation pressures.

In other words, it is not a star. Rather, it is an inert chunk of rock or ice that is heated either by friction with the earth's atmosphere or due to the propinquity of the heat of the sun, termed a meteoroid and comet, respectively.

The Bible records that as these events transpired, the sky rolled up like a scroll. Although the scroll was the public medium of choice two thousand years ago, today's modern audiences are more familiar with projector screens and thus this image may come alive for the contemporary reader by imagining the sky rolling up like a projector screen when its cord has been pulled.

"*The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up.*"

Such a curious description for the tumultuous events befalling the earth. The sun turns dark. The moon turns red. Meteoroids begin impacting the earth. These changes happen so swiftly, that to one who happens to be watching the Heavens at this precise instant, the sky will appear to be rolling up like a projector screen, shifting from daylight in one instant to darkness in the next.

Under normal circumstances, darkness approaches gradually, creeping over the land as it turns from late evening to early night. This wave of darkness, however, is going to crash instantly over the horizon; so quickly in fact, that it will appear as if the daylight simply scrolls away, and is gone.

In addition to all of these things, John reports that every mountain and island is moved, evidence that the earthquake of the sixth seal will be a worldwide event, perhaps even giving rise to disastrous volcanic eruptions which will bury nearby towns and cities a la Pompeii and Herculaneum in 79 A.D.

It is possible that the extinguishing of the sun is achieved, not through a diminished capacity to output solar radiation on the part of the sun, but due to an interpolating volcanic substance that conceals the sun from view.

When Krakatoa, a volcano located on the island of Rakata in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra, Indonesia, erupted in 1883, it was one of the most catastrophic ever witnessed in recorded history.

On the afternoon of August 26, 1883, the first in a series of increasingly violent explosions occurred. A black cloud of ash rose seventeen miles above the volcano, and on the morning of the next day, tremendous explosions were heard 2,200 miles away in Australia. Ash was propelled to a height of fifty miles, blocking the sun and plunging the surrounding region into darkness for two and a half days.

The drifting dust caused spectacular red sunsets throughout the following year. Pressure waves in the atmosphere were recorded worldwide, creating tsunamis that crashed and swelled and broke as far away as Hawaii and South America, killing thirty-six thousand people in the nearby coastal towns of Java and Sumatra. Lava flowed all the way into the sea, where it cooled and produced such huge masses of floating pumice that ships in the vicinity were forced to come to an abrupt halt. The nearby islands were buried under a thick layer of ash, and it took plant and animal life five years to even begin to reestablish itself.

If one volcanic eruption can create a two-and-a-half day blackout, then imagine what would happen if every volcano in the world suddenly began to spout lava and ash. The sun would certainly turn black and the moon would appear blood red for a very long time.

In any event, when the sun turns dark in the middle of the day, when the moon turns blood red, when meteoroids begin falling to the earth, and when a worldwide earthquake hits, people will only have to look as far as the nearest Bible in order to make sense of nature's upheaval. In that terrifying moment, they will believe in God, and will rush to find a place of refuge from the destruction, praying not to the Lord for forgiveness of their wickedness, but to the component rocks of caves and mountains, that they would provide a sufficient shelter to hide them from the face of God and the Lamb.

At the conclusion of these events, four angels will take up positions at the four cardinal directions to prevent any wind from blowing across the earth. There will be no breeze to cool it down, no gusts to ruffle the branches of a single tree or create swells upon the face of the ocean. All sea-vessels depending on wind for movement will be stranded.

Such serenity will stand out in stark contrast to the uproar and mayhem of the previous hours, an ominous, dreadful note of suspense that will pierce the hearts of many as from their hiding places they continue to cower in expectation of further destruction. Never will the calm after a storm ever contain so much terror.

In Luke 21:26, Jesus described this as a time of "*men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken.*"

In Ezekiel 32:3-15, the Lord spoke of this calamity through His prophet when He said, "*With a great throng of people I will cast my net over you, and they will haul you up in my net. I will throw you on the land and hurl you on the open field. I will let all the birds of the air settle on you and all the beasts of the earth gorge themselves on you. I will spread your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your remains. I will drench the land with your flowing blood all the way to the mountains, and the ravines will be filled with your flesh.*

"When I snuff you out, I will cover the Heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the Heavens I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land, declares the Sovereign LORD.

"I will trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring about your destruction among the nations, among lands you have not known. I will cause many peoples to be appalled at you, and their kings will shudder with horror because of you when I brandish my sword before them. On the day of your downfall each of them will tremble every moment for his life.

"For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: The sword of the king of Babylon will come against you. I will cause your hordes to fall by the swords of mighty men— the most ruthless of all nations. They will shatter the pride of Egypt, and all her hordes will be overthrown. I will destroy all her cattle from beside abundant waters no longer to be stirred by the foot of man or muddied by the hoofs of cattle.

"Then I will let her waters settle and make her streams flow like oil, declares the Sovereign LORD. When I make Egypt desolate and strip the land of everything in it, when I strike down all who live there, then they will know that I am the LORD.""

Ezekiel prophesied about the worldwide earthquake when he said, "*I will throw you on the land and hurl you on the open field.*"

He spoke of the great numbers of the dead when he said, "*I will let all the birds of the air settle on you and all the beasts of the earth gorge themselves on you. I will spread your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your remains. I will drench the land with your flowing blood all the way to the mountains, and the ravines will be filled with your flesh.*"

He predicted the Heavenly bodies would be shaken when he said, "*When I snuff you out, I will cover the Heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the Heavens I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land, declares the Sovereign LORD.*"

He speaks of the great terror that will grip the people of the earth when he says, "*I will trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring about your destruction among the nations, among lands you have not known. I will cause many peoples to be appalled at you, and their kings will shudder with horror because of you when I brandish my sword before them. On the day of your downfall each of them will tremble every moment for his life.*"

Finally, he speaks of the calm that will descend over the earth like a burial shroud with the words, "*Then I will let her waters settle and make her streams flow like oil, declares the Sovereign LORD.*"

These events take place in order to accomplish the will of the Lord, that all men will know that He is God.

In an remarkable sidebar, the four angels who have been employed to restrain the winds from blowing across the earth appear to be fallen angels. Although the distinction is not significant to the study of endtime events (for whether the restraining is accomplished by angels or by devils, the event of the restriction of wind flow will occur regardless), it is worth a closer examination.

In John's account of this event, he observes five angels. One he describes as being marked by the seal of the living God, while the other four are described without the sigil. This begs the question of why the seal of God was absent from John's description of the four wind-restraining beings.

One possible explanation for the descriptive omission is that the seal was simply not present. This suggests that the four angels without the mark of God are devils, rather than holy servants of God.

In addition, they are given *permission* to harm the land and sea, rather than *orders* to accomplish such. Although the Bible records that in times past, angels have been used of God to wreak destruction upon humanity, in every instance they have been acting on God's express orders to do so.

The slaughter of mankind is not a pastime in which the spiritual servants of God take pleasure at every permissible opportunity. They engage in such activity only when ordered to do so (Exodus 33:2; Numbers 22:23, 31; 2nd Samuel 24:16, 17).

The four angels that restrain the wind from blowing across the earth are not ordered by God to harm the earth, the trees, or sea. In fact, the only orders given them are instructions *not* to harm the earth until the elect of God have been sealed.

A holy angel would not have needed a command to abstain from violence against mankind, nor permission to indulge in the same. Only a devil would have required such directives.

Thus, the theory is advanced that these four angels are servants of Satan, rather than subjects of the Almighty King.

The Bible explains that God has given Satan, the Prince of this world (2nd Corinthians 4:3; Ephesians 2:2), the latitude with which to exercise his pleasure in regards to the earth, but He has not given Satan orders to destroy it or its people. Satan has received permission, not a directive. This point is well illustrated in Job 1:9.

"*The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.*"

Satan was permitted to accomplish his will with respect to Job's possessions, and later with his body, but he was bound by an edict of God to preserve his life. The tragedies that befell Job did not originate with God, nor were they fulfilled by Satan according to the word of God. Rather, as the Almighty relaxed His restraining hand about Job, reducing the borders of His protection to an area encapsulating no more than Job's person, and subsequently his soul, the Prince of Darkness seized on the opportunity of unguarded territory to perpetrate atrocity.

Functioning as sponsors of iniquity, the whole of the dark host of cherubim are busily engaged in procuring billions of human souls for companionship in the lake of eternal torment which burns with fire and brimstone. They need not be ordered by God to engage in such activity, for it constitutes their greatest desire; indeed, they strain against the bridle of God's restraint with a voracious fervor. Their burning hatred for the holiness of the Almighty and the vicious hostilities expressed towards His people in a vile attempt

to prevent the joining of the two are qualities that define their nature. They no more require a command to destroy mankind than mankind must await an instruction before drawing breath. The conductive element is simply permission.

In contrast, the purpose of holy angels in the service of the Almighty is to carry out the instructions of their Master. Thus, they will destroy a city or nation if so commanded, but it is not an activity in which they can be found engaged at their leisure. First and foremost, they are ministering spirits, sent to serve those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14).

The devils do not require orders to work iniquity, they require only permission, as was given to the four angels who restrained the winds from blowing across the earth. Although in possession of permission to harm the earth, they were prevented from commencing their assault until 144,000 Jews had become sealed with the mark of God.

As John lifts his eyes from the vision of earth, he sees that a vast multitude has just arrived in Heaven, clothed in white robes, and holding palm branches as they offer praise to God and to the Lamb.

One of the elders catches John's bewildered gaze and smiling, draws near to speak with him. Casting an arm about John's shoulder and indicating the newly-arrived crowd with his other hand, he asks, "Are you aware of the identity of these people, and their point of origin?"

Ever respectful, John answers, "No sir, but I am sure that you know."

Taking him aside, the elder explains that these are believers who have come out of the Great Tribulation. Never again will they be subject to the weaknesses of the flesh, and they will reside in Heaven for eternity.

The elder reveals to John who these people are and where they came from, but he does not elaborate on how they arrived, a subject which proves most interesting.

It is assured that much life will be lost in the worldwide earthquake of the sixth seal. Thus, one might believe that these are simply people who perished in the chaos.

The one who recalls that departed souls do not enter into their final reward immediately upon death, but instead are escorted to Hades, the Place of the Dead, will understand that death is a poor excuse for the presence of this congregation in Heaven.

What is it that scripture reveals concerning the transfer of souls from Hades to Heaven?

1st Thessalonians 4:15-17 – "*According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from Heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*"

The Bible declares that the dead in Christ will be resurrected when Jesus returns to the earth. Thus, the redeemed who have resided in Hades up to this point will be released and enter into their inheritance at this time. They will meet the Lord in the clouds as He comes, followed by those believers who are still alive upon the earth, and they will dwell with the Lord in Heaven for time everlasting.

If a vast congregation of humans has suddenly arrived in Heaven, they must first have been released from the waiting room of Hades; an event that will take place only upon the Lord's return to the earth.

Thus, the fact that the saints have arrived in Heaven indicates that the rapture has just taken place. If this is true, supporting evidence should exist in scripture.

In Matthew 24:3-35, the disciples specifically asked Jesus to explain to them how they would know when the time would be fulfilled for him to return to the earth, and Jesus gave an in-depth answer.

"*As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"*

"Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.

How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.

"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

"Immediately after the distress of those days" 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the Heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky,

with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.

"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

Jesus began his answer with a disclaimer and a warning. He said that the world would experience many wars, famines, earthquakes, and cataclysmic events, but these occurrences were not to be construed as a sign of his imminent return. These things will happen, but the end is not yet.

He said that persecutions would come upon his servants, and many false teachers would arise, leading many astray from the truth, but again, these are not portents of the end of the age.

Jesus spoke of an "abomination that causes desolation," and explained that this would coincide with a time of extreme persecution. Those in Judea must immediately flee when the abomination is made manifest, for if they hesitate for even a moment they will endure terrible torture and receive a violent death.

Then he said that "*immediately after the distress of those days*" the sign of his return would appear in the sky.

For those who have been conditioned to believe in a rapture that occurs long before this point, notice that Jesus said he would return only after his saints had endured "*great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again*."

The King James Version of the Bible renders it, "*For then shall be great tribulation*."

The phrase translated as "great distress" and "great tribulation" is "megas thlipsis."

"Megas" is a word that means, "great," as referring to the enormity of the dimensions and respects of space, great mass and weight, great compass and extent, great measure and height, great stature and age, great number and quantity, great intensity and degree, great effort, great affections and emotions of the mind, of great natural events powerfully affecting the senses, violent, mighty, strong, great establishment of rank, great eminence, great ability, great virtue, great authority, great power, high estimation of a person or object's importance, splendid, prepared on a grand scale, stately, God's preeminent blessings, and of things which overstep the province of a created being."

The word "megas" has been translated as "great," but it is greatness with a flavor of magnificence, ultimate splendor, and overwhelming power. It is not a garden-variety "great," but rather a definitive greatness, the greatest of the great.

Thus it is clear why Jesus elaborated on the word "great" by saying, "*unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again*," for such is the meaning of the word "megas."

The other half of the phrase, the word "thlipsis," means "a pressing together, or pressure." It is a metaphor for oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, and straits.

Taken together, it is understood that the people of the world, and the saints of God in particular, will experience a violent crushing of a magnitude never before experienced by this world.

In Daniel 7:7, the prophet saw this coming persecution in the form of a beast with iron teeth.

"*After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.*"

This wicked, violent world, for all its experience with war and riot and genocide, with its Hitlers, Stalins, and Husseins, has never even imagined the intensity of the ultimate persecution that is to come. Only after such tribulation will Jesus return for his Church. Only after such distress will the sign of his return appear in the Heavens.

And what exactly is the sign of his return?

Matthew 24:29-31- "*Immediately after the distress of those days " '**the sun will be darkened**, and **the moon will not give its light**; **the stars will fall from the sky**, and **the Heavenly bodies will be shaken**.'*

*"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and **all the nations of the earth will mourn**. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and **they will gather his elect** from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.*"

This sign of the return of Christ is the breaking of the sixth seal. Jesus said that the following collective events would be the sign of his return:

1. The sun will be darkened.
2. The moon will be darkened.
3. The stars will fall from the Heavens.
4. Heavenly bodies will be shaken.
5. All nations will mourn.
6. The angels will gather the chosen.

As the events of the sixth seal are examined, seven incidents are observed:

1. A great earthquake takes place.
2. The sun is darkened.
3. The moon is darkened.
4. The stars fall to the earth.
5. All nations mourn the Wrath of the Lamb.
6. 144,000 Jews are sealed.
7. A vast assembly of people arrive in Heaven.

If the sixth seal is truly the sign of the return of Jesus Christ, then these events described in Revelation should match that of the description in Matthew chapter twenty-four.

1. The sun is darkened in both prophecies.

Matthew 24:29 – "*the sun will be darkened.*"

Revelation 6:12 – "*The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair.*"

2. The moon is darkened in both prophecies.

Matthew 24:29 – "*the moon will not give its light.*"

Revelation 6:12 – "*the whole moon turned blood red.*"

3. Stars fall to the earth in both prophecies.

Matthew 24:29 – "*the stars will fall from the sky.*"

Revelation 6:13 – "*the stars in the sky fell to earth.*"

4. All nations mourn the Day of the Lamb in both prophecies.

Matthew 24:30 – "*all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.*"

Revelation 6:15-17 – "*Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*"

5. The elect are gathered in both prophecies.

Matthew 24:31 - *And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.*"

Revelation 7:9, 14 – "*After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. These are they who have come out of the great tribulation.*"

The 144,000 Jews that are sealed in Revelation chapter seven do not have an implicit parallel in Matthew twenty-four, yet this event is part of the gathering of the elect. The Gentiles will be caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds, while the believing Jews will be sealed, and will remain on the earth.

The Gentiles will be gathered in one manner and assembled together in Heaven, while the Jews will be gathered in another manner and assembled together on the Mount of Zion.

Hence, points six and seven concerning the sixth seal of Revelation are one and the same, and equal the sixth point in Matthew twenty-four.

One event in both passages (Matthew's shaking of the Heavens and Revelation's earthquake) remains unaccounted for, or so it would seem.

In Matthew, Jesus declares that the Heavenly bodies will be shaken. In what manner can a Heavenly body be shaken? Will the clouds be torn asunder in the atmosphere? Will thunder and lightning crack the sky? If Matthew twenty-four and the sixth seal of Revelation describe the same event, then why did Jesus speak of a shaking of the Heavens rather than a shaking of the earth?

The King James Version of Matthew 24:29 renders it, "*the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken.*"

The word translated as "powers" is the Greek "dunamis," meaning miraculous power, and implies a miracle itself.

The word translated as "Heavens" is "ouranos," and can denote a plethora of elements, such as the sky, Heaven as the abode of God, happiness, power, eternity, the Gospel, and Christianity itself. However, its primary definition is simply "the idea of elevation."

The root of "ouranos" is "oros," a word which means "to rise or rear as a mountain lifting itself above the plain; a hill; a mount."

The words of Jesus which have been translated to read, "*The powers of the Heavens shall be shaken,*" take on a different meaning in the original Greek.

"With miraculous power the mountains and the hills shall be thrust upward."

Thus it is made plain that Jesus did, after all, speak of an earthquake that would occur as a sign of his imminent return.

God spoke through His prophet Isaiah concerning the return of Jesus Christ when he said in Isaiah 10:10-13:

"*The stars of Heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the Heavens tremble;* ***and the earth will shake from its place*** *at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.*"

The Bible declares that an earthquake will herald the return of the glorious Prince of Peace. The prophecy Jesus gave in Matthew was duplicated exactly in Revelation with the opening of the sixth seal.

Pre-conceived ideas of a pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, or post-tribulation rapture must be redefined in light of the tribulation itself.

If the tribulation is defined as commencing with the opening of the first seal, then the sixth seal rapture, which occurs after the beginning and before the conclusion of the tribulation, might conceivably be described as a mid-tribulation rapture, even if it does not fall precisely upon the center demarcation of the tribulation's duration.

If the seals are excluded entirely from consideration and the tribulation is defined as beginning with the first trumpet judgment, then the sixth seal rapture could correctly be called a pre-tribulation rapture.

The placement of the rapture as it relates to the tribulation cannot be determined with any degree of accuracy until the tribulation itself has first been defined.

Jesus himself identified the Great Tribulation as occurring just before his return.

Matthew 24:21 – "*For then shall be* ***great tribulation****, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*"

Matthew 24:29-31 – "***Immediately after the distress of those days*** *"'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the Heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "****At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear*** *in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.*"

The rapture, then, would best be defined as a pre-wrath rapture of the church. The Holy Spirit of the first seal was not a punishment levied against the people of the world by God.

Nor was World War Two designed and accomplished by the Lord. Rather, it was the result of the credulity of man which allowed him to be influenced by spiritual forces not sent by God, a condition brought about and exploited by Satan due to a weakness in spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Not having put on the full armor of God, when the world was set upon by the rulers, the authorities, the powers of darkness and the spiritual forces of evil in the Heavenly realms, it was unable to stand its ground and succumbed to the might of Satan. It was the sinful state of mankind which brought about the world wars and their descendents.

Four devils were poised to destroy the earth, but God restrained them until the 144,000 could be sealed and his elect gathered to Him.

Thus far, God has not given vent to His righteous indignation and come against the people of the world to strike them down with the sword of His mouth. He has been patient and reserved, yet this will change with the beginning of the first trumpet judgment.

Hence, the rapture occurs before God brings His wrath to bear on a wicked world. It is a pre-wrath rapture of the Church, and it occurs on the heels of the opening of the sixth seal.

The period of duration between the manifestation of the sign of Christ's imminent return, and the physical emergence of the Messiah across the cloudy horizon of earth is enucleated by scripture.

The cataclysmic events that serve to portend the return of Jesus Christ are inceptive of what Messiah termed the "*great tribulation*," a time of "*great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.*"

In Revelation 3:10, Jesus revealed that the church would endure this time of trial for a period of one hour; a season from which the Philadelphian congregation and the early church in general were precluded.

"*Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.*"

The interval of one hour is not a literal designation of time, but a symbolic one. In Daniel 9:27, the prophet declared of the Antichrist, that "*He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.*"

The King James Version renders it, "*And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.*"

Revelation 13:5, 6 explains that this is not a literal week, but a symbolic week of years, for it reveals that the period of time allotted to the Antichrist is forty-two months, a period exactly one-half of seven years.

"*The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in Heaven.*"

A seven-year covenant will be made with the Jewish people which will be broken at its median, or forty-two months into the accord. The Antichrist will then enter the rebuilt temple of God in Jerusalem and open his mouth to utter blasphemies and slander with regard to the Almighty for the remaining forty-two months prior to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom by Christ.

If the symbolic week equals a period of seven years, then it is obvious that one symbolic day corresponds to one literal year. Given this information, the conversion of one figurative hour into a literal unit of measure becomes possible.

One symbolic week equals seven literal years. With twenty-four hours apportioned to one day, a symbolic week can be expressed as 168 symbolic hours (24 hours multiplied by 7 days).

Those 168 symbolic hours are equal to a literal 7 years, or a literal 2,555 days (365 days per year multiplied by 7 years).

To be perfectly accurate, there are 365 and ¼ days per year, thus the figure is more precisely 2,556.75 days (365.25 multiplied by 7 years).

One hour is .00595 percent of the total symbolic number of 168 (1 hour divided by the total 168).

That same percentage (.00595) of 2,556.75 days equals 15.21 literal days (2,556.75 multiplied by .00595).

Thus, one symbolic hour is equal to a literal period of 15 days, 4 hours, and 48 minutes, or roughly, a span of two weeks.

When the sun ceases to bestow full illumination, when the moon appears crimson, when meteoroids begin impacting the earth, and when the world convulses in the grip of a violent earthquake, the church will know that the rapturous conclusion of their mundane residency is but two weeks distant.

At this time, "*If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.*" – Revelation 13:10

"*There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Then I heard a voice from Heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them*." – Revelation 14:11-13

17. The Seventh Seal

Revelation 8:1-5

"*When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.*"

As the seventh and final seal is opened, there is silence in Heaven for about half an hour, and John may have felt a building suspense as the minutes ticked by with no further action.

The newly-arrived saints are standing in silence, their eyes the only parts of their bodies in motion as they take in the Throne Room of Heaven and the Lamb. The elders are seated once more on their thrones, their attention given fully to the Lamb, who continues to stand upon the throne of God. The cherubim flanked the One who sat there with the appearance of jasper and carnelian, mute sentries that stood at attention with their many eyes directed straight ahead, and from His throne, God continued to shine forth His glory in silent, piercing rays of splendor.

In Heaven, complete silence descended over the holy assembly. Not a voice moved to speak, and not a wing brushed the air; a multitude brought to stillness by the gentle will of the Spirit of the Lord with which they were all attuned.

On earth, a moment of silence is a sign of respect. Interestingly, silence is a biblical metaphor for death.

Psalms 94:17 – "*Unless the LORD had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.*"

Psalms 101:8 – "*Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.*"

Psalms 115:17 – "*It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to silence.*"

Psalms 143:12 – "*In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.*"

Isaiah 25:5 – "*You silence the uproar of foreigners; as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled.*"

Jeremiah 51:55 – "*The LORD will destroy Babylon; he will silence her noisy din. Waves of enemies will rage like great waters; the roar of their voices will resound.*"

Amos 8:3 – "*In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!*"

It is possible, then, that the silence of Heaven is a presage of the death that is about to come, and a deference to the power of the Almighty God who is about to pour out His wrath on an unrepentant world.

Suddenly there is movement. John's attention is drawn to the ranks of the angels, where seven of them are moving forward to receive seven bright shophars; long, silvery trumpets with undulating tubes that curve up and down and twist this way and that after the manner of a slithering serpent.

These seven heralds will each in turn proclaim divine judgment upon a corrupt and condemned world by sounding a loud blast on the shofar.

John watched as another angel approached the altar. Its base had returned to a state of solid gold, for the souls of the martyrs which had been seen through it previously were now standing in the presence of God.

John looked closer and noticed that the angel was carrying a length of chain from which depended a cup-shaped vessel covered by a lid pierced with holes.

It was a censer, a device used to hold incense, and when the angel reached the altar, he was given much incense to burn, along with the prayers of the saints.

The nature and origin of the incense is revealed in Revelation 5:8.

"*And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*"

The incense was the prayers of the saints, and each of the twenty-four elders possessed a bowl full of such prayers. Hence, the angel is given twenty-four bowls worth, or as the Bible records, *much* incense.

The angel empties the contents of the bowls upon the altar and ignites it, causing the smoke of prayer to rise up before God on His throne.

The prayer of the saints was revealed in Revelation 6:10 as an appeal for judgment and vengeance.

"*How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?*"

At the time of the request for justice, the saints had been told to wait a little longer. Now, however, the time for waiting has been completed.

As the prayers burn and their fragrance fills the Throne Room, a great fire begins to blaze on the altar. Filling his censer with the fire from the altar, the angel turns and hurls it to the earth with a resounding crash.

Thunder reverberates throughout the Heavens, and lightning seizes the earth in a web of snapping sparks and cracklings of electric current. Ominous rumblings roll across the void of space, and another violent earthquake rattles the surface of the planet once again.

Such is the answer of God to the saints' request for judgment. It is the reward for those who participated, whether through action or inaction, in the slaughter of Christians.

John, his eyes wide and mouth gaping in amazement, is astonished at the sheer volume of destruction that the earth is absorbing. The blackened, pitted chunk of charred rock that was formerly a beautiful green and blue planet capable of sustaining life is now nothing more than a wasteland of fire, disease, famine, darkness, and death, and missing over one fourth of its population.

Before John can even begin to comprehend the loss of more than one billion people, the first angel raises its shofar and prepares to blow.

18. The Trumpets

The First Trumpet

Revelation 8:6, 7 – "*Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.*"

As the first of the seven trumpets of God's judgment is sounded, hail and fire mixed with blood are hurled to the earth, resulting in a conflagration that reduces one-third of the earth to ashes. Specifically, one-third of the earth's trees and grass are incinerated in an event that is likely to prove detrimental to the earth's ability to produce oxygen.

The hailstorm of Egypt in Exodus chapter nine killed every man and animal that was caught outdoors (verse 19). It is probable then, that if of sufficient size, the bloody hailstones will cause much damage and perhaps even death.

The Second Trumpet

Revelation 8:8, 9 – "*The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*"

After one-third of the land is destroyed, the second trumpet sounds and one-third of the sea becomes devastated by what may be a mountain-sized meteor. Blazing with the energy of heat generated by entry into the earth's atmosphere, it splashes down into the ocean destroying one-third of all sea-life and oceanic vessels, resulting in the spilling of much blood into the waters.

Those nations that rely heavily on the sea for food will be severely impacted by this thirty-three percent reduction in supply. Whatever remaining vestiges of economy that have survived the ride of the black horse will be dealt a further blow, as those merchants dependent upon the shipping industry will find their supplies, and therefore revenue streams, severely crippled.

The Third Trumpet

Revelation 8:10, 11 – "*The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water— the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.*"

The word "star" in this passage is the Greek "stroo," meaning "a spreading star," or meteor, as previously elucidated concerning the "stars" of the sixth seal. It is burning like a torch due to its entry into earth's atmosphere at a tremendous rate of speed.

While the "burning mountain" of the second trumpet judgment contaminates the salt-water of the oceans, this meteor pollutes one-third of the world's fresh drinking water, causing it to become poisonously bitter. Many people will drink of this contaminated water and die.

This dreadful meteor will come to be known as the "Pandora Virus," or something as equally creative for denoting "pandemic contagion," for the Bible declares that it will be named "Wormwood," which means "catastrophic bitterness."

The word "wormwood" is reproduced in the King James Bible a total of nine times. On seven occasions, the word is translated as "la'anah," meaning "accursed," "poisonous," "hemlock," or "wormwood." The label of "la'anah" was therefore appositely bestowed upon a plant root that in primitive times was believed to possess an intrinsic faculty to effect curses.

The remaining two instances are found in Revelation 8:11, where the two occurrences of "Wormwood" are translated from the same Greek word "apsinthos," meaning "bitterness on the order of a calamity."

"*And the name of the star is called **Wormwood (apsinthos)**: and the third part of the waters became **wormwood (apsinthos)**.*" (KJV)

"La'anah" compares to "apsinthos" in the same manner as "toxin" relates to "epidemic." The meteor that contaminates one-third of the world's drinking water will be named "Epidemic Bitterness," as opposed to merely "Bitterness." The waters will carry a pandemic contagion from which many will die.

"*— the name of the star is **bitterness on the order of a calamity**. A third of the waters turned **bitter on the order of a calamity**...*"

There presently exists no meteoroid with the title of "Wormwood," or "Epidemic Bitterness." The toxic "star" will inherit its name from the devastation it inflicts upon mankind only after the fact.

The Fourth Trumpet

Revelation 8:12, 13 – "*The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!*"

As the fourth trumpet is sounded, the solar output of the sun and stars are reduced by one-third, and as a result the moon reflects only a fraction of the brilliance that it previously mirrored.

In addition, one-third of the day and night contain no illumination whatsoever, leaving the inhabitants of the earth wrapped in a shroud of complete darkness.

In the atmosphere high above the ravaged planet, an angel soars through the murky gloom with a message from Almighty God.

"Anguish and despair have been determined upon those who still remain on the earth, for there are further and more dreadful trumpet blasts that are about to be sounded by the other three angels!"

In effect, those who have perished prior to this point in time will be judged more fortunate than those who will continue to endure the judgments that are about to come. The next judgment will be especially grievous, and will be designated as the first of three Woes.

As an aside, the New International Version's translation of the Greek "aggelos" in verse 13 as "eagle" is inexplicable, for it denotes "a messenger," "envoy," "one who is

sent," "an angel," or "a messenger from God." It does not denote an eagle or any other such ornithological creature.

The Fifth Trumpet (The First Woe)

Revelation 9:1-12 – "*The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace.*

"The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

"During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

"The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.

"They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon. The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come."

Central to deciphering this enigmatic account is a familiarity with John's perception of the nature of the Abyss. He designates it "*the* Abyss," rather than "*an* abyss," which implies that it is a unique expanse and that it has been referred to by an official designation, whether proper or informal.

According to Zondervan's New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words, the Abyss "was identified in Greek thought with the underworld, the realm of the dead. In the New Testament this realm of the dead is pictured as a prison, smoldering with subterranean fires, where demons are captive."

Zondervan's New International Bible Dictionary affirms, "In the New Testament it refers to the world of the dead or the nether world, the prison of disobedient spirits. In Luke 8:31 the demons had a great dread of the primal abyss; even so, they may have caused themselves to go there when the pigs were drowned in the sea."

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words explains that "abussos," the Greek word for "abyss," "describes an immeasurable depth, the underworld, the lower regions, the abyss of Sheol… the lower regions as the abode of demons, out of which they can be let loose."

The Family Bible Encyclopedia (Berkley and Alvera Mickelsen) states that "in the New Testament this word is usually used of the home of the demons, or the after-death prison of those who disobey God."

Thus, John recognized the "Abyss" as a colloquial term for Hades in general and Tartarus in particular, that lowest of levels in which fallen angels are imprisoned.

"*And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.*" – Jude 6

The incarcerated spirits of this penal chamber are released into the world by a fallen star to whom the master key has been given.

By permitting scripture to explicate scripture, the "*star that had fallen from the sky to the earth*" is revealed as that antediluvian appellant in perpetual opposition to the saints.

Scripture refers to Satan as a morning star which fell to the earth from Heaven.

Isaiah 14:12-15 – "*How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.*" (KJV)

Luke 10:18 – "*He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven.*"

In fact, the Adversary's given name of Lucifer, when translated, denotes "morning star," "light-bearer," or "shining one," according to the Enhanced Strong's Lexicon.

Other scriptures affirm the use of the term "star" as representative of demonic princes.

Amos 5:26 – "*You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god— which you made for yourselves.*"

Acts 7:43 – "*You have lifted up the shrine of Molech and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.*"

Some versions of the Bible, such as the Jerusalem Bible, indicate that in Revelation 9:1 the word "star" is most accurately a designation of fallen angel.

The ostensibly devilish connotation of the "morning star" expression can be reconciled with Christ's invocation of the title in Revelation 22:16 by recognizing that Satan's original office and former nature was that of a covering cherub of perfect purity (Ezekiel 28:14).

While the Bible refers to angelic beings as "stars," and fallen angels in particular as "wandering stars" (as if although designed for light and direction, they instead became agents of deceit by aberrant travel throughout the Heavens), the "Morning Star" was originally an expression coined of the planet Venus, the brightest "star" of the morning, and thus became an appropriate description of Lucifer, who of all Heavenly creatures, was created most perfectly.

As the Supreme Creation, Lucifer in his perfection was the only being found worthy enough to lean upon the very breast of God, enveloped in His shekinah glory where with outstretched wings the very face of the Almighty was veiled.

As the Morning Star considered his matchless qualities, he of an instant compared himself to the only other One whose perfection did not defer to his own, and deeming himself capable of wresting away the crown of omnipotence from God Himself, challenged Him to retain it; his intention being to ascend the throne of God and confer his

former position upon his Creator, Who would thereafter exist to conceal the face of Lucifer in a converse role.

Unsuccessful in his initial effort, and his morning glory extinguished in the expulsion from Heaven (Ezekiel 28:18), the title of Morning Star is nevertheless one that he continues to claim, although it does not now refer to him in any official capacity.

Indeed, that title has been given to another, again the only being worthy of advancing beyond the four adjacent cherubim into the perfect holiness of God's transcendent presence: the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

A careful examination of Revelation 5:6 will show the Son of God standing, not in the center of the throne room, or at the foot of his Father's throne, but on the throne itself, before the face of the Lord in the position Lucifer vacated.

"*Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.*"

The word "throne" in this scripture is the Greek "thronos" and denotes a "throne seat," "chair of state having a footstool," or "judges bench," not a throne room. Christ is standing in the precise center of the seat of God.

Having been given the key to the prison of Tartarus, Lucifer will assemble the total complement of fallen angelic warriors and bring the full force of the powers of darkness to bear in a final unsuccessful attempt to depose Almighty God from His throne. His resources exhausted, it will become obvious to all that the strength and cunning of the fallen star are no match for the might of the King of all Kings.

Upon opening the Abyss, such a great amount of smoke will rise from it that the sun and sky will be obliterated, and out of the darkness nightmares will begin to descend.

"*The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.*"

Similarities have been noted between the description of these locusts and modern military aircraft; the hypothesis being that John described his observation of future technology in terms with which he was familiar, much as the Native Americans once referred to the steam locomotive as an "iron horse." Such comparisons are not without their problems, however, failing as they do to account satisfactorily for every descriptive element.

In light of the nature of the Abyss and the creatures that inhabit that region, the identities of these locusts become clear. They are not men or machines, but the infernal hordes of imprisoned devils who, with the stings of scorpions, have been released to torment a fallen humanity for a period of five months.

According to Dr. Scott H. Plantz, MD, Research Director and Assistant Professor of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, victims of scorpion stings may feel a painful, tingling, burning sensation at the site of the sting, as well as numbness, difficulty swallowing, a thick tongue, blurred vision, roving eye movements, seizures, salivation, and difficulty breathing. All but the most mild symptoms require hospital admission for twenty-four hours of observation.

Dr. David Cheng, MD, Assistant Professor, Department of Surgery, Division of Emergency Medicine, New York Presbyterian Hospital, Cornell University, reports that persons who have been injected with scorpion venom usually display a prolonged abnormal dilatation of the pupil, a rapid, involuntary, oscillatory motion of the eyeball, increased salivation, difficulty swallowing, and restlessness. The mode of death is usually via respiratory failure secondary to hypersensitivity, constricted air passages in the lungs, excessive bronchial and pharynx mucous secretions, and/or diaphragmatic paralysis, although venom-induced multi-organ failure also plays a large role.

A sharp, burning pain sensation at the sting site, followed by severe itching, redness of the skin caused by dilatation and congestion of the capillaries, local tissue swelling, and ascending sensitivity to sensory stimuli, as of the skin to touch or the ear to sound, may be reported. A dermal sensation, like that of an electric current, persists for several weeks, and is the final symptom to resolve before the victim recovers.

Victims may also endure venom-induced cerebral strokes due to clotting of blood vessels, experience an altered level of consciousness such as delirium, and lose the ability to coordinate muscular movement.

Children present the same symptoms and signs as adults, albeit of a more severe and protracted nature. Furthermore, they may display a restlessness that is out of proportion when compared to any other disease, as well as inconsolable crying, uncontrollable jerking of the extremities, and chaotic thrashing, flailing, and writhing combined with contorted facial grimaces. The symptoms mimic a centrally-mediated seizure, but the victim is awake and alert the entire time.

Such is the effect of a scorpion sting and the torment that will be inflicted by devilish locusts on all those who do not possess the seal of the living God on their foreheads.

At this time, subsequent to the event of the rapture, scripture reveals those individuals marked with the seal of God to be descended from twelve specific genealogies, namely the Jewish patrilineages of Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

Theorists have speculated that the seal of God will be bequeathed to tribulation saints alive at this time (those unbelievers who, only after his second coming, became convinced of the need to live for Christ), but this hypothesis is advanced independent of scriptural support.

As revered Bible prophecy scholar Tim Lahaye suggested in his book, *Revelation Unveiled*, "It may be that unbelievers will have the mark of God on their foreheads, whereas unbelievers will feature the mark of the Antichrist."

Such a proposition is tendered without a shred of supporting biblical evidence, and in fact, Mr. LaHaye concedes the point even as he submits the theory when he presents it as a scenario which "may be," rather than one which "will be." A literal rendering of scripture indicates that the locusts' authority to torment mankind is not limited to those who have accepted the mark of the beast, but extends to those who remain undecided, as well as to Gentile tribulation saints; all who are bereft of the Jewish seal of God.

Unfortunately for these, the scorpion stings are not of lethal potency, and death, although much preferred to the continued torment, will not come.

The scripture which declares that "*During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them*," does not imply that all attempts to commit suicide at this time are but exercises in futility. Obviously, the man who becomes separated from his head, and his body divided into ten pieces, will die. The individual parts will not continue to live and the man remain conscious, nor will life remain in any vessels of clay impaled on knives or perforated with projectiles of buckshot, a la George Romero's "Night of the Living Dead."

In the phrase, "*men will seek death*," the word "seek" is the Greek "zeteo," meaning "to seek by thinking, meditating, or reasoning."

This is not speaking of men who will seek death with a grim purpose and an able weapon, but rather describes a state of mind. The meditative reasoning of countless agonized minds will declare this quality of life unworthy of continued existence, and will crave the relative peace of death.

Although some may escape the throes of misery through the violent portal of suicide, there will be no respite afforded by the sting of the infernal locust, for its strike is not a blow of death, but that of a lingering torment.

As devils, their king is the angel of the Abyss, a Prince of Darkness named Destroyer, who will figure prominently in the following trumpet judgment.

The Sixth Trumpet

The sounding of this trumpet sets in motion three separate events. The following scriptures detail the foremost affair.

Revelation 9:13-21 – "*The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."*

"And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

"The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.

"A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

"The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts."

With an original population exceeding six billion, the pale horse of death relieved the earth of the weight of one and a half billion inhabitants, or one-fourth of its previous measure, through plague, wild animals, famine, and rioting. Prior to the sixth trumpet blast, humanity's population statistics have slipped to approximately four and a half billion.

Four devils that have been restrained for millennia from spawning a gushing swell of bloodshed are finally released to satiate their lust for gruesome slaughter in unspeakable acts of carnage that will effectively halve pre-tribulation population figures.

The Bible classifies them as "angels," a term which does not distinguish between the righteous upright or the fallen evil. The identification is determined from the manner in which the word "bound" is employed.

"Bound" means to restrict, to confine. Compton's American Heritage Dictionary defines it thusly: "1. To tie or secure, as with a rope or cord. 2. To fasten or wrap by encircling, as with a belt or ribbon."

For what reason would God elect to bind or tether any holy angelic being? Such action would be inexplicable as applied to benevolent, subservient creatures, for if the Almighty must forcibly restrain His Heavenly host from accomplishing a will apart from His own, it is a rebellion that He keeps in check.

Scripture has consistently depicted God as a Deity who does not infringe upon the privilege of free will He has afforded His creations with respect to their choice of lifestyle and ultimate destination. He does not restrain those who desire to commit wickedness nor does He compel them to perform virtuous acts. Those angels who made a conscious decision to affect rebellion were summarily dismissed from service, and there remain no further creatures in ministerial positions harboring an attitude of insubordination upon which the Almighty must constantly exercise tight rein.

It is not holy angels that the Lord restrains, but nefarious workers of iniquity.

2nd Thessalonians 2:7 – "*For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.*"

A voice emanating from the golden altar before the throne of God commands the angel of the sixth trumpet to release these four devils who, for millennia, have been bound in the river of the Euphrates. They will be responsible for the deaths of one-third of all mankind, reducing global population figures to approximately three billion. Of the six billion alive today, the odds of any given individual surviving beyond this particular point are no greater than fifty-fifty.

Below the joint authority of this quadripartite command are two hundred million mounted troops.

As with the locusts, it is tempting to draw comparisons between this horse/lion/serpent amalgamation and modern military weaponry, but as before, current military craft cannot account for every descriptive element.

With certain modifications, the previous locusts seem to match this description rather well, although an incongruous increase in stature from that of insect to equine has occurred.

Consider, that the locusts appear as horses with human faces, prepared for battle, while the two hundred million troops also appear as horses with mounted riders.

The locusts have on their heads something like crowns of gold and the teeth of lions, while the horses have the heads of lions. (A vertical golden ring running below the chin and about the head may give the appearance of a mane, and along with the teeth, would resemble the head of a lion.)

The locusts are fitted with breastplates of iron, and the horses are also described as such.

The locusts have arched, agile tails that undulate this way and that as they seek victims to strike, while the horses are described as having tails with a manner of movement akin to serpents, with heads that inflict injury.

The only discrepancies are the locust's hair and thundering wings, two elements whose omission can be explained with ease. If the locusts have reverted from aerial attacks to a ground assault, their speed will be reduced to a point in which their long, waving hair will cascade down the neck after the manner of a horse's mane, rather than blow about behind them in obvious fashion. As John has already described these creatures as horses, a mention of long hair flowing from the neck would no doubt be a superfluous detail. As far as the absence of wings with respect to the horses, when folded up against the flank after the manner of locusts, they would be hidden from view.

A substitution of forward-mounted weapons for the laterally-located barb can be explained as a conversion from non-lethal methods of attack to the implementation of deadly force. While previously they were prohibited from dispensing death, and thus limited to lancing maneuvers, there is no longer any such restriction.

Thus, the only significant deviation from the description of one creature to the next is the element of size, which can be accounted for by Satanic power.

If this is the case, then these troops are the recently liberated devils from the Abyss in a slightly different form.

Popular speculation presumes these to be human troops of the Chinese government, with their actions demonically influenced. If so, then they ride into battle upon vehicles as yet unknown to our science. Such a hypothesis depends not from the description of the cavalry or the nature of their command nucleus, but solely from the number of troops.

It is advanced that the nation of China alone possesses a population of sufficient numbers from which such an immense army could be assembled.

Thus, the identity of the two hundred million warriors is determined by an analysis which ignores the majority of indicia and considers only the number of gathered individuals.

In addition, the association of these troops with China does not correspond to the one-world nature of government that will have been established by this time. With the obsolescence of national sovereignty in favor of global allegiance, there will no longer exist multiple nation states, but a single United State of Earth. Since China, as it is known today, will have ceased to exist, it seems rather incongruous to affix this army of two hundred million with a label that will no longer exist in the cultural lexicon of the world.

With the world's arsenal of nuclear, biological, and other weapons of mass destruction under the secure aegis of Antichrist's United Earth Government, it seems unlikely that a rogue faction, having seceded from the Union and armed with only conventional weapons, would succeed in destroying a billion and a half inhabitants. To put such a campaign into perspective, that is more than fifty-three times the casualty statistics of World War Two.

If, however, the two hundred million-member army with its quaternion of Luciferian spirits is comprised of devils, they would be impervious to a World Government's arsenal of earthly weapons, and would therefore be prodigiously capable of roaming the earth with impunity and slaughtering human beings at will.

The evidence is by no means conclusive, however, and it is possible that the nature of these warriors will become known only after their campaign of terror has begun.

Regardless, one fact in our possession after having examined this passage of scripture is that one-third of the world's population, or one and-a-half billion souls, will be annihilated.

The second event set in motion by the sounding of the sixth trumpet is as follows:

Revelation 10:1-11 – "*Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from Heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand.*

"He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from Heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

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

"Then the voice that I had heard from Heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

"So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey."

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

The book of Revelation does not tell the entire story of the end times, for a page from the account has been torn from its binding, leaving a gaping void where the event of the seven thunders ought to have been.

All that is known is that a holy angel descends from Heaven with a small scroll in his hand. One foot touches down on the sea, the other on the land, and he gave a great shout like the roar of a lion, a cue for the seven thunders to speak

Unfortunately, this is knowledge that mankind has not been permitted to possess, and thus these proceedings are entirely incomprehensible.

John is directed to procure the little scroll from the hand of the mighty angel, and to consume it. The scroll tastes exceedingly pleasant in his mouth, but produces illness afterwards.

Scripture reveals a similar incident involving the prophet Ezekiel.

"*Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel."*

"So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it."

"So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them."

"The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the Lord upon me." – Ezekiel 2:9 – 3:4, 14

The two incidents are identical. Both prophets are given scrolls to eat. Both scrolls taste as sweet as honey. Both men become bitter after consuming them, and afterwards both are told to go forth and declare further prophecies.

Given that such a large portion of the events in Revelation 10:1-11 are duplicated in Ezekiel chapters 2 and 3, it may be that the scroll given to John contained information similar to that which was recorded on the scroll of Ezekiel: words of lament, mourning, and woe.

Honey is biblically depicted as a symbol of excellence (Ezekiel 16:13), goodness (Deuteronomy 8:7-9), life-sustaining water (Deuteronomy 32:13), sweetness (Judges 14:18), sustenance (Ezekiel 16:19), and passionate attraction (Proverbs 5:3).

Conversely, bitterness is associated with Passover austerity (Numbers 9:11), inedibility (Exodus 15:23), toxicity (Deuteronomy 32:32), offensiveness (Job 13:23-26), mortality (Psalms 64:3), immorality (Ecclesiastes 7:26), and is used to indicate an extreme level of unpleasantness (Amos 8:10).

The former is a compilation of endearing qualities, even as the latter register is comprised of undesirable elements.

The basic interpretation of the parallel incidents are thus understood as a consumption of that which ultimately contributed no benefit to the body, but initially tasted as if it would provide filling nourishment.

The use of various lenses may provide clarity concerning this delectable substance which produces deleterious effects upon the human body, but the biblical focus is given by Proverbs 27:7.

"*He who is full loathes honey, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.*"

Both Ezekiel and John partook of a bitter substance which tasted sweet as it was consumed. The Bible reveals that such an experience is unique to the famished or the zealous.

In these two prophets was found a common thirst for righteousness, a hunger for godliness, and a fervent desire to enter into an intimate spiritual union with their Creator. Ravenous for communion with Adonai Elohim, the celestial language of Heaven was as the sweetest of honey to the spiritually hungry, although in truth it contained expressions of divine wrath and judgment.

The scroll may have been written in the silvery lexis indigenous to angels, but it contained declarations of great lament, mourning, and woe concerning the unrepentant sinners who continue to spawn wickedness throughout the earth.

His illness notwithstanding, John must prepare to receive further images of misery of which he must prophesy.

The planting of the angel's right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land is obviously a symbolic action. The interpretation of the sea and land elements will be accomplished in greater detail in later chapters, but suffice it to say that the water is

biblically revealed as representational of all the nations of the world according to Revelation 17:15.

"*Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.*"

Hence the sea encompasses the kingdoms of the Gentiles.

Concerning the interpretation of "earth," Easton's Bible Dictionary explains that the earth is an expression delineative of "the whole world; the land as opposed to the sea," that it "also denotes a country; a plot of ground," and that "in the New Testament "the earth" denotes the land of Judea."

The "earth" is a term depictive of the entire world, however it can also refer to a country or particular piece of land. In the time of John, "earth" was a morpheme which specifically designated Judea, and therefore distinctively constitutes the Jewish people.

The angel stands with one foot on the sea and the other on the land, effectively bridging the Gentile and Jewish worlds. Whatever the seven thunders utter, it is likely that their words apply to both systems.

The third and final event set in motion by the sounding of the sixth trumpet is as follows:

Revelation 11:1-14 – "*I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles.*

"They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

"These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

"Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

"But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from Heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to Heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

"At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of Heaven. The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon."

This passage of scripture concerns the issue of a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem as well as the exploits of two holy witnesses of God associated with that same structure.

As of this writing, the summit of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, site of the ancient Hebrew holy place, does not yet support a Judaic temple, obstructed as it is by the Mohammedan Haram esh-Sherif (sacred enclosure) and the Kubbet es-Sahkra mosque, also known as the Dome of the Rock.

At the crux of any Israeli/Palestinian peace negotiation is the issue of which faction will ultimately control Jerusalem and the temple mount, an item neither side has been willing to concede.

Revelation 11:1, 2 may contain the key to an acceptable compromise.

"*I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles.*"

The original temple of God was an edifice composed of various courts, including an outer court or "Court of the Gentiles," and an inner court reserved exclusively for Israelite use.

In the previous scripture, John is instructed to measure only the inner court, for the Court of the Gentiles is to be surrendered to the Gentiles.

Asher Kaufman, a physicist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, writes in Biblical Archaeology Review ("Where the Ancient Temple of Jerusalem Stood") that there is room for the Kubbet es-Sahkra mosque to coexist along with a rebuilt Judaic temple if the outer court is excluded from construction, a potential solution which seems to have scriptural support, as well as the endorsement of such modern biblical scholars as Hal Lindsey, Randall Price, and David Brickner.

A rebuilt temple figures prominently in the emergence of endtime events, for an accord must be established between both Jews and Palestinians concerning the disposition of the Kubbet es-Sahkra mosque and the construction of the Judaic sanctuary, or such a treaty must be imposed on both parties. Scripture affirms in Daniel 9:27 that such an agreement will be drafted and enforced.

"*He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.*"

The word "seven" is derived from the Hebrew "shabuwa" which means "a period of seven years."

This seven year treaty will bring peace to Israel (by force, if necessary), resolve the Jerusalem question, and authorize the construction of a temple sans Gentile Court.

The Antichrist will break this treaty at its mid-point, enter the temple, and proclaim his deity to the world. For the remaining three and a half years prior to the establishment of Christ's government, scripture declares that the Gentiles will occupy Jerusalem.

Thus, events concerning the temple reconstruction are an effective gauge of the countdown to Armageddon.

For a time, two men will prophesy and bear witness to the righteousness of God. Invulnerable to any form of attack, they will be granted the full authority of Matthew 18:18, which states, "*I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven.*"

Imbued with the ability to wreak havoc in any conceivable form, these two witnesses will defy the Antichrist at their discretion and humiliate his false prophet in a three and a half year display of Heavenly power that will include periods of desiccation and transformations of water into blood.

At the end of the three and a half years, Destroyer, the beast that emerged from the depths of the Abyss, will overcome them and kill them.

Their bodies will be refused burial and will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days in a gala event that will be celebrated worldwide. Through the medium of global television, all eyes will behold the bodies of Enoch and Elijah and exult over the demise of these men who in previous millennia had been spared from the icy tendrils of death.

Hebrews 9:27 states that "*Everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God*," and the two prophets of old are no exception. After a brief sojourn in Hades, these men of renown will be resurrected and ascend to Heaven in full view of an astonished world, leaving in their wake an underground tremor which levels a tenth of the city, claiming seven thousand casualties.

The terrified survivors in Jerusalem give glory to the God of Heaven, but the Lord will not hear their cries for forgiveness, even though they seek after Him with bitter tears of repentance (Hebrews 12:14-17), for "*if anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.*" - Revelation 14:9-11

It is probable that the death of the two witnesses is a sign that the Antichrist's religious cleansings are complete, having eradicated all tribulation saints from the earth. The door-to-door searches of the fourth seal located and summarily executed many believers. The rapture of the sixth seal removed the remainder. Significant numbers of those who converted to Christianity after that point have fallen under the iron fist of the two hundred million-member army as it pursues a campaign of terror and carnage. The remaining vestiges of righteousness will be hunted down by special units and slaughtered.

"*If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.*" – Revelation 13:10

Scripture declares that the Antichrist will succeed where Hitler failed. He will achieve global domination and eliminate his religious opposition, with the exception of 144,000 Messianic Jews under the protection of El Shaddai.

Without an undecided faction left to persuade, or a righteous remnant to encourage, the time of witness for the two prophets is concluded, and they will receive their allotted share of death before departing this world.

The marked survivors of the Jerusalem quake are without salvation, although they now seek after it earnestly. Such tragedy is the second of three woes, a vivid aide memoire of Matthew 23:37.

"*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.*"

It is popularly held that the three and-a-half year testimony of the two prophets coincides with the first three and-a-half year period of the seven-year Israeli treaty, and that these men are executed at the mid-point in which Antichrist enters the rebuilt temple and declares that he is God.

This cannot be true for the simple fact that the departure of the two witnesses concludes an event that has been labeled "The Second Woe."

In any sequential system of record ever devised, the numeral two has in every instance followed the prime integer of one. If this Woe has been affixed with a designator of two, it is reasonable to assume that the event of the First Woe precedes it, namely the fifth trumpet judgment of locusts.

As the mid-point of the seven-year treaty with Israel coincides with the events of the sixth seal, if the resurrection of the two witnesses and subsequent earthquake (collectively termed "The Second Woe") were to take place within this period, the Second Woe would predate the First by five "judgments," and perhaps as much as two years.

It cannot be argued that the resurrection of the two prophets is parenthetical to the sixth trumpet, occurring at a much earlier period, for the second of anything cannot precede the first. The sixth trumpet cannot have sounded ahead of the first five, nor is there scriptural evidence for supporting a concurrent series of three sets of judgments, for the seven trumpets are not distributed among the angels until the ceremony of the seventh seal. To reiterate, the first trumpet cannot have sounded in conjunction with the opening of the first seal, for the angels do not come into possession of the instruments until the seventh seal has been opened.

In order for the resurrection of the two witnesses to occur at the mid-point of the Israeli treaty, it would have to take place at the opening of the sixth seal just prior to the event of the rapture, yet it transpires one seal and six trumpet judgments subsequent to that period. Although the amount of time spanning these seven judgments is unknown, if each were to occur at an interval of only one month, a period of seven months would have elapsed from the breaking of the treaty, placing the ressurrection far ahead of the treaty mid-point.

Since the departure of the two witnesses from the world scene is specifically declared by scripture to commence after the fifth trumpet and is included within the events of the sixth trumpet, it is possible to conclude by looking backward from this point on the timeline that a three and a half year ministry dates the arrival of the two prophets at least several months and perhaps by as much as two years beyond the treaty ratification.

The ministry of the two witnesses therefore bridges both treaty periods: that which will be honored and that which will be contravened. (See the Timeline of Endtime Events in the Appendix)

The Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 11:15-19 – "*The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in Heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."*

"And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great— and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

"Then God's temple in Heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm."

The seventh trumpet is sounded to the accompaniment of praise and worship directed to God by the twenty-four elders. With the absence of any godly presence in the earth, the time of Heaven's wrath in the form of seven bowls of agony has come. It is time to judge the dead, to reward the prophets and the saints, and to destroy those currently in the process of destroying the earth.

God's temple in Heaven is opened, revealing the ark of the covenant in an emblematic rolling up of sleeves as the Lord prepares to manifest His supreme power, a cosmic orchestration with a raging tempest and earthquake as a prelude.

19. The Woman Clothed with the Sun

Revelation 12:1-17

"*A great and wondrous sign appeared in Heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.*

"Then another sign appeared in Heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.

"The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

"And there was war in Heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in Heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

"Then I heard a loud voice in Heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you Heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

"When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.

"Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

John begins this chapter with the words, "*A great and wondrous sign appeared in Heaven*." Other translations substitute the word "pageant" for "sign." Regardless of the exact choice of words, the declaration communicates to the reader that the elements of the next several visions are wholly symbolic in nature; each component representative of a literal article.

The first player in this celestial production is a pregnant woman clothed with the sun. The moon lies beneath her feet while a band of twelve stars form a crown about her head.

The second character to pass before the backdrop is a gigantic red dragon with seven crowned heads and ten horns. Entering the scene with a flourish, it swept a third of the stars out of the sky with its tail and flung them to the earth before advancing menacingly unto the woman and opening its great razor-lined maw with a thundering roar, ready to devour her child at the moment of its birth.

As the woman groans in the first throes of labor, the dragon begins to snap hungrily at her legs, its forked tongue snaking out to wrap around the woman's ankle in lecherous anticipation while wisps of smoke curl from its flaring nostrils, its scaly tail coiling and flexing with impatient malevolence.

As the head of the infant crowns, the dragon lunges forward as if to tear it from the womb with its dagger-like teeth, but the boy is birthed of an instant and disappears, leaving the jaws to crack shut against empty air.

Bellowing with murderous rage and spewing sulfurous flame, the great beast rears its head as leathery wings unfurl and it launches itself into the air, its blood red eyes darting this way and that in a futile attempt to locate the child. Turning back to exact vengeance upon the woman, its tail thrashing in fury, it belches a thunderous epithetical roar to see her disappearing into the earth on the wings of a powerful eagle. Gathering its immense bulk, the winged serpent hurls itself after her, plummeting with an ever-increasing rate of speed toward the abode of fallen mortals with a sadistic frenzy apparent in its craggy features.

Dismounting from the eagle, the woman casts a nervous glance over her shoulder at the behemoth of evil plunging toward her in a venomous rage, and her sandaled feet hit the ground at a dead run, a vast expanse of desert stretching out before her with no sign of refuge on the horizon.

Seeing her with no place to hide, the dragon slowed its descent slightly as a wolfish leer spread across its face, its belly beginning to swell with a great inhalation.

Stumbling over the sloping sand, the woman fired a pair of terror-stricken glances at the monstrosity rapidly approaching before losing her balance and falling to her knees, her splayed hands two small reports impacting the parched ground in an attempt to break her fall.

Advancing to within range of its fetid breath, the crimson nightmare opened its mouth in a vicious rictus of a smile, a slimy secretion oozing from the gaping orifice over a double row of serrated razors employed as teeth.

A great gout of flame erupted from the belly of the creature and blazed through space like a fiery comet into earth's atmosphere where it coalesced into a cascading flood of water, roiling and churning across the arid soil in rising swells that overflowed the barren chambers beneath the surface of the sand and engulfed the dunes in a meteoric deluge that bore down upon the hapless female in its path.

With a bone-shaking rumble, the earth at her feet rent in two and widened to form a massive chasm in which the bottom-most depths could not be viewed. In slow-motion at first, the advance portion of the wave leaped into nothingness, the first droplets of spray seemingly transfixed for a moment before surrendering to the depths, followed by the remainder of the torrent until even the last echoes of its thundering passage died away.

In exceeding astonishment, the woman slowly stood to her feet on uncertain legs and watched as the dragon veered off in a rage in search of easier prey.

The elements of this pageant include the woman clothed in celestial raiment, the seven-headed crimson dragon, the baby boy who will rule the nations with an iron scepter, the eagle's wings, the floodwaters, the earth which opened up and helped the woman, and the woman's children whom the dragon began to pursue.

The identity of the woman will be ascertained first. She is described as being clothed with the sun, the moon her footstool, and a crown of twelve stars about her head. She is pregnant with a child who will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

Eschatologists are possessed of a diverse number of theories concerning the nature of this account, claiming it to be representative of articles such as the Catholic church, Mary the mother of Jesus, the New Testament church, or an alignment of the Virgo and Scorpio constellations with the Heavenly bodies of Earth.

Unfortunately, such hypotheses are consequential of mankind's attempt to ascertain spiritual truth through the medium of its own intellect, or stem from a cursory investigation of scripture with an imperfect extrapolation of the results, for they are not aligned with the information the Bible provides concerning this image.

When scripture presents a particular symbolism and then proceeds to define it, there remains no basis for an extra-biblical investigation, much less interpretation.

Although the elements of sun, moon, and twelve stars are not identified in the precise portion of scripture which constitutes Revelation 12:1-17, the Word of God is entirely forthcoming elsewhere concerning an identical symbolic narrative.

"*Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."*

"When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"

"His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind." - Genesis 37:9-11

Joseph's father, Jacob, identified the sun as an image of himself, the moon as his wife Rachel, and the eleven stars as his sons, with Joseph the twelfth star. Thus, this celestial configuration is biblically representative of the nation of Israel, the body from which a great king would one day arise.

Of this child, it is said that he "*will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.*"

As before, a precise identification of the boy is not made in this passage, yet this description is found in three other locations:

Psalms 2:9-12 – "*You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery. Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.*"

Revelation 2:26, 27 – "*To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father.*"

Revelation 19:15, 16 – "*Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*"

These scriptures are speaking of the man Jesus Christ, who is therefore the man-child born of the woman in this vision.

The meaning of the dragon is elucidated in the text of verse nine as a metaphorical description of Satan.

"*The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.*"

The initial concept thus conveyed by this pageant was that the Christ would emerge from the nation of Israel and be persecuted by Satan; a scenario John the Revelator was well acquainted with, describing as it did events which had already transpired.

According to Matthew 2:16-18, the dragon had lain in wait at the womb of Israel as the Messiah was birthed, sinking its teeth deep into the flesh of the woman in an attempt to devour the one of whom it had been prophesied would crush its head.

Again, in Matthew 4:1-11, the serpent endeavored to grasp the Christ in its blackened claws of temptation where it could rend him to pieces, but it was thrice unsuccessful.

Through the false piousness of the religious leadership, it continued to buffet him with accusations of having violated Mosaic law, and set the populace against him, nearly causing him to be hurled to his death from a cliff in Luke 4:28-30.

Finally, it pinned him to a crucifix, but his soul escaped the clutches of the great dragon and was caught up to God and His throne, where the keys of death were given him (Revelation 1:18).

Due to the description of Jesus as a male child, one might be tempted to believe that the ascension of the boy occurs just after his birth, however, an interim period of approximately thirty-three years separate the two events.

The boy is representative of the man Christ Jesus, and there is not a single scripture to suggest he was ever ushered into the throne room of Heaven at a point prior to his death at Golgotha. His ascension took place only afterwards. In addition, there is no evidence that the nation of Israel emigrated to a protective wilderness region at the time of Jesus' birth.

Although the prophecy in chapter twelve seems to indicate that all of the events depicted take place within the same timeline, in fact, they do not. This is the nature of prophecy, in that hundreds or thousands of years can be spanned between two sentences, or even two words in the middle of a verse, as evidenced by such scriptures as Zechariah 13:7-9, where the shepherd of verse seven refers to the striking down of Jesus Christ at Golgotha, and the next scripture is a reference to the endtime events of the sixth seal more than two thousand years removed from the crucifixion.

The remainder of the pageant deals with events at the end of the age. Banished to the earth after the defeat of his forces in Heaven, and knowing that the time remaining to him is short, Satan pursues the nation of Israel with a great fury that is only exacerbated when she is delivered by the powerful wings of an eagle into a region of wilderness, where for three and-a-half years she is protected by the earth from the greatest flood he can hurl to dislodge her from the place of refuge.

This time of exile constitutes the second of two three and-a-half year periods comprising the seven-year Jewish treaty, and involves the 144,000 sealed Jews.

Matthew 24:15, 16 - "*So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*"

This event prophesied by Jesus Christ takes place in the middle of the seven-year treaty, or after three-and-a-half years.

"*And he shall enter into a strong and firm covenant with the many for one week [seven years]. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and offering to cease [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and upon the wing or pinnacle of abominations [shall come] one who makes desolate, until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator.*" – Daniel 9:27 (AMP)

The treaty that has been established with the Jewish people will be broken by the Antichrist at its mid-point, and he will bring all activity in the temple to a permanent halt, entering even into the Holy of Holies where God's presence dwelled in the previous dispensation; the most holy place of Judaism where only the High Priest was permitted to enter, and but once a year.

When the Antichrist, also referred to as "the abomination," stands "in the holy place," Jesus warns the Jewish Christians to flee to the neighboring mountains; an action that will leave Jerusalem and its temple desolate of any godly presence.

For several years, the Antichrist has been content to observe the treaty he confirmed with the Jews, yet he abruptly reneges on the accord. What new development could have influenced him to amend his policy concerning the Jewish state? Does the Bible shed any light on what might have transpired at this time to cause the Antichrist to behave in this fashion?

Revelation 12:7-9 – "*And there was war in Heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in Heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*"

By identifying himself as the Messiah, the Antichrist is forced into certain patterns of Messianic behavior which he must strictly adhere to, lest his guise be apparent and his audience recognize him for the son of perdition that he is.

To that end, his display of signs and miracles are effective arguments, and coupled with the peace he enforces upon the world, the Jewish orthodoxy will be completely deceived into believing that his performance is genuine.

Yet, the Messiah is not God, but a man of God. He would be expected to endorse the worship and sacrifices that take place at the temple in Jerusalem. He would be expected to direct glory to Adonai Elohim and regard the Jewish nation as a chosen people set apart from the rest of the world. When the Antichrist suddenly identifies himself as not just the man of God, but Elohim Himself, the Jews will believe his claims no longer. When he puts an end to the sacrifices in the temple, they will realize that they have been betrayed. When he enters the Holy of Holies, they will be outraged, and when he announces his deity, they will denounce him as the devil's spawn.

Such behavior is not consistent with a program designed to deceive the world into believing that the Messiah has returned, and the reason for the deviance can be traced to the expulsion of Satan from Heaven and his incarnation in the earthly disciple of darkness.

When the great dragon is hurled to the earth, the scriptures reveal that the woman Israel will be protected for 1,260 days, or three and-a-half years (the Jewish year consists of 360 days), at which conclusion the true Messiah will return to the earth and establish his Millennial Kingdom of peace.

It is specifically at the mid-point in which Satan assumes personal control of his Antichrist puppet, causing the desolation of Jerusalem as thousands flee to the mountains of nearby Jordan in a massive exodus while military forces begin to cordon the city.

Luke 21:20, 21 - "*When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.*"

Mark 13:14 - "*When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*"

Those fortunate enough to escape the city will reconvene in the mountains of Jordan, while the remainder will be slaughtered in and about the ironically-titled City of Peace.

This escape of the woman will be engineered by God, and He will protect her from harm by His almighty strength, as foretold by the symbol of eagle's wings.

Although there are those who have viewed the eagle through the lenses of national insignia and identified the rescue of the woman as a United States airlift operation, the Bible gives a very different interpretation.

God declared in Exodus 19:4 – "*'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.*"

In the exodus from Egypt, the feet of the Israelites never left the ground, nor did they receive aid from a nation of united states. The eagles' wings were symbolic of the miraculous power of God who effected their release from Pharaoh, guided them by beacons of smoke and fire, parted the Red Sea, dispatched the Egyptian army, and provided ample food and clothing for the duration of their journey back to Israel.

In the same biblical manner, the Lord will bring His people out of Jerusalem by the power of His might, and the world will know that God's protection and His favor is with His people.

Knowing that a significant number of Jews have escaped his hand, Satan sends a flood against them, but the earth opens up and swallows the would-be deluge.

When employed symbolically throughout scripture, a flood is representative of an army.

Psalm 124:2-4 – "*If the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive; the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us.*"

Daniel 11:10 – "*His sons will prepare for war and assemble a great army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress.*"

See also Isaiah 28:2; Hosea 5:10; and Nahum 1:8.

The flood sent by Satan is therefore an army that has been dispatched to hunt down the survivors of the Jerusalem massacre.

According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, "the earth" is a term which denotes the land of Judea.

Thus, the earth which swallows the flood represents the land of Judea, or Israel. As the forces of Antichrist march against the escaped righteous, they will vanish before reaching their intended targets in Jordan, swallowed up by the mouth of the Lord while still in the land of Israel due, perhaps, to a proliferation of earthquakes, newly-formed chasms, or avalanches from the foothills to the west. Whatever the specific means, the enemy will be obliterated by the literal earth of Judea in a miraculous display of divine power.

When it becomes apparent that the escaped Jews are protected by a power superior to his own, an exceedingly wroth Satan will launch a murderous campaign against "*the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*"

Orthodox Jewry does not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and does not therefore accept his testimony. The focus of Satan's attention is, of course, the New Testament Church, with one figurative hour of persecution left to endure before the event of the rapture.

As Revelation 14:12 puts it, "*This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.*"

Finally, the description of Satan as a seven-headed dragon with seven crowns and horns and a tail capable of extracting stars from their loft of ebony ribbon is a depiction which cannot be disregarded.

The Bible reveals this imagery in Revelation 17:9-12 as symbolic representations of the seven hills of Babylon (the seven heads), seven kings of Babylon (the seven crowns), and ten kings upon whom the Antichrist will confer ten kingdoms (ten horns).

A comprehensive explication of this government system will be presented in a subsequent chapter. For present purposes, it is sufficient to understand that it represents a single administration with an authority structure which encompasses the entire world.

As previously learned, a symbolic star represents Heavenly beings, of whom Lucifer was formerly chief. The removal of one-third of the stars from the Heavens, then, is symbolic of one-third of the Heavenly host who joined Lucifer in his rebellion and were banished from Heaven along with him halfway through Israel's treaty period.

In review, the purpose of this vision was twofold.

Firstly, the familiar nature of the initial elements, such as the sun, moon, and star pattern, served to assist the reader in the identification of the players in this drama. These representations of Israel, Jesus, and Satan were readily apparent to the early Church.

Secondly, its purpose was to reveal that although a period of intense persecution will come upon the people of God in the time of the end, a remnant of righteousness will remain in the earth until the coming of the kingdom of God is at hand.

20. The Beast From the Sea

Revelation 13:1-10

"*And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.*

"One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"

"The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in Heaven.

"He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

"He who has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints."

This beast has many symbolic characteristics, including its emergence from the sea, seven blasphemous heads, and ten horns upon which are suspended ten crowns. Its body is a composite of leopard, bear, and lion, with one of the seven heads miraculously recovering from a mortal wound.

The nations of the earth bow in subjection before the authority and the power of Satan that has been given unto it. The duration of its merciless reign will span three and-a-half years, a period in which professing Christians will be marked for termination.

As the Bible is consulted for identification of this beast, a similar description is found in two other passages of scripture.

Revelation 12:3 – "*Then another sign appeared in Heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.*"

Revelation 17:3 – "*Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.*"

Compare with Revelation 13:1 – "*And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.*"

Each of these three scriptures have in common a beast with seven heads and ten horns. Blasphemous names and crimson hues are associated with both the red dragon and the scarlet beast, while the beast of the sea and the scarlet beast are both situated in the midst of a great body of water.

These scriptures appear to contain parallel descriptions of the same creature, each affording a different angle by which to observe the beast, much as the synoptic gospels offer slightly different perspectives with regard to the details of identical events.

The only significant deviation from one account to another is that of the crowns; the beast of the sea wearing ten, while the dragon bears seven.

The description of the beast from the sea in chapter thirteen neglects to mention the seven crowns sitting atop the seven heads. The depiction of the dragon in chapter twelve omits the ten crowns upon the ten horns, while the subject of circlets is in no manner referenced concerning the illustration of the scarlet beast in chapter seventeen.

If these scriptures are indeed independent descriptions of the same creature, then the resulting image created from these composite accounts is that of a hideous crimson beast with seven crowned heads of blasphemy and ten crowned horns, rising from the depths of the sea.

Revelation 12:9 identifies this beast as Satan, and additional scripture reveals the nature of the symbology, thus providing enlightenment concerning the discrepancy of the crowns.

Revelation 17:3-5 reveal a woman riding atop the beast, whose name is Babylon.

"*Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*"

Revelation 17:9, 10 explain that the seven heads are representative of the seven hills that Babylon sits upon, as well as seven Babylonian kings.

"*This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.*"

In chapter seventeen, it is significant that each head, a single symbolic element, is representative of *two* articles, for in chapter twelve, the task of representing two literals is evenly distributed between two emblems: heads and crowns.

Thus, the seven hills of Babylon and the seven Babylonian kings are objects and entities more precisely typified by their respective seven-fold consecution of heads and crowns, rather than by the head icon exclusively.

In like manner, each of the ten kings and kingdoms of Revelation 17:12 are multiple elements represented by a single icon (the horn), while in Revelation 13:1 each series is equated with the unique symbols of both heads *and* crowns.

The seven crowns represent seven Babylonian rulers, while the ten crowns represent ten future kings.

Unto the prophet Daniel, a slightly different version of the same vision was given.

Daniel 7:1-28 – "*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.*

"Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of Heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

"The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.

"And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'

"After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

"After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

"While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

"As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

"Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of Heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

"I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this.

"So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.'

"Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced

judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

"He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time."

"'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole Heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'

"This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

There are six elements of Daniel's vision that are worthy of note:

1. Four great beasts, each different from the others, <u>came up out of the sea</u>, just as the beast of Revelation 13:1 arose from the water, and the beast of Revelation 17:1 rested upon many waters.

2. The fourth beast, terrifying and frightening and very powerful, <u>had ten horns, representing ten kings of a future kingdom</u>, a feature identical to each of the beasts previously discussed.

3. The smaller horn, before which three of the others fell, <u>was waging war against the saints and defeating them</u>, just as the beast of Revelation 13:7 "*was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.*"

4. The saints will be handed over to the fourth beast for <u>three-and-a-half years</u>, the same amount of time Christians must endure persecution from the beast of Revelation 13:5.

5. The fourth beast will <u>speak against the Most High</u>, while in Revelation 13:6, the beast will open his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander His Name, His dwelling place, and those who live in Heaven.

6. The first three beasts resembled <u>lions, bears, and leopards</u>, while the beast of Revelation 13:2 resembled a leopard with the feet of a bear, and a mouth like that of a lion.

Daniel was permitted a view of the same creature, but in the vision he received, it appeared as four separate beasts, rather than an amalgamation of each.

The interpretation given Daniel is that each beast is representative of "*four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.*" – Daniel 7:17, 23-25

It is clear from the interpretation given to Daniel, that the red coadunation identified as Satan in Revelation 12:9 involves more than that entity alone, for the cells comprising the beast are labeled as nations.

The beast is then a type of government system to which Satan has given his power, a premise supported by Revelation 13:2.

"*The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.*"

Daniel is told that this administration will encompass (devour) the whole earth, a global governing body with the authority to enforce its resolutions, unlike the present federation of United Nations.

A curious insight concerning the ten future potentates is afforded through the vision of the beast as viewed from Daniel's perspective, as a small horn (another king) with a clamorous voice dispossesses three of the kings, installing itself in their place.

It is this diminutive horn that is waging war against the saints, speaking skillfully, boastfully, and slanderously against God and the things of God until dethroned by the returning Jesus Christ at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation.

This king "*will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws.*" - Daniel 7:25.

The Amplified Bible renders this portion of scripture as "*he shall speak words against the Most High [God] and shall wear out the saints of the Most High and think to change the time [of sacred feasts and holy days] and the law.*"

The Contemporary English Version translates it as "*He will try to change God's Law and the sacred seasons.*"

The New Living Translation puts it, "*He will try to change their sacred festivals and laws.*"

A Jerusalem Bible footnote explains that this reference to "times and seasons" refers to "the observance of the Sabbath and the feast days."

The word translated as "times" in Daniel 7:25 is the Aramaic "zeman," meaning "appointed or set time," with specific reference to the Hebrew liturgical calendar.

The Hebrew parallel to "zeman" is the word "moed," meaning "appointed time." It is a word which is also translated as "feast," and it is understood that when employed with reference to the Hebrew calendar, the term "appointed time" always means "feasts" or "holy day."

This redefinition of what constitutes legal Jewish worship is a reference to the cessation of sacrifice and offering decreed by Antichrist in Daniel 9:27.

Thus, the identity of the little horn is revealed as the Son of Perdition.

The red hue of the beast has been shown in a previous chapter to be indicative of both sin and war, an appropriate symbol with which to represent the oppressive regime of Lucifer.

The waters upon which the beast rests are revealed by Revelation 17:15 as the whole of the earth's population.

"*Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.*"

The beast is a system that emerges from and rests upon the framework of the world's nations, including three specific empires represented by the images of a lion, bear, and leopard.

It is a system founded upon the seven hills of Babylonian civilization, from whose grave will rise a conqueror unlike any other, immortal in the iron jaws of death. The Devil incarnate, the little horn with the blasphemous tongue will be pierced by a sword (Revelation 13:3, 14), and yet having derived its power, authority, and throne from the malevolent spiritual forces of evil in the nether realms of darkness, it will rebuff the icy hand of death to seize the reins of world government with which the earth has been tethered.

The great beast of the sea is therefore revealed as a conglomerate of nations whose actions are dictated by the Babylonian overseer known today as Iraq, within whose modern borders the ancient culture once thrived.

When this New World Order is realized, the inhabitants of the earth will find themselves citizens of a region rather than a nation, for the beast system of one-world government will be comprised of ten districts, each ruled by a governor which the Bible collectively represents as a ten-headed creature with ten horns.

Details concerning the nature of these regions have been known for nearly two decades, having first been mapped by the Club of Rome (an organization dedicated to the establishment of a one-world government) in their 1973 report entitled "Regionalized and Adaptive Model of the Global World System," a publication endorsed in 1995 by the United Nations Funded Commission on Global Governance, slightly modified by the Club in 1996, and debated once more by the United Nations in 1997.

The Club of Rome currently has two further reports pending concerning the subject, entitled "Governance in an Era of Globalisation," by Rudd Lubbers, current United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, and "10,000 Cultures, One Civilisation" by Mr. Mircea Malitza of Romania, both currently active members of an organization comprised of scientists, economists, businessmen, international high civil servants, heads of state and former heads of state from all five continents who are convinced that the future of humankind will be determined according to the dictates of their membership, and have determined to function as a global catalyst of change.

These ten global regions have been designated by the CoR as follows:

1. **Nafta** - U.S, Canada, Mexico, Central America
2. **European Union** - Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Spain, Netherlands, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal, Austria, Finland, and Sweden
3. **APEC** - Australia, New Zealand, China, South Korea, Indonesia, North Korea, Mongolia
4. **Middle East** - Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Magreb Union, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan.
5. **West Asia / East Europe** - Balkan States, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
6. **Central Asia -** Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbijjan, Cuba
7. **Asian -** Thailand, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Vietnam, Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq
8. **Orient –** Japan
9. **Main South Africa -** Union of South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Belgian, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Angola, Rhodesia, Mozambique, Madasgar

10. **South-Latin America** - Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Yucatan, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay, Guineas

Notice that region number one, also known as region Nafta, includes the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico. The North American Free Trade Agreement was the first step in the dissolution of all geographical borders indigenous to Region One, erasing as it did the economic boundaries of the aforementioned nations with respect to each other.

Thus, the United States of America will cease to be a world superpower and will become a minority within its own region – a people largely despised by the remaining nine regions, outnumbered and bereft of the veto power it currently enjoys as a member of the United Nations Security Council.

The United States was itself divided into ten Federal Regions by President Richard Nixon in 1972 as a more efficient means of retaining control of the populace under a declaration of martial law. With ten regions being easier managed than fifty, the abolishment of states was thus effected and recorded in Executive Order # 11649, Federal Register Volume 37, Number 30.

Each Federal Region is referred to as an UMJO, or Umbrella Multi-Jurisdictional Organization, and aligned by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as follows:

Region I: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
Regional Capitol: Boston

Region II: New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
Regional Capitol: New York City

REGION III: Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, District of Columbia.
Regional Capitol: Philadelphia

REGION IV: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee
Regional Capitol: Atlanta

REGION V: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin
Regional Capitol: Chicago

REGION VI: Arkansas, Lonisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
Regional Capitol: Dallas-Fort Worth

REGION VII: Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska
Regional Capitol: Kansas City

REGION VIII: Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming
Regional Capitol: Denver

REGION IX: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada
Regional Capitol: San Francisco

REGION X: Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho
Regional Capitol: Seattle

Upon declaration of a Federal emergency and martial law, the Government Reorganization Act will be activated, dissolving the states and creating a central government which, when merged with that of the Canadians and Mexicans, will

effectively establish region Nafta as the first construct in the superstructure of Satan's New World Order.

To elaborate on the entities responsible for setting the stage for world government, the Club of Rome contributes to the solution of what it calls the "world problematique," the complex set of the most crucial problems – political, social, economic, technological, environmental, psychological and cultural - facing humanity.

It does so by taking a global, long-term and interdisciplinary perspective aware of the increasing interdependence of nations and the globalization of problems that pose predicaments beyond the capacity of individual countries.

It is similar in purpose to the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the Rhodes Scholarship Trust.

The Council on Foreign Relations was founded in 1921 by businessmen, bankers, and lawyers from all international walks of life who are dedicated to the belief that the peace and prosperity of the United States of America is firmly linked to that of the rest of the world. It has published such reports as "Coping With Antiglobalization: A Trilogy of Discontents," "America the Vulnerable," "Imagine There's No Country: Poverty, Inequality, and Growth in the Era of Globalization," Internationalizing China: Domestic Interests and Global Linkages," "Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East," and "Integrating China into the Global Economy."

The Trilateral Commission was formed in 1973 by private citizens of Japan, Europe (European Union countries), and North America (United States and Canada) to foster closer cooperation among these core democratic industrialized areas of the world with shared leadership responsibilities in the wider international system.

Today, it remains as important as ever in helping the countries of its membership fulfill their shared leadership responsibilities in the wider international system, yet according to its website (http://www.trilateral.org), the organization believes its framework needs to be widened to reflect broader changes in the world.

To that end, the Japan Group has become a Pacific Asian Group, and Mexican members have been added to the North American Group, while the European Group continues to widen in line with the enlargement of the European Union.

The "growing interdependence" that so impressed the founders of the Trilateral Commission in the early 1970s is deepening into "globalization."

The perceived need for shared thinking and leadership by the Trilateral countries has only intensified with the passage of time. Their leadership believes that heads of state must alter their policies to take into account the dramatic transformation of the international system. As relations with other countries become more mature—and power more diffuse—they believe that the leadership tasks of the original Trilateral nations need to be carried out with others to an increasing extent.

The Rhodes Scholarships were established in 1903 by Cecil Rhodes, who dreamed of improving the world through the diffusion of leaders motivated to serve their contemporaries, trained in the contemplative life of the mind, and broadened by their acquaintance with one another and by their exposure to cultures different from their own. Mr. Rhodes hoped that his plan of bringing able students from throughout the English-speaking world and beyond to study at Oxford University would aid in the promotion of international understanding and peace.

Intellectual distinction is a necessary but not sufficient condition for election to a Rhodes Scholarship. Selection committees are charged to seek excellence in qualities of mind and in qualities of person which, in combination, offer the promise of effective service to the world in the decades ahead. The Rhodes Scholarships, in short, are investments in individuals who will work to advance its globalization ideologies.

Particularly telling is the register of American Rhodes Scholars, as recorded on their website (http://www.rhodesscholar.org), which lists scholars according to their Federal District as apportioned by President Nixon in 1973, rather than by state; districts which will only exist under martial law when the American government will merge with that of the Canadians and Mexicans to create region Nafta!

The Bible reveals that this New World Order will encompass the known world, including Babylon (modern Iraq), and three additional nations represented by a lion, bear, and leopard.

21. The Lion, Bear, and Leopard

In Daniel chapter seven, clues are given which aid in the identification of these nations which are represented by wild animals.

"*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.*

"*Daniel said: 'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of Heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.*

"*'The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.*

"*'And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'*

"*'After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.*

"*'After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast-terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.*

"*'While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.*

"*'As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.*

"*'Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)*

"*'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of Heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

"*'I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this.*

"*'So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever-yes, for ever and ever.'*

"*'Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws-the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell-the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.*

"*'He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.*

"*''But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole Heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'*

"*'This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.'*" – Daniel 7:1-28

The Lion

From the shoulders of the lion nation sprout two great wings of an eagle. As the wings strain against their heavy burden, powerful sinews cord beneath the feathery membranes before tearing free of their regal host, the disembodied agents of flight soaring into the Heavens.

Far below, the lion rises to its feet, the bone structure of the hind legs morphing into straighter, lengthier limbs, the hinge action of the joint expanding to the point of supporting its great bulk upon two formerly caudal feet in the manner of a man, while within its bosom a man's heart begins to burn.

In addition to its function as the corporal token of Jesus Christ, the Bible employs the lion as a symbolic emblem of courage, strength, and majesty, yet for all of that it does not indicate any particular nation, thus a lexicon must be consulted for further clarification.

Compton's American Heritage Dictionary defines lion as "a very brave person; the greatest or best part (as in the lion's share)."

Thus, the nation designated by the lion is one that can be described as great. The only nation with such an appellation is that component of the United Kingdom known as Great Britain. If the words "great" and "lion" can be used interchangeably, then Great Britain can accurately and exclusively be dubbed "Lion Britain," a title well-suited for a nation that has selected the king of beasts as its national symbol.

If the eagle's wings are also symbolic of a nation, then it can be representative of only one modern country: the United States of America, whose national symbol is the eagle, and whose soil was originally populated by British citizens emigrating that sovereignty.

The transfiguration of the savage beast into a cultured, honorable human being reflects the less-than-civilized origin of a nation whose sense of propriety has become second to none.

The sovereignty of Great Britain was constructed from an initial agglomeration of inimical savages organized by clan; namely the Celts, Picts, Angles, Saxons, Scots, and Jutes.

Out of this amalgam of wild tribes was formed the Commonwealth of Great Britain, that globally-recognized acme of decorum whose apex no outlander has ever crested.

Thus, respectability was bestowed upon the lion as its primitive barbarism was extracted; a process appropriately illustrated by the erection of the creature and its subsequent organ transplant.

The Bible reveals then, that Great Britain will play a key role in the administrative affairs of the New World Order.

The Eagle

Many, however, have wondered at the apparent omission from tribulation prophecy of the greatest nation in existence at the time of the end: the United States of America.

Other than the brief mention in Daniel 7:4, there are no references to the world's last remaining superpower. Some have assumed this indicates that by this time America no longer exists, destroyed by a coalition of aggressor nations or simply absorbed into a larger collective through a voluntary relinquishing of sovereignty.

The answer to this seeming incongruity is that the United States of America *is* biblically represented - by the lion of Great Britain.

Although America severed itself from Great Britain with the culmination of the Revolutionary War in 1776, it reunited with its former parent in a significant political fashion after the events of September 11, 2001.

In a revealing speech made by British Prime Minister Tony Blair on December 14, 2000 at Britain's University of Warwick concerning the transition of power from President Bill Clinton to President-Elect George W. Bush, Bill Clinton was said to have played over the past eight years "a hugely significant and insufficiently noticed part in bringing Europe and America to a closer understanding of each other," by "getting America to see globalization as an opportunity, not a threat."

The Prime Minister went on to say that "I believe passionately that whatever differences Europe and America have from time to time, they are dwarfed by vital strategic interests we have in common. More than anyone else, Bill Clinton understood this. More than anyone else, he sought to promote it."

Thus, the seeds of reunification were sown even before the tragic incident of the World Trade Center attack. The British head of state went on record in that speech as saying, "Today is an important day in the history of the United States, our closest ally."

He acknowledged his efforts to forge a singular bond between America and the Commonwealth of Great Britain by saying, "During the three and-a-half years I have been Prime Minister, I have worked very hard to ensure that the unique relationship between our countries has been enhanced and strengthened. This is about far more than personal friendship, important though personal friendship is. It is about bonds of kinship and history. It is about a shared language. Most of all it is about shared values; a shared determination to spread peace and prosperity throughout the world… . I never hide the fact that I see Britain's role as America's closest ally and now a leading partner in Europe, to be that of a bridge between the two. I believe stronger with America makes us stronger in Europe. Stronger in Europe, and we are a better ally to America. I never believe we need or should choose between the two."

The language of British friendship which President George W. Bush has adopted since his inauguration was first spoken by his overseas counterpart five weeks before he took office, saying in that December 14th address, "I have just spoken on the phone to President-Elect Bush to congratulate him, and to underline our commitment to the unique relationship between our two countries… I spoke about Britain's special friendship with America, a friendship which has helped to guarantee our freedom through the last turbulent century. I have absolutely no doubt that it will flourish still further under the Bush Presidency.

"President-Elect Bush is a man who shares our values and who wants Europe and America to stand side-by-side in the world. I know that he will be a friend of Britain, a friend of Europe, a friend of free trade, of new technology, and of solid defense.

"I offer George Bush on behalf of a country proud to call itself America's closest ally, our solid support and unwavering friendship, now and in the future. It is an awesome responsibility that rests on the shoulders of America and of an American President. Britain will be the friend of President Bush and America in discharging that responsibility for the good of America and the world."

To many British citizens, their leader is not "Prime Minister Tony Blair," but "American Ambassador Tony Blair," for no other Prime Minister has ever identified Britain so completely with a foreign power. As Blair's engagements take him from Pakistan to Moscow to the Persian Gulf, it is the opinion of many English burghers that he is functioning as a spokesman for an America whose President lacks the communication skills necessary for effective international diplomacy.

Nyta Mann reported on November 8, 2001 for the BBC News On-Line, that George W. Bush and Tony Blair committed their respective nations to an unyielding conjointment referred to as "the US-UK special relationship," a coterie which prior to September 11, 2001, could accurately have been described as "troubled."

Following these World Trade Center atrocities, William Farish, the U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James, hailed Britain as "America's truest friend," and affirmed that the two nations are united in their determination to eradicate terrorism from the face of the earth.

In a solidarity speech made by Prime Minister Blair from the Grand Foyer of the White House on September 20, 2001, just nine days after the terrorist attacks, Britain's commitment to supporting the United States was strongly emphasized.

The British Prime Minister stated, "I was in New York earlier today, and it's perhaps only when you are actually there that the full enormity and horror of what

happened comes home to you. And I said then, I would like to repeat, that my father's generation went through the experience of the second world war, when Britain was under attack, during the days of the Blitz, and there was one nation and one people that, above all, stood side by side with us at that time. And that nation was America, and those people were the American people. And I say to you, we stand side by side with you now, without hesitation."

Even by mid-October of 2001, many pundits had expressed surprise concerning the rapidity with which Britain had assumed a role in America's anti-terrorist military campaign.

On November 7, 2001, President George Bush voiced his support of Great Britain in no uncertain terms when he said, "The last time we were standing here I was getting ready to give an address to the United States Congress. And I knew then that the Prime Minister and the people he represent were going to be great friends of the United States in our mutual struggle against terrorism, and he has certainly proven that over the last weeks. We've got no better friend in the world than Great Britain."

As American efforts to form a coalition against terrorism proceeded, it became clear that of the sixty-nine nations who agreed to support the war on global terror, Great Britain would join the U.S. in assuming a leading role in that effort.

Although twenty nations have deployed more than 16,000 troops to United States Central Command's region of responsibility, the United Kingdom was the first nation to send military representatives and campaign planners to CENTCOM, arriving on September 18, 2001.

In addition, the U.K. has deployed the largest naval task force since the Gulf War to support Operation Enduring Freedom, and provided, as well, the only coalition Tomahawk Land-Attack Missile platforms to launch missiles during the commencement of OEF hostilities.

It was the United Kingdom who assumed the lead for the initial International Security Assistance Force operation.

The U.K. deployed a 1,700-person infantry battle group to Afghanistan, a unit constructed around a nucleus of forty-five Royal Marine Commandos. These arctic and mountain warfare-trained troops are now operating as part of a U.S. brigade.

As of June 14, 2002, there are forty British command personnel at U.S. CENTCOM, with additional U.K. staff attached to every major U.S. component command. British Major General Rob Fry serves as Deputy Commander for all coalition naval forces in the Middle Eastern theater, and is responsible for coordinating extensive operations from that position.

British forces have also participated in Maritime Interception Operations and Tomahawk Land Attack Missile operations. The Royal Air Force has provided aircraft throughout the region and contributed high-value assets in the critical areas of aerial refueling, Airborne Early Warning, and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR).

U.K. ground forces have participated in both Operation Enduring Freedom and International Security Assistance Force missions. A company of Royal Marines deployed to Kabul have contributed to airfield security and mine-clearing operations, including the provision of special equipment at both Bagram and Kabul International airports.

Through the eyes of the international community, the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Great Britain are acting as a single entity. Their actions are deliberately in concert, and therefore the biblical representation of the lion represents not only the United Kingdom, but the U.S, as well.

On January 31, 2003, a New York Times headline reported "Blair And Bush Agree That Time Is Running Out For Iraq." The story detailed President Bush and Prime Minister Blair's meeting in the Cross Hall of the White House that afternoon, in which the Prime Minister remarked that the two shared a common mind with regard to the twin threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

In that meeting, President Bush said of the Prime Minister, "I appreciate my friend's commitment to peace and security. I appreciate his vision. I appreciate his willingness to lead. Most importantly, I appreciate his understanding that after September the 11th, 2001, the world changed; that we face a common enemy: terrorists willing to kill innocent lives; that we now recognize that threats which gather in remote regions of the world must be dealt with before others lose their lives. Tony Blair is a friend. He's a friend of the American people, he's a friend of mine. I trust his judgment and I appreciate his wisdom… Saddam Hussein is not disarming. He is a danger to the world. He must disarm. And that's why I have constantly said and the Prime Minister has constantly said this issue will come to a head in a matter of weeks, not months… The strategic vision of our country shifted dramatically, and it shifted dramatically because we now recognize that oceans no longer protect us, that we're vulnerable to attack. And the worst form of attack could come from somebody acquiring weapons of mass destruction and using them on the American people, or the worst attack could come when somebody uses weapons of mass destruction on our friends in Great Britain."

The language of both heads of state since September 11, 2001, reveals a common purpose and a mutual agreement to act as one body, just as the eagle's wings of Daniel chapter seven were attached to the body of the lion.

In biblical tribulation prophecy, as well as modern politics, one cannot observe the lion of Great Britain without also surveying the American eagle.

Thus, the United States will not be defeated through military conflict, nor will it remain a force of integrity opposed to the Antichrist's beast system of government, but will instead become a major constituent of Satan's New World Order.

"*What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.*" – 1st Corinthians 7:29-31

The Bear

"*It had feet like those of a bear…*"

Raised up on one of its sides, the bear is engaged in a feeding frenzy, messily devouring human flesh while oblivious to three tiny slivers of bone caught in its bloody teeth.

As the lion and eagle were both representative of modern nations, it is probable that the bear symbolizes another world power present at the time of the end.

The bear has often been used as a symbol of the Russian Federation, the pre-eminent republic of the former U.S.S.R. In contrast to the position of supremacy it enjoyed with that union of socialist nations prior to 1992, the modern Russia appears to the world as an aging bruin with broken claws, patchy fur, and lumbering, clumsy movements. For a decade it has given the impression of an animal deceased, a charade calculated to convince the West of an irreversible loss of strength, yet it has borrowed from the possum the characteristic of feigning death while it labors to build a war machine capable of threatening the democracies of the world with complete devastation.

The Soviet strategic deception of Communism's demise served to convince Western governments that a massive disarmament could be accomplished without putting citizens' lives or national securities at risk. As the West relaxed its security measures, the Eastern Bloc intelligence services reorganized under innocuous titles and infiltrated the governments of democratic societies with a level of success unrealized even at the height of the former U.S.S.R's power.

Under President Bill Clinton, the effectiveness of the U.S. military was reduced by fifty percent from 1992 to 2000. In a presentation made at New York City on June 14, 2000 by the Council on Foreign Relations, it was reported that forty-five percent of active Army division flags have been retired since 1989, the rate of reduction for active brigades is thirty-five percent, and active battalion units have been reduced by twenty-six percent ("U.S. Military-Strategic Ambitions; Expanding to Fill the Post-Soviet Vacuum;" Project on Defense Alternatives, Charles Knight, Cambridge, MA: Commonwealth Institute, June 2000).

It must be pointed out that this rate of reduction, while enormous, was not sufficiently large enough to satisfy the CFR, who declared America guilty of failure to reform its military in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union, demanding an explanation for its "continued emphasis on procuring weapon systems" and "to explain why defense budgets have remained high and indeed are growing again," actions it suggests are indicative "that U.S. policy-makers have not yet moved beyond the Cold War frame" and "evidence of this fixation on the past."

As Western financial aid has poured into Russia, Communist intelligence agents have been able to infiltrate capitalist nations almost without confrontation. In this manner Russia and Red China acquired most of America's nuclear, missile, space, aircraft, and other sophisticated military technology during the Clinton administration of the 1990's.

According to Don McAlvany, in his report, "Beware Of The Bear: Is Russia Rising From The Ashes?" published in the September 2001 edition of the McAlvany Intelligence Advisor, the reality is that Communism is not dead, but has merely altered its name, appearance, associations, and leadership. The Communist Party is alive and well, covertly managing the affairs of Russia along with the KGB and Red Army.

The rumors of the KGB's demise have been greatly exaggerated, as well; it has been renamed and reorganized at least five times over the past fifteen years, and is more powerful and widespread than during the height of the U.S.S.R, oftentimes operating

under the assumed identity of the Russian Mafia, as well as powerful corporations and banking institutions. The KGB has successfully planted more operatives in the West over the last decade than it ever did during the Cold War period; some of whom function at or near the highest levels of government in America, England, and France.

The bear only pretends to sleep, sprawled on its side in preparation for a meal of much flesh.

The head of the bear is its Moscow capital, where should be located three small ribs (tiny nations) that Russia continues to deny independence, despite the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

Those three nations are Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, located to the east of Poland and north of Belarus.

Notice located between Poland and Lithuania a small region approximately one-third the size of Estonia, in which the city of Kaliningrad is located. Although separated from its body, this tiny section is Russia.

The following close-up shows that within the jaws of the Russian Federation, three small nations are indeed tightly gripped.

With the dissolution of the U.S.S.R, Estonia was supposed to have become an independent nation, but "independence has been marked by an ongoing dispute with Russia over Estonia's eastern border." – MSN Encarta Encyclopedia.

In fact, all of the Baltic States, as Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are called, are experiencing difficulties with Russia.

When the Soviet Union began permitting nations to secede and form their own governments in 1990, the Baltic States proclaimed their independence only to have it refused them by the Russian Federation.

As Grolier's 1996 Encyclopedia explains, they were seemingly permitted to separate from the U.S.S.R. later in 1991: "The Baltic States are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, three small countries located between Poland and the Gulf of Finland on the forested eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. Before 1918 they were part of the Russian

empire. After World War I they became independent, but in 1940 they were forcibly annexed by the U.S.S.R. Nationalist movements."

"In 1990, Lithuania declared its independence; Estonia and Latvia did the same in 1991. The U.S.S.R, weakened by internal dissension, was forced to recognize the independence of all three Baltic States shortly before its own demise in late 1991."

The reality, however, is that the Russians have long regarded the Baltic States as their "window" to Europe, although "doormat" would be a more appropriate description. The Baltic nations have spent most of the past two hundred years either under the control of Russian czars, Hitler's Germany or the Soviet Union. In fact, Estonians and Latvians nearly became minorities in their own countries while under Soviet occupation.

While a Russian occupying force is not actually expected to enter the Baltic States, the whole of Estonia's population is not much larger than the Russian military, and Russia continually badgers the three nations on issues ranging from border disputes to the treatment of resident ethnic Russians. (Led by Estonia, the triumvirate has repeatedly denied the allegations of human rights violations, and has been endlessly exonerated by a plethora of international monitoring groups.) Lithuania, meanwhile, is unfortunately located between conventional Russia and that displaced region in which lies Kaliningrad.

Even after gaining their independence in 1991, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have struggled to free themselves from the smothering influence of Russia and to firmly establish themselves in Europe.

As NATO is courted by Central Europe's strongest countries, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia fear that membership in NATO is all that stands between them and a future of tyranny.

"We are an endangered country," says Vitautas Landsbergis, Chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament. He worries that if his country is excluded from an expanded NATO, it could signal Western indifference to the Baltic region, thereby inviting Russian thoughts of assimilation.

At the Yalta and Potsdam conferences toward the end of World War II, America's President Roosevelt and Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill both accepted vague assurances from Stalin that in Soviet-occupied Europe, nations would be guaranteed civil liberties, free elections, and representative governments. In each of these countries, however, Moscow-trained political leaders supported by the military succeeded in gaining power, and anti-Communists were soon dead, in jail, or in exile. The Soviets refused to reverse their annexation of the Baltic States, and by 1950 Soviet puppet governments were solidly entrenched throughout the rest of Eastern Europe.

The Russian Federation is no more trustworthy today than it was fifty years ago. Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin has privately warned Lithuania that Russia will not allow it to join NATO. Ordinarily, such a threat might be dismissed as political posturing, except that Russia has a convenient excuse to pauperize its tiny neighbor: the necessity to maintain access to that portion of the Russian nation that lies wholly beyond Lithuania's boundaries: Kaliningrad, which is surrounded by Lithuania, Poland, and the Baltic Sea.

Lithuania permits the Russian military transit back and forth to Kaliningrad by railroad, as long as limited numbers of soldiers and weapons travel on different cars and the Russians obey other rules. According to Lithuanian officials, it is an acceptable

arrangement, but if hard-liners should regain power in Russia, they could easily insist on a more secure land bridge to Kaliningrad and essentially invade Lithuania to obtain it.

Nine countries are presently competing for NATO membership, including Slovenia, Romania, and the Baltic States, presenting the United States and its allies with quite a dilemma. Advancing NATO to the very borders of Russia would deeply antagonize the Russian government, but to disregard the Baltics and much of Eastern Europe would demonstrably surrender those countries to Russia's sphere of influence.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has stridently opposed NATO inclusion of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which were occupied by the Soviet Union from before World War II until 1991. If Russia were to lose control of the Baltics, retaliation may take the form of withholding cooperation on such issues as arms control and sanctions against Iraq, as well as increasing their sales of missile technology to Iran.

For the moment, Russia is content to permit the Baltic States their independence. When that situation becomes inconvenient, however, those nations will once more find themselves locked in the powerful jaws of the bloodthirsty bear.

(Author's Note: On April 2, 2004, the Baltic States received an invitation to NATO membership and accepted. Russia's reaction to the latest phase of Nato expansion has been one of muted discontent. Garton Ash reported in the British Guardian that the 'Russian president didn't seem to mind, amicably receiving George Bush in St Petersburg the next day.'

But this misreads Russian weakness for consent. Putin's energies are absorbed by internal questions, such as the brutal oppression of the Chechens, for which he seeks to maintain tacit US approval. His true feelings, however, are not in doubt. One of Putin's close aides, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, stated that the inclusion of the Baltic states in Nato had 'provoked the concern' of Russia which would now look to ensure that the position of the large Russian minorities there was improved.

Fearing that NATO's enlargement will significantly change the geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe and endamage its national security, Russia has warned that it will take steps to defend itself if the alliance's push is perceived as a menace.

A Foreign Ministry statement released just prior to the day of official expansion said this action forces Russia to take very serious notice of NATO's enlargement, a condition which will have an undoubted effect on its political, military and economic interests.

"NATO's steps have had an unfriendly character toward Russia," said Konstantin Kosachyov, head of the international affairs committee in the State Duma, or lower house of the Russian parliament. He warned that Russia might take corresponding actions to change the balance of forces in the region if NATO significantly deploys military bases near Russia's borders.

Russia is particularly concerned about the inclusion of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which could now be used as a base for NATO troops.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko on Tuesday defined the patrolling by NATO planes within the airspace of the three Baltic countries as unnecessary, saying it was an outdated measure used in the Cold War era.

General Anatoly Kornukov, a former Russian Air Force commander, even suggested shooting down NATO planes if they violate the air space.

Thus, the Baltics' inclusion within NATO has succeeded only in angering the bear further.

The Leopard

The final nation is represented by a four-headed leopard with four wings. On the six occasions in which the leopard is mentioned in the Bible, four characteristics are observed.

In Isaiah 11:6-8, the savagery of six animals are contrasted with the vulnerability of six others:

"*The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.*"

The leopard's fierceness is noted along with that of the wolf, lion, bear, cobra, and viper, therefore ferocity must be a feature intrinsic to this nation.

Jeremiah 5:6 – "*Therefore a lion from the forest will attack them, a wolf from the desert will ravage them, a leopard will lie in wait near their towns to tear to pieces any who venture out, for their rebellion is great and their backslidings many.*"

The lion will attack, and the wolf will ravage, but the leopard will wait and keep watch.

Habakkuk 1:8 describes its swiftness, while Jeremiah 13:23 makes mention of its spotted coat.

"*Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk.*" – Hab. 1:8

"*Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?*" – Jer. 13:23

Thus, the four qualities of the leopard reveal it to be a fierce, watchful, quick, and spotted animal.

The third modern nation designated by the Bible is one that can be described as having four heads, four wings, and the four characteristics of the leopard.

Revelation 17:9, 10 explain that seven heads taken collectively denote a specific nation, but that singly they represent kings.

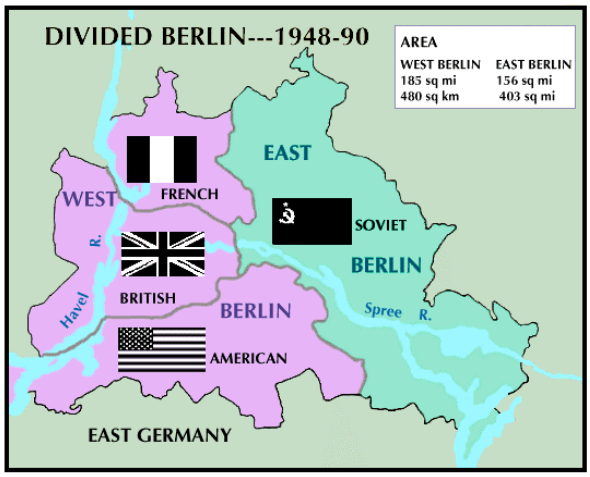
The dictionary concurs, defining "head" as "the seat of the faculty of reason, intellect, or mind; a person who leads, rules, or is in charge; a leader, chief, or director."

The leopard is therefore a nation possessed of four rulers or directors.

According to Compton's Encyclopedia, at the conclusion of the second World War, "Allied leaders met at Potsdam in 1945 and divided Germany into four occupation zones: French in the southwest, British in the northwest, American in the south, and Soviet in the east. Berlin, deep in the Soviet zone, was also divided into four sectors.

"The division of Germany into occupation zones made possible the future development of two separate German states. In 1947 the American and the British merged their zones for economic purposes, and the Germans were allowed to set up state parliaments in all three Western zones. The merger of the French zone of occupation with the other Western zones, along with the adoption of a constitution by representatives of the states forming the occupation zones, resulted in the proclamation on May 23, 1949, of

the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany. On October 7 of the same year, the Soviet zone was proclaimed as the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany.



"The Allies divided Berlin, as well as Germany, into four occupation zones under an Allied Control Council. In 1948 France, Great Britain, and the United States merged their zones into one economic unit. The Soviet Union withdrew from the council in protest and began a blockade of Berlin's rail, highway, and water communications with the West. The United States and Britain, however, supplied nearly 2 million tons of coal, food, and industrial goods to West Berlin by air. The airlift involved more than 200,000 flights and lasted more than 11 months, until the Soviets relented."

Until 1990, Germany was a nation of two identities, ruled by four "directors."

The four wings of the leopard indicate the presence of two distinct creatures, for volitant entities require only two such appendages. A replication of the basic components necessary for flight is thus indicative of two independent beings.

"On Sept. 12, 1990, some further issues were resolved during the "two-plus-four" negotiations (a phrase referring to the four Allies and the two Germanys). It was ultimately decided that the postwar occupation of Germany by these four powers would formally end on Oct. 1, 1990." – Compton's Encyclopedia

After forty-five years of being directed by its four heads, the leopard "*was given authority to rule.*" (Daniel 7:6)

As for the biblical qualities of the leopard, they are traits with which Germany has been well-endowed.

The military might displayed over the course of two world wars, as well as the sadistic Holocaust atrocities inflicted upon unarmed civilians testify to the fierce nature of this nation.

The surveillance society sometimes referred to as "Big Brother," established Germany as a nation of "watchers."

The blitzkrieg, or "lightning war," was a swift, sudden military offensive that was developed by the German armed forces and extensively employed over the course of World War II.

The most distinguishing characteristic of the leopard is its spots. When observed scouting prey in its native habitat, moving stealthily across the desert sand and rock, feet treading cautiously, eyes intelligent, whiskers taught and alert, it appears as a collection of several hundred ebony badges moving in concert against a tawny backdrop of rippling sinews.

It is an image to which Germany bears a marked resemblance, for the astute observer will note the coordinated

effort of several hundred territories whose peaceful interaction serves to sustain a larger creature.

"Germany is a country of regional differences in the culture and character of the people. Although one can speak of a German culture in general--which is reflected in the literature, poetry, and art of the German people as a whole--there are considerable differences in the way of life from region to region." – Compton's Encyclopedia.

Although the early histories of France and England are marked by the same tribal societies, a central power was slowly established over the regional princes in those nations, while Germany remained a divided region of three hundred diminutive entities, warring amongst themselves or in combinations against the emperors. No emperor or local prince was ever successful in maintaining control over Germany for a sustained period of time.

In 1815, the Congress of Vienna stipulated that the several hundred states existing in Germany prior to the French Revolution be replaced with thirty-eight states, some of them quite small. The existence of so many states of various sizes and kinds, such as principalities, electorates, ecclesiastical territories, and free cities, was such an established characteristic of the region that it became the inspiration by which its formal title was derived, for the word "Germany"comes from the Latin "Germanus," meaning "neighbor."

This disunity was exacerbated by the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, which shattered the united nature of German religion by converting many Germans from Roman Catholicism to Lutheranism and Calvinism. For several centuries, adherents to these two denominations of Protestantism viewed each other with as much hostility and suspicion as they did Roman Catholics. For their part, Catholics frequently resorted to force, either to defend themselves against Protestants or to convert them. As a result, Germans were divided not only by territory, but also by religion.

The divergent nature of these states persisted until 1871, when Otto Von Bismarck finally united the country after his North German Confederation defeated the French in the Franco-Prussian War.

"Even after the country's belated political unification in 1871, these divisions raised questions about whether Germany can be thought of as a single entity." – Grolier's Encyclopedia

The spotted disposition of the nation of Germany is obvious.

Consequently, it, as well as Great Britain, the United States, and Russia, will be assimilated into Satan's beast form of one-world government known as the New World Order.

To this beast will the saints will be handed over until those appointed to captivity and death have received their respective portions.

At the conclusion of the final three-and-a-half years, the Almighty's court will convene and its "*power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole Heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High.*" – Daniel 7:26, 27

The nations will be released from the iron grip of the beast and their management entrusted to the saints of the Most High God, who will coordinate their individual administrations with that of the Millennial Kingdom established and governed by Jesus Christ, directing their citizens to worship and obey the risen Prince of Peace.

22. King Nebuchadnezzar's Statue

"*You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.*

"*While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.*

"*This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of Heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.*

"*After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.*

"*Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.*

"*In the time of those kings, the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.*

"*This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.*

"*The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy.*" - Daniel 2:31-45

For many eschatologists, this dream of Nebuchadnezzar is the foundational prophecy from which many of their assertions proceed. For this reason, a thorough analysis of the statue is warranted.

Its purpose, as revealed by God through the prophet Daniel, was to provide a chronology of events that would, in an indistinct fashion, enable the dating of the arrival of the kingdom of God.

This objective was accomplished due to the manner in which the timetable was constructed. It began with King Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian empire circa 605 B.C, represented by the head of gold. The Persian empire conquered the region of Babylonia in 539 B.C, an event symbolized by the arms and chest of silver. The statue's belly and

thighs of bronze were emblems that prophesied of the success Alexander the Great would achieve in vanquishing the previously victorious Persian forces and the claiming of that territory for Greece in 331 B.C. Concluding the image were legs and feet composed of an iron and clay mixture, representations of the Roman rise to power in 168 B.C.

"*In the time of those kings, the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.*" – Daniel 2:44, 45

The excavation of this boulder, accomplished according to a supernatural design in which the human element was conspicuously absent, symbolized the initial emergence of Jesus Christ by a means entirely independent of mortal man.

"*The birth of Jesus Christ happened like this. When Mary was engaged to Joseph, before their marriage, she was discovered to be pregnant – by the Holy Spirit.*" – Matthew 1:18 (PME)

The birth of the promised Messiah was foretold over seven hundred years prior to the event by the prophet Isaiah:

"*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*" – Isaiah 9:6, 7

Over the course of the seven hundred-year interim, the Hebrew people formed a definite opinion as to the nature of the coming Christ. He was expected to significantly impact the political world by divesting the nations of their sovereign authority and summarily placing them under Israeli subjugation, thus delivering the children of Israel from their oppressors while restoring to the nation a glory and esteem unequaled since the golden age of King Solomon. Upon the establishment of a political and religious unity to which all the inhabitants of the earth would pay obeisance, the Messiah would effect a complete and enduring cessation of hostilities, thereafter to administer righteous judgment as the eternal King of all kings.

In truth, the Messiah *did* come, but he did not raise an army and throw off the bonds of Roman oppression. He did not establish Jerusalem as the world's capital, and therefore those who had believed Jesus to be the long-awaited Savior ceased to entertain such thoughts upon his crucifixion.

The Jews, however, were less than stellar students of their own scriptures, as Jesus frequently pointed out.

In John 3:7, Jesus told a Pharisee of the Jewish ruling council named Nicodemus that he of all people should not have been surprised at the need to be born from above, yet this religious leader remained completely unaware of this necessity.

"'*What!' said Jesus. 'Is this famous teacher of Israel ignorant of such things? If you disbelieve me when I talk to you about things on earth, how are you to believe if I should talk about the things of Heaven?*'" – John 3:10, 12 (NEB)

The incorrect assumptions concerning the purpose of the Messiah were not exclusive to the ruling class, for Luke 24:13-27 shows two of Jesus' followers subscribing to such teachings.

"*Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, "You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days."*

"What things?" he asked.

"All about Jesus of Nazareth," they answered, "who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free."

"Jesus answered them by saying, "You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself." – Luke 24:18-21, 25-27 (JB)

What the Jews failed to recognize was that within their own scriptures were repeated references to *two* separate Messianic kingdoms, also known as the First and Second Coming of Christ, or the Former and Latter Reign.

Concerning Messiah's former reign, the prophets made many predictions, including the fact that he would be birthed of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:1), that he would subsequently relocate to Egypt (Hosea 11:1), and that he would be raised in Nazareth of Galilee (Matthew 2:23). They predicted his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9), his betrayal for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12), the abandonment he would endure (Zechariah 13:7), his cooperation with the authorities at the time of his arrest (Isaiah 53:12), his subsequent crucifixion (Psalms 22:16), the casting of lots for his clothing (Psalms 22:18), and that his bones would not be broken as he hung from the cross (Psalms 34:20).

One of the most fascinating prophecies concerning the Messiah's former reign is found in Daniel 9:24-27, in which it is foretold that a decree would one day be issued to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. 173,880 days thereafter (69 prophetic weeks of 7 Hebrew years at 360 days per year), Daniel proclaimed that the Messiah would establish his first kingdom and then be "cut off."

"*Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.*

"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

"After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.

"The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.'

"In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." – Daniel 9:24-27

History records that on March 14, 445 B.C, (the date confirmed through astronomical calculations performed by the British Royal Observatory and reported by Sir Robert Anderson in "The Coming Prince"), Artaxerxes Longimanus decreed that the walls of Jerusalem be rebuilt (Nehemiah 2:1). The passing of 173,880 days concluded on April 6, 32 A.D, the day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, after which he was crucified, or "cut off."

After his resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven from the Mount of Olives in full view of his disciples, promising to descend upon that same mountain to establish his Latter Reign at the end of the age.

The global military force will then be destroyed by the sharp sword of his mouth, and Jerusalem will be appointed as the world capital of the Millennial Kingdom of Peace at the time of his Second Coming, events which the Jews expected Messiah to accomplish during his first reign.

For that reason, they will be easily deceived by the Antichrist when that entity of evil succeeds in meeting these same objectives.

"*All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.*" – Revelation 13:8

"*For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.*" - Matthew 24:24

The Kingdom of God that was established through the "cutting off" of the Messiah was a spiritual institution, rather than an earthly one. Had King Herod understood this, he would not have attempted to murder the Lord of Glory. Had the multitudes understood this, they would not have attempted to forcibly install him as king in John 6:14, 15.

Understanding also eluded those who greeted him in the streets of Jerusalem, shouting: "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!*" – Mark 11:9, 10

Jesus affirmed his majesty in John 18:36, 37 while clarifying that his kingdom was not at that time established within earthly boundaries:

"*Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."*

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

"Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

If the Former Reign of Jesus Christ was indeed represented by the rock formed without human hands, then it should occur on the timeline at a point subsequent to the formation of the Roman empire, and at an interval equivalent to the preceding three.

An average interlude of 145 years separates the founding of each new world empire (Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman). Thus, the distance between the Roman Empire and the First Coming of Christ should measure comparably to the spaces between the former events, namely, the aforementioned 145 years.

If the rock were symbolic of the second coming of Christ, then a disproportionate period of 2,200 years will have passed between that event and the time of the Roman

Empire's rise to world dominance; a theory in which one element of the chronological statue is out of step with its fellows.

The first coming of Christ, however, occurred approximately 168 years after the Romans began to impress their iron rod of authority upon the world, a period perfectly aligned with the others preceding it.

Thus, the stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream established a Heavenly kingdom within the souls of men, proclaiming freedom for all peoples by smashing the old code of nations in which, to a large extent, proper membership had previously determined salvation.

In the Old Testament, the Lord recognized only the sons of Jacob as His chosen ones, and no other people was permitted to share in that exclusivity.

1st Chronicles 16:12-14 – "*Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, O descendants of Israel his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the LORD our God.*"

Isaiah 65:9 – "*I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live.*"

Matthew 15:21-26 – "*Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."*

"Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

"He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

"The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

"He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

With the founding of Messiah's former kingdom, however, the elite status of the Jewish nation was rescinded.

Romans 10:12, 13 – "*For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*"

Acts 10:44, 45 – "*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.*"

The rock and its accompanying statue are therefore symbols of the Messiah's Former Reign, having nothing to do with the Latter, while Daniel's vision of the four beasts is characteristic of his Second Coming. This issue will be further addressed in chapter 27.

In conclusion, the three previous chapters have revealed the Beast of the Sea as a representation of the endtime world government system that has been given the authority, power, and throne of Satan.

It is a ten-region government in which Great Britain, the United States of America, Russia, and Germany play significant roles.

It is also a form of government under which Christians will be hunted as animals and murdered for their beliefs. No one will impede its relentless progress, no one will escape its path of devastation, and any form of resistance will be proven futile as, save for

144,000 sealed Messianic Jews, the spiritual salt and light of the world will be ground underfoot and extinguished for the remainder of the age.

23. The Beast of the Earth

Revelation 13:11-18

"*Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from Heaven to earth in full view of men.*

"*Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.*

"*He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.*

"*This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.*"

While the previous beast rose from the sea, and thus from the world's nations, this creature arises from the earth.

Easton's Bible Dictionary defines the term "earth" as "the whole world; the land as opposed to the sea; a country; a plot of ground. In the New Testament "the earth" denotes the land of Judea."

In one sense, the "earth" can refer to the whole world, but in another it can also denote a particular country or a certain piece of land. Specifically in the time of Jesus and John the Revelator, "the earth" was a Hebrew reference to Judea.

Thus, the beast which symbolically rose from the earth literally emerged from the region of Judea. To put it plainly, this creature is a Jewish entity.

In appearance it resembles a lamb, yet its voice belies its true deceptive nature. As a sheep, it displays a veneer of impotence (Matthew 9:36; 10:16) and professes allegiance to a righteous shepherd (John 10:7; Hebrews 13:20), yet the helplessness and innocence is a masquerade which disguises a reptilian intellect bent on enforcing worship of the United Earth's Supreme Potentate.

Scripture labels a purveyor of such deception as a False Apostle, and hence the beast that rises from the sea can be identified accordingly.

"*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.*" - 2nd Corinthians 11:13-15

While John reported that the previous beast of the sea was given a mouth with which to slander the Almighty and the authority to wage war against the saints, Daniel's narrative provided a greater detail, revealing that dominion was given, not to the beast as a whole, but to its little horn, a protuberance symbolic of Antichrist.

"*While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.*

"*I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell-the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully.*

"As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

"The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time." - Daniel 7:8, 20-22, 24, 25

The False Apostle, then, directs homage not so much toward the entire beast system (which is the One-World Government), as it imposes upon the world a decree of worship with respect to the beast's little horn.

Daniel's little horn is synonymous with the seventh head of both John's scarlet beast in Revelation 17:7 and the beast of the sea in Revelation 13:3 which recovered from a fatal wound.

"*One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.*" – Revelation 13:3

At this juncture, it is important that the recipient of the wound be specifically determined. Scripture symbolically refers to this entity as a head belonging to the beast.

According to Revelation 17:9, 10, the seven heads are symbols which perform two separate tasks. In combination, the seven elements function to designate a particular geographical region, yet individually each represents a singular king; five of whom perished in antiquity, one who was actively reigning at the time the prophecy was written, and one who would rise to power at some point in the future.

Were all seven heads fatally wounded, one would be forced to conclude that the collective definition was intended, thus identifying the recipient of the mortal injury as a strategically-located portion of inanimate earthen matter.

It is not a nation or community that finds its existence jeopardized, however, for the injury was borne by only one of the seven, and as a result it is the singular definition which must be applied to the wound: a king.

Of the seven kings, six have been dead for millennia, their flesh long since reduced to dust. Only the seventh king, the little horn that is yet to come, could possibly recover from the fatal bite of a cold, steel blade that has yet to be wielded.

Consequently, it is understood that the Antichrist will meet with death via an assassin's sword but the grave will not hold him, and in a blasphemous parody of Revelation 1:18, he will rise again to proclaim that the icy hand of death is clasped in reverent obeisance to his deity.

It is this worship which the False Apostle will enforce, obliging all flesh to declare an oath of allegiance to the Lord of Lies, his kingdom, and his puppet governor,

precluding any future application of Christ's blood to one's life, a sacred and binding vow which the God of Heaven will honor with solemnity and finality.

A vow is an expression of unusual devotion or commitment which a person declares to God. It is a consecrated affirmation which becomes indissoluble upon its utterance, according to Deuteronomy 23:23.

"*That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.*" – KJV

Thus, "*If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath.*

"He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever.

"There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." – Revelation 14:9-11

Such is the result for those who permit themselves to be deluded by the False Apostle, yet his ability to perform miracles will present a convincing argument with respect to his claims concerning the nature of Antichrist.

The False Apostle will function as a wicked version of John the Baptist, preparing the world for the arrival of a False Messiah, and clearing straight paths for him to traverse.

His appearance will precede that of the Son of Perdition, and therefore it is possible that his work has already begun. The investigation into the symbology of the beast of the earth will concern itself for a space with exploring identity possibilities.

The profile of the False Apostle is that of a Jewish individual (or a native of Judea), whose function is to prepare the populace for the arrival of a Christ persona. To accomplish that end, he will perform a variety of supernatural wonders which will serve to endorse his claims. He will appear as a righteous cleric, yet when compared against the holy scriptures, his words will prove to be the wicked agents of a false gospel perpetuated by the crimson dragon known as Satan. Finally, he will set up an image of the beast and enforce its worship, establishing a diabolical program of veneration from which the compulsory mark of 666 will come.

In order to prepare the world for the coming of Antichrist, the False Apostle must deliver his alternative gospel from a platform of global proportions, for a religious leader unknown to the masses will be incapable of impressing any measure of influence upon their lives. At the present time, the public spotlight belongs almost exclusively to a pair of compelling personalities, namely Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II.

Asked in 1999 if there was anyone to whom he regretted not being able to bring the gospel, Billy Graham responded that answering such a question "would be very difficult," due to having preached to "most of the population of the world. I preached in China, I've preached in every country in the communist world before it turned away from communism. I had crusades in Moscow, and then I have preached in Muslim-dominated countries, Buddhist countries, where they believe in another religion. And I've found a wonderful reception in all of them."

Billy Graham – World's Greatest Evangelist

Many have expressed disappointment with respect to the teachings of this world evangelist in recent years, citing the apparent abrogation of formerly held principles, associations with persons of questionable religious integrity, and damning statements made to various journalists and colleagues concerning inappropriate remarks made in relation to salvation theology in general and the American Jewish community in particular.

According to "Billy Graham's Twenty-three Years of Theological Change" by the Reverend Charles Emert, in 1948 Billy Graham was asked, "What do you expect the World Council of Churches to do this August when they visit Copenhagen?"

His reply was a scathing, "I believe they are going to nominate the Antichrist!"

Although he was on record as being opposed to the World Council of Churches in 1948, he revealed in 1966 that, in fact, he had attended their assembly in New Delhi five years earlier. He was also present at the organization's conference in Uppsala, Sweden in 1968, setting a precedent for his many future attendances.

In 1952 and again in 1958, Billy Graham took a strong stance concerning the propagation of false doctrine.

In 1952, he wrote to Bob Jones, Sr, "We have never had a man on our committee that denied the virgin birth, the vicarious atonement, or the bodily resurrection."

In 1958, he stated in Eternity Magazine: "If a man blatantly denies the deity of Christ or that Christ has come in the flesh, we are not to even bid him godspeed. Thus, the Scriptures teach that we are able to be separated from those who deny the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ ... I am to treat him as an Antichrist and an enemy of the cross."

In 1963, however, he appointed United Methodist Bishop, Gerald B. Kennedy, as his Los Angeles Crusade Chairman, a man who publicly denied the deity of Jesus Christ, writing in one of his books: "I believe that the testimony of the New Testament, taken as a whole, is against the doctrine of the deity of Jesus."

In 1964 Billy Graham's aide, George Edstrom, issued the following statement: "Mr. Graham has never preached in a Catholic church, and he does not agree with them in the joining of one church. If you heard this, it is nothing but false rumors."

Actually, Billy Graham *had* spoken at such a church in 1963: the Roman Catholic Belmont Abbey College. In 1967 he returned to the college to receive from the institution an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, whereupon he was quoted as saying that this was "…a time when Protestants and Catholics could meet together and greet each other as brothers, whereas ten years ago they could not… The Gospel that built this school and the Gospel that brings me here tonight is still the only way to salvation."

This favorable comparison of the gospel of Christ with the Roman Catholic rituals of praying to the dead, the use of the rosary, selling of indulgences, and the precept of transubstantiation was to many a clear evidence that his garments of "lamb's wool" were but the vestments of a cunning wolf.

In 1949 Billy Graham was quoted as saying, "Communism is inspired, directed, and motivated, by the Devil himself," yet a 1959 edition of "Christianity Today" reported that, "Without elaboration, the evangelist [Graham] said his thinking had undergone some changes... and he indicated that his attitude toward Eastern Europe is more open."

Even after attending the Moscow Peace Conference in 1982, where he met with a group of Siberian Pentecostals taking refuge in the American Embassy, he declared, "I saw no evidence of religious persecution in Russia."

The severe persecution and executions of Russian Christians were well-documented atrocities, and this statement caused many to scratch their heads in bewilderment, wondering whether the revered evangelist suffered from an especially acute case of naivety, or whether he was in some fashion cooperating with the Communists.

In 1948, Billy Graham announced that the three greatest threats to Orthodox Christianity were Communism, Roman Catholicism, and Mohammedanism, yet he retracted this statement in later years.

In 1973, he declared that Communist Mao Tse-Tung's Eight Precepts were generally equivalent to the Ten Commandments, and praised the Roman Catholic mass as a "very beautiful thing." In 1978, he proclaimed that Muhammed Ali's beliefs in Islam "are something we all could believe."

Billy Graham has also allowed certain figures of less-than-reputable character to accompany him to the podium during his crusades. In 1954, for example, he reserved a place on the stage for Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, a notorious blasphemer who wrote in his book, "The Christian Agnostic," that the Lord Jesus Christ was born a bastard child and that Mary was not a virgin, but a temple prostitute - a common New Age teaching.

One must question why Dr. Graham permitted such a blatant heretic to share the platform with him, for to request in an official capacity the presence of an adherent to another belief system as part of one's entourage is to imply the existence of a common philosophical ground between the two.

In 1978, McCall's Magazine reported Billy Graham's "updated" understanding of the plan of salvation: "I used to think that pagans in far-off countries were lost, were going to hell, if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that... I believe there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God; through nature, for instance, and plenty of other opportunities, therefore, of saying 'yes' to God."

In Romans 10:14, 15, the Apostle Paul declares, "*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'*"

According to Paul, the pagans cannot be saved unless a preacher is sent to deliver the gospel to them. In this, Dr. Graham has displayed his incomplete grasp of the scriptures, a failing he admitted to in a Time Magazine interview on America Online July 6, 1999.

In response to the question, "What advice do you have for me as a young pastor currently going to seminary in North Carolina and pastoring my second church?" the Reverend Billy Graham advises, "Study the Bible constantly. That's where I think I have failed. I don't know the Bible nearly as well as I wish that I did, and I wish I spent more time studying it."

A further example of scriptural ignorance can be found in his stance on homosexuality, as evidenced by a response to the following question from his own website at www.bgea.org:

"I struggle with homosexual feelings and temptations. Does God hate me? What can I do?"

A biblical response might have mentioned Romans 12:9 and 2nd Corinthians 2:7, 8, which affirm that God hates the sin, not the sinner.

"*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*" - Romans 12:9

"*Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.*" - 2nd Corinthians 2:7, 8

It might have referenced Mark 2:17, where Jesus explained that it was actually for the unrighteous that he came to earth, and not for the righteous.

"*On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*" – Mark 2:17

A scriptural reply might have included 1st Corinthians 6:11, in which the Apostle Paul, speaking to other Christians, declared, "*And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*"

In any event, a biblical response would surely have included Leviticus 18:22, 26, 29, 30, which declare in no uncertain terms, "*Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the LORD your God.*" – KJV

Leviticus 20:13 details the consequences of such sin by saying "*If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.*" – KJV

1st Corinthians 6:9, 10 underscore the seriousness of the offense from the other half of the Bible: "*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*"

Romans 6:13 admonishes: "*Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*"

Romans 1:24-27 defines such a lifestyle as "degrading," "shameful," "unnatural," "indecent," and "perversion."

The council given by this greatest of religious leaders to the troubled man seeking freedom from the bondage of homosexuality, however, was "You are not alone. Many people struggle just as you do. It is important to realize that God loves you deeply and does not condemn you for your same-sex feelings and temptations."

Although he went on to say that God "is intensely interested in what you do with them [the same-sex feelings]," and "is deeply grieved," his handling of the question is just wrong. God does not hate sinners, but He *will* condemn the sinner who does not repent.

"*Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.*" – Revelation 2:5

Once a self-confessed "Bible fundamentalist and separatist," Dr. Graham now freely associates and fraternizes with "anyone under any label," whether that label be liberal, modernist, charismatic, or Catholic.

His relatively new association with the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church does not come as a surprise to those who have been closely monitoring his actions. In his crusades, the world evangelist has established a global pattern of cooperative, ecumenical evangelism, allowing liberals, modernists, evangelicals, charismatics, and Roman Catholics to work together, thereby accelerating the already rapid pace of ecumenical union.

In a crusade held in 1994, he seated Roman Catholic nuns and priests in places of honor on the rostrum and then issued his standard invitation to come down to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, adding, "…and if you are Roman Catholic, I want you to come down to renew your vows," asserting that Roman Catholics need not divorce themselves from the doctrine of the Catholic church in order to obtain salvation, clearly revealing his gospel to be one of Ecumenicism.

The charge that Billy Graham is leading his followers down a path of religious compromise is one that would appear to have merit, yet the tag of False Apostle does not adhere securely to his person.

Is He Jewish?

This world-acclaimed preacher is not of Jewish descent, nor was he raised in the region of Judea, having been born in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1918.

Does He Function As The Mouthpiece Of A Coming Christ?

His sermons are less of a preparedness program for those eagerly anticipating the arrival of a Christ as they are catechisms of the New World Order. In this, he appears to be contributing to the establishment of a unified religion movement rather than to the construction of straight paths that a coming Christ will traverse.

Is He A Miracle Worker?

In his own words, spoken during the 1999 Time Magazine online interview, "I have never had the gift of healing people. Some clergy have said that they have that gift. I have never had it." Nor does he claim supernatural abilities in any other realm of the spirit.

Does He Speak With The Wicked Voice Of A Dragon?

The dissemination of such fallacies as "the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a necessary ingredient for salvation," and "God does not condemn homosexual thoughts," echo the heresy of the serpent in the Garden of Eden who, although God had decreed,

"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die," insisted, "You will not surely die."

The voice emanating from his mouth certainly resonates with the distinctive timbre of apostasy.

Does He Seem Likely To Erect An Image Of Worship In The Future?

There is no reason to believe that he is about to construct an image toward which he will direct worship, unless the image is a metaphor for the World Council of Churches.

Does He Have The Authority To Enforce His Beliefs Upon The World?

Although his observations are highly respected and his words carry much weight, they are passively persuasive. The Reverend Billy Graham has not the authority nor a vehicle with which to enforce the world to conform to his beliefs. His close association with many world leaders notwithstanding, he is a private citizen and for the present, the World Council of Churches, a possible future agent of change with whom he enjoys an intimate relationship, is not a governing body.

Conclusion

Although many may have cause to be disappointed by the positions Billy Graham has adopted, the charge of his fitting the description of the False Apostle of Revelation chapter thirteen is simply untrue. The reverend is not Jewish, he does not make a point of insisting that the arrival of the Christ is imminent, he displays no evidence of being able to perform miracles, and has no authority to enforce his brand of religious worship upon the masses.

In addition, at the ripe old age of 84 and afflicted with Parkinson's Disease, it seems unlikely that he will make much more of an impression on the future affairs of the world.

While the False Apostle will work to prepare the way for Antichrist, the work of Billy Graham is apparently serving to undergird that of the False Prophet.

Thus, he can be eliminated from the list of possible candidates.

Benny Hinn – Preeminent Televangelist

The Charismatic movement can trace its origin to the events of Azusa Street, California in 1906, which introduced a new era characterized by an emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As is the case with any organization of fallible human beings, droves of disingenuous, albeit magnetic personalities have sought to exploit the workings of the Spirit for personal gain.

Revival crusades in recent decades have glorified displays of signs and wonders, including miraculous healings. Those with a preponderance of the supernatural about their persons began to be esteemed as apostles and prophets, and have today achieved a type of superstar status in the public consciousness, attracting large followings and a wealth of money with which their already bloated "ministries" are enlarged.

Modern televangelism is a three-and-a-half billion dollar industry; the lion's share of which does not go toward the edification of the body of Christ, but to private bank accounts which finance lifestyles of extravagance and "healing tours."

Benny Hinn is considered by many to be the preeminent television evangelist of his time, and his programs are broadcast in more than fifty nations. He claims that as a vessel of God, the presence of the Lord frequently comes upon him and into him, taking control of his mind and tongue to speak miraculous words of knowledge and to perform exorcisms with an authority and intensity the world has not experienced since the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Oftentimes, he claims to become intoxicated by "the anointing" to such an extent that he is completely unaware of what he has said and done until later informed by aides or after watching video of the incident.

Millions of dollars have been garnered through the sale of books and tapes of teachings that are irregular in the extreme, and which frequently contradict other of his published works.

Benny Hinn was born in 1953 in Israel to a Greek father and Armenian mother. He was raised in the Greek Orthodox religion and attended a Catholic school. He claims that God first appeared to him while a young boy of eleven in Israel, and that the Lord continues to manifest Himself on a regular basis.

Following a move from Israel to Canada at the age of fourteen, he claims that he received a series of visions while in high school which depicted himself preaching before huge crowds. Additionally, he avers that he was healed of a stuttering problem in order to deliver the messages of God to the world.

Despite the alleged visions and several years of personal appearances by God, Benny Hinn specifies 1972 as the year of his conversion at the age of twenty, and credits a Kathryn Kuhlman service the following year with providing him a "profound spiritual experience."

Interestingly enough, this contradicts the testimony recorded in a 1981 publication of "PTL Devotional," in which he declared, "I got saved in Israel in 1968." He also tells of his family members giving their hearts to the Lord at different times, yet in his book "War in the Heavenlies," he said that all of his family members became saved at the same time.

There are frequently different versions of his facts and his word is consistently discrepant, leaving one to wonder which story, if any, is accurate.

In May of 1983, Benny was one of six survivors of a small-engine plane crash. In discussing the incident on the PTL Show with Paul and Jan Crouch, Hinn claimed the Lord had spoken to him, saying, "Nothing will happen to you."

According to Hinn, "When I walked out of that plane, Paul, I did not have a scratch on my body." He also claimed to have healed another passenger's eye which had been removed from its socket upon impact.

Two newspaper reports, the Federal Aviation Association, the National Transportation Safety Board, the Sheriff's Department and the hospital, however, subscribe to a different version of events, reporting that all six occupants were injured, and that Benny suffered multiple contusions, abrasions, and lacerations. The "Avon Park Paper" reported that "Hinn said he was in a state of shock," declaring, "It will be the last time I will ever fly in one of these [single engine airplanes] again."

No miracles were reported by either Benny Hinn, the newspapers, or the victims. In fact, the records show that Benny was confined to the hospital for two days, and his wife released after three.

As to the injured eye, the victim did verify that Hinn had prayed for him, but that he did not receive a healing. Today, after numerous operations, his sight has been restored; a testament to surgical skill and advanced technology.

As for the matter of miraculously healing his own stuttering, numerous people from his past were questioned regarding this, and even those he specifically mentions as capable of verifying the story are unable to recall his stuttering problem, including the youth pastor from the church in which the miracle was alleged to have been performed.

Benny Hinn once found himself mired in controversy over a series of teachings in which he alleged nine persons to exist within the Godhead, and endured further unpleasantness due to his assertion that Jesus took upon himself the nature of Satan when he died upon the cross and subsequently was born again in Hell, teachings which he later admitted were incorrect and inspired by New Age philosophy.

Other irresponsible claims include the assertion that God originally created women to give birth from out of their sides, and that men were created to swim like fish and fly like birds, able to travel between the planets with but a thought.

When challenged as to his authority for making such outlandish claims, he appeals to his Jewish origin and his knowledge of Hebrew. Incidentally, Benny Hinn is not Jewish, he is a Palestinian Arab.

Hinn readily admits that much of the misunderstanding that has arisen from his teachings is the result of his lack of formal Bible training, an admission also made by Billy Graham, and a common trait of false teachers. Benny blames the oversight, curiously enough, on God, saying that upon his conversion, "The Lord launched me into ministry almost overnight."

Despite an admitted ignorance of the scriptures, in 1983 he founded his present church, Orlando Christian Center, a congregation with an average weekly attendance of over seven thousand, and considers himself well-qualified to speak into the lives of millions through his television program, transmitted under the auspices of the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

Hinn has long been infatuated with the late faith healer, Kathryn Kuhlman. His books and sermons are replete with the impact she made on his life and ministry. Now, he claims that she appears to him periodically to impart wisdom. (A female spirit guide.)

He claimed that he was shown the future of his ministry from Kuhlman and Jesus Christ in what he described as a "vision of the night." His account of this supposed vision was delivered on the June 11, 1997 edition of his "This Is Your Day" program.

On the broadcast, he stated:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to tell you something right now. The Lord showed me a vision about—goodness it's almost been a year now—and I can tell you I sense now the time has come when this vision is going to be fulfilled.

"I had a vision of the night. I saw myself walk into a room, and there stood Kathryn Kuhlman, and she said, 'Follow me.' That's all she said, and I followed her to a second room.

"In that second room stood the Lord. When I saw the Lord, Kathryn disappeared. She was just gone. And now the Lord looked at me and said, 'Follow me.' And I followed him to a third room.

"In the third room sat a gentleman—I still remember his face, and the man sat in this wheelchair in that third room. There was a big hole in his neck. A tube down his throat. He was crippled on that wheelchair. And he had tubes down his body. Totally crippled, totally paralyzed. The Lord laid his hands on this man, and as he did, the tubes disappeared, the hole closed, he was completely healed and got up off the wheelchair. It was a creative miracle.

"Now I'm standing watching the Lord in this vision heal this man. And now as the man was healed, the Lord looked at me with piercing eyes—I'll not forget that one I'll tell you—looked at me with piercing eyes and said, 'Do it!' And the dream and the vision came to an end."

The interpretation of the vision, Benny says, was the following:

"When I woke, when I got up, when I came out of the vision, I was trembling and perspiring from head to toes. I know exactly what that vision means. It was Kathryn Kuhlman who took me, who introduced me to the Holy Spirit. That is the meaning of that first room when she said, 'Follow me.'

"But when Kathryn was gone, Jesus was there. Kathryn did her job and was gone, and the Lord said, 'Follow me' into a third room. And there was this man. I believe I'm about to enter that third room. [Audience applause]

"I'm telling you I feel it. I sense it. I believe that room speaks of a dimension, a new dimension in the Spirit. I believe I've been in that second room now for the last seven years. What is amazing to me, is God works, or has worked in my life, in seven year cycles. I'm now in the seventh year, and just now I feel another platform, another dimension, another level is really coming. Well, saints, you're going to be a part of it. God has sent you as partners to be a part of it. So how many are ready to see greater things for the glory of God?"

The definition of necromancy should be perused at this point.

"Necromancy: The practice of supposedly communicating with the spirits of the dead in order to predict the future." – Compton's American Heritage Dictionary

"*When people tell you, "Try out the fortunetellers. Consult the spiritualists. Why not tap into the spirit--world, get in touch with the dead?" Tell them, "No, we're going to study the Scriptures." People who try the other ways get nowhere--a dead end!*" – Isaiah 8:19, 20 (MSG)

A few months earlier, Hinn revealed to the audience at his Honolulu Crusade, "I have not just seen angels, I've seen saints. You may have a problem with this, I honestly don't really care. I've walked in that [supernatural] world. I've seen things you will never be able to understand, unless you've been in it. I've had individuals appear to me in my room. Not only angels. I've seen sights in prayer, incredible sights!

"Can I tell you something? I have never shared this. Never! I was in prayer one day and a man appeared in front of me. It happened for two days in a row, twice one day and the next day. The same man appeared. I've never told this, never. He was about six feet two. Old man. Had a beard. Glistening white beard. His face was somewhat thin, but very bold! Eyes—crystal blue. He had on a white garment, whiter than my shirt could ever get. On his head was like a shawl, like a covering. He looked like a priest, but every

part of him glistened like crystal. And I spoke out and I said, 'Lord, who is this man I see?' Now, I know you may think I've lost my mind, but the Lord said, 'Elijah, the prophet.'"

While Hinn swaggers, theorizes, and spews fiction while collecting outrageous sums of money in the name of "ministry," he is tarnishing the wonderful Name of Jesus which is above all other names, and causes his converts to become twice the son of Hell that he is (Matthew 23:15).

He claimed on April 2, 2000 that Jesus was physically manifesting himself to the Muslim world, saying, "The Lord is physically appearing in the Muslim world. I'm telling you, Paul, I am hearing it now more and more and more. Since we preachers cannot go there, Jesus is just going there himself. Since we preachers are not permitted to go in, he is just showing up, himself."

He claimed that Jesus would appear physically in Nairobi, Kenya, saying, "I believe that Jesus, God's Son, is about to appear physically, in meetings and to believers around the world, to wake us up! He appeared after his resurrection and he is about to appear before his second coming! I know deep in my soul something supernatural is going to happen in Nairobi, Kenya. I feel that I may very well come back with footage of Jesus on the platform!"

Previously, on March 29, 2000, Benny had announced that Jesus would be appearing at his crusades, saying, "Let me tell you something. The Holy Spirit has already told me he is about to show up. And you know, oh, I gotta tell you this quickly, just before we go. I had a word of prophecy from Ruth Heflin, you know who Ruth Heflin is? Ruth prophesied over me back in the seventies and everything she said has happened. She just sent me a word through my wife and said the Lord spoke to her audibly and said that he is going to appear physically in one of our crusades in the next few months. Yeah, she - I'm telling you - she said the Lord spoke to her audibly and said, 'Tell Benny I'm going to appear physically on the platform in his meetings.' Lord, do it in Phoenix, Arizona in the name of Jesus! And in Kenya too, Lord! Please, Lord, in fact, do it in every crusade. In Jesus' name."

Over the last few years, a number of "signs" have been reported in certain circles which indicate the actions of men like Hinn may have created a stirring in the realm of the demonic.

One of the most common "wonders" is the appearance of gold dust or gold flakes that fall from the sky, or appear on people or objects. Those involved sometimes call it "glory dust," believing that the manifestation must have originated with God, yet the phenomena may be derived from another source altogether.

Eyewitnesses to this effect were reported by an Assemblies of God State Newsletter as having a fine dusting of gold appear on the skin, including areas of the body concealed by clothing. No trace of it could be found upon the clothing, however, apparently manifesting itself through the very pores of the skin.

Ruth Heflin, the woman who informed Benny Hinn of the imminent appearance of Christ on his stage, was given a vision of him ministering on television with his face covered in gold dust.

On September 13,1999, Benny Hinn spoke on TBN about having gold dust on his hands, hair, face, and jacket. Paul Crouch theorized that the gold came from another

dimension, where "Heaven's door opened a crack, and a little of the street dust came down on you."

In February of 2000, Paul Crouch conversed with a guest who claimed to have analyzed the gold dust that appeared on him, and found it to be an unknown alloy formed in the shape of a square with a faux gold covering. It was then supposed that the element bore some sort of relation to the cubic form of the New Jerusalem.

Charisma magazine had samples of the gold dust analyzed by the United States Geological Survey in Washington D.C, where tests revealed it to be a plastic glitter. Additional tests of the gold flecks performed at the behest of Pastor John Arnott of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship and analyzed by the University of Toronto Geology Department, confirm the findings.

What is the meaning of this sign? Is it of God, of the Devil, or is it just another in a lengthy string of hoaxes perpetrated by purveyors of the religious equivalent of snake oil?

How well does Benny Hinn, certainly a master of spiritual deception, fit the profile of the False Apostle?

Is He Jewish?

Although he might insist otherwise, Benny Hinn is not Jewish, although he *was* raised in the region of Judea.

Does He Function As The Mouthpiece Of A Coming Christ?

His claims of soon sharing the stage with a physical Christ have been well documented, and he professes that God does enter his body to take control of his tongue that he might speak the words of the Lord to an anticipatory world.

Is He A Miracle Worker?

Although he claims to be a miracle worker, his miraculous signs have thus far been unsubstantiated as genuine manifestations of the supernatural. The power wielded by the False Apostle will be authentic, albeit Satanic, yet the marvels performed by Benny Hinn seem akin to parlor tricks.

Does He Speak With The Wicked Voice Of A Dragon?

There is no question that he speaks with the voice of his father the devil.

Does He Seem Likely To Erect An Image Of Worship In The Future?

Curiously, he has mentioned envisioning a soon-coming period in which the Lord will require those who desire a touch of healing to come before the altar of television and worship there for twenty-four hours while tuned to the Trinity Broadcasting Network. The dead will be raised to life, and all who come before the image will be healed of every kind of disease.

The following is a transcript of a conversation between Hinn, Paul, and Jan Crouch on "Praise the Lord," October 19, 1999:

"Hinn: Here's first what I see for TBN. You're going to have people raised from the dead watching this network. You're going to have people raised from the dead watching TBN. Programs - just plain programs - programs that haven't done much when

it comes to supernatural manifestations - teaching programs. It's not going to be a Benny Hinn saying 'Stretch your hands.' It's going to be your average teaching program, your normal Christian program that's blessing the church. There's going to be such power on these programs people will be raised from the dead worldwide. I'm telling you, I see this in the Spirit. It's going to be so awesome. Jesus I give you praise for this - that people around the world - maybe not so much in America - people around the world who will lose loved ones, will say to undertakers, 'Not yet. I want to take my dead loved one and place him in front of that TV set for twenty-four hours.'"

"Paul Crouch: Benny Hinn! Jesus!"

"Benny Hinn: I'm telling you. People are going to be canceling funeral services and bringing their dead in their caskets, placing them - my God! I feel the anointing here - placing them before a television set, waiting for God's power to come through and touch them. And it's going to happen time and time - so much it's going to spread. You're going to hear it from Kenya to Mexico to Europe to South America, where people will be raised from the - so much so that the Word will spread that if some dead person be put in front of this TV screen, they will be raised from the dead and they will be by the thousands. You wait. I see quite something amazing. I see rows of caskets lining up in front of this TV set and I see them bringing them closer to the TV set and as people are coming closer I see actually loved ones picking up the hands of the dead and letting them touch the screen and people are getting raised as their hands are touching that screen. With this program - I'm not talking about my program - I'm talking programs, plain programs aired - the glory of God will be so on TBN that there's going to be divine resurrection happening as people bring their loved ones to the TV set.

"The day is going to come when the gifts of the Holy Spirit will so intensify in the church that young children will be watching TBN, and signs and wonders will begin to take place through them. Impartations of the Spirit will come to them. A little child that knows nothing about the gifts, knows nothing about the anointing, knows nothing about the power of God, will be imbued with power from on high as a child, as that TV set comes on, and will go out like fire torches to their schools and their playgrounds and their families. I see these kids touching the TV set, receiving it, and going out and spreading it. And it's going to happen with children in the U.S, Canada, all over the world. And I do see people being raised from the dead here, but I see masses of them overseas."

The image of Revelation thirteen could very well be digital rather than statuesque, and if indeed it is, then he may well be close to establishing a religious network of pixelized miracles that require the worship of television.

Does He Have The Authority To Enforce His Beliefs Upon The World?

As a world-renowned "prophet," thousands, if not millions, live in fear of disobeying his "anointing," as evidenced by the flood of TBN supporters who jammed the phones in 1999 in order to survive the coming year of Y2K disaster which Hinn had threatened would destroy those who didn't double their giving. Donors who had already called in their pledges were ordered to call back and increase their giving or face the consequences, and the wrath of God was promised to descend upon those who might fail to follow through on their pledges.

While his deceptive practices may have placed many in the palm of his hand, he possesses no leverage over the legions of skeptics who refuse to voluntarily place themselves under his authority.

Conclusion

His actions indicate that Benny Hinn greatly covets the position of False Apostle, even to the point of falsifying his background and inventing supernatural abilities to obtain it. He is not a Jew, but he claims to be. He does not perform miracles, but he pretends to do so. He has no authority to enforce his beliefs upon others, although he cajoles and threatens many into compliance.

It seems as if he is diligently striving to attract the attention of Satan, that he might land an interview and an opportunity to inherit true power to employ on behalf of a false Christ. Although biblical prophecy seems to favor a Jew over a Judean Gentile in the office of False Apostle, if Satan is sufficiently attracted by Hinn's chicanery and God is willing, Benny may indeed be awarded the title he so earnestly desires, for his avarice, conceit, flair for the dramatic, and disdain for things godly are qualities well-suited for the job.

All things considered, however, the False Apostle will be imbued with genuine power, and there seems to be far too many counterfeit elements in association with Benny Hinn Ministries to consider him a viable candidate.

One thing is certain: the man of iniquity is about to be revealed, and false teachers such as Benny Hinn are setting the stage for the final apostasy that is coming.

Sri Chinmoy – Spiritual Leader of the United Nations

Born in 1931 in Bangladesh as Chinmoy Kumar Ghose, but now living in New York and known simply as Sri Chinmoy, this Hindu religious leader is a spiritual advisor to the United Nations who presides over the U.N. Meditation Room, a chamber containing a blackstone altar dedicated to Lucifer.

Some of his more sensational charges include his claim to be the spiritual brother of Jesus Christ, that he is imbued with supernatural strength while in meditation, that the god Krishna once perched upon his shoulders, and that in a previous life he was Thomas Jefferson.

His dramatic allegations notwithstanding, he has been and continues to be a powerful influence upon the religious policy makers of the U.N, believing that organization to be an institution ordained of God.

He writes, "No human force will ever be able to destroy the United Nations, for the United Nations is not a mere building or a mere idea; it is not a man-made creation. The United Nations is the vision-light of the Absolute Supreme, which is slowly, steadily, and unerringly illuminating the ignorance, the night of our human life. The divine success and supreme progress of the United Nations is bound to become a reality. At his choice hour, the Absolute Supreme will ring his own victory bell here on Earth through the loving and serving heart of the United Nations."

It is this religious philosophy that guides the organization which will soon enjoy unchecked global authority.

Although Chinmoy is not totally consistent with certain Hindu teachings, he continues to promulgate a great deal of Hindu tradition, requiring his women adherents to wear saris, and awarding his most loyal disciples with Bengali spiritual names.

At Sri Chinmoy prayer centers throughout the world, followers meet every Wednesday night for a forty-five-minute period of meditation while focusing on a centrally-located picture of Sri Chinmoy in an incense-permeated, candlelit atmosphere designed to inculcate feelings of reverence and divinity for the guru.

Upon conclusion of the meditation ceremony, the hallowed nature of Sri Chinmoy is reinforced by a dining ritual in which followers are served "blessed food" or "prasad." Each disciple approaches the nutrient table with hands folded in a position of supplication and bows to the image of Sri Chinmoy as the food is procured.

Chinmoy, who proclaims himself a "god-realized master," is actually just another religious leader with an ecumenical agenda of world peace; a major theme in his campaign to install commemoratory "peace blossoms" in over nine hundred major tourist venues, including Australia's Sydney Opera House, the Grand Coulee Dam, Victoria Falls, and the Statue of Liberty.

Chinmoy, an obvious "dragon" to the Gospel of the Bible and a spiritualist making grand overtures of peace, is a man associated with the most powerful dignitaries of an organization that will most likely become the vehicle for establishing and enforcing the dictates of a global government. His unique position would therefore seem to render him an excellent candidate for the position of False Apostle.

Originally sponsored by the late Secretary General U Thant, Chinmoy has been leading prayer and meditation at the United Nations every Tuesday and Friday. According to him, those who are "inspired" are welcome to attend.

According to Pastor David J. Meyer, however, a former witch who became a true minister of the Gospel after being baptized in a small Apostolic church, these "inspired" individuals are world leaders and Illuminati masterminds who gather around the Satanic lodestone altar to meditate.

Contrary to Sri Chinmoy's claim of an "open door policy," Pastor Meyer explains that the Meditation Room is only accessible to the public in the mornings, for after the sun has moved from its antemeridian to postmeridian position, only the adept in witchcraft are permitted access to the chamber. As the sun gives way to waning light and the female power of the moon goddess, the meditation room at the U.N. becomes off-limits to those deemed "the profane."

The Hindu guru is less than forthcoming about another subject, as well. A former photographer of Chinmoy provided the following insight into his claims of supernatural strength:

In about 1985, when Chimnoy first began lifting weights, he decided that photographs depicting Herculean acts of strength would propel him further into the public eye. If he was not successful in all of his lifting endeavors, it was not due to a lack of effort. As a matter of fact, he was successful in supporting quite a remarkable volume of weight for a man of his years.

He would struggle with both hands to raise above his head a dumbbell weighing one hundred pounds, and then momentarily support it with one hand before it crashed to the floor.

However, he began to make requests of his photographers, saying, "Is it not possible to make this little piece of the machine lower? You can see it is already lifted… but for the press, so that they can see it clearly?"

In this manner, the photograph falsification process began, with altered images presenting "evidence" of higher and more impressive lifts than the nearly sixty-year-old Hindu counselor had performed.

Due to the increasingly unrealistic feats Chinmoy wished to portray, portions of machinery would be airbrushed out and shadows added where none existed to give the illusion that an immovable bulk of iron had been lifted. Eventually it was discovered that if photos were taken from a sufficiently low angle, it would appear as if the weights had been rolled slightly upward against the crook on which the load was cradled, rendering the post-development editing obsolete.

On the day of his attempt to lift a seven thousand-pound weight, over a dozen witnesses were invited to take part in the record-breaking affair. As the guests arrived, inspectors were busily examining the floor and basement ceiling under which reinforced standing beams had been erected to support the weight of the monstrosity above, a metal-framed apparatus with two u-bends sustaining the more than three tons of iron at shoulder height.

Toward this structure Sri Chinmoy advanced, circling it and rolling his eyes as if in a meditative trance. He suddenly seized the bar and began to exert himself violently in an effort to budge the behemoth rod, veins distending about his biceps and neck. He cried out from the strain, his forehead a mass of compressed skin, as sweat streamed down his crimson face.

A drama of genuine effort unfolded before their eyes, yet the weight did not budge, unyielding in its frame of iron as if silently mocking the endeavor.

Shortly thereafter, Chinmoy thrilled to a video of the attempt as it was shown to the assembled guests. As the film played, he suddenly shouted, "There! Did you see?"

He looked radiant amid the deafening silence, and ordered the tape rewound. "Look! Did you see?" A few of the women nodded enthusiastically in the face of such a charismatic personality, and as the tape was replayed a third time, and then a fourth, more people began to accept and accede to this version of "the emperor's new clothes."

In this manner did the seven thousand-pound weight come to be lifted.

Concerning earlier lifts, Sri Chimnoy has displayed a certificate signed by Ernie Frantz of the American Powerlifting Federation as evidence that he was successful in single-handedly raising more than three thousand pounds, but Chairman Frantz has issued the following statement concerning the alleged testimonial:

"He should not use my name as a reference; he has always claimed the same with me, with no proof. One time I requested to be present when he did all these things, but he said he can only do this when he meditates, and that may be in the middle of the night. I feel that he is a phony."

It is not a unique view. According to the testimony and evidence, he certainly presents himself as something he is not and leads world leaders down a Satanic path of worship which may have future implications for the inhabitants of the earth, but is this sufficient to identify him as the False Apostle of Revelation chapter thirteen?

Is He Jewish?

He is not Jewish, nor has he lived in the region of Judea. By this criteria alone, he is excluded from serious consideration.

Does He Function As The Mouthpiece Of A Coming Christ?

His purpose is not to praise an imminent man of redemption, but to exalt the concept of a global religion and to shape its constitution at the highest levels of government.

Is He A Miracle Worker?

Although a man who precedes world leaders in worship before a Satanic altar would be expected to manifest occultic phenomena, the miracles of Sri Chinmoy are but fraudulent attempts to legitimatize his religious philosophy and to attract a devoted cult following.

Does He Speak With The Wicked Voice Of A Dragon?

Veiled by expressions of peace and global brotherhood, the course of action he advocates will result in the suppression of the biblical gospel and the eradication of true Christian believers from the face of the earth.

"*While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*" – 1st Thessalonians 5:3

Does He Seem Likely To Erect An Image Of Worship In The Future?

There is no evidence to suggest that he is in any way contemplating the construction of a global image before which the world must shortly bow. Admittedly, the visage cannot be chiseled until after the Son of Perdition is revealed, but it would seem reasonable for the False Apostle to be ruminating over such a design, even if in a preliminary conceptual phase, yet unless his Sri Chinmoy Prayer Center photographs can be considered a preliminary experiment in the establishment of a mandatory global worship system, Sri Chimnoy has voiced no desire to initiate such an endeavor.

Does He Have The Authority To Enforce His Beliefs Upon The World?

His association with the United Nations has been long forged, and if that body is successful in establishing a World Court, dissolving national sovereignties, and fielding an active military, this political organization will have the authority and the ability to dictate to every "citizen of the world" the manner in which they will conduct themselves, and the beliefs which they will respect.

Chimnoy's position as spiritual advisor to such an agency affords him the opportunity to ensure that the religious standards enforced are identical to his own.

Conclusion

The weight of evidence is not exactly threatening to topple the balances in favor of Sri Chimnoy as the fulfillment of Revelation thirteen's beast of the earth. Despite his occultic allegiances, Chimnoy is a charlatan in whom even Satan has declined to bestow power. He is a match for only two of the six biblical criteria, and at age seventy-one, his

involvement in crafting a uniform standard of worship seems to be drawing to a close, rather than a climax.

Robert Muller – Former U.N. "Prophet of Hope"

Born in Belgium in 1923 and raised in France, Robert Muller was awarded an internship at the fledgling United Nations in 1948 on the basis of an award-winning essay he composed concerning the subject of global governance.

For the next forty years, he championed an initiative of world peace, rising to the level of Assistant Secretary General and designated as the unofficial U.N. "Prophet of Hope."

He makes his home in Costa Rica at a small farm on the crest of a hill overlooking the University of Peace. The hill, Mt. Rasur, has local significance as a sacred summit from which, according to indigenous prophecy, a civilization of peace will extend to the entire world.

From his pacific ivory tower, he contemplates global thoughts and dreams of a world in which war is unknown, an enumeration of ideas which he published in his Testament to the United Nations.

In his book, "New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality," Muller makes no attempt to conceal that one of the United Nations' chief objectives is one of ecumenicism. He states that in his opinion, a global government and global religion as directed by the United Nations is mankind's only hope of redeeming itself from certain annihilation.

He states, "I would wholeheartedly support the creation of an institutional arrangement in the UN or in UNESCO for a dialogue and cooperation between religions." In 1996, Muller's vision was realized with the signing of the United Religions Initiative.

The initiative, signed by its director and founder Bishop William Swing, and by Muller himself, seeks to "bring religions and spiritual traditions to a common table, a permanent, daily, global assembly. There, respecting each other's distinctness, they will seek to make peace among religions so they might work together for the good of all life and the healing of the earth."

In the year 2000, the United Religions' charter was completed and ratified, resulting in projects of interfaith cooperation among sixty countries and a global interfaith community dedicated to making the charter a ubiquitous functioning reality.

As one of the prime architects of the United Religions Initiative, Robert Muller has played a key role in establishing the system which will be used to direct worship toward Antichrist.

Those who do not accede to the tenets of this system will be strongly pressured to comply through the economic sanctions of the mark of the beast, a program which will be initiated by the False Apostle.

Could Robert Muller be this sophistical witness?

Is He Jewish?

He is not Jewish, he was not reared in the land of Judea, nor does he reside there presently.

Does He Function As The Mouthpiece Of A Coming Christ?

His function has been to pioneer a framework of ecumenicism, rather than to proclaim the arrival of a soon-coming Christ. In fact, he has declared all faiths, and therefore all Christs, to be equally valid.

Is He A Miracle Worker?

Robert Muller has not alleged any ability to perform miracles, nor has such a claim been declared on his behalf by a third party.

Does He Speak With The Wicked Voice Of A Dragon?

Any individual who asserts that Christianity and Wicca can peacefully coexist, as does the United Religions Initiative which Muller helped craft, speaks the words of his father, the devil (John 8:38-41).

"*Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.*" - Deuteronomy 18:10, 11

"*The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*" – Galatians 5:19-21

"*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*" – Exodus 22:18 (KJV)

Does He Seem Likely To Erect An Image Of Worship In The Future?

Robert Muller has published a list of four thousand "Ideas and Dreams for a Better World."

Idea number 2,064 is: "The rose garden adjacent to the visitors' entrance of the United Nations in New York and the vast Parc des Nations of the U.N. in Geneva should be transformed into Peace and Human Rights Parks open to people. Statues and busts of great peacemakers and human rights defenders should be erected on them, following our example at the U.N. University for Peace in Costa Rica. The vaster Park in Geneva could also be made into an ecological demonstration center for the public."

He is an admitted advocate of erecting images of influential personalities upon the grounds of global structures, and has assembled such a statue at the University for Peace in Costa Rica, over which he presides as Chancellor. The likeness is that of Ryoichi Sasakawa, a Japanese philanthropist who donated one million dollars for the construction of the university.

This affinity for constructing images and positioning them in conspicuous locations such as the visitors' entrance to the United Nations in New York City and the U.N. Park of Nations in Geneva, is a trait the False Apostle will share.

"*He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.*" - Revelation 13:14, 15

Does He Have The Authority To Enforce His Beliefs Upon The World?

Robert Muller served as Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations under three administrations, including those of U Thant, Kurt Waldheim, and Javier Perez de Cuellar. In 1996 he was nominated for the post of Secretary General, and thus certainly possesses the credentials required to exert his religious influence upon the world.

Consider that on September 21, 2001, he wrote the following letter to the present Secretary General, Kofi Annan:

"Dear Mr. Secretary General,

"It is of historic, world importance, and it would make you one of the most important leaders of the 21st century, if you would recommend today the creation of a United Nations Anti-Terrorist Agency.

"The United Nations Anti-Terrorist Agency could be equipped with a World Police Center which would serve as a clearing house for any information on potential terrorism from any nation or source around the world.

"The United Nations Anti-Terrorist Agency would be accompanied by a World Anti-Terrorist Tribunal to judge cases of terrorism and apply sanctions and punishment.

"With my warmest wishes and prayers for permanent peace,

"Robert Muller

"Former UN Assistant Secretary General

"Co-Founder of the UN University for Peace in Costa Rica"

Apply sanctions? Apply punishment?

This is eerily reminiscent of scripture which states:

"*He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.*" - Revelation 13:16, 17

"*If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.*" - Revelation 13:10

Robert Muller wields authority, even as a retired officer of the U.N.

Conclusion

Despite his fascination for statue-building, his global philosophy, and the authority to impose it upon others, Robert Muller matches only half of the False Apostle's profile. At seventy-nine years of age, he is likely too far advanced in years to ever see the Antichrist arrive, let alone serve at his side for seven years to be defeated by Christ at the battle popularly known as Armageddon.

"*But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.*" – Revelation 19:20

Bishop William Swing – United Religions Initiative Founder

There is a time-worn apothegm which states: "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions."

William Swing, an Episcopalian Bishop of the California Diocese has not only succeeded in paving the road to Perdition, but has added additional lanes, painted the lines, and posted signs declaring that the city of Blessed Felicity is located at the next mile-marker, when in truth, travelers of the Swing Expressway are headed for a fiery destination.

Given that the United Nations are most likely serving as the framework upon which Satan is establishing his throne, it is reasonable to assume that an association of global religions may have been formed for the express purpose of assembling a platform from which the False Apostle can preach.

The United Religions Initiative is one such stage which seeks to provide the world with a religious counterpart to the political U.N. To that end, the URI became an official Non-Governmental Organization affiliated with the UN in the year 2001.

Founded by Bishop William Swing, the URI is composed of nearly two hundred "Cooperation Circles," each representing a minimum of three distinct religious systems.

The stated goal of the URI is "to promote enduring daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings."

The organization prohibits any form of dialogue between adherents of unlike faiths that is conducted for the purpose of acquiring converts, endorses a philosophy of situational ethics, and portrays their opposition (largely Jews and fundamental Christians) as intolerant obstacles to peace and enlightenment.

Three of the URI Charter's twenty-one principles are precepts to which fundamental Christians cannot subscribe.

Principle two declares: "We respect the sacred wisdom of each religion, spiritual expression, and indigenous tradition."

The tolerant nature of this tenet belies an intolerant attitude toward those who hold to an exclusive form of worship.

"*There is one Body and one Spirit, just as it was to one hope that you were called. There is Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is the one over all, the one working through all and the one living in all.*" – Ephesians 4:4-6 (PME)

Christians who accept the aforementioned scripture as an essential spiritual truth are unable to pronounce the wisdom of Paganism as an equally valid theological teaching. Such a person must either compromise his faith, or remain excluded from the initiative where he will find himself branded a subversive and castigated for the crime of religious discrimination.

The second troublesome principle is number seven, which states, "We seek and welcome the gift of diversity and model practices that do not discriminate."

The Bible teaches that witchcraft, idol worship, and homosexuality are activities which trespass God's law, a position which fails to conform to the URI model of diversity, as it discriminates against various religions, venerable cultures, and alternative lifestyles. It is clear that fundamental Christians will be unable to join such an association as the URI while continuing to remain faithful to the doctrine of the Bible.

Principle twenty-one concludes: "Members of the URI shall not be coerced to participate in any ritual or be proselytized."

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus instructed his followers to "*make disciples of all nations*," and according to Matthew 24:14, his return is based on the fulfillment of that great commission: "*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*"

2nd Corinthians 5:18-20 provides Christians with a license to plead for the world's reconciliation with their Creator (*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*) and 1st Peter 3:15 admonishes such ambassadors to be perpetually prepared to do so (*Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have.* – JB).

Ephesians 3:10 underscores this responsibility: "*His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities…*"

"*On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.*" - Mark 13:9

Principle twenty-one forbids Christians to fulfill their God-ordained duty to declare "*there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*" – Proverbs 14:12

The founder of the URI, and therefore the author of these principles, is a man greatly admired in ecumenical circles, namely the Bishop of the California Diocese of the Episcopal Church, Reverend William Swing.

Among the multitudinous activities planned as part of the United Nations Fiftieth Anniversary gala in 1993, it was decided that an interfaith prayer service would prove beneficial and appropriate, and Bishop Swing was asked to coordinate the effort.

It was this event which led him to envision an organization with the capacity to facilitate greater communication between members of diverse religions, in effect, a "United Nations of Religion" that would parallel the United Nations.

If the Bishop is widely-known for his views on globalism, he is also known for his liberal morality. The district in San Francisco over which he presides is vehemently pro-homosexual, and operates a program entitled "Oasis California" which provides for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender involvement in the Episcopal Ministry. The diocese is unequivocal in its endorsement of homosexual marriages, and in a 2001 letter to Oasis California, Bishop Swing remarked:

"Heterosexuals are a threat to marriage. Homosexual couples are a threat to the traditional institution of family. Homosexuals are kicked out of families and disowned. Then when they form their own families, they are abandoned by the Church. And when they raise their children, society treats them as being scandalously selfish. Nevertheless, we are all going to have to grow up and realize that the institution of family is changing before our eyes. Churches need to have family values -- values for the big, emerging family that has redefined itself."

In Swing's opinion, an exclusive (fundamental) view of Christianity is undesirable: "Fundamentalism...comes about where people feel more and more insecure, and grab harder and harder to the exclusive claims of one religion or another...The sense

of the freedom that there must be in God, and the generosity of God, and the compassion of God gets frozen out with the exclusive claims." He makes no apology for his judgment of religious exclusivists as hostile impediments to world peace.

Rather than take an aggressive stance on issues succinctly dealt with in scripture, the Bishop subscribes to a theology of moral relativity in which the concept of sin is made obsolete and all things are declared lawful.

Although Jesus stated in John 14:6, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*," Bishop Swing interprets the Bible according to a relativist worldview which has become increasingly popular with the present generation.

For his compromise of biblical truth and his willingness to be used as an agent of Satan, the International Diplomacy Council presented the Bishop with their Citizen's Diplomacy Award, an accolade which did not go unnoticed by California's Governor Gray Davis and President George W. Bush, who relayed their congratulations.

The President commended Swing for his accomplishment and hailed the URI for "facilitating international understanding."

Although URI membership numbers continue to multiply, fundamental Christians have yet to be numbered among their ranks, knowing that to equate the teachings of Christ with Shamanism, Druidism, Hinduism, or Satanism is to deny Christ, and thus disqualify themselves from the prize of eternal life (Matthew 10:32, 33; 2nd Timothy 2:12).

The URI is an ideal vehicle with which to institute the global religious system over which the False Apostle will have oversight, a system which Bishop William Swing currently chairs.

By his own admission, his ecumenical efforts have altered the way in which he views scripture:

"I've spent a lot of time praying with Brahmins, meditating with Hindus, and chanting with Buddhists. I feel I've been enormously enriched inwardly by exposure to these folks. I've gone back and read our own scriptures, and it's amazing how they begin to read differently when you're exposed to more truth from more people in other parts of the world."

It's anyone's guess as to what revelations emerged from an incorporation of biblical doctrine and pagan philosophy, but one certainty is manifested in abundant measure: the blending of two such disparate belief systems can only result in a hybrid creature unlike either progenitor – an accursed lineage.

"*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from Heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*" – Galatians 1:6-9

According to scripture, unless Bishop Swing repents, he will be eternally condemned for preaching an alternative gospel. Could he, however, be the preeminent apostle of such a gospel?

Is He Jewish?

Born in Huntington, West Virginia in 1936, Bishop William Swing is not a Jew, and his organization is centered in San Francisco, rather than Judea.

Does He Function As The Mouthpiece Of A Coming Christ?

Like many false teachers, Bishop Swing does not direct the attention of the world beyond the confines of the ecumenical movement, while the False Apostle will point to a political individual outside the organization.

Is He A Miracle Worker?

There is no evidence that Bishop Swing has been imbued with the power to perform miracles.

Does He Speak With The Wicked Voice Of A Dragon?

"*Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*'" - John 14:6

Bishop Swing teaches the alternative gospel that God can be reached by a multitude of avenues, denying the words of Jesus in John 10:1, 7-9:

"*I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber… I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.*"

According to Jesus Christ, William Swing is a thief and a robber.

According to the Apostle Paul, he is eternally condemned (Galatians 1:8).

According to 2nd Corinthians 6:14-16, he is bound to Belial (a name of Satan, and the personification of all that is evil): "*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.*"

Christians are not to enter into fellowship with individuals who profess to follow Christ and yet declare sin acceptable.

"*When I wrote in my letter to you not to associate with people living immoral lives, I was not meaning to include all the people in the world who are sexually immoral, any more than I meant to include all usurers and swindlers or idol worshipers. To do that, you would have to withdraw from the world altogether. What I wrote was that you should not associate with a brother Christian who is leading an immoral life, or is a usurer, or idolatrous, or a slanderer, or a drunkard, or is dishonest; you should not even eat a meal with people like that.*" – 1st Corinthians 5:9-11 (JB)

Bishop Swing is actively engaged in slandering the name of Jesus Christ and dishonestly representing his teachings. He is a dragon in lamb's clothing whom the sheep would do well to avoid.

Does He Seem Likely To Erect An Image Of Worship In The Future?

The San Franciscan Bishop does not appear to be in favor of erecting images for worship. In fact, he seems to advocate the demolition of many pre-existing examples of idolatry.

When questioned about the destruction of giant Buddha figures in Bamiyan by the Afghani Taliban, he remarked, "There are a lot of things that have the potential to be idols… and some of them need to be blown up," adding that the incident "raises the whole question of idolatry in this world."

Does He Have The Authority To Enforce His Beliefs Upon The World?

Although his association with the United Nations might someday provide him with the vehicle to enforce his beliefs, Swing has had difficulty garnering support from the Vatican, the leadership of Orthodox Christians, Muslims and the Southern Baptist Convention.

One of the ironies about the United Religions, Swing laments, is that religious groups convinced of their exclusive custody of the plan salvation are the most difficult to approach, and yet are in the greatest need of the URI's message of religious conciliation.

Conclusion

Bishop William Swing matches almost none of the biblical requirements for the False Apostle, proving that a candidate needs more than an association with the United Nations and a philosophy of globalism and ecumenicism in order to be seriously considered as the Antichrist's personal prophet.

Benjamin Crème – A Psychic John the Baptist

Benjamin Creme, a British artist and long-time student of esoteric philosophy, has become the principal source of information about the emergence of an entity known as Maitreya, the World Teacher.

Born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1922, Benjamin Creme began studying the teachings released in the late nineteenth century through Helena Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, and more recently through Alice A. Bailey. These teachings persuaded him to believe in the existence of the enlightened Masters of Wisdom, a union of ascended entities who function as the custodians of the Divine Plan for planet Earth.

His endeavor to become more receptive to their cosmic communiqués resulted in his contact with one of the Masters in 1959, and the subsequent disclosure of his selection as a facilitator of Lord Maitreya's return in approximately two decades.

Thirteen years later, Creme's training began in earnest as he prepared to proclaim the arrival of the World Teacher supposedly known to every religion under alternative titles such as the Christ, Messiah, Imam Mahdi, Krishna, and Maitreya Buddha.

From 1975 to 1979, Creme lectured throughout Europe, and spent 1980 on tour in the United States, speaking to large audiences in many major cities. Since the early 1980's, he has been engaged to speak throughout Western and Eastern Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Mexico, with two regularly-scheduled lectures within the U.S. each year. In America alone, more than three hundred radio and television programs have extended invitations for him to share his sensational story of a supernatural collective and its plans for humankind.

Creme is the co-editor of Share International, a monthly magazine circulated throughout seventy nations which contemplates global political, economic, social and spiritual transformation, and his books detailing the return of Christ have been translated into seven languages and published throughout the world.

Unlike many other religious sensationalists, Benjamin Creme requests no remuneration for his work and makes no claims of spiritual superiority, lending an air of authenticity to his words. That authentic sense of purpose, combined with his intelligence and exuberant humor, has lent tenability to an otherwise untenable tale, prompting scores of leading broadcasters to concur with the assessment of Canadian Broadcasting producer Max Allen: "The Maitreya story is important and Creme is an admirable spokesman."

Since his initial public discourse in 1974, Creme's message has been heard by millions, and many have collaborated to amplify it to the world.

Creme believes his task is to create a climate of hope and expectancy within the public consciousness with respect to the imminent appearance of Lord Maitreya. The following is his story, told in his own words.

"In late 1958, I was told by a fellow disciple who had the 'connection,' that I was receiving 'messages.' This surprised me, and I had no sense that it was true. I was told that the messages 'bounced off' me, but if I did such and such, in time I would receive correctly.

"I must have done the right thing, because one night, early in January 1959, so clearly there was no mistaking, I heard inwardly the instruction: go to so-and-so (a place in London), on such-and-such a date and time, some three weeks ahead. On the night, there were people waiting there to meet me.

"That was the start of a flow of messages which came in gathering momentum. Some, apparently, I missed (I was told later when I missed one) and I became so afraid of missing them that I gave them to myself. I sent myself on several rendezvous, where nothing happened and no one came, but gradually I settled down; I did not miss them and I stopped making them up. I was told to get a tape-recorder, and received many long dictations of various kinds. Some contained advice, guidance, or spiritual instruction. I was not told the identity of the Master (or Masters) who spoke thus, telepathically, to me, and I think I was too shy to ask, although I was told I could ask questions. It was not until years later that I learned his name and also that I would have been told had I asked long ago.

"One night, early in 1959, during such a transmission, I was told to turn off the tape-recorder. There followed a discourse on his Reappearance by Maitreya, the Christ, Head of our planetary hierarchy. He said also that I would have a part in the plan. At that time I believed that the World Teacher would come from one of the higher planets, probably from Venus, and this information from Maitreya caused a complete upset to my thinking. In a transmission soon after this event, my Master, referring to this new-found knowledge, added: 'The time is coming when you will be expected to act upon it.' And in another: 'Affirm his coming!'

"I cannot claim that I took these exhortations to heart and that that is why I am engaged in this work of preparation for the Christ. On instruction, I put these tapes away for seventeen years and I am afraid I needed a rather strong push from the Master to launch me into this work.

"Towards the end of 1972, when I was rather in the doldrums and least expecting it, that Wise, and Wily One, whom I have the privilege to call Master, pounced. He took me in hand, and subjected me to the most intensive period of de-glamorization, disillusioning, training and preparation. For months we worked together, twenty hours a day, deepening and strengthening the telepathic link until it was two-way with equal ease, requiring the minimum of his attention and energy. He forged in this period an instrument through whom he could work, and which would be responsive to his slightest impression (of course, with my complete cooperation and without the slightest infringement of my free-will). Everything I see and hear, he sees and hears. When he wishes, a look from me can be a look from him; my touch, his. So, with the minimum expenditure of energy he has a window on the world, an outpost of his consciousness; he can heal and teach. He himself remains, in a fully physical body, thousands of miles away. I am not suggesting that I am his only 'window on the world.' I do not know how rare this is, but I am sure that it is not unique.

"Towards the end of 1974, the Master said, several times: 'You know, you must take all this to the public. It is of little use giving this information to the twenty or so people, only, who are here.' The pantomime began: I would remonstrate, plead not to have to 'go public.' He would assure me that he was only joking: 'I have other plans for you,' he would say, and I would relax again. But in January, 1975, he finally said: 'I mean it. Give this information (he had dictated a mass of information on how the plan would work out) to the groups, of all backgrounds and teachings. Tell them what you know. The hope is that from the more focused minds of the groups will go out a telepathic interplay with the general public, so that when you go to them, they will be somewhat prepared.'

"I didn't like it. I didn't like it at all. I liked what I was doing. I liked working quietly, esoterically, knowing I was doing something useful, but neither too strenuous nor making too great psychological demands on me. I did nothing about the groups until several firm pushes from the Master at last got me moving. In March or April I wrote hopefully to forty or so groups working along spiritual lines, offering my services as a speaker on "The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of the Wisdom." The response, not surprisingly, for I was quite unknown, was not altogether overwhelming. I had, I think, about six or seven replies. Three of these groups were interested to know more — all newish groups run by young people — Centre House, Gentle Ghost and the Franklin School, and I gave a talk at each, the first at Centre House, on May 30th 1975.

"I was very nervous. Although I knew my material, I did not have it in any sort of order. The Master, in his kindness, dictated for me a list of headings which I could glance at, and, in fact, so overshadowed me throughout the talk that he practically gave it. Just before the end, I was suddenly overshadowed by Maitreya himself, my heart melted, and I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my voice steady. The following words were put into my mind:

" 'When the Christ returns, he will not at first reveal his Presence, nor will the Masters Who precede Him; but gradually, steps will be taken which will reveal to men that there lives among them now a man of outstanding, extraordinary potency, capacity for love and service, and with a breadth of view far beyond the ordinary. Men and women, all over the world, will find themselves drawn into the awareness of the point in the modern world wherein this man will live, and from that center of force will flow the

True Spirit of the Christ, which will gradually reveal to men that he is with us. Those who can respond to his presence and his teaching will find themselves somewhat reflecting this love, this potency, this breadth of vision, and will go into the world and spread abroad the fact that the Christ is in the world, and that men should look to that country from which a certain teaching is emanating. This will take place in a very, relatively, short period of time, and will lead to conclusive evidence that the Christ is in our midst.

" 'From that time onwards, the changes which will take place in the world will proceed with a speed unprecedented in the whole history of the planet. The next twenty-five years will show such changes, changes so radical, so fundamental, that the world will be entirely changed for the better.'

"No one was more surprised than I was to hear this statement. Not until I heard it back on tape was I sure, even, that it made sense.

"At the beginning of September 1977, I was asked if I would take the messages from Maitreya publicly. On September 6th 1977, the first public message was given, at Friends House, Euston Road, 'experimentally,' to find out, I suppose, how I stood up to the demonstration of this kind of overshadowing and telepathy in public — a very different thing from the privacy of one's own group. These have continued until now. At the moment of going to press we have received eighty-five messages. These are conveyed by me to the audience; no trance or mediumship is involved, and the voice is mine, very obviously strengthened in power and altered in pitch by the overshadowing energy of Maitreya.

"It is an enormous and embarrassing claim to have to make — that the Christ is giving messages through oneself. But if people can rid their minds of the idea of the Christ as some sort of spirit, sitting in Heaven at God's right hand; if they can begin to see him as indeed he is, as a real and living man (albeit a Divine man) who has never left the world; who descended, not from Heaven, but from his ancient retreat in the Himalayas, to complete the task he began in Palestine; as a great Master; an Adept and Yogi; as the chief actor in a Gospel Story which is essentially true, but much simpler than hitherto presented; if people can accept that possibility, then the claim to receive telepathic communications from such a closer and more knowable being is also, perhaps, more acceptable." (From "The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom," by Benjamin Creme)

The following are revealing answers to questions concerning the nature of his relationship with the Masters, taken from the FAQ page of his website at http://www.shareintl.org/archives/B_Creme/faq_Benjamin_Creme.htm:

Q: What are the qualities which have made you the spokesman for Maitreya?

A: "The main quality, I suppose is doggedness, steadfastness - by which I mean holding on, never giving up - and the ability to go on saying the same thing over and over again. For 25 years I have been doing this work of preparing the way for Maitreya to a public which is skeptical to a degree, to a media which is almost totally cynical, trying to put forward very complex, difficult ideas to people without the background of experience or reading to absorb them easily. The people who come to my meetings are self-chosen - they would never attend such meetings if they were not somewhat open to the ideas. Why are my meetings not full of journalists ? Because every journalist thinks he or she knows everything about everything, and mostly they know little about anything. That is a factor

in the dissemination of this profoundly important information. Of course, the other, probably most important factor is that I can be contacted, telepathically and consciously, by my Master and by Maitreya if necessary."

Q: Are you the only one speaking about the appearance of Maitreya?

A: "Originally, five disciples were asked to make this approach to the public about the reappearance: one in New York; myself in London; one in Geneva; one in Darjeeling; and one in Tokyo. Unfortunately, I am the only one who has taken up this work publicly. The disciple in New York (working in the New Thought movement) does not believe in the Christ's physical presence. Likewise, the disciple in Geneva does not believe my story. The disciple in Darjeeling is still "asleep," while the one in Tokyo - a woman - believes that she is Maitreya! So, in a sense, I am alone in presenting this information to the world, but I am courageously aided by very many men and women all over the world. We work very much as an extended group, in close communication all the time. These autonomous groups in each country make themselves responsible for disseminating this information in their area."

Q: What happens during the overshadowing of yourself at the beginning and end of a meeting?

A: "Some fragment of Maitreya's extraordinary consciousness overshadows - comes into my consciousness. When the Messages were originally given, Maitreya thought the Messages and they automatically entered my mind. At the same time I was very highly magnetized, so I could almost only say what I said and I could not say it in any other way. With the magnetization, my breath was controlled, and the control of the breath controls how you actually speak. Although I was speaking, he was manipulating the breath, so I spoke as I did, with a mantric effect. I gave the physical-plane energy; my etheric energy and my voice allowed him, at the same time, to impress the same message, the same ideas, on all the planes - for example, on the astral planes so that they can influence the astral mediums around the world (they do not get it exact, but they get the idea). Thus the world has been prepared in a very definite way about the reality of the Christ's appearance. My job has been to create the climate of hope, of expectancy, so that Maitreya can enter our lives without infringing free will. For most people, I would say, the truth of what I am saying lies in their experience of the overshadowing. People see me covered with light and actually disappearing during the overshadowing (I don't disappear to myself; I am sitting there absolutely solid, but the light so surrounds me that I am lost in the light).

"Sometimes people see Maitreya's face appear where my face was, and the room is filled with the light. Only a miniscule quantity of Maitreya's consciousness enters into mine, but it is enough to convince thousands of people all over the world of the reality of this happening. It is a blessing, a spiritual nourishing, which he pours out to the people in the audience. For most people that is what convinces. Anyone can make up a story, but you cannot invent that energy."

If the story of Benjamin Creme is true, then he is in contact with spiritual forces of darkness and he works to prepare the way for the antithesis of Christ rather than the true Son of God – a sign that he may be genuinely coupled to a vast reservoir of demonic power; a prerequisite for the office of False Apostle.

Is He Jewish?

Benjamin Creme can trace his Jewish ancestry through his father, who emigrated from Russia to Scotland.

Does He Function As The Mouthpiece Of A Coming Christ?

His primary objective, by his own admission, is to prepare the world for the reappearance of Christ, an entity which has at sundry times adopted a variety of names and titles, including Messiah, Krishna, and Buddha Maitreya.

Is He A Miracle Worker?

Creme claims to periodically disappear within a glorious light when overshadowed by Maitreya, and that his countenance is frequently altered to resemble the World Teacher during these sessions. Such phenomena is consistent with the known characteristics of demon possession, and combined with the fact that not a single individual has come forward to repudiate these claims of supernatural manifestation, the scales of inquiry are seemingly tipped in the direction of authenticity rather than forgery. At the very least, there is no evidence with which to expose the miracles as fraudulent.

Does He Speak With The Wicked Voice Of A Dragon?

Among other things, Creme denies Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, and Acts 1:9-11, which testify to Christ's Heavenly ascension and subsequent seat at the right hand of God. In fact, he urges men to rid their minds of such notions and to embrace the "simpler" gospel that he ascended into the Himalayas.

This view supposes a bit of prevarication on the part of Jesus, when he said in John 14:2, "*In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.*" In order to reconcile Creme's claim with scripture, God's house must exist in the Himalaya mountain range where believers will dwell in the hereafter on some snowcapped peak.

He also claims that "when the Christ returns, he will not at first reveal his presence," a contradiction of Matthew 24:23-28 in which Jesus declared that his return would be as conspicuous as vultures circling a carcass and as striking as an eastern lightning which is visible even in the west.

His words do not reverberate with truth, but with the falsehood of the dragon.

"*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*" – John 8:44

Does He Seem Likely To Erect An Image Of Worship In The Future?

The following question was put to Creme and is reproduced on the FAQ page of his website:

Q: Does Maitreya use any of the many statues of him to transmit his energies through?

His answer: "Yes, most certainly. One example is a famous statue in wood in the Koryuji Temple in Kyoto, Japan, dating from the sixth and seventh centuries. For centuries it has been known as 'the statue of the golden light' because of the radiance which is sometimes seen to emanate from it."

There is presently a project to erect a five-hundred foot statue of Maitreya in Bodhgaya, India. Bodhgaya is the site of the Mahabodhi stupa (a chief Buddhist pilgrimage site) and the ancient Bodhi Tree, under which the historical Buddha gained his "enlightenment."

The five hundred-foot bronze statue of Maitreya Buddha is being designed to endure one thousand years, and is scheduled for completion in January, 2005.

Never before has a statue of this size been constructed. For comparison, the Statue of Liberty rises to a height of one hundred fifty-feet, thus the Maitreya Statue will dominate more than three times the amount of skyline and occupy more than twenty times the volume of space.

Construction of the image will require the collaboration of innovative technologies and craftsmen of superlative skills in a colossal exhibition of the advanced engineering necessary to overcome the architectural, constructional, and maintenance challenges posed by the Maitreya Project. The huge edifice must be capable of withstanding the abrasions which one thousand years will impose upon the structure, including high winds, extreme temperature changes, seasonal rains, possible earthquakes and floods, and environmental pollution.

Although Creme's Share International organization has denied any involvement of Benjamin Creme with the Maitreya Project, and declared the endeavor to be an "entirely independent" undertaking, Creme has admitted that Maitreya benefits from such structures, which amplify the transmissions of his supernatural energy.

Given that these statues are conducive to broadcasting the ascended master's energies throughout the world, it is reasonable to assume that Benjamin approves of their construction, and that he might choose to endorse the manufacture of such an image in the future. While he presently has no association with the Maitreya Project, the statue will not be completed until 2005, providing a period of two years in which he may yet forge an association with the structure.

At the very least, he has verified that the manifestation of Maitreya's energies are positively affected by the presence of the Maitreya statues. As his responsibility is to prepare the world for the appearance of the "Christ," this admission alone is enough to suggest a future involvement in the assembly of such an image.

Does He Have The Authority To Enforce His Beliefs Upon The World?

Presently, Creme has no way of enforcing worship of his lord Maitreya, but if his miracles of light escalate into threatening displays of blazing gouts of flame plummeting from the sky, many may be commoved to submit to his particular brand of theism.

Conclusion

Benjamin Creme appears to have one foot solidly planted in the dark side of the spiritual realm, and is an intriguing candidate for False Apostle. He matches four of the six characteristics and possibly a fifth, but his inability to obtrude his theology upon an antipathetic populace, and the issue of his advanced age (80) are two issues which severely impede the campaign to proclaim him the antecessor of Antichrist.

Of course, many people live to become centenarians, and Satanic power may be able to sustain a human body until it reaches the extreme limits of its capacity for vitality, perhaps even capable of propelling it beyond the outermost atypical degree, but the odds

are not in favor of such an occurrence and in any event, the issue of Creme's exiguous authority remains.

The False Apostle will order the world to erect an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He will execute any who refuse to worship the image, and will impose upon the world a mark which will be required for survival.

Benjamin Creme is without even a fraction of the authority required to institute such action, and it is difficult to imagine him being presented with the global jurisdiction to do so ahead of younger individuals already in positions of world leadership.

Pope John Paul II – Vicar of Satan

The Catholic Church has long possessed a reputation for wickedness – a legacy of deception, violence, and pagan influence which has been documented by such reverent minds as Alexander Hislop ("The Two Babylons") and Ralph Woodrow ("Babylon Mystery Religion"), recognized as early as 1560 by such defenders of the faith as Myles Coverdale and John Foxe (whose Geneva Bible openly identified the Pope as Antichrist), and perpetuated by the Satanic displays of allegiance as performed by Pope John Paul II, three of which are detailed below.

1. The Silver Scepter

The crucifix held aloft by Pope John Paul II is of a type not customarily carried by the Pontifex Maximus. Known as the "silver scepter," or "Twisted Crucifix," the bent cross was created by Black Magick Satanists in the sixth century as a symbol of both Antichrist and his mark of 666.

In appearance, the portion of the stipes extending upward above the crossbeam sags toward the ground as if bent by a gigantic hand, while the horizontal patibulum curves forward in a warped arc from which depends the repulsive and distorted figure of an emaciated Christ – a blasphemous symbol of Antichrist worshipped by jubilant throngs of people who remain ignorant of its true meaning.

There are reports of a New World Order Plan in which the Roman Catholic Pope has been selected to become the world's supreme religious leader, and if such a plan exists, then John Paul II's use of this Twisted Crucifix is consistent with that role, as he has caused millions to unwittingly bow before an image of Antichrist.

2. The Mark of Shiva

It was reported in the first quarter of 1998 by the "Former Catholics For Christ" newsletter, that Pope John Paul II had permitted a Shiva priestess to reproduce the traditional Shiva mark on his forehead.

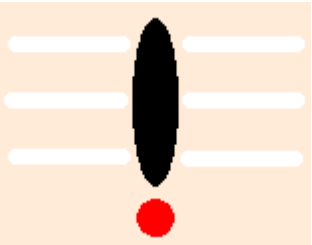
In Revelation chapter thirteen, the False Apostle implements a system in which all persons must receive a mark, either in the forehead or in the right hand. Hence, the placing of a mark in the forehead of the Pope by a pagan priestess sets an eerie precedent.

"Although [in Hinduism] many divinities may be worshiped, modern Hindus are generally divided into followers of Vishnu, Shiva, or Shakti." – Compton's 1999 Encyclopedia

"Shiva (Sanskrit for "auspicious one"), [is] also called Siva, [the] Hindu god who personifies both the destructive and the procreative forces of the universe. As the destroyer, he is represented wearing a necklace of skulls and surrounded by demons. His reproductive aspect is symbolized by the lingam, a phallic emblem." – Microsoft 2000 Encarta Encyclopedia

A lingam is a stylized phallus, derived from the Sanskrit words "li" and "gam," which mean "mark" and "penis," respectively.

In temples, Shiva is identified with his lingam, or phallus, resting in the yoni, a stylized representation of the vulva, and thus a representation of female sexuality.



The mark of Shiva, which the Pope received, is then understood to have been a representation of an erect penis entering a vagina, and is depicted below:

Why would the "Vicar of Christ on Earth" consent to the application of such an immoral emblem on his forehead?

When one understands the nature of the Pope as a Satanic dragon disguised as a Christian lamb, his motivation for receiving such a mark becomes clear.

In accepting the mark of Shiva, Pope John Paul II has disobeyed the commandment of God set forth in Jeremiah 10:2: "*Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen*." – KJV

3. The Inverted Cross

On March 24, 2000, the Pope appeared at the Mount of Beatitudes (Karn Hattin in Galilee) to address over eighty thousand attendees concerning the subject of youth evangelism.

The throne on which he positioned himself for this event was emblazoned with a blasphemous Inverted Cross. Of the many Satanic pictograms, the Inverted Cross is one of the most vile depictions of occult sacrilege.

To take the Christian symbol of the cross and turn it upside down, is to declare a gospel that is diametrically-opposed to the teachings of Christ. To do so is to proclaim that Jesus was not born of a virgin, that he surrendered to temptation and engaged in sin even while claiming to be faultless, and denies his resurrection and his deity.

This antipodal declaration of Jesus Christ denies his lineage as the Son of God and proclaims him Antichrist in a dangerously unforgivable display of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:22-32), for it insists that his power to perform miracles was derived, not from his Father in Heaven, but from Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

The official explanation given by the Vatican is that the Inverted Cross represents the crucifix upon which Simon Peter was crucified.

An early Christian historian named Hegesippus recorded that after his final arrest, Peter requested that he be crucified upside-down because he did not consider himself worthy of being executed in the same position as his Lord, a story also recounted by John Foxe in his famous book of martyrs.

However, the Apostle Peter was nailed upside-down to a cross that was emplaced upright in the ground after the usual custom of the Roman executioners. The cross itself was not inverted – only the captive.

"*Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.*" – Revelation 13:11

Pope John Paul II displays a façade of Christian love and kindness, extolling the virtues of peace and morality, yet every inclination of his heart is continually evil.

"*Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.*" – Proverbs 26:23

The Amplified Bible renders the preceding scripture this way: "*Burning lips [uttering insincere words of love] and a wicked heart are like an earthen vessel covered with the scum thrown off from molten silver [making it appear to be solid silver]*."

Is He Jewish?

Pope John Paul II was born in Poland in 1920, and is not Jewish.

Does He Function As The Mouthpiece Of A Coming Christ?

During his tenure at Rome, the Pope has championed the issues of world peace, human rights, arms control, and racial equality. A persistent voice for moderation and the right of the unborn to life, he has spoken out against Communism, homosexuality, and contraception, yet he has not expressed more than a token presentiment concerning the return of Jesus Christ.

In fact, the cause of Christ's delay he attributes to the unbelief of the Jews, appealing to 2nd Peter 3:9 to augment his assertion that the Messiah will not return until the nation of Israel recognizes Jesus of Nazareth for the Christ, a realization that is not likely to dawn as even an emerging ray of sunlight on the horizon of the next millennia.

The official position of the Vatican with respect to the reappearance of Christ can be found on its authorized website at www.vatican.va:

"And when one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God; the other awaits the coming of a Messiah, whose features remain hidden till the end of time; and the latter waiting is accompanied by the drama of not knowing or of misunderstanding Christ Jesus." – Catechism of the Catholic Church; Part One, Section Two, Chapter Three, Article Nine, Paragraph Three, Reference 840

"The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel", for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus. St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom Heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." St. Paul echoes him: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" The "full inclusion" of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles", will enable the People of God to achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", in which "God may be all in all"." – Catechism of the Catholic Church; Part One, Section Two, Chapter Two, Article Seven, Reference 674

Pope John Paul II has elected to use the influence of his office to advance his position on various issues of the day, rather than to proclaim that the end of the age, and therefore the Christ, draweth nigh.

Is He A Miracle Worker?

The principal supernatural phenomena occurring within the Roman Catholic church in the late twentieth century are events which have been given the term "Eucharistic miracles."

In addition to numerous reports of visions and voices originating from the Mother of Jesus, there has been an astonishing quantity of recent manifestations corroborated by both eyewitnesses and videotape testimony relating to the sudden bleeding of communion hosts consecrated during the celebration of Catholic Mass. Such phenomena has been

reported previously in history, however, modern incidents are unique due to the preponderance and frequency of the occurrences.

Accounts of bleeding and weeping statues, bleeding and levitating hosts, and other inexplicable phenomena occur intermittently throughout Catholic historical literature, beginning in about 250 A.D.

One such incident occurred in the eighth century village of Lanciano, Italy during the celebration of Catholic mass. As the words of consecration were spoken, the outer edge of one of the hosts was observed to transform into a ring of flesh surrounding the remaining wafer, and the communion wine transformed into visible blood.

The flesh and blood were then placed into special containers where they have remained to this day.

In order to determine the exact nature of the miraculous tissue, a scientific investigation was conducted in 1970 and again in 1981 by Odoardo Linoli, a noted Professor of Anatomy and Pathological Histology as well as Chemistry and Clinical Microscopy. Professor Ruggero Bertelli of the University of Siena assisted in the evaluation, which was documented with absolute and unquestionable scientific precision via a series of microscopic photographs.

Although the container into which the flesh and blood from the Eucharist had been placed was not hermetically sealed, the samples had not deteriorated to any discernible degree – a miracle in itself.

The flesh sample contained within was found to be striated muscular tissue of a myocardial wall and other components which, as a whole, constitute the human heart muscle.

The blood sample was found to be of type AB human blood and the proteins found within were discovered to exist in quantities identically proportionate to that of *fresh* blood.

Given that the samples have been exposed to the deleterious effects of twelve centuries' worth of atmospheric and biological agents, the preservation of the flesh and blood remains an extraordinary modern display of the miraculous power of Satan.

More than two dozen documented reports of similar Eucharistic miracles have occurred throughout Europe between the tenth and fifteenth centuries, with dozens more since that time and many new sealed containers of miraculously transformed flesh and blood which remain on display in Roman Catholic reliquaries for the perusal of believers and skeptics alike.

While many of these miracles have transpired in ages past, many more are inscribing themselves under the advancing edge of the historical timeline.

During Mass in Betania, Venezuela on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1991, a consecrated host began to bleed. A medical team later verified that the substance exuded by the host was, in fact, human blood. The local bishop declared it to be incontrovertible evidence of the transubstantiation doctrine, declaring, "God is trying to manifest to us that our faith in the consecrated Host is authentic."

Other events of the supernatural order have occurred in Betania, including numerous apparitions of the Blessed Mother which have been observed by thousands of witnesses, multiple physical and spiritual healings, and physical manifestations of stigmata, bilocation, and levitation. The bishop of Betania has also witnessed such

phenomena and in a pastoral letter has declared the apparitions to be of an authentic and supernatural nature.

On July 1, 1995, Bishop Roman Danylak of Toronto, Ontario celebrated Mass together with Father Joseph Peter Finn of Ontario, Canada, and a Korean priest. Affixed to the wall above the altar, a figurine of the crucified Christ was observed by a female in attendance named Julia Kim to assume a human body of flesh which proceeded to bleed from seven wounds. The falling drops of blood morphed into seven white communion hosts, which clattered onto the altar before a statue of the Blessed Mother. The falling hosts were observed by many eyewitnesses, and even more testified to hearing them tumble onto the altar.

The following day, all seven hosts were consumed according to the local Archbishop's instructions, and the seventh was presented to Julia Kim. At the moment she received the wafer and the wine, the host began to swell within her mouth. A strong odor of blood pervaded the room and the host began to move about on her tongue.

The white edge of the host began to disappear, transforming itself into a substance which exuded a crimson fluid. Those in attendance were not oblivious to the manifestation within their midst, and a hastily located camera documented the proceedings. Photographs and eyewitness testimony revealed that the host had changed into a dark red mass of living flesh from which flowed rivulets of blood.

Bishop Danylak's written testimony affirms, "In Julia's mouth the species of unleavened bread changed to the species of flesh and the species of wine changed into the species of blood. In the twilight of 5:30 p.m. that momentous Friday the rest of us observed the moving flesh on her tongue and the blood brimming under her tongue and filling the creases of her lips. It was only later, as we examined the photos, that we began to apprehend the full magnitude of the miracle. The host had changed into a living and vibrant heart.

"After Mass, Julia shared with us that she experienced the Divine Flesh as a thick consistency and a copious flowing of blood, more so than on the occasion of previous miracles of the changing of the host into bleeding flesh. We remained in silence and prayer; all present had the opportunity of viewing and venerating the miraculous host. After some moments I asked Julia to swallow and consume the host. And after the Mass Julia explained that the Host had become large and fleshy; and that she consumed it with some difficulty."

Julia's written testimony concludes the affair: "I swallowed the Host with much difficulty, because it had changed into a piece of flesh, and had become larger. We were crying and entered into prayerful meditation; a light came down from Heaven and the voice of Jesus, at once warm and loving, and full of dignity and majesty, made itself heard, even though I could not see Him."

A sample of the blood taken from Julia's mouth was later subjected to DNA testing at the medical laboratory of Seoul National University and was found to be human blood.

It is interesting to note that three years earlier, Julia Kim and her husband received Pope John Paul II's blessing in Rome on June 3, 1992. She again visited the Vatican on October 31, 1995 (Halloween) where the event was duplicated and witnessed by the Pope during a Mass in his private chapel.

With increasing rapidity, supernatural manifestations are occurring within the Roman Catholic church. Hosts have been transformed into visible flesh when consecrated, hosts have bled, hosts have become as hard as stone when given to individuals perceived to be guilty of mortal sin, hosts have levitated and have signaled their hidden presence by mysterious appearances of light, persons have suddenly begun bleeding from wounds supernaturally inflicted upon each hand and foot for which doctors have no medical explanation, and there have been visions, audible voices, and phenomena of tears, fire, and light in miraculous displays of Satanic power which simply cannot be ignored.

Seated atop this blood-soaked behemoth of devilish debauchery, Pope John Paul II is drawing genuine power from the occult realm with his talismans of twisted and inverted crucifixes, twin batons of malevolence with which the Vicar of Christ has conducted an infernal symphony composed entirely of dissonant chords – and yet a refrain which inexplicably resonates with one-sixth of the world as they waltz toward a horrific and irrevocable eternity.

Does He Speak With The Wicked Voice Of A Dragon?

"*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*" – Matthew 7:15-20

"*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.*" – Proverbs 23:7 (AMP)

"*Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be.*" – Matthew 6:21 (NLT)

The fruit of the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore of necessity the Pope, has been proven throughout the centuries by men of principle and virtue to be a harvest of rotten bounty, reeking with the putrefaction of thinly disguised Satanism.

"*But do not trust any and every spirit, my friends; test the spirits, to see whether they are from God, for among those who have gone out into the world there are many prophets falsely inspired."* – 1st John 4:1 (NEB)

When the spirit of Pope John Paul II is tested, when his fruit is examined, and the treasure of his heart revealed, he is exposed as a whitewashed sepulcher, full of dead men's bones.

Does He Seem Likely To Erect An Image Of Worship In The Future?

Roman Catholicism is replete with statues, icons, and venerated effects. There are magnificent cathedrals which boast over four thousand pieces of statuary, and a black statue, claimed to be a representation of the Apostle Peter located in St. Peter's Basilica, is nearly without its toe, so often has it been kissed.

With its monolithic cathedrals, towering obelisks, and impressive sculptures of saintly figures, it would be shocking if the Catholic Church *ceased* to erect such structures of worship!

It would entirely remain within the character of the Vatican to construct additional images of worship in the future.

Does He Have The Authority To Enforce His Beliefs On The World?

The Pontifical office enjoys the highest of profiles and is said to command a following of over one billion adherents from all over the world. It cannot be said that the Pope is privileged to meet with high-ranking world leaders and dignitaries, for quite the opposite is true, as politicians and heads of state consider themselves greatly esteemed when selected to host a Papal reception.

"*And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.*" – Hebrews 7:7

John Paul II may not command an army of Vatican Guard with which to ensure worldwide compliance with the Catholic faith, but he does command the attention of governors the world over, and the voluntary allegiances of one-sixth of the earth's population.

If the New Age objective is to establish the Roman Pontiff as superintendent of a united religions movement (as Roman Catholic priest Malachi Martin asserted in his book, "The Keys to this Blood"), and if retired U.N. Assistant Secretary General Robert Muller is successful in creating a United Nations Anti-Terrorist Police Force and Tribunal, the two halves of global authority will forge a union in which the religious body will benefit from the political office.

To wit, the administrative branch of government will afford the Pope legislative authority to institute global religious policies which the administration will then enforce.

Although the Pope may not currently possess a judicial authority, it is a prize well within the reach of his ambitious arm, and a goal which the powers of this world seem anxious that he achieve.

In summation, the answer to the issue of his authority must be recorded as a negative for the present time, understanding however, that such a status could change with but a moment's notice.

Conclusion

Although the Vatican has never officially commented on the Pope's physical condition, he has shown symptoms of Parkinson's Disease for years; a diagnosis publicly confirmed by one of his doctors in January of 2001.

He has also been treated for cancer, undergone an appendectomy, was shot twice in an attempt at assassination, and endured both a fractured shoulder and a broken leg in an incident which led to hip replacement surgery. John Paul II has also suffered repercussions from being struck by vehicles on two different occasions as a youth.

At the age of eighty-two, he is not likely to remain on this earth much longer, and at any rate, he is not Jewish.

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the Jewish Archbishop of Paris, is a potential candidate for his replacement. His selection would resolve the Jewish issue, but at seventy-six, it is doubtful he could survive another decade.

If, however, the Cardinal is appointed as Pope John Paul II's replacement, four of the six requirements would immediately be accounted for, and as a Jew who has never forsaken his background, he might become the first Pope to declare the imminent return of Messiah - an action which would fulfill the fifth prerequisite. The sixth criterion of authority would be met providing the Roman Catholic leader is appointed head of an ecumenical organization by the United Nations.

Of the seven men profiled, none fit the profile perfectly, and none so well as Benjamin Creme or possibly Cardinal Lustiger. Creme has not the authority, and Lustiger has not the office of Pope, thus it seems probable that the False Apostle has yet to appear, and that his personality will resemble a Benny Hinn albeit with genuine power, or a Benjamin Creme with genuine authority.

If this exercise has demonstrated nothing else, it has made abundantly evident that Christ's prophecy in Matthew 24:24 has been proven correct, when he said, "*Fake Messiahs and lying preachers are going to pop up everywhere. Their impressive credentials and dazzling performances will pull the wool over the eyes of even those who ought to know better.*" (MSG)

Whatever his identity, the False Apostle will order an image of the Antichrist erected and will cause the image to achieve sentience. Thus animated, the image will require the worship of all mankind, else their lives will be forfeit.

The image may take the form of a literal statue, after the manner of King Nebuchadnezzar's ninety-foot image of gold, or it could be an electronic image such as that reproduced by television. The "life" of the image may be nothing more than a transmitted series of radio frequencies collected by a video terminal and assembled into a likeness of Antichrist which will then appear to move and speak through the modern miracles of audiovisual and satellite technology.

The final significant act of the False Apostle will be to implement a global system of worship in which a sinister mark of allegiance will be permanently affixed to either the forehead or right hand of every earthly individual.

"*This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.*" – Revelation 13:18

24. 666

"*This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.*" – Revelation 13:18

The false apostle will require all flesh to participate in a global system of worship with economic ramifications involving the mandatory acknowledgment of a mark placed into the right hand or forehead.

Two details in relation to this mark are provided by scripture, with the first being its value of 666 as it relates to the identity of the beast, and the second revealing it to be a number unique to humankind.

There are two schools of thought concerning the meaning of the Greek "anthropos" within the context of Revelation 13:18, with the first translating it as the specific "a man," and the second as the all-encompassing "man," or "mankind."

According to Zondervan's NIV Exhaustive Concordance, the word can be translated as "human being, person, humankind, [or] people." It is "used of human beings in contrast to animals or deity," and relates information "from [a] human point of view."

The question of which definition to endorse is an issue which every team of Bible translators has faced, with the majority selecting the singular definition and therefore associating the numeric 666 with the name of Antichrist. The general definition is well represented by such respected translations as the New International Version, the Revised Standard Version, the Wycliffe New Testament, and the Message. The Amplified Bible straddles the issue by rendering the text in the general fashion while providing the singular definition in its additional "flavor" brackets.

If the number 666 represents the name of a specific man, it has not aided in his identification, for many political figures have been credited with fulfilling this prophecy, including past U.S. Presidents, Russian Premiers, and Roman Caesars. There seem to be a plethora of mathematical formulas which enable any given name to equal the sum of 666.

If, however, the number was not intended to designate any particular individual and the NIV/RSV scholars are correct in their broad rendering of the word as a structure unique to the culture of the Earth, then which specific human institution does it represent?

"*This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six.*" – Revelation 13:18 (RSV)

Scripture reveals the mark of 666 to be the name of a beast. Revelation chapter thirteen references two separate beasts: a beast that rises from the sea, and a beast that emerges from the land. Which beast is designated by the iniquitous mark?

"*He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.*" – Revelation 18:15-17

The mark belongs to "the first beast," which arose from out of the sea. The first beast has been identified in a previous chapter as the One-World Government System in which the Antichrist is represented as an undersized horn.

The key to deciphering the mark is the knowledge that it is representative of the *beast*, not the beast's little horn, and thus designates the global government system rather than its bombastic leader.

For those who would insist that the mark specifically be applied to the name of a precise individual, the Greek "onoma" translated in Revelation 13:17 as "name," can also mean "title," or "reputation." This same "onoma" is found in Revelation 19:16 in which it refers to a title: "*And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*" (KJV)

Thus, the suggestion that the mark refers to a titled human organization, nation, community, or company is a premise at least as valid as that which assumes a specific individual significance.

In addition, it must be acknowledged that the precise value of the mark itself has been questioned for centuries due to discrepancies within the ancient texts.

Bibles which provide expository notes regarding Revelation 13:18 reveal that in place of 666, "some manuscripts read 616." Textual scholars agree that the variant figure was not the result of an early scribal error, but an intentional inclusion within the text.

The ancient Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus, which lies one hundred-sixty kilometers south of Cairo, is an archeological site which has relinquished a great number of legal, social, and cultural secrets from Greco-Roman Egypt in the form of hundreds of thousands of papyrus documents.

Among the artifacts which have been recovered from the site is a fragmentary papyrus of Revelation which is the earliest-known witness to some sections, dating to the late third or early fourth century. One feature of particular interest is the value of 616 which this earliest of manuscripts has assigned to the beast.

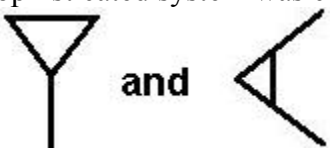
Given that Revelation chapter seventeen depicts Babylon riding atop the One-World Government beast, it would seem entirely reasonable to determine whether or not a relationship exists between the number 666 and Babylonian mathematics. To phrase the question succinctly, "What if the number 666 is a Babylonian number?"

If the figure of 666 does pertain to the Mesopotamian system of arithmetic rather than to that of modern Western civilization, it should also be able to account for the 616 textual variant of ancient manuscripts.

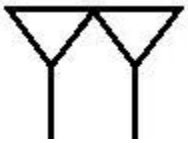
The Babylonians possessed a positional number system with a base of sixty which, in some ways, is more advanced than the modern decimal system which is based on ten.

In fact, the present-day method of measuring hours, minutes, and degrees has been borrowed from the Babylonian sexagesimal (base sixty) system.

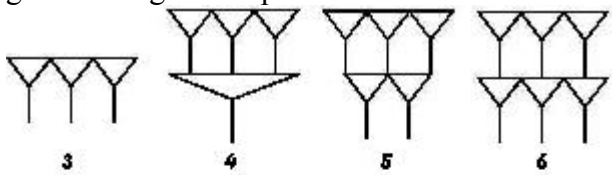
Curiously enough, this sophisticated system was comprised of only two symbols:

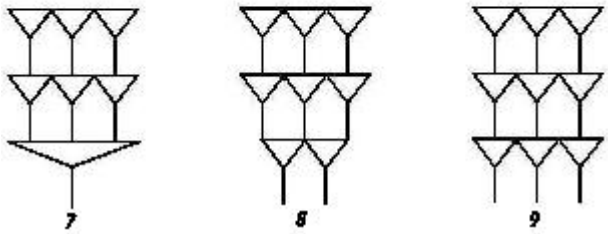


Respectively, these symbols represent the numbers one and ten. Thus, to depict the number two, the "one" is duplicated and placed alongside the first numeral as shown:

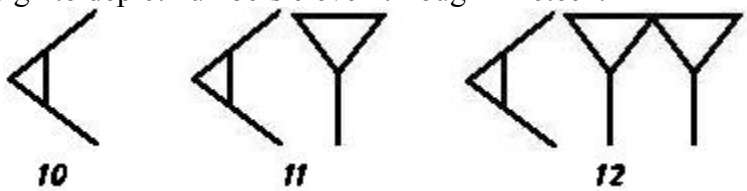


The number three would have been portrayed by adding an additional symbol, and so on, with the figures arranged into patterns reminiscent of cubed dice.

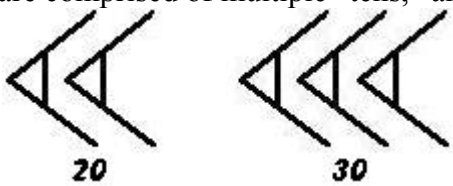




After reaching the number ten, additional "one" symbols are grouped together with the "ten" sign to depict numbers eleven through nineteen.



In a formula similar to that implemented by the Roman numeral system, the numbers twenty and thirty are comprised of multiple "tens," and portrayed as follows:



The relevant portion of this system as it relates to the mark of the beast is made manifest after the symbol for fifty-nine, which is designated by a group of five "tens" and nine "ones." While it might seem logical to represent the number sixty by adding a sixth "ten," a single "one" symbol functions in that capacity, instead.

Thus, the Babylonian symbol for sixty is:

The value of the symbol (whether "one" or "sixty") is determined by its numerical context, just as the meaning of the word "bear" is inferred to indicate either a wild animal or a state of conveyance by the context of the sentence.

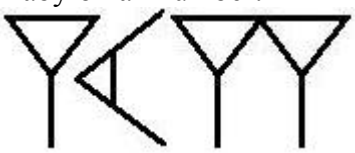
Depending on the equation, the intended value can be patently obvious or altogether unclear. Compounding the difficulty of correctly deciphering a system which assigns multiple values to identical digits, the Babylonians made no provision for the numeral zero. Occasionally, the existence of a space would signify a zero, but it was not an early or consistent practice – complicating the process of deciphering the intended numbers.

The Babylonians employed a positional system, which is to say that the value of each numeral was enhanced by its position within the number as a whole – a characteristic which the decimal system shares.

In the decimal system, the closer a numeral is positioned towards the left of a number, the greater its value. To take the number 357 as an example, the numeral 3 occupies the leftmost position and therefore the highest value is assigned to it (the hundreds place). The 5 holds the position of next-greatest value (the tens place), while the 7 is the least-valued numeral due to its position at the extreme right edge of the number.

The Babylonian sexagesimal system is no different, in that it places numerals of greater value to the left.

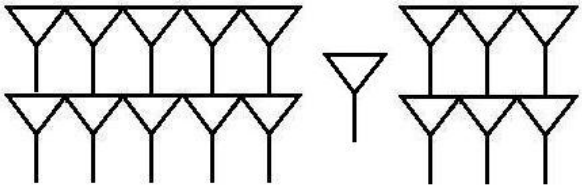
Consider the following Babylonian number:



Although this number is comprised of the numerals for "one," "ten," and "two," this is not 1,102, but rather 72. The first symbol is not a "one," but a "sixty" followed by a "ten" and a "two." In other words, 60+10+2=72.

In this way, numerals are deciphered according to their contextual relationship within the number as a whole.

Having grasped a foundational knowledge of Babylonian mathematics, the form of the number 666 as it appears in that system can now be revealed:



Although the first set of symbols would appear to be a grouping of ten "ones" (and therefore a numeric depiction of the integer 10), Babylonian mathematics expressed such a sum as:

Rather, the initial portion of the preceding figure is a series of ten "60's," and denotes the number 600.

Taken as a whole, the sexagesimal number above is deciphered as one of the following:

600	60	6 = 666
600	1	6 = 616

The Babylonian numbering system is the only ranking structure in the world in which the number 60 can be mistaken for the number 1, thus accounting for the numeric variant in the ancient Bible manuscripts concerning the value of the beast's mark.

The theory consequently advanced is that the number 666 of Revelation 13:18 is a sexagesimal number which, when converted into the decimal system, equals 21,966.

If the number of the mark is equal to the name (or title) of the beast as scripture indicates, and if the name of that number is Babylonian, then it follows that the name of the beast (the One-World Government) must be Babylon.

The significance of the numerals is not found in their sum, but rather in their origin. The wisdom necessary to decipher the number of the beast is the knowledge that it is a specific type of human number, characterized by the figure six hundred and sixty-six (or six hundred and sixteen).

The Bible identifies the One World Government (and thus the beast) as a Babylonian system in Revelation chapter seventeen, which many have undertaken to interpret as a code word for Rome. It is the position of this author that no such interpretation is necessary, and that it is Babylonian indeed.

The preceding pages have documented the relationship between that number system and the figure of 666, and have explained how the Babylonian sexagesimal system can account for the variant value of 616 which is contained within the earliest manuscripts.

Any attempt to decipher the coded mark of the beast must be capable of accounting for the alternate value of 616 if it is to be considered a legitimate solution. Its inclusion within the ancient texts is not due to fancy or error, and therefore its presence must be logically explained.

If the number 666 is a Babylonian sexagesimal, then its meaning is plain: the ancient nation of Babylon will rise once more from the ashes of history to take the reigns of a government that will extend its authority throughout the globe.

While the number has long been claimed to be of Greek origin, it is an assumption which has been erected upon a foundation of "sound reasoning" rather than incontrovertible fact.

It is generally known that the value of the beast's mark in Revelation 13:18 was originally not revealed alphabetically, but was recorded in a pictorial, or numeric form.

In every other biblical instance, the notation of numbers has been structured grammatically. Had the chronicling of the mark followed this format, the words employed to disclose its equivalence would have been the Greek "hexakosioi hexekonta hex," meaning six hundred sixty-six."

Instead, the number was written mathematically in a "600 60 6"format.

As the original text of Revelation was penned in Greek, many assumed, then, that this numeric value was expressed with the Greek "Chi, Xi, Stigma," and indeed, thus it has been claimed. However, the original manuscript written by John is not in modern man's possession, and therefore such a conclusion, although formulated logically, remains an unsubstantiated theory.

While experts may continue to affirm that the original form of the number was the Greek "Chi Xi Stigma" (and thus 666), the earliest manuscripts disagree, ascribing the value of 616 to the beast.

The Codex Ephraimi Rescriptus, for example, declares the mark of the beast to equal 616. Dated to the fifth century, this manuscript has always enjoyed the exceptional esteem of critics, and prior to the unearthing of the Codex Sinaiticus it was regarded as second in importance only to Codex Vaticanus.

According to a Latin translation of his work, Tyconius, a North African Christian scholar born in the second century, recorded that the mark of the beast was 616.

The 616 value is further corroborated by the Armenian version of the Bible translated from the Old Syriac manuscript in 414 A.D. by Mesrob - a translation of the Bible which, incidentally, has been referred to as "The Queen of the Versions" due to its unique rendering of the New Testament in clear, accurate, and literal terms while remaining stylistically brilliant.

The early church father, Irenaeus (120-203 A.D.) was aware of the 616 number, but chose to endorse the alternative 666.

Jerome, another early Christian minister (342-420 A.D.) endorsed the 616 form.

If the original number penned by John was 616 rather than 666, as the evidence seems to suggest, then the book he authored could not have contained the Greek "Chi Xi Stigma" characters of 600, 60, and 6, as conventional scholarship avers, and if the specific characters can be questioned, then so, too, can the nature of the characters be questioned.

If the original recorded number was not 666, then what event can account for its later inclusion within the texts, if not the Babylonian system of rank, in which a "one" can be confused with a "sixty?"

It is obvious that at some point subsequent to John's death, some reverent mind observed the pictorial form of the mark of the beast in the original manuscript and rather than copying it exactly as it appeared, translated it into the written form of "six hundred sixteen," while another identified it as "six hundred sixty-six." The Babylonian system can account for both.

An explanation nearly as ancient as the book of Revelation itself declares that depending upon the language used to perform the calculations, the name of "Nero Caesar" can be construed to total 666 as well as 616, although the value of 666 is derived through the addition of an "N" (thus arriving at "Neron," an uncommon spelling) and by disregarding the rules of Jewish gematria (in which the value of a second "N" in any word is assigned the value of 700, rather than 50, yielding through proper calculation a value of 1,316 rather than 666).

In any event, the Nero computation suggests Revelation had an immediate application to the first century, rather than being prophetic - a position known as preterism, and a posture not adopted by this author, although generally embraced by the Roman Catholic Church.

In summation, the name of the beast, as defined by its mark, is Babylon – the modern nation of Iraq, and the future head of the One-World Government system.

This identification of Babylon will be discussed in greater detail in chapter twenty-seven.

25. Three Oracles and a Prelude to Destruction

"*Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.*

"*And I heard a sound from Heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.*

"These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

"*Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the Heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."*

"*A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."*

"*A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.*

"*Then I heard a voice from Heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."*

"*I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.*

"*Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.*

"*Another angel came out of the temple in Heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe."*

"*The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.*" - Revelation 14:1-20

Before returning to the sequential disclosure of prophetic events, four additional pageants are performed for the Revelator which remain independent of the timeline.

144,000 Sealed Jews

As the vision in Revelation 14:1-5 unfolds, the 144,000 Jews protected by the seal of the living God are gathered together with their Lord Jesus Christ on the summit of the Mount of Olives.[1]

The tranquil scene is marked by a gentle wind wafting across the crest of rock, lightly stroking the hair and garments of the assemblage silently waiting for instructions from the Master.

A darkened silhouette to those farther below, the Lamb of God stood motionless on the pinnacle of the rocky promontory with his shoulders relaxed, one hand clasped by the other behind his back in a posture of tranquility belied only by eyes of an unusual intensity which shifted from point to point as if following the movements of a multitude indiscernible to human eyes.

A sudden gust of wind blew through the crowd, stirring up the sand from beneath their feet and filling the air with a dusting of abrasive particles which slightly obscured the assembled group as a fine cloud which briefly hung on the wavering currents before slowly dissipating into the winds and falling back to the earth without a trace.

As the fleeting wind relinquished its spirit, the hair on the back of the Master's neck fluttered a final time and then settled back into place against his collar. As if responding to an inaudible cue, Jesus released a glorious smile and lifted his face towards Heaven while extending his hands to the sky.

As he turned to face the remnant of Israel, an intense radiance began to emanate from his being, and into the deafening silence he declared in a whisper which was heard by all, "Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His Name and worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness."

A steady wind began to whistle across the mountainside, transforming the placid hilltop into a sea of billowing garments. Impossibly, the gentle whisper of Christ could be heard over the increasing whine of a wind which began to intensify in strength.

"…The voice of the Lord is over the waters… The glory of God thunders… The Lord thunders over the mighty waters… The voice of the Lord is powerful… The voice of the Lord is majestic… The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars… The Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon…"

The timbre of Christ's voice took on a silvery, metallic edge as the winds rapidly grew to gale force, buffeting the congregated Chosen this way and that while blasting sand outward in a three hundred-sixty degree radius extending out over half a mile.

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[1] Although the text specifies the meridian as Zion, that title has been applied to the whole of Jerusalem as well as to three specific summits: a southern peak located between the Kedron and the Tyropoeon Valleys; a peak to the southwest which received the appellation in the time of Simon the Hasmonean, also known as the "new" Mount Zion; and subsequent to Solomon's relocation of the ark to Mount Moriah, that particular station became synonymous with the name, as well. Thus, the "Mount Zion" designation is less than precise, as it can be employed to denote the entirety of the Jerusalem region. Further scripture such as Zechariah 14:4, however, reveals the mount to which Christ returns as the Olivet ridge, a range of hills rising two hundred-fifty feet above the temple mount east of Jerusalem proper, yet considered to be situated within the environs of Jerusalem, nevertheless.

At the forefront of the throng and glowing like a hot ember, Jesus stood solidly amid the tempest, his robe fluttering violently in the wind. Opening his mouth to speak, his words pierced the din like blasts from a trumpet as he proclaimed, "The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning… The voice of the Lord shakes the desert… The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forests bare, and in His temple all cry glory!"

A great crash resounded throughout the Heavens and the earth began to tremble and reel like a drunkard as the storm reached a fever pitch.

"Listen!" boomed a thunderous decree. "Listen to the roar of His voice, to the rumbling that proceeds from His mouth! He unleashes His lightning beneath the whole Heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth. After that comes the sound of His roar… He thunders with His majestic voice! When His voice resounds, He holds nothing back… God's voice thunders in marvelous ways!"

A thunderous roar reverberated throughout the Heavens and rattled the very fabric of space. The earth convulsed and the 144,000 pitched headlong onto their faces, prostrate before the God of all Creation.

The Lamb of God continued to stand with arms upraised to Heaven, the tumult now lashing out at only his hair and beard, for his body was now a crackling pillar of fire. His head and hair were white hot like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many armies rushing into battle. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword, vaporous and shimmering with intense light.

A faint sound like the distant tinkling of ten thousand crystalline chimes began to crescendo, a peculiar lilting melody which beckoned to the fallen multitude.

A great portion of the Heavens illuminated like lightning and a dazzling cylindrical beam of irradiated light transfixed those on the mountain in a spotlight of glory.

"Come!" beckoned the transfigured Christ. "Sing for joy to the Lord, shout aloud to the Rock of your salvation! Come before Him with thanksgiving and exalt Him with music and song!"

The Heavens exploded in a shower of white sparks as hundreds of thousands of angels suddenly streamed through a gaping aperture torn in the sky over Jerusalem. Delicate, transparent wings propelled each cherub through the dimensional portal and into the clear blue skies of Israel. The previous peals of crystal were now revealed as the golden notes produced by plucked harp strings which accompanied the honeyed voices of the Heavenly chorus.

"The Lord is the great God," intoned the Messiah, "the great King above all gods! In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him! The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land!"

One by one, the angels began to alight on the mountain as the Son of God continued the call to worship of the one true God who is over all, and in all, and through all things.

"Sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord and praise His Name! Proclaim His salvation day after day! Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all peoples, for great is the Lord and most worthy of praise!"

Each of the 144,000 suddenly found themselves partnered with an angelic companion who, taking them by the hand, pulled them to their feet and began to teach them the song of the Lord and of the Lamb.

With a mighty refrain, they sang, "He is to be feared above all gods, for all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the Heavens! Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and glory are in His sanctuary!

"Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name! Bring an offering and come into His courts! Worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.

"Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns!' The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved! He will judge the peoples with a righteous judgment! Let the Heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad, let the sea resound, and all that is in it, let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them! Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy, they will sing before the Lord, for He comes, He comes to judge the earth! He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His truth!"

The preceding illustration was not intended as a literal interpretation of the events of Revelation 14:1-5, but a creative rendering in keeping with the "pageant" nature of the revelation.

Additional information provided by Zechariah reveals that the day of Christ's return to the Mount of Olives will coincide with the defeat of the nations which have gathered at Armageddon for the destruction of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:3-6).

Prior to the commencement of battle, the Lord will cause a great fissure to crack the Mount of Olives from east to west, a chasm that will expand with a grinding rumble into a valley sufficiently sized to accommodate the passage of 144,000 fleeing Jews.

"*On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel.*" – Zechariah 14:4, 5

As the Jews retreat to safety, the Lord will go out and fight against those nations which have assembled in opposition to His Name and the city of His people.

Then will the prophecy of Revelation 19:19-21 be fulfilled, which declares:

"*Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*"

That day will mark the arrival of a new dispensation while simultaneously recording the final accounts of the former; a day unique for having dawned on the event of Christ's physical return to the earth and for its distinctive weather as foretold in Zechariah 14:6-9.

"*On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime-a day known to the LORD . When evening comes, there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and*

half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD , and his name the only name."

A curious illuminative phenomena will be made manifest in the Heavens as the day and night surrender to the luminous glory of the Lord. The city of Jerusalem and the surrounding region, if not the entire world, will have no need of the sun or the moon to provide light, for the splendor and radiant glory of the holiness of God will bathe the earth in a warm and magnificent glow through the lamp of the Lamb.

Living water will flow from Jerusalem to the sea, and "*the Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.*" – Zechariah 14:9

The term "living water" is employed in the Bible on seven occasions to denote two concepts.

Jeremiah spoke of the living water as a metaphor for God Almighty.

"*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*" – Jeremiah 2:13

"*O LORD , the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.*" – Jeremiah 17:13

Jesus spoke of the living water as the Holy Spirit which would soon be bestowed.

"*Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?*" – John 4:10, 11

"*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*" – John 7:38

Although the phrase, "living water" has herein been given two definitions, the latter is simply an aspect of the former. On that day God's Spirit will flow out from Jerusalem to the sea (all nations) in summer and in winter (at all times).

"*Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike.*

"I will cause wonders in the Heavens and on the earth--blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will turn bloodred before that great and terrible day of the LORD arrives. And anyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved. There will be people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem who escape, just as the LORD has said. These will be among the survivors whom the LORD has called." – Joel 2:28-32 (NLT)

The purpose of this first pageant is to confirm what was prophesied through the prophets Zechariah and Joel, namely, that in the time of the end, the Spirit of God will be poured out on all flesh, and the Lord will provide a way of escape for the Jewish survivors shortly before the commencement of a battle between the nations and Almighty God.

The Three Angels

As the image of the first vision dissolved into sparkling particles of light and then faded into interminable darkness, a second pageant flashed against the black backdrop of space; an indistinct scene which momentarily flickered in the uneven beams of an increasing brightness before resolving into a motion picture of exceedingly high definition.

The image was that of an angel soaring across the blue skies of earth with the everlasting gospel to proclaim unto all flesh.

This is not a message of reconciliation declaring the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but a discourse concerning the imminent establishment on earth of the kingdom of God which always has been and always will remain.

That this gospel is defined as something other than the provision of salvation through the sacrifice of the second Adam is an actuality intimated by the distinct presence of three strategically-placed indicia.

The first is the knowledge of 2nd Corinthians 5:18-20 which was supplied by the Apostles Paul and Timothy prior to the emergence of Revelation affirming that the gospel of reconciliation was not entrusted to angelic beings, but to the mortal members of Christ's body known as the Christian Church.

Were this particular message to be delivered through any vessel other than humankind it would result in a scriptural paradox, for the Bible cannot continue to be regarded as the inerrant Word of God if in one location the Church is affirmed as the exclusive Ambassador of Christ to the world, while an extra-dimensional creature is described in a subsequent passage as functioning in that self-same capacity.

Consequently, the very use of the word "gospel" in relation to an angelic being suggests that an altogether dissimilar definition is intended.

This suggestion is further advanced by the "everlasting" qualifier of the angel's gospel. In the current dispensation, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is indeed good news with respect to the fallen state of man, but it is a report which serves a specific and finite purpose and is not of an eternal nature. When the final vestiges of imperfection and wickedness are expunged from existence at the White Throne Judgment and mankind is completely and irrevocably reunited with its Creator, the message of reconciliation will cease to remain relevant. Indeed, many maintain that its validity is concluded upon the rapture of the Church.

It is therefore evident that the good news of salvation and the gospel which retains its immediacy throughout eternity cannot be one and the same.

Finally, if the eternal gospel was in any way related to the redeeming gospel of Christ, one would expect some trace of corroborating evidence to be found within the text of the message itself:

"*Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the Heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.*"

In fact, no such evidence presents itself, for the eternal gospel has to do with the role of mankind with respect to the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

As Zondervan's New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words attests, "While in the Epistles the word 'gospel' is clearly focused on the saving work of God in Jesus, it is important to note that at times in the Gospels a different message of good news is in view. This is the good news that God's kingdom is at hand and that God may act at any moment to establish his rule on earth. It is important when reading the Gospels to note

that when the phrase 'of the kingdom' is added to 'gospel,' a different message is in view than that intended by the Epistles."

According to Strong's, the phrase "everlasting gospel" is the Greek "**aionios** (without beginning and end, that which always has been and always will be) **euaggelion** (the glad tidings of the kingdom of God soon to be set up)."

Thus, the message that the angel delivers is one which directs worship, glory, and respect toward God; a gospel that will remain in effect for all of eternity.

As the first angel vanished from the celestial panorama, a second came into view, proclaiming the news of the recent downfall of Babylon (known today as Iraq) before following its companion into a distant scattering of clouds in the blue expanse of earth's sky.

Although some would aver that the destruction of Babylon was accomplished by the Medo-Persians millennia ago, or that this prophecy is a symbolic reference to a modern nation that has yet to decline, a subsequent chapter will reveal that the biblical designation of Babylon denotes that region, indeed, and that the ancient nation of King Nebuchadnezzar will rise once again in the near-future only to be razed to the ground anew in a swift, cataclysmic event that will astound the entire world.

Trailing his fellows, a third angel soaring on the thermal updrafts of wind beneath its wings declared the eternal punishment which awaits those who vow a pledge of loyalty to the beast system and its little horn of blasphemy.

"*If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever.*

"There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name. This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus."

As the illuminated pageant flickered and then faded, John heard a voice intone, "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. They will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.*"

Thus, those who accept the mark of the beast will have effectively applied unremittable damnation to their souls, while those who die in Christ from this point forward will find a blessed rest.

The Harvest

In preparation for the presentation of the third pageant, the backdrop of sky and cloud rippled as if it were an image projected onto a surface of water, its crystal clarity disturbed as if by the casting of a stone into the depths below it.

Seemingly erasing an outer image layered above another, the trailing edge of the swell exposed as it flowed across the azure vista of the earth's upper atmosphere a scene identical to the first, save for an additional cloud positioned at the very center of the ethereal canvas upon which was seated a crowned "son of man" with a sharp sickle clutched in his hands.

Scripture reveals the expression "son of man" to be depictive of Jesus Christ.

"*For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*" - Matthew 24:27

"*At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.*" - Matthew 24:30

"*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*" - Matthew 24:37

"*And they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*" - Matthew 24:39

"*So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*" - Matthew 24:44

"*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in Heavenly glory.*" - Matthew 25:31

"*As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.*" - Matthew 26:2

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words declares that "In the NT this [the term 'son of man'] is a designation of Christ, almost entirely confined to the Gospels… 'Son of Man' is the title Christ used of himself."

It is obvious then, that the personality seated upon the cloud is Jesus Christ. That he is informed by an angel that the time of the harvest commencement has come is entirely in keeping with scripture, for Matthew 24:36 proclaims that, "*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*"

The date of Christ's return has been concealed even from him; it is knowledge possessed only by the Father who has determined not to reveal it in advance of the appointed time.

"*So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.*"

In Matthew 13:39, the harvest is revealed as the end of the age, and thus the sickle represents the rapture of the church when true believers are gathered to their Lord Jesus Christ (1st Thessalonians 2:1).

A second harvest follows the first and is accomplished through angelic office rather than Messianic. Those harvested are not escorted through the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven, but are hurled into the winepress of God's wrath and destroyed, a scenario previously recounted by Jesus Christ in his parable of the weeds, a symbolic narrative explained in Matthew 13:37-43.

"*He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.*

"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

The purpose of this vision is to underscore the fact that one cannot adopt a position of ambiguity with respect to matters of the spirit, for a lukewarm position

concerning righteousness is the equivalent of great wickedness and will result in an eternity apart from the presence of God (Revelation 3:15, 16).

"*Don't you realize that making the world your friend is making God your enemy? Anyone who chooses the world for his friend turns himself into God's enemy.*" – James 4:4 (JB)

The final verse of chapter fourteen reveals the unrighteous harvest to include a vast multitude in the process of advancing upon the gates of a certain city. The force will meet with certain and violent destruction, the broken bodies of such a massive complement resulting in a profuse flow of bloodshed producing a crimson tide "*200 miles long and about five feet deep.*" – Revelation 14:20 (TEV)

In fact, this copious issue of blood emanates from an annihilated world army which had encompassed the city of Jerusalem in an attempt to depose the Almighty King of all kings; the details of which effort are enumerated in the ensuing chapter.

A Prelude To Destruction

"*I saw in Heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb:*

"Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

"After this I looked and in Heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests.

"Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed." - Revelation 15:1-8

The following events of Revelation chapter fifteen are described as "another great and marvelous sign," (NIV) "an astonishing portent," (NEB) a "mysterious sight," (TEV) and a "mighty pageant showing things to come." (Living) Thus, the episode which follows is understood to be another in a series of Heavenly visions.

In this particular vision there appears before John seven angels bearing seven bowls of plague which constitute the final portions of judgment to be poured out upon the earth. With the spilling of the seventh bowl of sorrow will the consummation of God's wrath be realized.

The sea of glass before the throne in Heaven is portrayed as a lake of fire, symbolizing the reward awaiting those who will experience the full measure of God's wrath.

Standing at the periphery of this flaming sea are those saints who did not consider their own lives too valuable to lay down, and therefore triumphed over the beast; refusing its mark and disregarding the decree to worship its image.

As the pageant concludes and the celestial viewscreen fades into nothingness, John's attention returns to the Throne Room of Heaven as preparations are made for the events of the previous vision to be fulfilled.

A single gate of the temple of God was opened and from it proceeded seven angels clothed in spotless white linen with sashes of gold fastened across their chests. Approaching one of the four cherubim, they were each issued a golden flask brimming with the wrath of the eternal Almighty God.

An epic symphony of alternating harp melodies accompanied a glorious chorus of praise as the Redeemed voiced their profound love for the Ruler of their Completeness and Peace.

Upon conclusion of the psalm, the content of the first bowl was prepared for delivery, yet before the implications of that act are explored, there is a significance concerning the temple of God in verse eight of Revelation chapter fifteen which should not go unnoticed.

"*And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.*"

In John 2:19, Jesus identified himself as the temple of God which would be destroyed and rebuilt in three days' time. In 1st Corinthians 3:16, the temple of the living God is revealed as the Church, of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 5:23).

If the temple of God is Jesus Christ and his Church, then the fact that "*no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed*," signifies the inability of any person to enter into the redemption of Jesus Christ and indicates that no additional persons will be permitted membership into his Church from this point forward.

At this time, those remaining on earth will be incapable of achieving salvation, having transferred the title of their eternal souls to Satan in accepting his infernal mark.

The Church of Christ for whom the days of distress were shortened (Matthew 24:22) were raptured out of this world just after the events of the sixth seal. Those who remained and became Christians throughout the duration of the trumpet judgments were hunted down by the Antichrist's "brown shirts" and executed by his two hundred million-member army (Revelation 13:10).

As the first of the bowls of God's wrath is readied for deployment, the only remaining source of righteousness in the world is that of the 144,000 sealed Jews.

Thus, with no further function, the "temple" of God will be closed and those to whom righteousness was imputed must stand aside as His great power is made manifest and His terrible anger is vented.

26. The Bowls

Revelation 16:1-21

"*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."*

"The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

"The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.

"The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

"Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve."

"And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."

"The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

"The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

"The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

"Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

"Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

"The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake.

"No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.

"From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible."

The time has come for the wrath of God to be poured out upon an unrepentant world in the form of seven bowls of woe.

The First Bowl

The first angel poured out a plague of foul and virulent sores. This is the judgment of all who have taken the mark of the beast and have worshipped its image.

It is remarkable to note that the physical composition of the mark itself may be directly responsible for the resulting affliction of malignant ulcers.

Applied Digital Solutions is an advanced digital technology development company founded in 1993 which specializes in miniaturized power sources, biometric monitoring devices, and wireless data delivery systems; three technologies which have combined to produce the VeriChip – a microchip implant which is almost certainly a precursor to the mark of the beast.

The VeriChip is a 12mm x 2.1mm encapsulated radio frequency identification device containing a unique verification number. Due to its extremely small dimensions (equivalent in size to the tip of a ballpoint pen) it is virtually undetectable and practically indestructible once inserted below the skin. The chip is enclosed within a polyethylene receptacle designed to adhere to the inner surface of the skin to prevent it from becoming dislodged and adrift within the body.

Inactive by default, the VeriChip is energized by an exclusive skin-penetrating radio frequency emitted by proprietary ADS scanners and responds by transmitting its own RF signal containing the verification number of its host.

Although in its current form, the VeriChip is powered through rapid temperature variations within the body (ideally-located in the forehead just below the hairline or in the back of the right hand) and thus has no need of a battery, the next generation systems will be capable of transmitting and receiving signals to and from Global Positioning System satellites in order for authorized persons to determine the real-time locations of any given individual.

These advanced models will contain an embedded GPS system slightly larger than a U.S. quarter and will require an additional power source.

Keith Bolton, Applied Digital Solutions' chief scientist, says that issue has been resolved. "We believe we have solved the battery issue, which leaves the question of an antenna that can transmit through skin tissue."

While the engineering team at ADS focuses on the development of a viable antenna for the advanced prototype, the lithium ion battery has been selected as its power cell – a battery which, if ruptured while under the skin, will produce a rash of intensely painful, festering sores.

Product Safety Data Sheets such as those prepared by Eveready Battery Company, Inc. designate lithium ion as a hazardous substance and are quite emphatic in labeling it a health hazard, citing a multiplicity of deleterious effects which can be incurred from chemical interaction with unprotected human tissues.

Although a Divine distribution of physical infirmity cannot be discounted, a possible interpretation of the plague of sores is that it is simply the result of a

supernaturally-induced fracture of all lithium ion-powered microchips, and thus an affliction which every participant in the system is assured of experiencing.

The Second Bowl

The second angel turned the oceans to blood, depriving every creature in the sea of its life.

"While humans are increasingly dependent on industrialised agriculture for their nutrition, wild ecosystems still provide food for a substantial proportion of Earth's human population. For example, in 1995 the total global marine fish catch was more than 97 million tonnes. Nearly 1 billion people depend on fish for their primary source of protein, and demand for food fish is projected to increase to about 110-120 million tonnes in 2010." – *The Production and Consumption of Food – An Earth Charter* by Brendan Mackey

Were malnutrition not already a grievous pandemic, it would become a rampant affliction for 17% of the world's population when every remaining organism in the sea comes to abrupt end and the ocean can no longer be depended upon as a primary source of food.

The Third Bowl

As the third angel emptied its bowl upon the spring waters and fresh rivers of the earth, the entirety of mankind's essential liquid nutriment became contaminated with blood.

Lest one believe that a supply of potable water will be available in the form of a bottled reserve which many will no doubt have begun to hoard, Exodus 7:19 reveals that formerly when the God of the Ages inflicted His wrath upon the Egyptian people in comparable fashion, He did not spare the water which had been collected into vessels.

"*The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt – over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs' – and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars."* "

If the first Egyptian plague is any indication of the degree to which the third bowl of wrath will affect the world's supply of fresh water, not one molecule of the life-sustaining fluid will remain untainted.

This suggests that the bowls of wrath will be deployed in rapid succession - on the order of days rather than weeks - for without water, mankind cannot survive beyond a period of seventy-two hours.

Moreover, an individual subjected to such deprivation can expect the quality of his existence to steadily decline as the rapid effects of dehydration trigger a series of debilitating symptoms including irrationality. Physically, the depletion of bodily fluids will result in a lowered blood pressure incapable of preventing the constriction of blood vessel walls; a condition which will swiftly produce headaches, muscle cramps, and dizziness.

For this reason it is apparent that the remaining four judgments will be administered over the course of the next three days, for without a pure source of drinking water the human race will find itself extinct within four.

These judgments are severe, and yet the angels and the martyred saints testify that the sentence is deserved, for the Lord has promised to reward the spilling of blood with further bloodshed.

"*When I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood, while my sword devours flesh.*" – Deuteronomy 32:41, 42

"*The LORD will repay him for the blood he shed.*" – 1st Kings 2:32a

"*How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

"For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." – Hebrews 10:29-31

"*I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus… her sins are piled up to Heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself.*" - Revelation 17:6; 18:5-7

The Fourth Bowl

"*The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire.*" – Revelation 16:8

The word translated as "scorch" is the Greek "kaumatizo" which means "to be tortured with intense heat," and thus, to blister, char, or sear.

Compton's American Heritage Dictionary defines "scorch" as "*v.* To burn superficially so as to discolor or damage the texture of. *n.* A slight or surface burn."

Thus, the increased radiation emanating from the sun will produce intense pain, but will harm only the surface of the skin rather than penetrate into the subdermal tissues.

According to a 1991 review in *Physics in Medicine and Biology* by B. L. Diffey titled "Solar Ultraviolet Radiation Effects on Biological Systems," nearly all of the harmful radiation proceeding from the sun is contained within the ultraviolet wavelength.

"The Sun is responsible for the development and continued existence of life on Earth. We are warmed by the Sun's infrared rays and we can see with eyes which respond to the visible part of the Sun's terrestrial spectrum. More importantly, visible light is an essential component of photosynthesis, the process whereby plants, which are necessary for man's nutrition, derive their energy. However, the deleterious effects of sunlight on biological systems are due almost entirely to radiation within the ultraviolet spectrum of the Sun's emission."

It was revealed to John that the painful burn of the fourth bowl was triggered by a modification which was made to the sun. "*The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun*." Thus, it is obvious that the sun is the source of the sudden and intense blistering.

It has been affirmed that the majority of the sun's harmful radiation emanates from the band of ultraviolet. Consequently, if humanity is experiencing an adverse reaction to the sun, the malefic effects must be originating from the UV spectrum.

Scripture describes the effect as a scorch, which the dictionary has defined as a surface burn – a very interesting characterization, for the observable biological effects in

humans due to exposure from solar ultraviolet radiation are limited to the skin and to the eyes, for the penetrating properties of UVR in human tissues are extremely low (less than 1 mm) and it is absorbed by the anterior ocular tissues (the cornea and lens) before it can reach the retina.

The standard responses of the skin to UVR are of two classifications: acute effects and chronic effects. An acute effect is one of rapid onset and generally of short duration, as opposed to a chronic effect which is often of gradual onset and long duration.

As the fourth bowl judgment is levied suddenly and of necessity can last no longer than three days, the reaction produced by the increased UVR is acute, rather than chronic, resulting in erythema, or sunburn.

High doses of UVR can produce swelling from an effusion of watery fluid in the cellular tissues beneath the skin, intense pain, and blistering – effects which correspond to those indicated in Revelation 16:8, 9.

Thus, the judgment of the fourth bowl is revealed as a supernatural amplification of solar ultraviolet radiation and the possible elimination of the natural UVR shield located between six to thirty miles above the surface of the earth known as the Ozone Layer. (Incidentally, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency's website at http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/ozonelayer.html, scientists have predicted the layer of ozone to reach a maximum level of depletion by 2010.)

The Fifth Bowl

"*The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness.*" – Revelation 16:10

In order to determine the extent of this darkness, the identity of the beast must first be ascertained. Scripture has employed this term as a specific designation of the One World Government system, as well as a broad representation of Antichrist.

If the specific definition is here intended, then the expanse of darkness is understood to encompass the entire globe. However, it is known that the earth will be apportioned into ten sectors, with the Antichrist assuming personal authority over three of the divisions – one of which may include his native homeland.

Thus, the "throne of the beast" may indicate the land of the Antichrist's birth, while "his kingdom" may include the additional two regions which have come under his direct influence.

In Daniel 8:8, 9 it is foretold that he will rise from one of the four kingdoms which emerged from the fractured Greek empire of Alexander the Great: either Greece itself, Egypt, Turkey, or Babylon.

In Daniel 11:28 he is described as "the king of the north," an inappropriate title for any Egyptian potentate due to the location of that region within the southern sphere of Middle Eastern influence in which endtime prophecy is fulfilled. In any event, it is prophesied in Daniel 11:42, 43 that Egypt, together with Libya and Ethiopia, will be counted among those foreign territories which he will acquire through military prowess:

"*He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission.*" – Daniel 11:42, 43

The original form of the words "extend" and "power" ("shalach" and "yad") mean "to stretch out" or "extend" his "strength" or "power." Thus, to "stretch out his strength"

across Egypt, or to "expand his authority" in such a manner as to include Egypt within his realm of influence, is to say that his strength and authority originally resided in an external locale which became lengthened in scope until that territory came under the purview of Antichrist.

It is obvious, then, that the Son of Perdition cannot emerge from the land of Egypt. The regions of Greece, Turkey, and Babylon, however, can each be considered "kingdoms of the north" and therefore deemed reasonable progenitive candidates for Antichrist.

Daniel 8:8, 9 provide additional insight as to the possible homeland of the Contemptible One, for the prophecy states that he will extend his power not only over the south (including Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia), but to the east and toward Israel, as well.

Conversely then, the throne of Antichrist can be sited to the north and west, characteristics which exclude Babylon from consideration due to its central/eastern location within the Middle Eastern theater of endtime operations.

Finally, scripture reveals that the Antichrist will face opposition from certain quarters, including the island nation of Chittim.

"*For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved…*" - Daniel 11:30 (KJV)

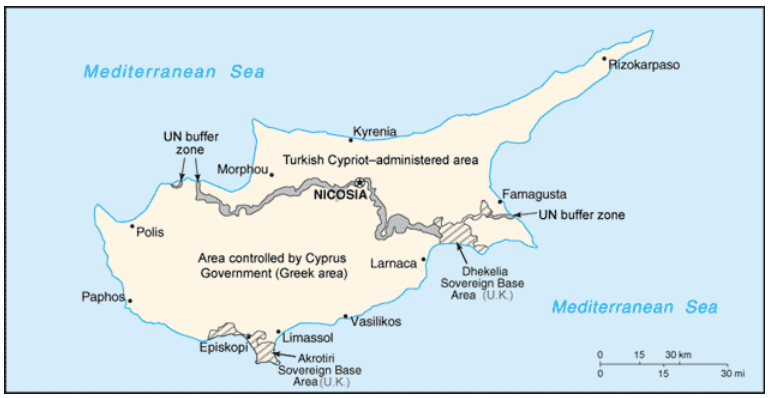
According to Zondervan's New International Bible Dictionary, Chittim, or Kittim, as it was called, characterized "ships of Grecian pattern which roamed the Mediterranean very early." Also, by this name "the island of Cyprus is probably meant."

There is evidence, then, that with the Grecian navy obstructing his efforts and defying his authority, the land of his birth and his kingdom may well be identified as the Republic of Turkey.

In Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Bible can be found this entry: "Kittim: One of the sons of Javan in the Genesis 'table of the nations,' and so the name of Cyprus and of its early city of Kition."

Today, Cyprus consists of two ethnic de facto states: The Greeks and the Turks, neither of whom consider themselves Cypriots. The Turks, who account for 18% of the population, occupy approximately 40% of the island while the Greeks account for the remainder.

Hostilities in 1974 divided the island into two de facto autonomous areas: a Greek Cypriot region controlled by the internationally recognized Cypriot Government, and a Turkish Cypriot zone – each area divided by a thin United Nations buffer purlieus approximately eighty-seven miles long (east to west) and up to three miles wide, dividing the island into two sectors. The neutral zone, or Green Line as it is often described, contains one hundred fifty-four observations posts patrolled by a UN peacekeeping force numbering over 1,200.



The history between the two peoples is brimming with conflict. In December

1963 Greek and Turkish Cypriots clashed after President Makarios proposed changes to the constitution, including abolition of the Turkish minority's authority to veto laws in the legislature. Fighting engulfed the island, with the Turkish Cypriots demanding partition while the Greek Cypriots insisted on a unified state and pledged that Turkish minority rights would be preserved.

With both Greece and Turkey threatening to intervene, full-scale civil war was pre-empted by British troops within the region. Acceptance of a UN-brokered cease-fire on August 10, 1964 ended sharp fighting between the two factions and a peacekeeping force was subsequently established to patrol the island.

Further U.N. efforts to forge a lasting peace in the region met with failure and the animosity between Greece and Turkey continued to increase.

In 1963 and 1964, the Turkish Cypriots withdrew from the government. In 1974, after Greek-led Cypriot forces overthrew Cyprus's president, Turkey invaded Cyprus and won control of the northern third of the country. In 1975 the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus was established in northern Cyprus, unilaterally declaring itself in November of 1983 to be the independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, albeit unrecognized by the United Nations or any government save that of Turkey.

Both Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities have separate military organizations, the former aided by Greece, the latter by Turkey which maintained about 30,000 troops on the island in 1996. As of that date, the Greek Cypriots maintained an army of approximately 10,000 members and a paramilitary police force estimated at nearly 4,000. Turkish Cypriot forces totaled about 4,000.

The preceding information becomes relevant in light of Daniel 11:44 which, concerning the Antichrist who has traveled to the south, declares:

"*But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many.*"

Incoming reports of mobilizing enemy forces from the regions north and east of Libya/Egypt would include the nation of Greece as well as the island of Cyprus, indicating an imminent strike by the Grecian military against the Antichrist's native Turkey.

The advantage of this interpretation is that it sheds a unique light on additional enigmatic prophecy.

Firstly, Daniel 11:37 declares that the Son of Satan "*will show no regard for the gods of his fathers.*"

If the ethnicity of the Antichrist has been correctly identified as Turkish, then the significance of this scripture as it relates to that region is a reference to its strict secular status. Islamic at heart, the Turkish leaders, and to a large extent its people, are forbidden by law to practice their faith.

The turbulent relationship between Islam and the Republic of Turkey was engineered according to design. Founded upon the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who attributed the demise of the former empire to the centrality of religion within the administration, it was determined that Turkey would be established as a wholly secular nation.

As a result, prohibitive legislation was introduced which affected nearly every form of religious expression, with a particular emphasis on the obstruction of Islam, including bans on the religious customs of wearing beards and veils.

Advocating an extreme form of Turkish nationalism which can be classified as both stringently secular and statist, Ataturk imposed his ideological views upon the entirety of Turkish society and refused to recognize national and religious minorities.

Since the death of its founder in 1938, the government has been dominated by an unbroken succession of high-ranking army generals determined to continue the secular policies of their predecessor.

In September of 1997, legislation was drafted providing severe prison terms (up to fifteen years and eight years, respectively) for leaders and members of organizations "aiming to change the characteristics or right of exercise of sovereignty or bring the use of basic rights and freedoms and the structure of the state in conformity with religious principles." Up to five years imprisonment was deemed an appropriate disciplinary action for persons disseminating propaganda with the intent to procure support for the aforesaid reforms, and a six year sentence was imposed upon those actively participating in demonstrations staged for the purpose of achieving the same end.

Although secular Turkey is predominantly Islamic, its legal and political establishments have for nearly eight decades exhibited a profound fear of Islam as a political force. Only under the suspicious eye and oppressive hand of the government is Islam practiced and taught. Modern restrictions include injunctions forbidding religious apparel within public universities and government offices.

Islamic schools are increasingly viewed by the secular government as a significant threat to national security, fearing that an impetus from that quarter may ultimately succeed in establishing Islamic fundamentalism squarely within the infrastructure of governance.

Concerned that an Islamic education may bequeath to younger generations an inflexible allegiance to radical Islamic fundamentalism, the Turkish administration is deliberating passing legislation which will lengthen the elementary school day in order to deny children the time to attend the Islamic schools which are thereafter convened.

Even Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the popular Mayor of Istanbul whose accomplishments and integrity set an example for all political parties in Turkey and was esteemed by the citizenry as a public role model who functioned as the "sound of the silent masses and helper of the needy," was removed from office in late 1998 for "inciting religious hatred" and sentenced to a ten-month prison term.

His crime was the reading aloud of an Islamic poem at a rally. His conviction excludes him from ever again serving in public office and ended the political career of a man many saw as a future leader of Turkey's Islamic political movement.

Earlier that same year, the leader of Erdogan's Virtue Party, former Premier Necmettin Erbakan, was banned from politics for five years.

Concerning Mustafa Kemal Ataturk himself, H.C. Armstrong writes in his book *The Grey Wolf, Mustafa Kemal: An Intimate Study of a Dictator*, "it was public knowledge that he was irreligious, broke all the rules of decency, and scoffed at sacred things. He had chased the Sheik-ul-Islam, the High Priest of Islam, out of his office and thrown the Koran after him. He had forced the women in Angora to unveil."

Thus, Turkish "kings" (or "Prime Ministers," to which their ancient title has been amended), constrained to observe the primary decree upon which their nation was founded, do not regard the Islamic gods of their fathers, and in fact, serve no god – just as was foretold in Daniel 11:37.

"*He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god.*"

It may also interest the reader to know that the term determined upon the Israeli treaty by the Antichrist (seven years) coincides with the term of office to which a Turkish Prime Minister is appointed.

This is significant due to the largely tyrannical nature of Middle Eastern politics, for emerging dictators do not consider themselves obliged to continue the foreign policies established by previous regimes.

Thus, the guarantee of a Turkish potentate to observe any given international treaty is valid only while that governor remains in office, for he cannot guarantee the actions of his successor.

The treaty with Israel will therefore be confirmed by the Antichrist for the duration of his term; a period which just happens to correspond to that of the Turkish head of government.

Secondly, Daniel 11:38 states that he will succeed in his accomplishments due to the aid of a foreign god, described as "the god of fortresses."

The identity of this false deity was known to ancient Israel and much of the pagan world as Ishtar, Goddess of the Tower. The Caananites recognized her as Ashtoreth, the "Queen of Heaven" referred to in Jeremiah 7:18, while the Romans named her Diana – the very "Diana of the Ephesians" whose silversmiths took exception to Paul's anti-idolatrous message recorded in Acts chapter nineteen.

Due to the vagaries of language, her title, if not her purpose, varied from culture to culture, however, her persona as the "virgin queen" who birthed an immortal redeemer enabled well-traveled individuals to recognize her regardless of their current station.

Originally designated Semiramis, the wife of Genesis 10:8, 9's Nimrod, the founder of the Babylonian Mysteries became known as Astarte, or "the woman that made towers," as the name is rendered literally.

It is recorded in the ancient histories of Greece that citizens often appealed to the tower goddess (or "goddess of the fortress") for protection in times of truculence when their cities were threatened with destruction.

Of particular significance is the manner in which the fortress goddess was often depicted – with an elaborate crown fashioned in the likeness of a turreted stronghold.

It is therefore most curious to note what may be a veiled reference to this tower goddess in Daniel 11:38.

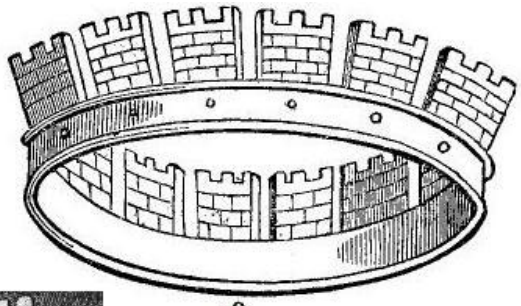
The significance of this god in relation to a Turkish Antichrist is that it is Babylonian in origin, "*a god unknown to his fathers*."

According to Revelation chapter seventeen, the One World Government beast functions in accordance with the tenets of Babylonian religion, for the fortress goddess Semiramis is depicted atop the brute in a position of authority.

Were the Antichrist to emerge from Babylon, it would create an eschatological paradox, for a global system of governance cannot be established upon Babylonian dogma while rejecting the pantheon from whence it came.

To restate, if the foundation of any structure is removed, its superstructure will collapse into a mass of rubble, resulting in a site ill-suited for the further erection of any sort of edifice.

Thus, the Son of Perdition cannot arise from modern Babylon, yet this Turkish Jew will adopt that region as his own.



Artemis

Cybele

Tyche

Diana

Rhea

Lakshmi

Thirdly, with five major dams along the Euphrates River, Turkey is uniquely positioned to regulate that body's flow of water to such an extent that a complete impounding of the current can be accomplished at the government's discretion – the very action which is observed in verse twelve of Revelation chapter sixteen (the sixth bowl).

Fourth and finally, scripture reveals in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 that upon his release at the conclusion of the Millennial Reign of Christ, Satan will adhere to previous strategy and again storm out in a rage against Israel from the region of Turkey (Revelation 20:7-10). The issues regarding this post-millennial conflict are too numerous to catalog here, and will therefore be examined in a later chapter.

The weight of this evidence, then, seems to indicate that the darkness which befalls the throne and kingdom of Antichrist will blanket the region of Turkey and its neighboring territories – effectively targeting the Middle East.

Having deduced that the throne of Antichrist resides in the modern nation of Turkey, it must be determined whether this is a conclusion which can be supported by the existence of additional scripture.

As the Antichrist is a man possessed of Satan, it follows that to locate the throne of Antichrist is to discover the throne of Satan, and vice versa. Thus, if scripture can be found which reveals the location of Satan's throne with respect to endtime events, it will have disclosed the site of the Antichrist's throne, as well.

The words "Satan" and "throne" occur within close proximity only once in the entirety of the Bible, namely Revelation 2:13:

"*I know where you live-where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city-where Satan lives.*"

These words were spoken by Jesus Christ to the church in the city of Pergamum.

According to the Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2001, Pergamum was an "ancient city of NW Asia Minor, in Mysia (modern Turkey), in the fertile valley of the Caicus… The modern town of Bergama, Izmir prov., is on the site of ancient Pergamum."

Hence, the throne of Satan and his Son of Perdition is conclusively shown to be comprised of the region of Turkey in general, and the city of Bergama in particular.

Some history concerning this citadel of evil will reveal a disturbing association with the Prince of Darkness.

The impressive city of Pergamum has been described by scholars as "the most illustrious city of Asia," "the most spectacular Hellenistic city of Asia Minor because of its imaginative town planning," and "a royal city."

Constructed on a precipice approximately 1,165 feet above sea level, and 1,000 feet above the contiguous flatland, even the ruins of the city of Pergamum exhibit a powerful visage of strength and solidity – an appropriate setting for one enamored of the fortress goddess.

The first city to forge an alliance with Rome, Pergamum became the capital of Asia in 129 B.C, and of all the provinces within the Roman Empire, none was more thoroughly devoted to the practice of emperor worship – a fitting characteristic of a city which will eventually lead the world in worshipping the Antichrist as God.

As chief city of the province, it was here that the "concilia" could be found; an administrative council to whom matters of state religion were entrusted and the body which ensured that oblations of incense were presented before an image of the emperor – again, an action which is paralleled by the image of Antichrist in Revelation 13:14.

As a loyal municipality of Rome and devout adherents of Paganism, the citizens of Pergamum were known for their pitiless and brutal persecution of those who professed their faith in Jesus Christ. A people noted for their profusion of temples and immoderate idolatry, a number of the Pergamene deities were perhaps more prominent than others.

Worship of Asklepios, the god of healing, was a pervasive custom, and as that particular entity was depicted as a serpent, the worship of snakes and the handling of reptiles was an extensive practice within the city. Temples erected to the god of healing were infested with serpents, and other of their gods were portrayed as giants with serpentine tails. Ancient Pergamene coinage bore reptilian emblems, as well; one in particular depicting the Roman Emperor Caracalla standing before a great serpent

entwined among the branches of a bowed sapling, revealing the god of Pergamum (and of Rome) to be that ancient adversary of mankind who, within the Garden of Eden, assumed the form of a serpent and engineered humanity's descent into sin at the foot of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The worship of Zeus and Athene was also widespread, and an ornate altar of Zeus (who was referred to as the "Savior") was constructed with striking pagan scenes masterfully chiseled on each face.

In 29 B.C, the first temple in Asia was erected to Augustus, and others soon followed as the Imperial Cult of Emperor Worship began to flourish.

Incidentally, 200,000 manuscripts of the famed library of Alexandria originally comprised the library of Pergamum, donated in its entirety to Cleopatra by Mark Antony after the original library was inadvertently destroyed by the battle fires of Julius Caesar in 48 B.C.

Thus, the hallmarks of the Adversary's domicile have been abundantly evident in the Turkish city of Pergamum for millennia. In point of fact, it is noted that Pergamum seemed to have more influence on Rome than vice versa, for Pergamum was completely Hellenistic in culture upon its appropriation - a culture which Rome prized and, in fact, imitated.

Having addressed the geographical location in which the darkness will be made manifest, the nature of the plague must also be investigated.

There are many natural phenomena within the earth's atmosphere which can account for an abrupt presence of localized darkness, including heavy and sudden cloud cover, smoke from burning forests, the presence of airborne desert sand which has been hurled into the upper atmosphere by storm-generated winds, and volcanic ash.

An obscuration of light occurring from beyond the earth, however, is known as an eclipse, and can assume two forms: solar and lunar.

During a solar eclipse, the face of the sun is completely concealed for several minutes by the lunar body, yet total darkness is forestalled due to the incandescence of the sun's outer atmosphere, or corona, which provides a light equivalent to the dusk of late evening.

A Norwegian observer of a total eclipse on July 28, 1851 recorded that the darkness did not resemble that which is brought on by night, remarking that mountains fifteen miles away remained faintly visible, and that the contents of books written in sufficiently large type could be discerned out of doors with but a modicum of effort.

A total lunar eclipse can last from three to four hours and occurs when the moon passes through the earth's shadow; an umbrage produced to the rear of the planet while the sun brilliantly inundates the fore.

If the darkness which envelops the throne and kingdom of Antichrist is of an ecliptic nature, it may interest the reader to note that according to Fred Espenak, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, Maryland, the next solar eclipse viewable within the Middle Eastern geographic region will be a total eclipse occurring August 2, 2027 with a duration of six minutes and twenty-three seconds.

The next lunar eclipse viewable within the same region will also be a total eclipse, occurring June 26, 2029 with a duration of five hours and twenty-three minutes (one hour and forty-three minutes of totality).

It is possible that one or another of these eclipses can account for the events of the fifth bowl judgment, however, the probability is also high that the darkness is supernatural without the occurrence of any corresponding natural phenomena.

"*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt-darkness that can be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.*" – Exodus 10:21-23

This nigritude was described as a near-tangible substance which enveloped Egypt to such an extent that for three days it simulated blindness, while just across the eastern bank of the Nile River the Israelites' vision remained unobstructed – a miraculous extinguishing of the Egyptian light.

Chief deities of the Egyptian religion included Ra (God of the Sun) and Isis (Goddess of the Moon). Thus, the pagan gods of light were symbolically destroyed and the Egyptians were plunged into a darkness that neither they, nor their gods, could illuminate – a caliginosity accomplished alone by the hand of Almighty God. Conversely, the Israelites possessed a light which could not be extinguished!

Matthew, Mark, and Luke report the rapid onset of a mysterious darkness which in the presence of the noon-day sun fell over the nation of Israel during the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

"*From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.*" – Matthew 27:45

Speaking through His prophet, God declared in Amos 8:9 that such miracles would be accomplished.

"*In that day" declares the Sovereign LORD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.*"

Whether the darkness of the fifth bowl is produced by overcast skies of wind, clouds, dust, and rain; an eclipse of the celestial bodies; or the hand of God Almighty, it is enough to know that in whatever form the gloom is dispensed, it will descend upon the kingdom of darkness in a manner which will eloquently illustrate the supremacy of Jesus over the self-styled "god of this age."

The Sixth Bowl

"*The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.*

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

"Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon." – Revelation 16:12-16

The sixth bowl of wrath has the effect of drying up the Euphrates River for the express purpose of affording eastern armies ready access to the western regions of Megiddo and Jerusalem.

At 1,800 miles long, the Euphrates is the largest river in western Asia, and functions as the line of demarcation between east and west in that portion of the world.

Although fording the Euphrates is an objective which must be realized if eastern armies are to advance westward, the river is entirely impassable upstream from the Iraqi city of Hit, where rapids and sandbars make navigation impossible, and highly unpredictable downstream, although certain forms of transportation are capable of traversing the treacherous current. It is only below Basra that the Euphrates becomes more navigable for modern transportation, the current at that point not normally exceeding one mile per hour and often falling to a quarter of that speed. During spring flooding, however, the speed of the flow can increase to as much as five miles per hour. (According to an American University Inventory of Conflict and Environment (ICE) case study titled "Tigris-Euphrates River Dispute")

As can be seen from the following map, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers merge to form the Shatt al Arab before emptying into the Persian Gulf. The portion of river extending southeast of Al Basrah constitutes the navigable waters of the Euphrates – a strip approximately fifty miles long – leaving the majority of the river largely impassable.

The purpose of draining the Euphrates, as revealed in Revelation 16:12, is "*to prepare the way for the kings from the east.*"

While this may indicate the nations of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and such, there is an alternate possibility that it may be a reference to the selected route of troop movements rather than a designation of the armies involved.

The Greek word translated as "east" is "anatole," meaning "rising of the sun." Thus, the scripture would literally read: "to prepare the way for the kings of the rising sun."

Again, this may very well denote those regions located to the east, however, it is interesting to note that in Sumerian times, the Euphrates flowed directly into the Persian Gulf which was then known by several names, including the Lower Sea, the Bitter Sea, and the Sea of the Rising Sun.

If the term "Rising Sun" is meant to designate the Persian Gulf, then the Euphrates may not be "crossed" so much as its length traversed by a coalition which enters the barren channel via the gulf.

"*...so that the road for the kings of the East might be made ready.*" – Revelation 16:12 (TCNT)

"*...so that the highway of the kings from the rising sun might be made ready.*" – Revelation 16:12 (BER)

"*The waters of that river were dried up to prepare a road for the kings from the east.*" – Revelation 16:12 (PME)

As to the mechanics of the Euphrates' transformation, it is entirely possible that it is accomplished according to the divine hand of Almighty God, however, the Lord is not averse to the employment of human agents to accomplish His will. In view of the latter, events currently transpiring within the borders of Turkey may prove to be significant.

In recent years, the Turkish government has been diligently working toward completion of the "Southeastern Anatolia Project," a massive endeavor requiring the construction of twenty-two dams and nineteen hydroelectric plants along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. With five of these massive structures already in place along the Euphrates River (Keban, Karakaya, Ataturk, Birecik, and Karakamis), the nation of Turkey is now possessed of the ability to entirely impede the flow of water from that particular body – a situation with serious political ramifications for Syria and Iraq, who have already begun to lodge formal complaints concerning water rights.

To conclude, if the desiccation of the Euphrates is achieved through supernatural means, then no explanation is necessary and it can occur at any time. If, however, a human agency is to play a role, then the Turkish government, perfectly suited for the part, is prepared to act upon a moment's notice.

As the Euphrates becomes a barren riverbed, "*three foul spirits leap like frogs*" from Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Apostle. – Revelation 16:13 (WMS)

With an inherent capacity to perform miraculous wonders, this triumvirate of evil is dispatched to ensure the timely arrival of the world's armies at the Plain of Esdraelon in northern Israel; the staging area from which a mighty host will descend upon Jerusalem, and a region known in the Hebrew tongue as Armageddon.

The Seventh Bowl

"The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.

"The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.

"From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible." – Revelation 16:17-21

The seventh bowl contains a violent storm, hailstones of up to one hundred pounds in weight, and an earthquake of such magnitude that its equal has never before been measured.

Every island will succumb to the violent convulsions of the roiling oceans, enormous swells crashing upon their faces, splintering rocks and trees before submerging them in their entirety. Raging seismic waves will rattle the earth with a thunderous, rumbling roar, causing every pinnacle formed of earth and rock to tremble and quiver before cracking into scores of cragged sections and plunging thousands of feet to the heaving earth below, bursting upon impact into billions of petrous fragments or disappearing altogether into a profusion of vast gaping chasms created by the mighty rending of the seven tectonic plates. Cities and structures designed to withstand the mightiest earthquakes will convulse and topple, reducing formerly elegant and substantial

metropolitan areas to blazing heaps of rubble composed of smashed glass, twisted metal, and broken flesh.

Two fissures will incise the great city of Jerusalem, forming three disassociated partitions; yet it will not fall. If a topographical survey were to be performed at this point, one would discover the earth to be of a largely singular elevation, save for three conspicuously intact portions of Jerusalem, the city of God.

Simultaneously, the Lord will return with thousands upon thousands of his saints "*to bring judgment against them all, convicting each person of every defiling act of shameless sacrilege, of every dirty word they have spewed of their pious filth.*" – Jude 15 (MSG)

"*I saw Heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.*

"The armies of Heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

"He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty." – Revelation 19:11-15

Additional information concerning this Day of the Lord is provided by the prophet Zechariah.

"*This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.*

"On that day men will be stricken by the LORD with great panic. Each man will seize the hand of another, and they will attack each other. Judah too will fight at Jerusalem.

"The wealth of all the surrounding nations will be collected—great quantities of gold and silver and clothing. A similar plague will strike the horses and mules, the camels and donkeys, and all the animals in those camps." – Zechariah 14:12-15

In a final gruesome act of punishment, the armies assembled for the destruction of Jerusalem will be subjected to a doomsday blast equivalent to that of a thermonuclear device. Their flesh will rot on their bones even as they stand, their eyes will melt out of the sockets, and their tongues will putrefy within their mouths. By this manner will the animal kingdom also taste of death.

If these effects are produced by a nuclear device or an energy wave of comparable magnitude, those unfortunately located within the vicinity of Jerusalem may suffer the following consequences (results based on the effects of a one megaton thermonuclear detonation):

Lethal gamma rays emanating from the epicenter of the blast will vaporize all life within an area of six square miles. In less time than it takes for the electrical impulses of human sensory organs to navigate the complex cordage of the central nervous system and report to the brain the excruciating sensations of cellular annihilation that have begun to take place within the body, the dematerialization of mortal matter will be complete. In a

fraction of an instant, the intense radiation will sear concrete and stone with phantom silhouettes of those who were sentient, animate beings just one second previous.

For a distance of ten miles beyond the sphere of total destruction which constitutes ground zero, intense light from the blast will permanently blind every living thing – including farm animals, pets, birds in flight, and people – regardless of whether their eyes are opened or closed; an effect with even greater range (perhaps fifty miles) for those who are inadvertently looking in the direction of the detonation as it occurs. A large, glowing orb will be irrevocably burned into the retina, destroying light receptor cells and leaving these individuals with an enduring image of the ultimate holocaust branded within their eyes. (From Jerusalem, this effect will reach just across the eastern border into Jordan, to the Mediterranean Sea in the West, and to Armageddon in the north.)

A tenth of a second after the initial eruption of gamma rays, a multi-spectral wave of intense heat (largely X-ray and ultraviolet in nature) will claim the lives of many more, causing asphalt to liquefy and catch fire even as a terrified populace attempts to escape across it in a futile search for refuge, themselves becoming ablaze and essentially dissolving into the boiling pavement. Those who seek the extinguishing properties of the rivers and oceans will, in their mad torment, forget that all have been transformed into reservoirs of blood, and plunge to their deaths. (Even were a body of pure water to be found, the hapless victims of a nuclear conflagration would resurface only to catch fire anew – a vicious cycle consigning the sufferers to the inevitable fate of being reduced to a disproportionate quantity of ash.

In addition to the firestorm, many casualties will be incurred by the pressure wave which will follow in just seconds. Those at extreme range who do not succumb to the power of the wave will be hemorrhaging from every orifice, and many of these will perish in the windstorm which will gust over an area of several hundred square miles. Reaching velocities of several hundred miles per hour near the epicenter and remaining above gale-force for as far as six miles away, the tremendous winds and airborne fragments of civilization will destroy structures and cause shrapnel-type wounds and blunt-trauma injuries throughout regions as far away as Egypt and Saudi Arabia to the south, Jordan, and Iraq to the east, and Syria, Lebanon, and Cyprus to the north.

The survivors will experience severe nausea and extreme thirst as their skin is ravaged by an onslaught of angry rashes and their hair begins to fall out in great amounts. Finally, their skin will begin to peel away from the tissue and bone below, due to the disruption of molecular tissues caused by the exposure to excessive amounts of radiation. Organs within the body will begin to liquefy, becoming an unrecognizable mass of bloody tissue. Victims will perish from the inside out as the higher functions of consciousness shut down first, reducing formerly healthy individuals to zombie-like status; living corpses animated only by their remaining primitive brain activity – the last vestiges of which will relinquish its hold on life only after a great endurance of agony.

Thus, "*Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths*," just as Zechariah prophesied.

The conclusion to this narrative is recounted in Revelation chapter nineteen, yet before that portion of the account is disclosed, John is shown the complete destruction of the city of Babylon, mother of harlots.

Two points, however, must be addressed before this chapter can be brought to a close; both of which are intimately related. The first involves the identification of "the great city" in Revelation 16:19 which "split into three parts," and the second explores the nature of the fracture itself.

The "great city" is here acknowledged as Jerusalem due in part to this self-same description elsewhere in scripture.

"*Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.*" - Revelation 11:8

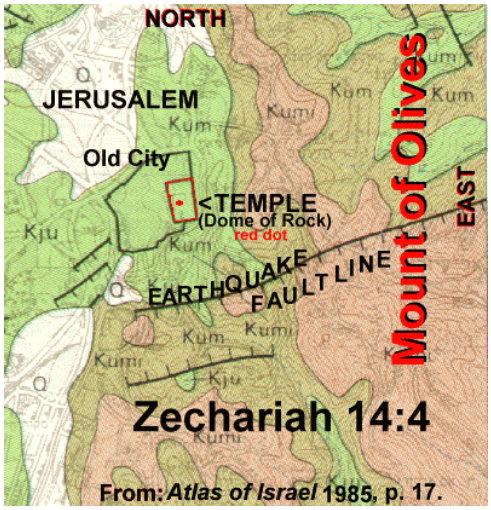
Although scripture similarly refers to the cities of Resen, Gibeon, Ninevah, and Babylon in this manner, further evidence in support of the Jerusalem posture is drawn from the fact that the Mount of Olives, located just half a mile to the east of Jerusalem, will be torn asunder on the day of the Lord's return. Scripture declares that the Mount of Olives will be split from east to west, forming two distinct portions.

"*Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.*" - Zechariah 14:3, 4

If this fissure extends westward to any degree, it will bisect the city of Jerusalem, and it does not take an uncommon mind to realize that a city cloven in two could fragment into three pieces with little difficulty.

An especially revealing document regarding such a scenario is provided below, revealing a fault line which runs along this exact area:

It has been established from scripture that the Mount of Olives will separate into two parts; a fracture which, without divine intervention, will follow the fault line into the city of Jerusalem, dividing it into two pieces. Possessed of the knowledge that the substratum of Jerusalem will indeed rupture, yet forming three parts rather than two, it is quite reasonable to conclude that the additional fragmentation is simply a secondary rift divaricating from the primary fissure which proceeds from the Mount of Olives to the east. Thus, the "great city" which splits into three parts is identified as Jerusalem and the nature of its wound is made clear.



27. Mystery Babylon

Revelation 17:1-18

"*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."*

"Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

"The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

"When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.

"The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

"This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

"The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

"Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

An element of Bible prophecy integral to the conception of proper eschatological imagery concerns the identity of the woman riding upon the scarlet beast in Revelation chapter seventeen.

Given the frequent utilization of complex representational images by the Lord in His message of Revelation, it is particularly fortunate when on occasion the interpretation is supplied within the text.

The following are three such examples:

1. Daniel 8:20, 21 – "*The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king.*"

2. Ezekiel 17:3, 4, 12, 13 – "*Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: A great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers and full plumage of varied colors came to Lebanon. Taking hold of the top of a cedar, he broke off its topmost shoot and carried it away to a land of merchants, where he planted it in a city of traders…*

"Say to this rebellious house, 'Do you not know what these things mean?' Say to them: 'The king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and carried off her king and her nobles, bringing them back with him to Babylon. Then he took a member of the royal family and made a treaty with him, putting him under oath. He also carried away the leading men of the land."

3. Revelation 6:8 – "*I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him.*"

In like manner, the identity of the female rider is provided by scripture and declared to be the great city of Babylon.

The consentient practice of traditional scholarship mistakenly assigns symbolic significance to an object which has been literally defined, thus subjecting the original element to two levels of translation. The city of Babylon is commonly viewed as a figurative representation of the figurative prostitute; the implicit intendment being interpreted as Rome.

Quite illogically, this process proceeds to define a figurative article (the woman) by means of an additional figurative annotation (Babylon), and interprets the latter as the concluding literal (Rome).

Even in the natural, the axiom "Pluralities should not be posited without necessity," is a fundamental principle of scientific methodology commonly known as Occam's Razor. Or, to put it plainly, "Simpler explanations are to be preferred over complex ones."

The simpler explanation in this instance is that the designation of Babylon has been provided by scripture as the literal answer to a figurative query, rather than a redundant illustration of the original question to which an answer has not been given and must therefore be deduced from outside of its context.

Given that this argument alone does not constitute a presentation sufficiently compelling to sway the stalwart traditionalist, let us proceed to examine the scriptural evidence with meticulous solicitude.

Establishment eschatology defines the Mother of Harlots as Rome for two reasons; the first of which involves the statue of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Although this issue has been addressed in a previous chapter, it can nevertheless be explored in greater detail.

Traditional scholarship mistakenly classifies the prophecy of the compositely-fashioned image as iconography which concerns the second coming of Christ rather than that of his initial arrival – a view which supposes the ancient Roman empire will again rise to distinction.

Although scripture explicitly reveals the statue as representational of only four kingdoms, many believe the feet and toes of the statue (described as iron mixed with

clay) indicate the presence of a fifth type of kingdom - a Roman polity conjoined with an additional entity such as the Catholic Church. In this manner, the Revived Holy Roman Empire postulate is derived.

In point of fact, the iron and clay are construction materials which describe the postliminary condition of that nation which existed at the time of Christ, and the purpose for their inclusion is entirely explained in Daniel 2:40-43.

"*Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.*

"Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.

"And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay."

The occurrence of iron and clay accretion is found at the toes, the point at which the statue concludes. This is significant, for it directs the positioning of the literal intendment with respect to its corresponding location on the Roman portion of history's timeline: the point at which the empire concluded.

The Bible declared nearly eleven hundred years in advance that a division of the Roman Empire would lead to its collapse as a world power – a prophecy which has been proven accurate by history.

The decline of the Roman Empire and its subsequent fall in 476 A.D. is directly attributable to its division in 285 A.D. by Diocletian, who, deeming the Empire too large a territory to be effectively governed by a single authority, divided it in half.

"*Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom.*"

Appointing his colleague Maximian as emperor over the western region, Diocletian presided over the western region and established his capital at Nicomedia. In 293 A.D, each appointed a subordinate official with the title of Caesar: Galerius in the east and Constantius in the west. Thus, the tetrarchy (a system of government in which power is divided between four regional emperors) was formed.

With his reforms apparently successful, he and Maximian abdicated their stations in 305 A.D, and the Imperiate passed to Caesars Galerius and Constantius, who immediately greeted each other with hostility.

With the death of Constantius in 306 A.D, his son Constantine ascended to the title of Caesar and the Empire became mired in civil war for nearly twenty years as Caesar fought against Caesar in a violent reenactment of that drama which had been previously staged by Alexander the Great's four successors.

In 325 A.D, Constantine emerged as the sole surviving emperor and subsequently took control over the entire Empire, relocating his capital to Constantinople, Turkey, from which he ruled for twelve years.

Upon his death in 337 A.D, the Empire was again divided, this time between the three sons of Constantine, and again the kingdom was plunged into a civil war ("*And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people… will not remain united, any*

more than iron mixes with clay.") which lasted until the reign of Theodosius (379–395), when Rome was once again united under a single emperor.

The stability was short-lived, however, as the Germanic Visigoth tribe captured and sacked Rome in 410 A.D. From 451 to 453, Rome was overrun by Attila the Hun, and in 455, the Germanic Vandals finally conquered Rome. In 476, Odoacer, chieftain of the Germanic Heruli, Sciri, and Rugii tribes and former mercenary of Rome, deposed the Roman Emperor Romulus Augustulus and appointed himself emperor. Thus, the great Roman Empire ceased to exist, and its power was seized by the war chiefs of tribal barbarians.

In addition to the political divisions and social infighting, it is widely held that the fortunes of Rome reversed themselves in part due to the disintegration of the elite 200,000 member Roman army into an unorganized, ill-motivated rabble.

Of the many stimulus factors suggested as catalyst agents capable of producing such a deleterious effect, three are key.

1. The loyalty of the Roman soldier, previously directed toward one emperor and one central nucleus of authority, was fragmented amidst a surfeit of potentates and an abundance of command centers.

2. The granting of citizenship to all free men within the Empire provided Roman citizens with little incentive to enlist. Formerly, non-citizens serving in the Roman army received citizenship at the end of their enlistment, a lengthy period which was initially set at sixteen years and later extended to twenty-five. The aspiration of outlanders to acquire Roman citizenship provided the Roman army with sufficient numbers of voluntary recruits to maintain acceptable levels of strength for two hundred years. It is certain that without this practice, the army could not have remained at full efficacy had it been forced to depend upon volunteers from those already possessed of Roman citizenship, for this quarter displayed an extraordinary indisposition for service. Due to the "free citizenship" program initiated by Rome, the army was reduced to a disorganized and ineffective multitude of malcontents.

3. With the sharp decline of experienced soldiers and the reduction of quality enlistments, Rome began to rely heavily on mercenaries, such as the Heruli, Sciri, and Rugii tribes of Odoacer who, upon detecting the military impotence of the Romans, began to infiltrate the western empire in small groups and then whole tribes, eventually turning on them and exploiting the resources of Rome for the establishment of their own kingdoms.

The Roman economy had become weak, its military might brittle, and its people divided. In the end they were conquered, not by another kingdom, but by a handful of primitive tribes.

Such is the meaning of the empire of iron which became mixed with clay.

The endtime One World Government system, observed by John in Revelation chapter thirteen as a beast of the sea, was an amalgam of many nations combined with an additional undefinable substance. This mixture in Revelation is not the crumbling Roman Empire. It is a new breed of polity, commonly referred to today as the New World Order, and it will not be based on Roman ideology, but Babylonian.

It was revealed to John in Revelation 17:8 that the reigning government upon the earth at the time of Christ's return would be a nation which "*once was, now is not, and yet will come,*" a formula which is equal to Babylon.

It is crucial for any student who would solve this equation to bear in mind the period in which the statement was given; specifically during the latter course of John's life, as it is commonly held that the book of Revelation was written in 95 A.D, five years before his death.

Thus, the statement "*once was, now is not, and yet will come,*" must be positioned within the concluding portion of the first century. The nation which is divinely destined to rise again is one which existed prior to this period, yet had faded from the global stage by this time and was observed no longer.

It can be demonstrated that all firsthand information concerning the animate city of Babylon had vanished by 10 B.C. The Sicilian historian Diodorus Siculus, a first century B.C. contemporary of Julius and Augustus Casear, related that only a small part of ancient Babylon was inhabited in his day. Strabo, the Greek geographer and historian (63 B.C.-19 A.D.), described Babylon as being "in great part deserted."

In 1st Peter 5:13 (written about 60 A.D.), the apostle makes reference to groups of persecuted Christians who had taken to hiding among the ruins of Babylon. They must have departed the site almost immediately after Peter's mention, for the Jewish historian Josephus reported that these abandoned the city in about the middle of the first century due to the intensity of persecutions suffered there. Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.), the Roman scholar, encyclopedist, and scientist, recorded during the first century that while the temple of Bel was still standing, "in all other respects the place has gone back to a desert." The Roman historian Dio Cassius reported that when the Roman Emperor Trajan visited Babylon in 115 A.D, he found nothing but "mounds and stones and ruins."

Pausanias, the Greek traveler and geographer, declared that by the second century nothing remained of Babylon except the temple of Belus and the walls of the city. Lucian, the Greek sophist and satirist (120-180 A.D.), remarked that even the ruins of Babylon would soon disappear as completely as Nineveh, which by his time had disappeared completely from the world. In 199 A.D, Emperor Septimius Severus found the site completely deserted.

The ancient city of Babylon, under King Nebuchadnezzar II, was a wondrous sight to behold. "In addition to its size," wrote Herodotus in 450 B.C, "Babylon surpasses in splendour any city in the known world." According to his calculations, the outer walls were fifty-six miles in length, eighty feet thick and three hundred-twenty feet high - wide enough for a chariot of four horses to pivot round and reverse its course. The inner walls were "not so thick as the first, but hardly less strong."

Numerous interior fortresses and temples contained enormous statues of solid gold, while the famous Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, gave the impression of a relocated mountain upon which rows and rows of vaulted balconies were placed, resting upon hollow, cubed pillars which were filled with soil and planted with the largest of trees.

Rising above all the splendor, a majestic backdrop of strength, the famous Tower of Babel stretched into the Heavens. A city of power, magnificence, and influence, which by the time of John's writing in 95 A.D, had simply ceased to exist, the bulk of its population having been evacuated in 275 B.C. to the new Seleucid capital of Seleucia on the Tigris River.

Unfortunately for the proponents of a Revived Roman Empire, the city of Rome fails to meet the prophetical qualification of "*once was, now is not, and yet will come.*"

Although the Roman Empire existed prior to the first Christian century, it existed throughout that same period and continued until the late fifth century – clearly disqualifying that municipality from contention as the Mother of Harlots.

Other popular candidates include New York City and Egypt, two additional assertions which fail to comply with biblical prophecy, for New York was not founded until 1624 as the colony of New Netherland (renamed New York in 1664), and Egypt has never ceased to exist.

For those who see the beast and its number of 666 as representative of a singular individual, the formula is completely inapplicable, for neither Mikhail Gorbachev, Henry Kissinger, John F. Kennedy, George W. Bush, Prince Charles of Wales, Adolph Hitler, King Juan Carlos, Kofi Annan, Saddam Hussein, Vladimir Putin, nor any other human being in existence today ever drew breath prior to the date of their birth in the twentieth century – and therefore could not have fulfilled the prophecy concerning an existence which predated that of John the Revelator.

Only Babylon satisfactorily meets the biblical criteria provided for the purpose of identifying the Great Harlot. Babylon is specifically identified as this woman by scripture in Revelation 17:5; Babylon "*once was, now is not, and yet will come*;" Babylon answers the riddle of 666/616; and as will be demonstrated, Babylon is the city of seven hills.

The second reason for the traditional practice of defining the Mother of Harlots as Rome has to do with its construction upon seven pillars of earth.

Proponents of the Roman theory insist that it is this feature which so obviously points toward Rome as the fulfillment of that which sits upon seven hills. Such insistence fails to recognize that "obvious" answers are incorrect by default, for the Lord warned that to arrive at a proper solution would require a generous measure of uncommon knowledge.

"*This calls for a mind with wisdom.*" – Revelation 17:9 (NIV)

"*This calls for a mind [to consider that is packed] with wisdom and intelligence [it is something for a particular mode of thinking and judging of thoughts, feelings, and purposes]*." (AMP)

"*To understand this, one must be wise.*" (WE)

"*You need a wise mind to understand this.*" (NCV)

"*In this situation a wise mind is needed.*" (GWT)

"*Here is scope for the exercise of a mind that has wisdom!*" (WEY)

"*But here is the clue for those who can interpret it.*" (NEB)

"*Here is a problem for a profound mind.*" (GSPD)

"*Here is something for the intelligent to ponder.*" (BER)

"*Here there is need for cleverness, for a shrewd mind.*" (JB)

"*Here is a puzzle that calls for careful thought to solve it.*" (LB)

The need for profound wisdom, carefully employed, suggests that the sagacious investigator must of necessity remain wary of solutions arrived at effortlessly, and therefore the conspicuous Roman response is a dubious resolution.

In fact, having ceased from their investigative efforts after identifying only the most obvious of possibilities, many traditionalists remain unaware of the fact that Rome is but one city among six which are known to have been built on seven hills.

These include Rio De Janeiro, Jerusalem, Babylon, Rome, Byzantium, and Rome, Georgia, USA.

Advocates of the Roman postulation cannot claim the substructure of the Italian capital to be an exclusive design (and therefore the only possible answer to the riddle of Revelation 17:3-6), for it is an architecture shared by at least five other municipalities.

As a matter of fact, Rome's claim to the title of "City of Seven Hills" is squarely rooted in mythology, and an inaccurate description in any event. It is derived from the seven brightest objects in the nocturnal sky of Rome, namely the sun, moon, and five planets, which were named after the chief Roman deities.

As the brightest object in the sky, the sun was given the name of Apollo, the appellative of the Roman God of Enlightenment. The moon, as the second-brightest body in the Heavenlies, was labeled Diana, the sister of Apollo. The fastest planet was called Mercury, after the swiftest Messenger of the Gods, while the slowest planet was named Saturn, for the God of Time. The planet which burned with more passion than its fellows was named Venus, after the Goddess of Love. Recognizing the crimson hue as a symbolic representation of war, the red planet was given the appropriate title of Mars, the God of War. Finally, the largest planet was named Jupiter, after the King of the Gods.

According to myth, there existed in ancient times a small city called Alba Longa which was ruled by a kind and gentle king named Numitor. The king was not a warrior and he fielded no army, wanting nothing more than peace and prosperity for his people.

His younger brother, Amulius, however, was determined to become king, and began to train a clandestine army to accomplish his aims. When the day of the coup d'état arrived, his forces attacked King Numitor's estate, killing the prince, imprisoning the princess Rhea Sylvia, and exiling the king. Without an army or weapons, the king and his people became the reluctant subjects of Amulius.

In time, Princess Rhea Sylvia escaped from prison with the help of Mars, who was taken by her beauty. As a result of their union, twin sons were born, named Romulus and Remus, which an enraged Amulius had thrown into the Tiber River, determined to eliminate any possible contenders to the throne which he had usurped from his older brother.

Rescued by a female wolf and then discovered by a shepherd who raised them as sons, the twins grew to become men, and decided to found a city upon the river from which they had been retrieved.

In addition to being located within the vicinity of the Tiber, there were two further prerequisites deemed necessary for the site: It must be a well-defensible position, and it must be founded upon seven hills; seven being the perfect number of the Gods. The reasoning behind the latter was that any potential enemy would behold the seven hills and reconsider their intention to lay siege to a "city of the Gods."

Scholars today believe that the city was founded by a Trojan woman named Roma, who arrived at the site with a Trojan fleet in 753 B.C. Describing the scene as one of enchanting beauty, where before the setting sun the visitor was "enticed to dream while being caressed by the off-shore breeze," she became so enamored of the site that she convinced the other women to join her in burning the ships in order to prevent the men from departing such a tranquil vista – an explanation entirely devoid of the "Seven-Hilled City" theme and its accompanying mythos.

Thus, the title "City of Seven Hills" as it is applied to Rome, can be understood only if one departs reality and traverses the storied realms of fantasy.

According to René Seindal, M.A. in History and Italian, B.Sc. in Computer Science, University of Copenhagen in Denmark, "Traditionally, Rome is said to be founded on seven hills, but the history and the topography of Rome is a bit more complicated than that.

"The hills are not all separated, muddling the definitions somewhat. Most of the hills are high ridges, cut by natural streams flowing from the higher ground into the Tiber River."

The hills include the Palatine, Capitoline, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Caelian, and Aventine.

"The Capitoline has two summits, the Capitoline proper to the south, and the Arx to the north, with the Asylum on the ridge between them." (Seindal)

Although reckoned as a singular elevation, the Capitoline consists of two promontories, rather than one, and by definition inflates the traditional number of seven hills to a figure of eight.

"Various parts of the Esquiline Hill have separate names. The Cispian Hill (*Cispius*) is a small ridge just north of the Esquiline, the western side is called Fagutal (*Fagutalis*), and the southern side Oppian (*Oppius*). The Esquiline Hill was connected to the Palatine Hill via a ridge called the Velia, which was all but leveled in late antiquity." (Seindal)

Thus, the Esquiline is considered one hill, only by ignoring three additional existing crests, as well as an ancient fourth, whose inclusion would swell the number of Roman hills from eight to twelve.

"The Caelian Hill is the southernmost of the four large spurs… It had two high points, referred to as the Larger Caelian (*Caelius major*) to the west, and the Smaller Caelian (*Caelius minor*) to the north." (Seindal)

Again, Roman tradition has combined multiple gradients into one, lest the number of foundations be increased to thirteen.

These points are made to underscore the fact that the title "City of Seven Hills" is a highly inaccurate description of Rome. Moreover, the city, which was originally founded upon only one hill (the Palatine), grew to include other hills even beyond the Tiber River, which are accepted as official hills of Rome.

"Outside the ancient city limits were other hills that would later be incorporated into the city as it grew." (Seindal) These include the Pincius, just north of Quirinal Hill, and the Janiculum and Vaticanus which are located across the Tiber River, bringing the total number of hills to sixteen.

The reference to the numeral seven is simply a nostalgic nod to mythologic history in which it is honored as a symbol of celestial perfection (and no doubt the origination of the Christian adoption of the concept in which a six, however oft-repeated (as in 666) will invariably fall short of the perfection of God).

As Rome was originally founded upon less than seven hills and today encompasses more than seven, one cannot insist that the city rests upon seven single foundations. It is "The City of Seven Hills" in name only.

Advocates of a Roman solution to the Harlot enigma are reduced to claiming that Rome was the only city *well-known* for such a title, and that its widespread fame is sufficient qualification for identification of the wealthy prostitute.

However, Rome has not been the only city prominently recognized for that title. Babylon was also celebrated as "The City of Seven Hills," in addition to Jerusalem, Byzantium, and to a lesser extent, Rome, Georgia, USA.

"We are all familiar with Babylon on the Euphrates (which became the capital of the world in the time of Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century B.C.) as being the "Seven Hilled City." And, it may be surprising for some to learn this, but when Constantine the emperor wanted to build a "new Rome" in the eastern part of the Roman Empire (because most of the economic life of the Roman Empire in the fourth century was centered in the eastern half of the Empire and he felt he needed a capital city much nearer the economic center of the Empire), he finally selected a spot on the Bosporus called Byzantium. The reason he selected this spot to be the "New Rome" was because it was a small village also located on "Seven Hills." This made "New Rome" as a City of Seven Hills.

"… Strange as it may seem, the City of Jerusalem as it existed in the time of Christ Jesus was also reckoned to be the "City of Seven Hills." This fact was well recognized in Jewish circles. In the *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, an eighth century midrashic narrative (section 10), the writer mentioned without commentary (showing that the understanding was well known and required no defense) that "Jerusalem is situated on seven hills" (recorded in *The Book of Legends*, edited by Bialik and Ravnitzky, p. 371, paragraph 111).

"And, so it was. Those "seven hills" are easy to identify. If one starts with the Mount of Olives just to the east of the main City of Jerusalem (but still reckoned to be located within the environs of Jerusalem), there are three summits to that Mount of Olives. The northern summit (hill) is called Scopus [Hill One], the middle summit (hill) was called Nob [Hill Two], the highest point of Olivet itself, and the southern summit (hill) was called in the Holy Scriptures the "Mount of Corruption" or "Mount of Offence" [Hill Three] (II Kings 23:13). On the middle ridge between the Kedron and the Tyropoeon Valleys there was (formerly) in the south "Mount Zion" [Hill Four] (the original "Mount Zion" and not the later southwest hill that was later called by that name), then the "Ophel Mount" [Hill Five] and then to the north of that the "Rock" around which "Fort Antonia" was built [Hill Six]. And finally, there was the *southwest* hill itself [Hill Seven] that finally became known in the time of Simon the Hasmonean as the *new* "Mount Zion." This makes "Seven Hills" in all." – Dr. Ernest L. Martin, eminent theologian and archaeologist

Although Rome, Georgia, USA is a relatively modern construction, founded in 1834 and most decidedly incapable of fulfilling Bible prophecy as the Mother of Harlots, it is nevertheless widely known as "The City of Seven Hills." Unlike its prestigious namesake, the American city was indeed constructed upon seven pillars of earth, known as Tower Hill, Old Shorter Hill, Lumpkin Hill, Blossom Hill, Jackson Hill, Mt. Aventine, and Myrtle Hill.

The purpose in mentioning this city is to further illustrate the fact that the traditionalist assertion of "Rome is the only city well-known for its 'Seven-Hilled' title" is demonstrably false.

Now the argument becomes, "Rome is the *best-known* city of seven hills," an accurate conclusion, albeit one which can be reached with but a modicum of wisdom (if any at all), and thus a defense which denies the sapience clause of Revelation 17:9.

To refocus on biblical criteria rather than human-crafted arguments, the Great Harlot conforms to three characteristics:

1) It is a city of seven hills
2) It had ceased to exist by the first century A.D
3) Its name is 666 as well as 616

Consider the six cities of Rio de Janeiro, Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome (Italy), Rome (Georgia, USA), and Byzantium in light of the aforementioned attributes. Each has been selected for its compliance with the first requirement, so let us proceed to the second.

Rio de Janeiro did not exist before the first century, founded as it was in 1502.

Babylon both entered and exited the world scene prior to the first century, having been made insignificant due to the establishment of a new Seleucid capital to which most of Babylon's population was transferred in 275 B.C. From that point forward, the city fell into ruin and did not support a civilization during the New Testament period.

Jerusalem's existence was an established fact both prior to the first century as well as during it.

The city of Rome predated the book of Revelation while at the same time shared with it a contemporary existence.

Rome, Georgia, USA did not exist before the time of John.

Byzantium was founded in the eighth century B.C, and is known today as Istanbul; a city which has weathered the test of time and endured numerous alterations to its name (aka New Rome and Constantinople).

Only one city fulfills the second requirement: the city of ancient Babylon on the Euphrates, which incidentally, is the only entity which can also account for the 666/616 discrepancy concerning the Mark of the Beast.

Only one point remains obscure: how its characterization as a "Seven-Hilled City" can be reconciled with the fact that ancient Babylon was sited upon an enormous desert.

"*Here there is need for cleverness, for a shrewd mind.*" – Revelation 17:9 (JB)

The word translated in Revelation 17:9 as the English "hills" is the Greek "oros," meaning "to rise, or rear; a mountain, as lifting itself above the plain."

Thus, the word refers not to a hill, but to a mountain which elevates itself above the plain by its own hand, as it were, in an egoistic posture of arrogance neither desiring nor requiring assistance from a Creator or master builder – an attitude which originally manifested itself in the plain of Shinar during the construction of the Tower of Babel.

"*Come, let **us** build **ourselves** a city, with a tower that reaches to the Heavens, so that **we** may make a name for **ourselves** and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.*" – Genesis 11:4

The attitude displayed is one of self-aggrandizement; a rebellious indulgence which specifically rejects any and all dissenting external influences, with a particular emphasis on the exclusion of a divinely-appointed morality.

Thus, the seven "hills" which serve as objects of reclination with regard to the Great Harlot are, in fact, seven mountains which have discarded the mind of God and proceeded along a path of self-empowerment, lifting *themselves* above the plain.

Consequently, the student of Bible prophecy should be searching, not for a city of seven hills, but a city of seven insolent mountains.

Exalting itself into the Heavens above the plain of Shinar, the Tower of Babel was a monument to such self-expression. In fact, the word "tower" in Genesis 11:4, 5 is the Hebrew "migdalah," which is derived from the root "gadal," meaning "to boast, bring up, exceed, excellent, promote, increase, lift-up, magnify, be much set by, proudly spoken, tower."

A tower, to be sure, but what an incredibly ostentatious edifice! The title "Tower of Babel" could easily have been rendered as "The Boastful Tower of Babel," "The Exceedingly Excellent Tower of Babel," "The Magnified Tower of Babel," or "The Proudly Speaking Tower of Babel."

This narcissistic attitude of self-sufficiency is manifestly evident even in the earliest stages of Babylonian civilization and architecture.

The Tower of Babel was constructed as a terraced pyramid of seven successively receding stories – a design known as a ziggurat. Ascent was enabled via an exterior triple stairway or a spiral ramp.

An eyewitness account of the Tower of Babel is provided by the Greek historian Herodotus:

"In the middle of the precinct there was a tower of solid masonry, a furlong in length and breadth, upon which was raised a second tower, and on that a third, and so on up to eight. The ascent to the top is on the outside, by a path which winds round all the towers. When one is about half-way up, one finds a resting-place and seats, where persons are wont to sit some time on their way to the summit. On the topmost tower there is a spacious temple, and inside the temple stands a couch of unusual size, richly adorned, with a golden table by its side. There is no statue of any kind set up in the place, nor is the chamber occupied of nights by any one but a single native woman, who, as the Chaldaeans, the priests of this god, affirm, is chosen for himself by the deity out of all the women of the land.

"They also declare - but I for my part do not credit it - that the god comes down in person into this chamber, and sleeps upon the couch. This is like the story told by the Egyptians of what takes place in their city of Thebes, where a woman always passes the night in the temple of the Theban Jupiter. In each case the woman is said to be debarred all intercourse with men. It is also like the custom of Patara, in Lycia, where the priestess who delivers the oracles, during the time that she is so employed- for at Patara there is not always an oracle- is shut up in the temple every night."

An excellent description of the Tower of Babel, recorded onto a cuneiform tablet from Uruk in 229 B.C, can be found today in the French Louvre. A reproduction of an earlier text, it states that the tower was constructed of seven terraces, and provides the height of the seven segments as ninety-one meters in totality.

Upon the top-most terrace was a temple, dedicated to the Babylonian god Marduk. The Louvre tablet describes seven rooms within this temple:

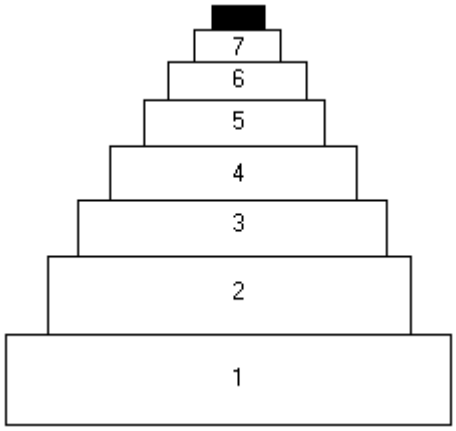
The first, which Marduk shared with his wife Sarpanitum; the second, reserved for the scribe-god Nabu and his wife Tashmetu; rooms for the water god Ea, the god of light Nusku, the god of Heaven Anu, and finally Enlil, Marduk's antecessor as chief of the Mesopotamian pantheon. The seventh room was referred to as the "House of the Bed," and consisted of a bed and throne. A stairway which led to the roof enabled the Babylonian astronomers to engage in their craft at the highest possible level.

According to MSN Encarta Encyclopedia, "A tablet giving measurements and the eye-witness account of the Greek historian Herodotos describe it as having had seven stages of different colors with a temple at its top."

Thus, the ziggurat of Babel consisted of seven levels, sometimes described as eight due to the temple which was built upon that of the seventh tier.

Known by the Sumerians as Etemenanki, its meaning is traditionally suggested as "Temple of the Seven Masters of Heaven and Earth," a logical title for an edifice of seven levels which were dedicated to one of the seven major Heavenly bodies which the Romans later named as Apollo, Diana, Mercury, Saturn, Mars, Venus, and Jupiter.

A simple diagram of the Tower of Babel has been provided below:



The term "ziggurat" comes from the Akkadian word "ziqquratu," meaning "mountain peak." An understanding of Mesopotamian religion is necessary to comprehending ziggurat design. Ancient civilizations often regarded mountains as sacred sites inhabited by gods.

Zeus, for example, was believed to reside on Mount Olympus, Baal on Mount Saphon, and Yahweh on Mount Sinai. In fact, these mountains were believed to function as portals between Heaven and earth. On the Mesopotamian plain, however, no mountains existed, and so in order to correct this, the indigenous population constructed artificial pinnacles known as ziggurats.

This concept is reflected in the uncorrupted Akkadian name for Babylon: "bab-ilu," meaning "gate of the gods." The Babylonian word for the city was "Babel," (pronounced "*bab*-ul") which sounded similar to the Hebrew "balal," (pronounced "baw-*lal*") which meant "confused," an interpretation which does not accurately reflect its native meaning.

The Babylonians believed that Babylon, by way of its ziggurat, provided access to the Heavens, even as its name implies. Characterizing the concepts of pagan polytheism, sexual immorality, and human sacrifice, the ziggurat represented an affront to the One true God and therein lies the motive for the intervention of Yahweh.

The very word "ziggurat" was representative of a mountain, even as the structure which it denoted was viewed as such. Other Babylonian ziggurats have been translated as "Temple of the Mountain Breeze," and "Temple of the Exalted Mountain."

At this time, the reader should recall that the original word for "hills" in Revelation 17:9 was "mountain," and therefore denoted seven "mountains" upon which a woman was perched.

The genius of the riddle which requires "*a mind… packed with wisdom and intelligence*" is that it is referring to the seven stories (or mountains) of the Babylonian ziggurat.

The Bible declares that a woman could be found at rest upon the heights of these mountains, and ancient records have affirmed that in ancient Babylon, the Mystery Religion indeed retained a woman within the temple of the seventh "mountain" at all times, along with a bed or couch.

In addition, the golden cup clasped in her hand is revealed by the prophet Jeremiah as another representation of Babylon:

"*Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed.*" - Jeremiah 51:7,8 (KJV)

Compare this description with that of Revelation 17:2, 4:

"*With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries… The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.*"

Wisdom reveals the Great Harlot of Revelation as Babylon, an entity which sits upon seven mountains, holding a golden cup which the nations have used to drink of her wine, and have become drunk.

Only Babylon fulfills all of the prophecies.

Scripture declares that this ancient city will rise again at the end of the age, a prophecy which becomes salient in light of the astonishing fact that the rebuilding of Babylon quietly began in 1978. Upon the precise location of its original counterpart, Saddam Hussein has reconstructed much of King Nebuchadnezzar's illustrious city, including the Procession street, the Ishtar Gate, a Greek theater, many temples, and Nebuchadnezzar's throne room.

Although adorned with lavish raiment, glittering jewels, and polished gold – the extravagant beauty of a queen – in one hour will she be consumed with fire, never to rise again, for mighty is the hand of the Lord that works justice and harsh are His judgments concerning her. Equally severe are her offenses, as evidenced by her bloody state of intoxication at the expense of the saints.

While Rome and the Catholic Church are traditionally viewed as the blood-spattered butcher of Christianity depicted in Revelation seventeen as a "painted woman," such institutions merely imitated and perpetuated those customs which originated in Babylon.

Indeed, it is she who will instigate the world-wide slaughter of saints in this latter age, forging an alliance with the Turkish Antichrist to effect a breach of the Jewish Treaty, instate her Mark, erect an image of worship, capture Jerusalem, and to slay Jews, Christians, and any others who might object to her authority.

There are four additional issues which have yet to be clarified before this chapter can be considered complete:

1) The nature of Babylon's destruction
2) The ten horns and dual symbology of the scarlet creature's seven heads
3) The identity of the eighth king
4) The meaning of "Mystery" Babylon

Firstly, Revelation 17:15-17 reveals that the One-World Government System will eventually come to despise the authority of Babylon and the Antichrist. In one hour, she will be brought to ruin, stripped of her garments, consumed, and burned with fire at the behest of Almighty God.

The specific causal events which will influence the world to rebel against its sovereign authority can only be theorized at this time. Those alert to the developments of future political strategery may one day be capable of formulating an answer. At present, it

is enough to know that such action will be taken, even if the motives behind such a response, and the subsequent mechanics, are currently obscure.

Secondly, Revelation 17:9, 10 declare the seven heads to be representational of seven hills as well as seven Babylonian kings. Five were deceased prior to the first century, while one actively reigned.

"*The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come.*"

The Bible affirms the existence of a Babylonian king during the time of John, despite the fact that Babylon had ceased to exist by the New Testament age – evidence that the Bible considers the Roman Caesar, the king in power at the time of John, as a scion of Babylonia.

The statue of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream affirms this, for its purpose was to reveal the identity of the four different monarchies which would come into possession of the region of Babylon before the advent of Christ.

Rome was the sixth regent, the king which existed during the time the book of Revelation was drafted. To enumerate retrogressively, the fifth king was the sovereign of Greece; the fourth, Persia; the third, Babylon itself. Predating the period in which Daniel lived, and thus preceding the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, the second administrator to govern the region of Babylon belonged to the Assyrian empire. Before that, it was managed by the Chaldeans. The seventh king who "is to come" is the future Antichrist.

The ten horns represent the ten governors who will preside over the ten regions into which the world will be divided; men "*who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.*"

Thirdly, Revelation 17:11 speaks of an eighth king.

"*He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.*"

While it is true that the seven bestial heads are representative of seven kings rather than eight, there are, in fact, two sets of kings mentioned in relation to the scarlet beast. As indicated above, Revelation 17:12 specifies a second assembly of ten such potentates.

The eighth, then, can only belong to the second grouping of ten – a conclusion which is confirmed by scripture.

"*After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast-terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it.*" – Daniel 7:7, 8

Three of the ten horns will be uprooted by the Antichrist, leaving seven. The Antichrist will then become the eighth king (who "*belongs to the seven*").

He is therefore typified as the seventh of seven heads, the eighth of ten horns, and a king in the registers of both.

Fourthly, and in conclusion, the inclusion of the word "Mystery" in the title of Babylon the Great is a reference to the type of religion she established.

A "mystery religion," according to Grolier's 1996 Multimedia Encyclopedia, "is generally used to refer to those cults of the ancient world whose members believed that by means of the performance of particular secret rituals they would gain knowledge not

available to the uninitiated and thus effect a mystical union with the divine. In contrast to traditional religion, which emphasized the gulf between God and humankind, the mystery cults promised a share in the life of the gods, most importantly in their immortality.

"Because these cults focused on the search for eternal life, the central figures were usually gods who had died and were then reborn. The initiates thus guaranteed immortality for themselves by reenacting the death and rebirth of the divinity."

In fact, the initiates were commonly required to feed on the flesh and blood of sacrificial victims in order to become united with a divine entity and to ensure their own immortality. The mystery religions began in Babylon.

As Reverend R.L. Meares explains in his article "What Is Mystery Babylon?"

"Satan knows much of the plan of God. He knows that according to the word of God in Genesis 3:15, one day a "heel" would come to "bruise his head." So he formulated a plan and devised a religious system that people would believe in, kill for, even be willing to die for. This religious system would be an occult system, centering upon Mystery Babylon. This system was to eventually control the world, and to attempt to deify Satan as lord.

"To introduce this system into the world, he used two people: Nimrod, a son of Cush and the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah (Genesis 10:6-11). His very name is defined by *Smiths' Bible Dictionary* as meaning "rebellion". The other person used in the propagation of this self-serving, self-seeking society was Semiramis. Together with Nimrod she ruled Babel, one of the first major cities constructed after the flood. (Genesis 11:1-9)

"According to the nineteenth century historian, Alexander Hislop, most dependable historians agree that Babel (Babylon) was the primal source from which all idolatry spread to the ancient world. Also according to Hislop, Shem the son of Noah killed Nimrod because of his iniquitous practices. Semiramis, however, moved quickly. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, Tammuz. She let it be known that this was Nimrod reincarnate. This was the first intimation of the "trinity" as associated with the worship and deification of the godhead. (*The Two Babylons*, Alexander Hislop, *The Force*, pg.11, Chick Publications).

"Another historian, Ralph Woodrow, concluded that to this present time, evidence of Babylonian worship exists in "all the false religions of the earth." (*Babylon, Mystery Religio*n-Ralph Woodrow).

"Beginning at Babylon and finding its way into all ancient societies was the teaching of "Pantheism." Pantheism teaches that all forces, manifestations, etc. of the universe are god. (Sun worship, animal deification, etc.)

"This is the same doctrine being propagated today as "New Age." This teaching has been a threat to humanity throughout the ages. It was a very real threat even during the time of the Apostles. (Romans 1:20-32)

"However, the main god of Babylon was a god represented by an equilateral triangle, or as a single body with three heads. This is the most ancient depiction of the "trinity." Even in this modern age, Buddhist, Hindus and Catholics still retain a "trinity" as their god. They also still retain certain symbols (the equilateral triangle, etc.) as the symbol of god.

"The scriptures, as well as historical evidence, prove that Babylon is the very mother or originator of all Paganism. The spread of pantheism, with Satan at its pinnacle, was precipitated by the confusion of the languages at Babel (Genesis 11).

"Yet through the lineage of Shem, God raised up a righteous man by the name of Abram (Abraham). It was through the seed of Abraham that God would bring forth a nation to be a light to those in the dark world of idolatry. This was the nation of Israel. However in the fullness of Gods' prophetic time clock, it would be the church. (See Genesis 11-25)

"By the time of Moses, the gods of Babylon had spread over the face of the earth. Many kingdoms had arisen from the plains of Shinar and moved across the face of the earth, taking with them the ancient deities of Babylon. (Edom, Ammon, Midian, Egypt, etc.) Only the names of their gods had changed. The Egyptian trinity were Isis, Horus, and Seb. Mystery Babylon was flourishing, growing and prospering."

Through Nimrod and Semiramis, founders of the city of Babylon, Satan developed an occult religious system that would enable him to obtain the souls of mankind. Through the false doctrines of Divination Astrology, Hypnotism, Spiritualism, Witchcraft, Celibacy, and Sun Worship, the allegiances of man would be transferred from their Creator to Satan.

Ezekiel chapter sixteen imparts God's thoughts on the practice of the mysteries:

"*'And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and sacrificed them to the idols. In all your detestable practices and your prostitution you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, kicking about in your blood. 'Woe! Woe to you, declares the Sovereign LORD.*" – Ezekiel 16:20-23

"*'Therefore, you prostitute, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you poured out your wealth and exposed your nakedness in your promiscuity with your lovers, and because of all your detestable idols, and because you gave them your children's blood, therefore I am going to gather all your lovers, with whom you found pleasure, those you loved as well as those you hated.*

"I will gather them against you from all around and will strip you in front of them, and they will see all your nakedness. I will sentence you to the punishment of women who commit adultery and who shed blood; I will bring upon you the blood vengeance of my wrath and jealous anger.

"Then I will hand you over to your lovers, and they will tear down your mounds and destroy your lofty shrines. They will strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewelry and leave you naked and bare. They will bring a mob against you, who will stone you and hack you to pieces with their swords. They will burn down your houses and inflict punishment on you in the sight of many women. I will put a stop to your prostitution, and you will no longer pay your lovers." – Ezekiel 16:35 – 41

Notice how perfectly this last passage mirrors Revelation 17:16; a promise of ruination, nakedness, dismemberment, and blazing fire for those who follow after the "mysteries" of Babylon.

In summation, "Mystery Babylon the Great, The Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth," is not Rome, but the Babylon of modern Iraq.

28. Threnody, Festivity, and Hostility

Revelation 18:1-24

"*After this I saw another angel coming down from Heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."*

"Then I heard another voice from Heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to Heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'

"Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her. When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry:

"'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!' "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more— cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men.

"They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn and cry out:

"'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!'

"Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out:

"'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin! Rejoice over her, O Heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.'"

"Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown

down, never to be found again. The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth."

Threnody

The basic premise of this chapter is that Babylon has fallen, never to rise again.

She considered herself to be a splendid woman of affluent tastes, ravishing and irresistible to the masses, yet God exposed her as a vile glutton of filth, detestable in every way.

Her golden chalice has been drained of its wine of abomination and returned to her twice-strengthened. With her next draught, she will experience a double portion of the violence she dispensed, receiving the same measure of grief and suffering as the abundance and extravagance with which she provided herself.

Secure in her royalty, she believed that tragedy could never strike her down, and yet in a moment she was overtaken by death, mourning, famine, and fire.

The poverty and anguish which she had thought exclusive to others now defines the final moments of her existence as the furious wrath of an Almighty God descends upon her in thunderous blows of destruction.

The Lord will cause the people of the earth to tear her limbs from her body, grinding her bones and shredding her flesh until it hangs in tatters of unrecognizable pulp and her blood oozes after the manner of the prophets and saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.

With such violence will the city of Babylon be thrown down, never to be found again.

"Woe, woe, great city of Babylon, for in one hour your doom has come!"

There are two additional clues in this chapter which identify the city of Babylon as the Great Harlot.

Revelation 18:16 describes her as arrayed in fine purple and scarlet linen, glittering with gold, precious stones, and pearls.

In Revelation 17:4, the Great Harlot was also dressed in purple and scarlet, and the Tower of Babel was known to have been adorned with precious metals and stones.

Nebuchadnezzar himself described how "gold, silver and precious stones from the mountain and from the sea were liberally set into the foundations" of the tower.

"I have completed its magnificence with silver, gold, other metals, stone, enameled bricks, fir and pine. The first which is the house of the earth's base, the most ancient monument of Babylon; I built and finished it. I have highly exalted its head with bricks covered with copper. We say for the other, that is, this edifice, the house of the seven lights of the earth, the most ancient monument of Borsippa:

"'A former king built it, (they reckon 42 ages) but he did not complete its head.'

"Since a remote time, people had abandoned it, without order expressing their words. Since that time the earthquake and the thunder had dispersed the sun-dried clay.

The bricks of the casing had been split, and the earth of the interior had been scattered in heaps.

"Merodach, the great god, excited my mind to repair this building. I did not change the site nor did I take away the foundation. In a fortunate month, in an auspicious day, I undertook to build porticoes around the crude brick masses, and the casing of burnt bricks. I adapted the circuits, I put the inscription of my name in the Kitir of the portico. I set my hand to finish it. And to exalt its head. As it had been in ancient days, so I exalted its summit."

Nebuchadnezzar's inscription demonstrates that the concept of seven lights of perfection (the sun, moon, and five planets) was not only understood by the Babylonians, but was adopted as a colloquial title for the infamous structure: "The House of the Seven Lights of the Earth," also rendered as "The Temple of the Seven Mountains" (for each light was believed a god, and each god believed to inhabit a personal mountain).

Secondly, the mention of her "magic spell" in verse twenty-three is a reference to the "mysteries" of Babylon, to which the prophet alluded in Isaiah 47:9-14:

"*They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells. You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away. A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom; a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you.*

"*Keep on, then, with your magic spells and with your many sorceries, which you have labored at since childhood. Perhaps you will succeed, perhaps you will cause terror. All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame.*"

Festivity

Thus, the destruction of a reconstructed Babylon is a surety, indeed, and results in the celebration of Revelation 19:1-10:

"*After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in Heaven shouting:*

"*Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."*

"*And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."*

"*The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!"*

"*Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"*

"*Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come,*

and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

"*Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'*

"*And he added, "These are the true words of God."*

"*At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*"

Hostility

"*I saw Heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of Heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

"*And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."*

"*Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*" – Revelation 19:11-21

At this point, the invisible barrier dividing the realms of spirit and carnality is removed and John is once again greeted by the white horse of the first seal.

With eyes blazing like fire, its rider is none other than Almighty God, come to judge with a righteous judgment the nations which rejected the Chief Cornerstone, and to remove the Adversary from the board of strategy in a masterful exhibition of checkmate.

On his head are many crowns, sigils of His infinite and absolute authority. His robe bears evidence of having been bathed in blood; the campaign to excise wickedness from the earth having already begun a short time ago in Bozrah, Jordan.

"*Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.*" – Isaiah 63:1 (For more information, see "Preserved For Judgment" in the Appendix)

Following the Incarnate Word are the armies of Heaven; the faithful saints of God, riding upon identical horses of ivory and dressed in pure raiment.

From out of the mouth of the Lord a shimmering image of silvery light is formed, coalescing to shape a double-edged sword – a symbol of the Word of God, and the

standard by which the nations will be judged; a weapon of active, energizing power, capable of penetrating even to the point where soul and immortal spirit conjoin, and dividing the two asunder.

At this time, the prophecy will be fulfilled, "*You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.*" – Psalms 2:9

Amassed just outside the perimeter of Jerusalem and impotent to avert His imminent arrival, the combined military might of the nations trembles in dreadful anticipation, quivering in terror before the majesty of the Lord as grapes awaiting the winepress of His righteous fury. In the final terrible moment before the wrath of Heaven is realized, an angel steps into the sun, and makes a frightening, bone-chilling statement:

"Dinnertime!"

The valley erupts with violence as blood splatters the ground, arteries spurt fountains of gore high into the air, flesh is shredded from bone, and chest cavities burst open, forming a river of blood which becomes a rising flood - a torrent of such depth as to nearly submerge a horse, sweeping along the plain for a distance of two hundred miles.

(For comparison, Egypt's Suez Canal is located approximately two hundred miles south of Jerusalem.)

Their armies destroyed, the Antichrist and False Apostle are captured and cast into Hell for all of eternity, while the carrion birds begin to gorge themselves on the flesh of the dead.

"*Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!*"

"*And I saw an angel coming down out of Heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.*

"*I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)*

"This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years." – Revelation 20:1-6

With the dispatch of his pawns, the Purveyor of Sedition will be felled and bound with an unbreakable chain, and in this condition cast into Hell where he will reside for the next one thousand years.

The Millennial Reign will have commenced, and those martyred for the testimony of Jesus (those who refused to worship the image of the beast or take his mark) will be given the authority to reign as co-regents with Christ.

"*Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.*" – 2nd Timothy 2:11, 12

29. The Final Battle

"*When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves.*

"But fire came down from Heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

"*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.*

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

"The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.

"Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." - Revelation 20:7-15

At the conclusion of the battle popularly known as Armageddon, the Millennial Reign of Christ will commence.

Born a king (Isaiah 9:6,7) and crucified for his royalty (Matthew 27:37) by a people who rejected his authority, he will ascend his rightful throne as king in the house of David and receive the glory due his name, manifesting his kingdom to all.

Scripture reveals this to be a period characterized by peace, longevity, and justice.

"*There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.*

"And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD." - Isaiah 65:20-25 (KJV)

Life upon the earth will continue, both for the remainder of the unsaved world not destroyed by the armies of Heaven at Jerusalem, and the 144,000 righteous who were protected to the end. These survivors will continue to inhabit earthly dwelling places rather than celestial or infernal, and will continue to erect such structures, plant vineyards, consume nutritious substances, bear children, and experience death, however infrequently.

"*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*" - Isaiah 11:6-9 (KJV)

"*And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*" - Micah 4:3 (KJV)

"*He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*" – Isaiah 2:4

The earth will be at peace, secure from predators both savage and civilized. Not only will the perpetuation of violent activity cease, but the weapons of war will be dismantled and battle strategies will no longer be studied.

Within the Millennial Kingdom, Israel will finally repose in a world of serenity and harmony.

"*"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."*" - Jeremiah 23:5-6

"*And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*" - Revelation 19:15 (KJV)

"*I will restore your judges as in days of old, your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City.*" - Isaiah 1:26

With the theocracy reestablished, the judges of the Old Testamental period will be reinstated, a legal body comprised of transfigured saints (2nd Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:4), of which a certain twelve will preside over the twelve tribes of Israel, also known as the 144,000.

"*Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" – Matthew 19:28

Additional insight into the Millennial Reign is provided in Zechariah 14:16-21:

"*Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.*

"*On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the*

altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD Almighty."

Any nation refusing to comply with the decrees of Christ will endure punishment and drought.

For the Lord to establish edicts and policies concerning specific violations and perpetrators is to demonstrate a willingness to determine such action upon humanity, for if no such levy is intended, then the promise of penalty is idle and the deterrent non-existent.

This, then, implies the continued existence of rebellious factions upon the earth, and henceforth reveals the need for judges who dispense justice and pronounce sentence.

Many of the "marked" populace may conclude that if compliance gains them nothing (with respect to eternity), then rebellion will cost nothing further. Many more may acquiesce in word and deed only, their hearts remaining unrepentant and resentful. While others may seek to educate their children in the ways of righteousness that their offspring might lay hold of the crown of eternal life even if their own choices have excluded them from the prize, the remainder and their brood will find a kindred spirit in Satan when that entity is released from his chains and the prison in which he has been confined for a thousand years – ready footsoldiers in yet another Luciferian campaign to destroy Jerusalem and the children of God.

Some specifics concerning this final conflict are provided in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39.

Through the prophet, the Lord predicts that a massive crusade will be launched against His peaceful and unsuspecting people in Israel.

It is a prophecy which has yet to be fulfilled, for at no time in past history have the events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 been recorded as fact.

If the Word of God is true, then the student of biblical eschatology can be certain that at some point in the future, the prophecy of Ezekiel will unfold exactly as described. The remainder of this chapter will concern itself with a determination of the precise time period in which this conflict occurs, and an identification of the participants involved.

One belief is that the events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 will occur prior to the rapture and the seven-year Israeli treaty, while another claims this to be a description of Armageddon. Are one of these theories correct, or is it possible that the battle occurs during another period entirely?

"*The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you.*

"'*Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought*

out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.

"*'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land." Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages will say to you, "Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?"*

"*Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of it? You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.*

"*'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Are you not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them. This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign LORD. In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'*

"*Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows drop from your right hand. On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD.*

"*'I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of.*

"*'Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up—the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD.*

"*'On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog. 'For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD.*

"*'Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land and, in addition to them, others will bury those that remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search. As they go through the land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. (Also a town called Hamonah will be there.) And so they will cleanse the land.'*

"*Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: 'Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood. You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls—all of them fattened animals from Bashan. At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are glutted and drink blood till you are drunk. At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every kind,' declares the Sovereign LORD.*

"*I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them. From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God. And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid my face from them.*

"*Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.*" – Ezekiel 38, 39

This prophecy is directed towards a man named Gog, a chief prince. Traditional scholarship identifies Gog as a nation, but the language of the scripture indicates otherwise:

"*Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.*"

Magog, Meshech, and Tubal are described as territories within the purview of Prince Gog.

Zondervan's New International Bible Dictionary supposes the following, concerning Magog:

"Josephus and Greek writers generally applied this name to the Scythians. Some modern Christian writers indicate the Tartars of Russia and of Southern Europe. The names of King Gog, "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal" (Ezek 38:2; see NIV footnote) resemble the modern Russia, Moscow, and Tobolsk."

Easton's Bible Dictionary provides the following definition of Meshech and Tubal:

"Meshech — 'drawing out,' the sixth son of Japheth (Gen. 10:2), the founder of a tribe (1 Chr. 1:5; Ezek. 27:13; 38:2,3). They were in all probability the Moschi, a people inhabiting the Moschian Mountains, between the Black and the Caspian Seas. In Ps. 120:5 the name occurs as simply a synonym for foreigners or barbarians. 'During the ascendancy of the Babylonians and Persians in Western Asia, the Moschi were subdued; but it seems probable that a large number of them crossed the Caucasus range and spread over the northern steppes, mingling with the Scythians. There they became known as Muscovs, and gave that name to the Russian nation and its ancient capital by which they are still generally known throughout the East.'"

"Tubal — (1.) The fifth son of Japheth (Gen. 10:2). (2.) A nation, probably descended from the son of Japheth. It is mentioned by Isaiah (66:19), along with Javan, and by Ezekiel (27:13), along with Meshech, among the traders with Tyre, also among the confederates of Gog (Ezek. 38:2, 3; 39:1), and with Meshech among the nations which were to be destroyed (32:26). This nation was probably the Tiberini of the Greek historian Herodotus, a people of the Asiatic highland west of the Upper Euphrates, the southern range of the Caucasus, on the east of the Black Sea."

According to the above scholars, the region thought to contain the ancient Meshech and Tubal is the Armenian/Azerbaijan territory located between the Black and Caspian Seas.

This theory locates Magog, Meshech, and Tubal within modern Russia, and identifies that nation as the instigator of Israeli oppression.

However, other evidence sites Meshech and Tubal not in the Armenian/Azerbaijan region between the Black and Caspian Seas, but squarely within the borders of present-day Turkey, south of the Black Sea, a conclusion supported by both Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Bible, and Zondervan's Handbook to the Bible.

According to Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Bible, "East of Lydia was Phrygia. In Assyrian records and in the Old Testament it is called Meshech." Lydia was the region which constituted the extreme western edge of Turkey. Thus, to be located east of Lydia is to be centrally located within the confines of modern Turkey, just north of Syria.

Turkey is to the south of the Black Sea, while Russia is to the north of the Black Sea – exhibiting quite a difference between the two theories: One, that Magog, Meshech, and Tubal are modern Russia, and two, that they are modern Turkey.

The Russian theory is based on a similarity between names. Meshech sounds similar to Moschi, which in turn became Muscov, and finally Moscow.

Tubal, it is thought, became Tiberini, and the names of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal are all similar in sound to Russia, Moscow, and Tobolsk.

The Turkish theory, however, seems to be built on a stronger foundation of evidence, citing ancient Assyrian records which identify Meshech as the ancient land of Phrygia.

One theory is based on subjective sounds, while the other has roots in the very real records of ancient history.

An alternative method used to interpret the Russian theory is based on lineage. There are scholars who cannot view the regions of Meshech and Tubal apart from the inhabitants of these regions, who emigrated north into the land of modern-day Russia.

While this is accurate, scripture did not identify the assailants in Ezekiel 38 and 39 as Muscov, but as Meshech. God's intention was not to indicate a particular race of people, but a specific geographical region, known as Magog. Those who originally inhabited the region of Magog did indeed emigrate elsewhere, but scripture does not direct one to trace the migratory patterns of this tribe around the earth. Rather, it specifies a fixed geographic region of land: Magog, or modern Turkey.

To briefly review, the Bible declares that Gog, the prince of Meshech and Tubal, will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting Israel. At this point, it would seem that the aggressor nation is Turkey, along with its allies of Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth Togarmah.

"*Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you.*"

According to all accounts, Persia is the modern Iran.

Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Bible identifies Cush as the modern Sudan, a region south of Egypt: "To the south of Egypt lies the Sudan, which was known as Cush in the Old Testament. Usually dominated by Egypt, the Cushite soldiers served in the Egyptian armies. An independent kingdom existed in Cush in Hellenistic and Roman times, with its capital at Meroe. Queens, referred to as "the Candace," often ruled this state."

Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Bible identifies Put as "an African country, precise identity disputed, but widely believed to have been a part of Libya."

Easton's Bible Dictionary defines Gomer as: "The eldest son of Japheth, and father of Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah (Gen. 10:2, 3), whose descendants formed the principal branch of the population of South-eastern Europe. He is generally regarded as the ancestor of the Celtae and the Cimmerii, who in early times settled to the north of the Black Sea, and gave their name to the Crimea, the ancient Chersonesus Taurica. Traces of their presence are found in the names Cimmerian Bosphorus, Cimmerian Isthmus, etc. In the seventh century B.C. they were driven out of their original seat by the Scythians, and overran western Asia Minor, whence they were afterwards expelled. They subsequently reappear in the times of the Romans as the Cimbri of the north and west of

Europe, whence they crossed to the British Isles, where their descendants are still found in the Gaels and Cymry. Thus the whole Celtic race may be regarded as descended from Gomer."

According to race, Gomer would today include Germany and Great Britain. According to the original settled land, Gomer would be Russia, since it was north of the Black Sea. Or, to determine its location at the time of the New Testament, Gomer was part of the Roman province of Asia Minor, or the modern Turkey.

Easton's Bible Dictionary defines Beth Togarmah as "a nation which traded in horses and mules at the fairs of Tyre (Ezek. 27:14, 38:6); probably an Armenian or a Scythian race," a conclusion which places Beth Togarmah within today's Turkish/Armenian region.

Some will no doubt take exception to the aforementioned modern identities of these ancient regions, claiming that positive identification cannot be made. These are troubled by concise delineations due to the method of their investigation, which involves tracing to the ends of the earth the wanderings of those individuals who originally inhabited these areas. By this method, Gomer might be identified as Russia, Germany, Great Britain, or the United States of America.

Other researchers, however, are quick to identify these nations by determining, not the eventual settled status of the people who once dwelled there, but by discerning the geographical boundaries of the regions themselves.

By identifying these nations according to their lineage, the region of Magog does indeed appear to be Russia, and is therefore deserving of a closer inspection.

As John F. Walvoord sets forth a well-written argument for the theory of Russia in his book, "The Nations in Prophecy," this theory will be examined from his viewpoint.

His argument is commenced with the admission that the Bible makes no mention of the word "Russia," and proceeds to defend that identification of Magog by contending that although the particular tract of land which the modern world regards as Russia is not named as such specifically in scripture, this omission does not disqualify that same plot from being biblically described in some way.

The point is well-taken, for the word "rapture" is not in the Bible, either, and yet the event is described. It is therefore quite possible that the Bible contains descriptions or ancient titles of modern lands.

Mr. Walvoord believes that the war of Ezekiel 38 and 39 occurs during the first three-and-a-half years of the seven-year Jewish treaty, a point which the reader would do well to keep in mind as his conclusions are explored.

In his opinion, the scriptures are plain that these passages describe a military invasion in which the assailants are utterly destroyed, a point with which this author quite agrees.

He determines that this is prophecy which has yet to be fulfilled, due to the specified period of peace and safety which Israel is said to enjoy prior to the attack. Again, this author concurs. Israel has experienced but a singular era of peace, specifically that golden age under the rule of King Solomon which was enabled by the subjugation of the nation's enemies by King David, and of course, the prophecy was not fulfilled at that time.

As he begins the process of identifying the land of Magog, however, Mr. Walvoord traces the emigration of the people who once lived in that region, and

concludes that they ended up "scattered precisely over the geographical area that today is called Russia."

While that may be an accurate assessment, it is also irrelevant, for it is not Rosh that is mentioned by scripture, but rather Magog. Scripture does not state that God will put hooks into the jaws of the sons of Magog, regardless of their location upon the globe, but that He will place hooks into the jaws of Magog, a specific geographical region delineated by certain borders, and encompassing the kingdoms of Meshech and Tubal.

It matters not where the descendants of Noah's grandson Magog eventually settled. When the people who lived in Meshech and Tubal departed those regions, they very well may have entered the land of Russia, but they did not settle there and establish new nations of Meshech and Tubal and Magog. Those nations existed in only one geographical region, and that was in the modern-day nation of Turkey.

Those who hold to the Russian theory continue to do so due to the similar-sounding names of the cities, and by tracing the lineage of the sons of Noah. However, God did not state that He would provide a burial place for the sons of Magog in the valley of Israel, He appointed entombment for Magog, the nation which existed in the region of modern Turkey.

This is a fact that Mr. Walvoord acknowledges, saying that the historian Josephus identified the nation of Magog with the ancient Scythians, and that they originally lived immediately to the north of what would later become the nation of Israel. The nation immediately north of Israel was the tiny Phoenicia, or later, Syria, and just above this was the region now known as Turkey.

This certainly was not Russia. The land that would come to be known as Russia lies even farther north across the Black Sea. The land of Magog was located in present-day Turkey, even by the admission of Mr. Walvoord and attested to by Josephus. In order to identify Magog as Russia, Mr. Walvoord has traced the migratory route of the inhabitants of Magog, and ignored the geographical region which bore the name.

Had this been the method of interpretation God intended man to employ, He would have substituted "the sons of Magog," for the precise portion of land which was known as "Magog."

Those who presume that the correct interpretation of Ezekiel 38 and 39 can be ascertained only by tracing lineages and migratory routes, must then in a uniform manner define all of the nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38:5, 6 according to this procedure, and not alter the rules of interpretation to suit their theories. Mr. Walvoord's rules of interpretation, however, change with respect to the nation of Gomer.

Gomer was a region located within the Roman Province of Asia Minor, settled by individuals who had previously inhabited the Russian territory. After the first century, these relocated to Great Britain and Germany, and later traveled to the United States of America.

If proponents of the Russian theory wish to continue insisting on tracing the migration of ancient peoples, they must then conclude that Gomer can be defined as either Great Britain, Germany, or the United States, and in fact, Mr. Walvoord does acknowledge the resettlement in Germany, but dismisses it as irrelevant in light of the Russian conclusion.

To his credit, he is quick to acknowledge the inadequacies of the theory and states that concerning Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Togarmah,

"Most of the terms in this portion of Scripture are quite strange to us and do not immediately connote anything related to Russia."

This apparent difficulty can be resolved when one realizes that these terms were never intended to serve as Russian indicators. Rather, they are ancient titles for nations which once existed within the region of modern-day Turkey and the surrounding territories.

Mr Walvoord concedes that Magog, identified with the Scythians, was originally located in modern Turkey, but instead chooses to follow them into Russia.

Cush, he says, "is another name for Ethiopia, which poses a problem because today Ethiopia is to the south." In fact, there is no paradox when one accepts that Cush is an ancient title for the modern Sudan.

Put, he relates, "is a difficult expression about which little is known." Many researchers had no difficulty in identifying Put as a former portion of modern Libya.

If the method of tracing lineage and migration is followed, then Gomer, he admits, "is identified by most as referring to the ancient Cimmerians, a portion of whom lived in what today is called southern or western Germany."

Togarmah, he says, "is commonly recognized as referring to the Armenians, who at one time lived immediately to the north of the land of Israel," (modern Turkey) but he chooses to follow a few of them as they emigrate into the northern region of what will one day be called Russia, just as he did in the case of Magog.

Regardless of the fact that not all of the pieces fit the puzzle, he says that, "The nations which accompany Russia, for the most part, fit properly into the picture…"

What, then, are we to make of the least part, that portion which does not fit properly into the picture? Should the remnant be discounted? Should it be ignored or explained away? Or is there an alternate method of interpretation which will account for all of the pieces?

One cannot discard pieces of a puzzle which do not fit a theory and still present it as a valid teaching. One cannot identify these nations by tracing their migratory routes or their ancestry. Nowhere in Ezekiel 38 and 39 did God indicate that this was His intended design.

The modern world is cognizant of the locations of these ancient lands, and they include today's regions of Turkey, Iran, Sudan, and Libya.

If the ruler of Meshech and Tubal is indeed the prince of modern Turkey, then it is logical that his allies would be located geographically somewhat nearby. This is found to be an accurate inference for both Beth Togarmah and Gomer, which are adjacent territories, and for Persia (Iran), which lies just to the east of Turkey, Put (Libya), which lies just south of Turkey across the Mediterranean Sea, and Cush (Sudan), which lies just southeast of Put.

In point of fact, Israel is geographically encompassed by these nations. Turkey is to the north, Iran is to the east, Libya is off the coast of the Mediterranean to the west, and Sudan is to the south.

The prophecy in Ezekiel states that the nation of Israel will be assailed from all sides by a numerous enemy. Revelation 20:8 states that the one who plants the evil scheme of assault within the heads of the nations will "*deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog.*"

With Israel considered to be the center of the world during the Millennial Reign, these nations will indeed proceed against Israel from the four corners of the earth; a coalition of nations under the command of Gog, a second Turkish Antichrist.

Turkey, Libya, Sudan, and Iran will certainly attack the nation of Israel, but the plan will not be of their own design, for the Lord says that it is He who will place hooks into their jaws and draw them down to assail His people.

"*…In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Are you not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them. This is what will happen in that day.*" - Ezekiel 38:16-18

These nations would not have come against Israel of their own volition, but the Lord will stir them up and permit the scheme to coalesce within their minds.

"*This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme.*" - Ezekiel 38:10

Scripture reveals several facts concerning the state of Israel prior to the assault of Jerusalem by the coalition of nations under the command of Gog:

1. Israel will have recovered from war.

(*In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war*)

2. Jews will have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had long been desolate.

(*whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate*.)

3. The Jews will live in peace and safety.

(*They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety.*)

4. Israel will be a land of unwalled villages, without gates or bars.

(*I will invade a land of unwalled villages; …all of them living without walls and without gates and bars.*)

5. Israel will be a peaceful and unsuspecting people.

(*I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people*)

Gog will come to plunder and loot the land of Israel, the resettled ruins of the former battle, and the people at the center of the land who have become wealthy with livestock and goods.

Upon the arrival of his troops, however, the Lord will thwart their efforts and send "*a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground.*

"I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows drop from your right hand. On the mountains of

Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD."

The Lord will cause the weapons of the enemy to fall from their hands, and they will begin to attack each other in a manner reminiscent of the Midianites at the time of Gideon. (Judges 7:19-23)

He will send a mighty earthquake and a plague of fire and hail amidst a terrible storm, and the coalition will be destroyed by the Lord Himself.

This final conflict can be characterized by three elements:

1. A time of peace and prosperity, during which the Israelis inhabit villages without walls, gates, or bars, living in peace and safety, unsuspecting of violence.
2. The attack which descends upon Jerusalem like a thief.
3. The judgment of God and subsequent defeat of the enemy.

In determining the time period of these events, the first element is key. The Bible reports that Israel will live in safety, in cities without walls, gates, or bars. They will be a peaceful and unsuspecting people, and a nation recovered from the effects of war.

There has been no period of history in which Israel has fulfilled this prophecy. From the time that Israel became a nation in 1948 until today in 2002, the land of Israel has not been a land of peace and tranquility. Hence, this is an event which can only transpire in the future, in one of three possible timeframes:

1. The portion of time which constitutes the first three and-a-half years of the seven-year Israeli treaty.
2. If it is referring to the sealed and protected 144,000 Jews who are living in the mountains of Jordan after the Antichrist defiles the temple, then it designates the second three and-a-half year period of time, completed at the Battle of Jerusalem commonly known as Armageddon.
3. The peaceful Millennial Reign period of Christ which is established after the Battle of Jerusalem.

When the attack is launched, the Israelis will be caught completely unprepared, having had no prior warning of the commencement of hostilities, and having raised no armies or erected defenses with which to repel the attack.

The enemy that comes against them will be a vast host – "*You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land.*" – Ezekiel 38:15, 16

Despite their numbers, the judgment of God will then descend upon them and even on the day of battle will their defeat will be accomplished.

Subsequent to the rout, "*those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up—the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel.*" – Ezekiel 39:9, 10

Given the vulnerable nature of Israel, if this battle were a protracted engagement of any kind, no towns would remain in place, nor would the people have survived – a peaceful, unsuspecting people who dwell in cities without walls, gates, or bars. Without divine intervention, their destruction would be assured within moments by the great horde of combatants who obscure the earth as a cloud.

Thus, the fact that the towns and townspeople remain after the battle's conclusion is an indication of the swift destruction of the enemy, even before the assault could get underway.

Ezekiel 38:18-22 states that the destruction "*will happen in that day…when Gog attacks the land of Israel… I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.*"

In Ezekiel 39:11 God declares, "*'On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea.*"

When Gog and his allies come against the land of Israel, there will "in that day" be a great earthquake, and judgments of hail, fire, and rain. Every man's sword will be against his brother, rather than against the Israel that they came to destroy. On that day Gog will be given a burial place in the valley of Israel. This language speaks of the enemy's defeat being accomplished on the very same day of their arrival at Jerusalem.

Finally, the form in which judgment is arrayed resembles that of the Seventh Bowl of Revelation which is poured out at Armageddon.

"*The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake.*

"No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed.

"God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible." - Revelation 16:17-21

The storm, the earthquake, and the hail of Ezekiel can also be observed in Revelation. In addition, Revelation 19:17, 18 detail the assembling of avian predators for a great feast upon the dead bodies of the enemies of God:

"*And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.'*""

The same is observed in Ezekiel:

"*On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals.*" – Ezekiel 39:4

"*Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: 'Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood. You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls—all of them fattened animals from Bashan. At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are glutted and drink blood till you are drunk. At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every kind,' declares the Sovereign LORD.*" - Ezekiel 39:17-20

Having explored the three elements of Ezekiel's prophecy (the peace, the attack, and the defeat), it remains to determine at which point these events occur.

There are three possible time periods of peace. The Bible tells of a seven-year peace treaty confirmed with Israel which the Antichrist will violate after three and-a-half years. Israel will experience a brief period of peace during this time.

Another possibility is that the scriptures are referring to the peace and safety of the 144,000 Jews that are sealed and protected by the hand of God. These are sealed at the treaty's mid-point, resulting in a peaceful period of three and-a-half years in duration, from the treaty median until the culmination of the age at Armageddon. This theory places the events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 at the Battle of Jerusalem just prior to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom.

Finally, the Bible reveals a Final Battle which will be waged at the conclusion of the peaceful Millennium, when Satan will be set loose upon the earth for one final time, and Israel will once again come under siege.

Let us examine the events of Ezekiel with respect to the first period of Jewish peace, namely the first three and-a-half years of the seven-year treaty.

Is it feasible that during this time the Jews will recover from the effects of war to such an extent that they will dwell in cities without walls, gates, or bars in peace and safety? Will this brief peace be so complete that Israel will cease to maintain an alert status with regard to their hostile Arab neighbors? Will they drop their guard so completely in three and-a-half short years that when the attack does arrive, they will be caught entirely off-guard and unprepared, without so much as a hint of intelligence alerting them to the mighty horde of combatants massing at their borders?

For a people painfully aware of the Arab desire to drive them into the Mediterranean Sea, and distrustful of all who surround them, such naivete would seem improbable after the peaceful passage of less than four years. Today, tanks patrol the streets, soldiers maintain a visible presence in the land, and people die daily in the Middle Eastern conflict. As a nation, Israel is surrounded on every side by enemies who want her destroyed. In order to preserve their very lives, a state of alertness and military preparedness is necessary, and even then they must rely heavily on their alliance with the United States of America for their very survival.

If Israel recovers from the effects of war to this extent after only three and-a-half short years, then the peace afforded by the seven-year treaty is incredible, indeed!

Not only would one have to accept that the seven-year treaty brings an amazing unprecedented peace, but given the fact that the attack on Israel will be put down the same day it is launched would require one to also accept that what the Bible seems to be saying is not, in fact, what it really means. For the prophecies to agree, the Turkish

invasion of Israel must persist for three and-a-half years rather than a single day, and the offensive must then be concluded at Armageddon.

Of course, the scriptures indicate no such thing. When Israel is attacked at the mid-point of the treaty, Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles and the Antichrist will enter the temple to proclaim that he is god. There is no evidence that the Antichrist is engaged in a Jerusalem battle which rages for three and-a-half years before he is able to gain access to the temple.

Quite to the contrary, Jesus warned the Jews to flee Jerusalem immediately, for it's fall will be effected swiftly. ("*Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.* – Matthew 24:17, 18)

In spite of the weakness of this theory on two points (the improbable peace and the duration of the attack), it is attractive for the fact that the judgment of the Lord upon the enemies of Israel seems to match up quite well with the judgment of the Seventh Bowl of Revelation which is poured out at Armageddon.

Many believe the mention of unwalled cities is to be taken literally, and as the modern cities of Israel are not encompassed by such structures as in the days of old, this portion of the prophecy is considered fulfilled.

If the purpose of the "walls, gates, and bars" is considered, however, one will conclude that they existed solely for defense. Thus, for scripture to indicate that Israel will live in cities without walls, gates, or bars, it is referring to a period in which the Jews will dwell within Israel with no regard or thought for their own defense.

The modern cities of Israel may be constructed without exterior walls, but that is only one element which the prophecy says will be in place at the time of Ezekiel's war. It also declares that Israel will be living as a peaceful and unsuspecting nation in complete safety and recovered from the effects of war – portions of the prophecy which have not been fulfilled at this time in any way.

In summation, the first three and-a-half years of the seven-year treaty are quite implausible as the period in which this prophecy will find fulfillment.

The conclusion of the battle as observed from the perspective afforded by the second theory, like the previous one, also coincides with that of Armageddon. There is no general peace for the Jews after the mid-point of the treaty when the Antichrist enters the temple and proclaims that he is god, for Jesus warned the Jews in Matthew chapter twenty-four to flee Jerusalem and head for the mountains at this time, for the Great Tribulation will have commenced – a period of intense persecution on a scale unrivaled in past history.

There is, however, a peace of sorts for the 144,000 Jews preserved by the hand of God in the mountains of Jordan. These will be present at the Battle of Jerusalem, where the Lord will strike down their enemies and establish the Millennial Kingdom. The second theory postulates that Magog and its allies have come to strike down these 144,000.

The difficulty with this theory is that the Bible says the nation of Israel will be a land that has recovered from the effects of war. The 144,000 Jews do not seem to meet this definition. It is also difficult to accept that 144,000 people, out of a nation of six million, per 2001 census, can be thought of as a nation.

Equally difficult is to accept that these 144,000 meet the definition of having recovered from the effects of war. They have not recovered from war, they have simply been rescued from it, hiding out in the mountains of Jordan. The only protection they enjoy has been supernaturally provided through the hand of Almighty God Himself - hardly the image of a nation that has recovered from the effects of war, living in villages without walls, gates, or bars in complete safety and unsuspecting of the danger that is all about them.

The final possibility is that the events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 occur after the Millennial Reign of Christ.

In the preceding theories were found aspects of the Bible prophecy that were difficult to accept, yet in the setting of the concluding Millennial Kingdom, no such dilemma exists.

It is not only possible, but probable that after a thousand years of having lived in peace under the direct rule of Jesus Christ, the Jews would be completely unsuspecting of an attack by neighboring nations.

It is a fact that under the rule of Jesus Christ, it will no longer be necessary for the Jews to construct and maintain defenses or organizations of military intelligence, for the Lord Himself will protect them.

It is only during this time of Christ's peace that Israel can finally be considered as a nation recovered from the effects of war; one which would therefore remain wholly unsuspecting with regard to an enemy attack.

At the conclusion of the Millennial Reign, however, the aforementioned disgruntled nations will be seen as prime targets by someone intent on planting an evil scheme of rebellion within their minds.

"*When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from Heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*" - Revelation 20:7-10

Notice to which location Satan travels upon being released from his ethereal prison - to prince Gog and the land of Magog (modern Turkey), the region which served as his center of operations one thousand years previous.

Ezekiel prophesied that the army which would arrive to assail Israel would be an enormous foe, a mighty horde blotting out the earth as a cloud, only to be consumed by burning sulfur.

The corresponding passage in Revelation says they will number as the sands of the seashore, (Rev. 20:8) yet will be consumed by fire from Heaven.

The peaceful existence of the Jews at this time is fact. Scripture indicates that Satan indeed incites the land of Magog into battle against Israel, and that on the very day of battle, God will rain fire upon the enemies of righteousness.

"*I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD.*" - Ezekiel 39:6

From this time forward, the Lord "*will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.*"

All of the elements fit perfectly into the time period which is the conclusion of the Millennial Reign of Christ. The events described by the prophet Ezekiel do not occur prior to the rapture, nor do they describe Armageddon, but the Final Battle which will take place at Jerusalem in the far future at the close of Christ's one thousand years of peace.

At this point, the Jews will proceed from their unwalled cities to gather the implements of war strewn about the land. Fashioned to bring about their destruction, these weapons will instead provide Israel with seven years' worth of energy.

"*Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up-the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD.*" – Ezekiel 39:9, 10

After one thousand years of a complete cessation of military hostilities, it is not unreasonable to assume that the world may have lost much of its ability to wage war, regressing back to a time of swords and spears and catapults.

It will take seven months to bury the dead, and men will be employed to regularly travel throughout the region to cleanse the land from the effects of God's fiery deluge.

For those who question the similarity of the Final Battle and the Seventh Bowl of Revelation which was poured out one thousand years previous, it may be nothing more than a case of the same punishment for the same transgression.

As Lucifer is cast back into Hell for eternity, the White Throne Judgment will commence, in which the souls of those who perished apart from the salvation of Christ will be resurrected and assembled before the throne of God. The souls of the wicked who inhabit Hades will be discharged, and they will be judged according to their deeds which have been recorded in the Heavenly books.

The Book of Life will then be opened, and anyone whose name is not found inscribed therein will be cast into Hell for eternity. This is the second death.

30. The New World Order

The New Jerusalem

"*Then I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*"

"*He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.*"

"*He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*"

"*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

"*The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.*

"*I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.*

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." - Revelation 21:1-27

Before the eyes of the Revelator, a new Heaven and a new Earth are fashioned as the former things pass away.

No sea swirls across the face of this new earth, for it is not a literal representation, but a symbolic one. The New Jerusalem, descending from Heaven as a bride, is not a physical city, but the body of Christ. The redeemed of the Lord, His ecclesia, have become a holy city, perfect and ablaze with the jewels of righteousness.

In scripture, the sea is a typification of adversity, separation, and death.

Because of the great wickedness detailed in Genesis chapter six, the Lord sent a flood upon the earth which served as a catalyst for climatic change which has continued to cause natural disasters and distress to this day. This, however, will not always be the case.

"*For the earth was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*" - Romans 8:20-21

"*That day will bring about the destruction of the Heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new Heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*" – 2nd Peter 3:12, 13

The Lord will restore the earth to its original perfection as a faultless abode for His people, where adversity, separation, and death have ceased to exist.

A city constructed with living stones and shining with the glory of God, it will house no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

It will not require the sun or the moon any longer, for the glory of God will illuminate it, and the Lamb will function as His lamp.

In the former earth, the sea separated the land masses, dividing the peoples of the earth. Without a sea, such separation will no longer be possible.

All who dwell within are designated a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God and dwelling with Him for eternity. No longer will they be separated from their Creator. As it was in the Garden of Eden before the fall of man, the Lord will dwell with mankind; they will be His people and He will be their God.

It will be a city of shining glory, based on the foundation of Israel and the Gospel which was laid by the twelve apostles, with a great and high wall which symbolizes the mighty protection of God.

In a fulfillment of Hebrews 6:1, the eternal Bride of Christ is found to be perfect. The angel measures the city and discovers that this is so, for it is represented as a perfect cube, constructed from the purest metals and stones.

Zechariah 2:1-5 reveals the city to be a metropolis without conventional walls, for God will be its walls, and its glory within.

"*Then I looked up—and there before me was a man with a measuring line in his hand! I asked, "Where are you going?*"

"*He answered me, "To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is."*

"*Then the angel who was speaking to me left, and another angel came to meet him and said to him: "Run, tell that young man, 'Jerusalem will be a city without walls*

because of the great number of men and livestock in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,' declares the LORD, 'and I will be its glory within.'"

The New Jerusalem is not a physical structure, but the complete body of the redeemed, the assembly of those to whom have been given the mind of Christ.

Nothing impure will ever enter into the city, nor will those who have engaged in shameful or deceitful acts, for their part shall be found in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and all wickedness will be abolished.

As for the role of mankind in the new Heaven and Earth, "*however, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.'*" - 1st Corinthians 2:9

Paradise

"*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

"No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

"There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

"The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." - Revelation 22:1-20

Emanating from the throne of God and the Lamb, a river of life is shown to flow through the center of the Holy City, flanked on each bank by trees of life, whose fruit will provide abundant immortality.

"*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*" – John 10:10

It was fruit from this type of tree which was preserved by the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Indeed, had they partaken of it, mankind would have become immortal sinners.

"*And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."*

"So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life." - Genesis 3:22-24

With the creation of a new Heaven and Earth, the time has come to consume the fruit of the Trees of Life. The nations will be healed, and they will live forever in glory.

"*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*" – 1st John 2:17

31. The Identity of Antichrist

While this work was completed in April of 2000, the labor of several additional years was required to assemble the material into a form suitable for scholarly consideration, and in that interim events have transpired within the Republic of Turkey which may or may not have relevance regarding the identity of the Antichrist, but which this author in any event deems worthy of note, if only for the exercise in profiling.

In the same manner in which the ancient prophets cited forty-eight preintimations concerning the Former Reign of Messiah, the Bible reveals through its forewisdom many identifying characteristics relative to the identity of Antichrist.

As it is the contention of this author that the evidence of scripture points to a Turkish Antichrist, the prophetic template will be examined as it is overlaid current Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Scripture reveals that the Antichrist will be a Jew who will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women (Dan. 11:37), but instead will honor a foreign god of fortresses (Dan. 11:39). With a fierce countenance (Dan. 8:23) and a look more "stout" than his fellows (Dan. 7:20), he will have no claim to royalty (Dan. 11:21) and will ascend to power with the help of a few (Dan. 11:23). He will also go to war with Egypt and assimilate that nation into his kingdom (Dan. 8:9; 11:40, 42, 43).

Recep Tayyip Erdogan – Is He Jewish?

The Ottoman Empire, that precursor to the Republic of Turkey, controlled at its height in the mid-1500's a vast area extending from the Balkan Peninsula to the Middle East and North Africa.

The empire began to decline after the reign of Suleyman I in 1566, and steadily lost territory through World War One.

A revolutionary group which came to be known as the Young Turks, expressed their dissatisfaction with the status quo and blamed the poor standing of the state on Sultan Abdul Hamid, who they declared too dictatorial. They demanded his exile and the restoration of the 1876 constitution.

Among the leaders of this organization were Djavid Bey and Mustafa Kemal. Bey became the Minister of Finance, and Kemal became the leader of the new regime, adopting the name, "Ataturk" (Father of the Turks). They were both impassioned doenmehs.

Jewish people who seemingly converted to Islam during the Ottoman period but secretly preserved their religious beliefs and worshipped Yahweh in private were called doenmehs ("the renegades").

In the city of Salonika, the doenmehs proclaimed to themselves "the ten commandments of our Lord King and Messiah Shabtai Zvi."

Shabtai Zvi was a man who was believed by many Jews to be their long-awaited Messiah, and he was accompanied by a False Apostle named Nasan Ashkenazi. Exiled from Jerusalem by the rabbis of the city in 1664, he found himself in the presence of the

Sultan two years later and was presented with the option of either converting to Islam or facing execution, and he chose to become a Muslim.

Following his example, many Jews converted with him, openly declaring their Muslim status but secretly remaining true to their Jewish heritage.

The commandments declared by the Salonika Jews in the 17th century still form the credo of surviving modern doenmehs:

I shall meticulously adhere to the customs of the Turks so as not to arouse their suspicion. I shall not only observe the Fast of Ramadan, but all the other Muslim customs which are observed in public.

I shall not marry into a Muslim family nor maintain any intimate association with them, for they are to us an abomination and particularly their women.

Djavid Bey and Mustafa Kemal were such doenmehs, a fact which their opponents publicized in an attempt to remove them from their positions of authority, albeit unsuccessfully. Unfortunately for their detractors, too many of the Young Turks in the newly-formed Turkish government prayed aloud to Allah but silently to Yahweh, and not enough support could be found to sustain the movement to depose.

As Ataturk accelerated the reforms of the last Ottoman rulers and banished from his country all traces of Islamic authority, his opponents increasingly began to voice their beliefs concerning his Jewish heritage, although nothing was ever proved.

The Turkish governors of Salonika, after receiving complaints about the religious order from Mohammedan clergy, would periodically attempt to investigate the strange existence of the doenmehs. Their clannishness, their refusal to mingle with Mohammedan families, and their marital restrictions had become a well-known fact, difficult to hide from the majority of people among whom they had lived for many generations.

When the investigations began in earnest, however, it was found that those accused of being doenmehs were beyond reproach in their Moslem religious practices. In fact, they often seemed even more devout followers of the prophet Mohammed and more sincere worshippers of Allah than the rest of the community. They fasted during Ramadan, and were found in conspicuously large numbers among the pilgrims to Mecca.

It is obvious, then, that to accuse a devout Turkish Muslim of being a closet Jew is a difficult allegation to prove. With substantiation proving as elusive as a New England fog, the only evidence linking a given Turkish Muslim with Judaism may be that which is obtained circumstantially. As has been previously stated, although the identity of specific sect members has remained unprovable for centuries, the subtle tendencies of the doenmehs are difficult characteristics to hide from those with whom they have lived in close proximity for so long.

When considering the issue of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's lineage, then, it is interesting to note that there are occasional Islamic Turks who, as the opponents of Ataturk were once wont to do, whisper the name of their leader and the word "doenmeh" in the same breath.

Is he Jewish? No one knows for sure, but even his own countrymen have their suspicions.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan – Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

Had Daniel prophesied that the coming Antichrist would have a claim to royalty, attention would be focused on candidates with a "pedigree" or established history of family involvement in politics.

Such candidates might include the Kennedys of America, Prince Charles Windsor of Wales, Emperor Akihito of Japan, or King Juan Carlos of Spain.

However, Daniel specifically foretold that he "has not been given the honor of royalty" (NIV), a man "to whom royal majesty and honor of the kingdom have not been given" (AMP), and in fact, "a worthless nobody, who doesn't come from a royal family" (CEV) – Daniel 11:21.

Thus, attention needs to be focused on candidates with no political lineage. Erdogan was born in 1954 as the son of a coastguard in the city of Rize on Turkey's Black Sea coast. At thirteen years of age, his father moved the family to Istanbul in order to provide a better environment for his five children. As a teenager, Erdogan sold lemonade and sesame buns on the streets of Istanbul's rougher districts in order to earn extra money.

His impecunious background is therefore perfectly in line with the prophecy of Daniel 11:21.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan – Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

Interested in politics and business even as a youth, Erdogan attended an Islamic school and joined his political party's youth branch at fifteen. He later obtained a degree in management from Istanbul's Marmara University College of Business, where he also played professional soccer.

While attending university, he met Necmettin Erbakan, who would go on to become the country's first Islamist Prime Minister, and entered Turkey's Islamist movement.

While working for Istanbul's transport authority in 1980, Erdogan's boss ordered him to shave off his moustache as it was a symbol of Islam. His refusal cost him his job, yet it gained him attention in the Islamic Welfare Party and in 1994, he became the mayor of Istanbul.

When the Welfare Party was banned in 1998, Erdogan, along with Abdullah Gul, began working to create the AKP (Justice and Development Party), another pro-Islamist political party which would be founded three years later in 2001.

In the interim of 1999, angry at the dissolution of the Islamist Welfare Party and not yet ready to launch his AKP, Erdogan publicly read an Islamic poem including the lines:

"*The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers...*"

He was charged with inciting religious hatred and sentenced to ten months in jail for his anti-secular, pro-Islamist activities, a sentence which automatically prohibited him from ever serving in public office again, as Turkish law forbids any person with a criminal record from standing in elections or holding political office.

When his party swept to power in November 2002, he was unable to become Prime Minister because of his crime, but a speedy change in the law by a few in the AKP

(a minority party holding only 59 of 550 seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly) cleared the way for him to run for Parliament - and within days of his winning a Parliament seat he had been named Prime Minister.

Erdogan most certainly came to power with the help of a few, and in fact, Daniel elaborated in chapter 11, verse 21 that he "shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries, intrigues, and cunning hypocritical conduct." (AMP) "He'll surprise everyone, seemingly coming out of nowhere, and will seize the kingdom." (MSG)

"Many Turks appeared stunned by the magnitude of Erdogan's victory. 'Social Explosion From the Ballot Box' ran the headline in the daily Hurriyet." – The Asia Times

Recep Tayyip Erdogan – Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

As a political leader of Turkey, this requirement has been met due to the very nature of Turkish law which forbids its Islamic citizens who hold public office to practice their faith, requiring them to adhere to a strict policy of secularism.

However, this requirement has also been met in another, more personal sense, for Erdogan has now disavowed the hardline Islamic views of his past and is trying to recast himself as a pro-Western conservative. Today, the AKP rejects the "Islamist" label and claims that it is a pro-Western mainstream party with a "conservative" social agenda but also a firm commitment to liberal market economy and European Union membership.

Turkey's secular constituency, as well as the military, view Erdogan's new moderation with suspicion. Many feared prior to the election that he might alter his views again to openly champion the cause of Islam if his party came to power, and there are those who still yet fear some sort of shift in direction from their enigmatic leader.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan – Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

"*He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women.*" – Daniel 11:37

The word translated "women" is "issa," a term which carries a marked "married" connotation. It is translated in other places as "wives, female mates, married women, widows, mothers, and adulteresses." Every one of these expressions denotes a female who has joined with a husband to become one flesh in holy matrimony.

As an irregular plural, the intendment of "issa" is "each and every." Thus it is employed to designate "each and every married woman" in the same wide sense as the word "mortal" is inclusive of every man on earth. According to Strong's, this universal inclusiveness is often left unexpressed in the English version of the Bible.

Many times the word is used as it is in Genesis 18:11 to universally refer to all women. It can also designate all the women of a particular nation. In Exodus 1:16 it denotes all Hebrew women. In Exodus 1:19 it is used to indicate every Egyptian woman, and in Numbers 31:9 it refers to all Midianite women.

The word denotes each and every woman of a particular classification, whether that determination is made by class, nationality, tribe, or grouping.

Daniel 11:37 may therefore be rendered, "he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by every married woman."

The specific classification Daniel intended has yet to be determined. Was he referring to women of every tribe and language or did he have a specific group in mind?

It is important that the perspective of the Biblical author is not lost. Daniel, a Hebrew, was writing to other exiled Hebrews in Babylonia.

When referencing the deity in the former portion of verse thirty-seven, he makes an effort to emphasize that the divine presence in question is not their own Yahweh. Indeed, he is careful to italicize the fact that this divinity is one which presides over *his* fathers (Antichrist's) rather than over their own Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Yet when he speaks of the second deity, he makes no distinction between false god and true as he did formerly. Speaking to fellow Hebrews, Daniel relates that the Antichrist will not regard the god which is desired by all married women. He does not qualify the statement, which reveals his intendment as either all women of the earth or all the women of the group to whom he is addressing, namely Israel.

If he is referring to the Hebrew women and the god which they desire, there can be only one interpretation: this is a reference to the Messiah all Hebrew women wished to birth, and the desire to obtain favor with God as well as the "blessed art thou among women" honor which Mary received.

"*He shall not regard the gods of his fathers or Him [to Whom] women desire [to give birth – the Messiah.]*" - Daniel 11:37 (AMP)

This is a clue to the nationality of Antichrist. As a Turk, he will outwardly worship the god of his fathers – the Allah of Islam - yet as a doenmeh, he will privately worship Yahweh. This scripture reveals his insincerity with regard to both and goes on to declare his allegiance to the Fortress Goddess of Babylon.

To answer the question of whether or not Recep Tayyip Erdogan has disregarded Yahweh, the God desired by women, the first commandment of Yahweh is "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" (Exodus 20:3)

Yahweh decreed in Exodus 34:14, "*Do not worship any other god, for the LORD , whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*"

Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "*No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.*"

The Apostle James declared in James 1:8 that, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*"

If Erdogan is a doenmeh, then according to scripture he is a double-minded man attempting to serve two masters and has violated God's command to not follow after the customs of the heathen nations.

"*Do not learn the ways of the nations.*" - Jeremiah 10:2

"*You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them.*" – Leviticus 20:23

Remarkable insight can be gained into the mind of God concerning the practices of the doenmehs in the following passage:

"*Then the king of Assyria gave this order: "Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires." So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the LORD.*

"*Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns where they settled, and set them up in the shrines the people of Samaria had made at the high*

places. The men from Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men from Cuthah made Nergal, and the men from Hamath made Ashima; the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire as sacrifices to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. They worshiped the LORD , but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. They worshiped the LORD , but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.

"*To this day they persist in their former practices. They neither worship the LORD nor adhere to the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands that the LORD gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel. When the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: "Do not worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them. But the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices. You must always be careful to keep the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands he wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods. Rather, worship the LORD your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies."*

"*They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices. Even while these people were worshiping the LORD , they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did.*" – 2nd Kings 27-41

The Lord is not pleased with those who worship Him whilst in the process of bowing down to false gods.

Scripture declares that the only way to reach the Father is to first pass through the Son (John 14:6), yet by not openly acknowledging the Son, Jesus will not acknowledge Erdogan before the Father (Matthew 10:32, 33).

Even if he has preserved is Jewish beliefs and his allegiance to Islam is merely a façade, Yahweh is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5) who demands total dedication from His worshippers (Deuteronomy 6:5).

When Simon Peter publicly denied any association with Christ, his actions were interpreted by God as a denial of Him (Matthew 26:75). Thus, for Erdogan to deny Him publicly is to deny Him in truth and to disregard the God desired by all Hebrew married women.

Of course, if he is a true Muslim and not a doenmeh, then he has of course rejected the God of Abraham, but at the same time failed the Jewish requirement which the Antichrist must meet.

Left alone, this explanation fails to account for one small discrepancy which the alert student of Hebrew will be sure to observe.

The word "gods" in Daniel 11:37 is in its plural form, denoting a multiplicity of deities. The assertion that has been presented is that "the gods of his fathers" refers to the Islamic faith, yet it is an invariable tenet of Islam that there exists only one true god and his name is Allah.

The question that is raised by the observant scholar, then, is how Islam's belief in one god can be reconciled with the plurality of deities found in this portion of scripture.

First, it must be pointed out that the word is not translated as a plural in every translation of the Bible. In the King James Version, for example, it is rendered, "the God of his fathers."

The word in question is the Hebrew "elohim." Elohim, when used in conjunction with Yahweh, is employed as a plural of majesty. The word is constructed in a plural form, yet it retains its singular meaning. The purpose is to amplify the aspect of great power to the extent that great attention is drawn to it.

However, when not used specifically to extol Yahweh, the word reverts to its true grammatical plural and simply denotes a multiplicity of gods.

This explains why, after realizing that Daniel 11:37 is referring to the god of Antichrist, many translators render "elohim" in the true grammatical plural. However, others believed this portion of scripture to be indicative of Yahweh indeed, and the word was rendered, "God" with a capital letter in order to represent the name of the One True God.

From this expression is derived for many the idea that the Antichrist will have a Jewish ancestry. What they fail to realize is that there is also an Islamic side to the nature of Antichrist and that the phrase, "god of his fathers" is a clever description of the Islamic Allah.

The phrase, "God of our fathers" is an expression unique to Hebrew culture.

"*I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.*" – Daniel 2:23

"*Praise be to the LORD , the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king's heart to bring honor to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem in this way.*"- Ezra 7:27

This unique expression is alluded to by Paul in Galatians 1:11-14.

"*I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*"

According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, "the origin of divine devotion is traced to the Patriarchs. Hence the "Amidah" prayer begins with the patriarchal benediction "Birkat abot" (the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)… Abraham was the head of the Patriarchs and Jews were identified as 'the people of the God of Abraham' because he was the first to recognize the true God." – The Patriarchs, Schulim Ochser, Wilhelm Bacher, and Judah David Eisenstein

Not only were the Hebrews known to the nations as "the People of the God of their Fathers," but Yahweh identified Himself with this same appellation.

"*Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"*

"God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

"God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers-the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob-has sent me to you.'

This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation." - Exodus 3:13-15

When Moses asked God for His Name, Yahweh answered with "The God of your Fathers… This shall be my Name forever, this my appellation for all eternity."

So the phrase "God of our fathers" is a unique Hebraic expression which was exceedingly familiar to Daniel's Hebrew audience.

Yet, as was previously pointed out, Daniel modified the pronoun in this time-worn Name of God, creating "God of *his* fathers" from the original "God of *our* fathers."

In all respects save one, this is an expression indicative of the One True God, yet it no longer identifies Yahweh as the God of the Hebrews, but the God of the Antichrist.

By invoking this ancient Hebrew name for God ("The God of our Fathers") on behalf of Pagan worshippers, albeit in modified form, Daniel is attempting to communicate something special.

Had Daniel's intention been merely to declare that Antichrist would not follow in the religious paths of his own people, he would have said, "he shall not regard his own god."

That would have adequately conveyed such a message. The fact that he chose to couch this sentiment within a uniquely Hebraic expression which the Pagans would never have used, begs the question of why.

Had "elohim" been used outside of this expression, it would not have created an absurdity, and would have reverted to its true grammatical plural denoting a multiplicity of gods, and a contradiction would then exist between the number of gods in Antichrist's religion and the single deity faith of Islam. Turkey would no longer fit the profile of Antichrist's homeland and the surfeit of evidence to the contrary would be faulty.

The fact that it remains embedded within a Hebrew idiom for the name of God, however, signals the reader to examine the term with an additional measure of caution.

As scripture warns in other passages, this calls for a mind with wisdom. If a special meaning is to be imputed this verse, then the value or emphasis of one of the words must signify something other than what is ordinarily to be expected. The only element within this particular phrase with a variable definition is the word "elohim." Rather than revert to a simple plurality, it remains an extolling modifier.

Since Daniel recognized the existence of the One God and acknowledged that there were no other gods alongside Him (as scripture affirms: Deut. 32:39; 2nd Sam. 7:22; Is. 43:10; Is. 44:6, 8; 45:5, 21; 1st Cor. 8:4), any other deity declared to be the One God would exist as such only in the minds of the Pagans. And this is entirely the meaning of the prophet in Daniel 11:37.

The Antichrist will not honor the deity whom his fathers regard as the One God, nor will he honor the One True God of the Messiah, although he will appear to worship both.

In short, were the words "elohim" used in isolation, it would revert to its literal plural, but due to its apposition with the phrase "of his fathers," Daniel has communicated that the Antichrist's fellow countrymen worship a single deity that is not Yahweh, but whom they regard as the One True God.

Thus, the complete phrase, "God of his fathers," taken together with the supporting evidence found elsewhere in scripture, can be identified as a cloaked reference to the god of Islam: Allah.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan – Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

The word "fierce" comes from the Aramaic "az," and means "strong" or "mighty," while the word "countenance" is translated from the Aramaic "paniym," meaning "face" or "presence."

The word "stout" has been translated many different ways, including "larger in appearance" (NASB), "dominating" (MSG), "looked greater" (AMP), "seemed greater" (NLT), "more imposing" (DARBY), and "more visible" (HCSB). It is translated from the Aramaic "rab," meaning "great," "captain," "chief," "master," or "lord," and simply means that he will be greater than his associates.

Taken together, these two prophecies indicate that the Antichrist will have a charismatic presence greater than any of his fellow associates, a personality trait which can be applied to Prime Minister Erdogan.

It was this compelling charisma which brought him from the lemonade stands of Istanbul's squalid streets to the Chair of his party, the Mayor's office, a seat in Parliament, and the desk of the Prime Minister.

He is one of the most successful political figures to emerge from Turkey in many years, having solved many of his nation's complex infrastructure problems. As Chairman of the Welfare Party, he developed a new form of organization which was later adopted by the city government. As Mayor, he was a good manager in both money and public administration, and solved many complex problems within the municipality. He brought new concepts and methods to the political structural system and was revered by the people as "the sound of the silent masses and the helper of the needy," a man of integrity who became a role model in the eyes of the public.

If Antichrist, his "new form of organization" and his "new concepts and methods" will not be limited to the Republic of Turkey, but will find expression within a global administration "*which* [is] *different from all the others and most terrifying.*" (Daniel 7:19)

Recep Tayyip Erdogan – Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

Certain new developments with regard to the military dimension of the relationship between Egypt and Greece are of concern to Turkey, as contacts between the two countries on this issue are continuing and the military relationship is expanding.

Inherently suspicious of any nation desiring to ally itself with its long-hated rival Greece, Turkey's own alliance with Israel is threatening to escalate tensions within the region, which even before now have been a continual threat to reach peak levels.

The concern of Greece is that Israel may support Turkey in any future conflict between Athens and Ankara. Despite Israeli assurances to the contrary, Greece has not hesitated to express this concern openly in bilateral talks, and Egypt and Greece have even discussed the possibility of conducting joint military exercises.

Conversely, the Egyptian administration is apprehensive about its exclusion from the Turkish/Israeli relationship and has expressed this uneasiness frequently in talks. Desiring to assume a leadership role in the Middle East, Egypt is concerned that it will be unable to attain this goal due to the alliance between Turkey and Israel.

If an outbreak of hostilities were to erupt in the future between Turkey and Greece, Egypt would enter the conflict on the side of Greece, an action which would result in a Turkish counterassault upon the Land of the Pyramids.

The violence between Turkey and Greece has been long documented, and one has only to look at the island nation of Cypress to view the effects of this dispute firsthand. With its Grecian alliance, Egypt becomes an unwelcome interloper and an instant enemy by default.

Thus, Erdogan has plenty of reasons to consider the King of the South with a suspicious eye, to strengthen the ties with his Israeli allies, and to launch either a preemptive strike or a defensive counterattack against Egypt at the first sign of hostility.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan - Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

Yes. For centuries, Greeks and Turks have considered the other to be enemies. Chronic tensions between their two countries are rooted in historical wounds that are regularly inflamed by recurring disputes involving issues such as territorial claims, treatment of minorities, and control of Cyprus.

Conclusion

Although only a portion of the biblical profile provided to aid in the identification of the Antichrist has been examined, it is fascinating how well Prime Minister Erdogan is able to satisfy the requirements furnished thus far.

Certain of the prophecies cannot be used to recognize Antichrist in advance of his defilement of the temple in Jerusalem. Others will not be fulfilled until after the establishment of the One World Government and the earth is reorganized into ten manageable administrative regions. Some simply require the passage of a modest portion of additional time before the auguries are fulfilled, and with a greater body of verifiable data from which to work, candidates for Antichrist can be judged with a greater degree of accuracy than is presently available.

To illustrate, the Antichrist will war against the saints, abolish the Jewish daily sacrifice, issue an insidious Mark, murder the two witnesses of God, and mass troops at Armageddon for the ultimate confrontation with Almighty God, yet these are prophecies which will come to pass only well after he has been recognized as Satan's agent of evil.

The Son of Perdition will break his covenant with Israel, enter the Holy of Holies and declare he is God, will discover that the righteous remnant in Jordan are beyond the reach of his arm, and will recover from a mortal wound, yet such prophecies cannot aid in his identification prior to these events.

He will be involved in the occult, will come to accept the Mystery Religion of ancient Babylon, will invade wealthy provinces and distribute the wealth among his followers, will attack Egypt, and will be attacked by Greece.

There is no way of knowing whether Erdogan is involved in the occult at this time, whether he is being drawn to the Babylonian Mysteries, or if he is contemplating an invasion of other nations, yet certain predictions can be extrapolated from previously demonstrated behaviors and from existing circumstances.

Greece, for example, is a likely candidate to attack Erdogan's nation at some point in the future, and if Egypt enters the fray, he may well invade the splendid lands of the Pharaohs and the Gods, and begin distributing the wealth among his faithful followers. He has only to publicly confirm the already standing Turkish/Israeli alliance and then to deceitfully renege on the agreement and invade the Beautiful Land for a host of additional prophecies to apply to him.

As for embracing the Babylonian Mysteries, although this subject lies far beyond the scope of this book, a simple celebration of Christmas or Easter on the part of Erdogan may be all that is required for the world to recognize his Babylonian bias.

Speaking to this potentiality, it is intriguing that St. Nicholas (a wholly fabricated personage) was said to have been born in Patara around A.D. 280 in Asia Minor and became bishop of Myra, now Demre, in Turkey.

Today visitors to Myra can see the partially restored Church of Saint Nicholas which was built after his supposed death. The remains of "Noel Baba" were placed in a rock sarcophagus within the church. In a nearby park, tourists will find a modern statue of Saint Nicholas complete with beard, bag of toys, and children gathered around him. Unlike the American Santa Claus, St. Nicholas is depicted as a tall thin man, dressed in a hooded robe.

An annual St. Nicholas Festival is held in Myra for three days around the saint's official Feast Day on December 6th. The celebration attracts many tourists who spend their Christmas holidays on the sunny coast of ancient Lycia.

Other than the St. Nicholas recognition in Myra, Christmas is not a major holiday in Turkey.

"As you know, Christmas is a Christian tradition," says Fusun S. Nebil, an internet company executive in Istanbul. "Although there are a lot of Jewish or Christian people who live in Turkey, the main religion is Islam so we don't have the Christmas celebration tradition." According to Mrs. Nebil, the main celebration in late December is the end of the year and the welcome to the new year.

"As the world is going toward globalization, many things are becoming shared," she says, and cites the Christmas tree as an example. "For the last ten or twenty years in Turkey, people began to use pine trees as a decoration for the New Year celebration. This is getting some criticism from religious people, though."

It can therefore be seen that a basis exists for Turkish citizens to accept and participate in a measure of the Babylonian Mysteries.

While the Bible refers to the Antichrist as "the Assyrian," causing many to regard the modern nation of Syria as the birthplace of the "Ignominous One," this can be reconciled with the Turkish view very simply. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, the ancient region of Assyria "was located in what is now northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey."

Indeed, Assyria spans four modern countries: In Syria it extends west to the Euphrates river; in Turkey it extends approximately one hundred miles north of Syria to Diyarbakir and another one hundred miles beyond to Lake Van; in Iran it extends east to Lake Urmi; and in Iraq it extends to about one hundred miles south of Kirkuk.

This is the Assyrian heartland, and includes a significant portion of Turkey. Thus, Turkish citizens (as well as those of Iraq, Iran, and Syria) share the Assyrian heritage. While the scriptural appellation of "the Assyrian" would not adhere to many world

leaders, including those from Egypt, Russia, America, or Italy, it is significant that Turkey is one of the few to which it can be applied.

Given the prodigious amount of smoke swirling about Prime Minister Erdogan with regard to the issue of Antichrist, it would seem only a matter of time until the eruption of flame.

Whether the smoke and sparks ignite an blazing inferno and Erdogan is revealed as the consummate adversary of Christ, or whether the smoke smolders and dissipates upon the winds and a successor fills that role, he remains at this time a fascinating candidate to whom vigilance must be paid.

In fact, no other candidate visible on the world stage can match the Antichrist profile as well as Erdogan currently does.

How Other Popular Candidates Match Up

1) George W. Bush, President, United States of America

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

Yes. A former Governor of Texas, his brother the Governor of Florida, his father a former President of the U.S, and his grandfather a former Senator, he is also distantly related to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Princess Diana, and President George Washington. He therefore enjoys an established history of family involvement in politics.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

Yes. He won the election of 2000 while losing the popular vote 50,999,897 to 50,456,002, yet the "few" controlled more electoral votes and he won 271 to 266.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

As Bush is not a professing Muslim, this prophecy does not apply to him. (Note: While the phrase is thought by this author to refer to Allah and the religion of Islam, for those who disagree it will be regarded literally with respect to this and the following additional candidates.)

If the "god of his fathers" phrase were to be divorced from its Hebraic uniqueness and regarded as simply an artistic way of expressing that he will not be true to his own religion, then President Bush must be considered to have fulfilled this prophecy.

A professed Methodist, Bush is a member of the Illuminist Skull and Bones Society, which is the American chapter of the international Brotherhood of Death Society, whose German chapter, the Thule Society, Adolph Hitler belonged to from 1919 until his death in 1945.

A Satanic organization to which Bush affirmed his loyalty as recently as 2004, it is at extreme odds with the Methodist faith which the President pretends to support for the sake of the religious vote.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. As the God of women is the Hebrew Yahweh, also known as Jesus, his membership within the Skull and Bones Society obliges him to reject the One True God just as surely as it results in his rejection of the version the Methodists revere as the Trinity.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

A reticent "yes." While he has been noted for his less-than-commanding presence and for his stumbling, stilted, and decidedly uncharismatic oratory skills, with respect to foreign powers Bush's arrogance has been greater than any of his predecessors. Among other notable actions, he has seen fit to replace the governments of Afghanistan and Iraq, while publicly naming Iraq, Iran, and North Korea a collective "axis of evil."

In his 2005 Inaugural Address, he put the rest of the world on notice by saying, "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world… It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world… Some have unwisely chosen to test America's resolve and have found it firm. We will persistently clarify the choice before every ruler and every nation… We will encourage reform in other governments by making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people… Some, I know, have questioned the global appeal of liberty - though this time in history, four decades defined by the swiftest advance of freedom ever seen, is an odd time for doubt. Americans, of all people, should never be surprised by the power of our ideals… Today, America speaks anew to the peoples of the world: All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: The United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors… Democratic reformers facing repression, prison or exile can know: America sees you for who you are -- the future leaders of your free country."

While outwardly beneficent, the core of this message was a statement of global purpose which involves replacing every non-Democratic government in the world with one friendly to the long-term goals of the New World Order. This objective would be realized regardless of cost, whether through negotiations, sanctions, or as previously demonstrated, military force, and a challenge was issued to every world leader, ally, or citizen who would dare oppose him.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

Possibly. There is much anti-American sentiment in Greece as a result of the United States meddling in Greece's affairs a number of times with negative results. The United States intervened in the Greek civil war, taking the side of the neo-fascists against the Greek left which had fought the Nazis. The neo-fascists won and instituted a highly brutal regime, for which the CIA created a new internal security agency, the KYP. Before long, the KYP was carrying out all the endearing practices of secret police everywhere, including systematic torture.

Furthermore, the United States CIA assisted in the 1967 coup. The military coup took place in April 1967, just two days before the campaign for national elections was to begin, elections which appeared certain to bring the veteran liberal leader George Papandreou, Senior back as Prime Minister. Papandreou had been elected in February 1964 with the only outright majority in the history of modern Greek elections. The successful machinations to unseat him had begun immediately, a joint effort of the Royal Court, the Greek military, and the American military and CIA stationed in Greece.

The 1967 coup was followed immediately by the traditional martial law, censorship, arrests, beatings, tortures, and killings, the victims totaling some 8,000 in the first month. This was accompanied by the equally traditional declaration that this was all being done to save the nation from a "Communist takeover." Corrupting and subversive influences in Greek life were to be removed. Among these were miniskirts, long hair, and foreign newspapers; church attendance for the young would be compulsory.

James Becket, an American attorney sent to Greece by Amnesty International, wrote in December 1969 that "a conservative estimate would place at not less than two thousand" the number of people tortured, usually in the most gruesome of ways, often with equipment supplied by the United States.

Becket reported the following: Hundreds of prisoners have listened to the little speech given by Inspector Basil Lambrou, who sits behind his desk which displays the red, white, and blue-clasped hand symbol of American aid. He tries to show the prisoner the absolute futility of resistance: "You make yourself ridiculous by thinking you can do anything. The world is divided in two. There are the communists on that side and on this side the free world. The Russians and the Americans, no one else. What are we? Americans. Behind me there is the government, behind the government is NATO, behind NATO is the U.S. You can't fight us, we are Americans." The occupation of Iraq by the United States has only furthered the view of the United States as belligerent in the eyes of Greeks living in Greece.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 5/8

2) Prince Charles Windsor of Wales

Is He Jewish?

A tentative yes, for according to “The Antichrist and a Cup of Tea” by Tim Cohen, he claims to be descended from David, Jesus, and Mohammed and is thought to be from the tribe of Dan.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

Yes.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. Traditionally, the British monarch is known as "Defender of the Faith" — referring to his or her role as head of the Anglican Church of England. But, to the umbrage of some traditionalists, Charles has described himself as "Defender of the Faiths" — signaling his intention to embrace all the major religious communities in Britain, not just the State's official religion.

Over the years, it has become increasingly common to see the prince donning both Jewish and Muslim skullcaps in visits to Jewish and Muslim communal events and putting on religious ceremonial garb for the openings of Sikh and Hindu temples.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. Rather than embrace the God of Israel, he has adopted the God of Ecumenicism.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

No.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No. Greece and Britain have been faithful allies in the struggle for freedom and democracy, and heirs of common intellectual traditions and values.

Today, the United Kingdom attracts a large number of Greek students pursuing academic studies, second only to the number of students enrolled in Greek Universities; many Greek shipping companies and ship-owners have made the City of London their home; on the other hand, the number of British visitors to Greece exceeds that of any other group of foreign nationals.

They enjoy good economic relations, and a strong willingness to expand and strengthen their cultural exchanges. This fact is demonstrated by the success of the "Greece in Britain" cycle of events in London, and of the extensive program of the British Council in Athens.

The British School of Archaeology at Athens remains a major center of archaeological scholarship, and its history has been linked with important archaeological discoveries since the nineteenth century; the school currently engages in a very promising development program, preparing for the challenges of the new millennium. All the above is evidence of a flourishing relationship between these two nations.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 3/8

3) King Juan Carlos of Spain

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

Yes.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

No. Throughout history, Spain has been one of the foremost strongholds of Roman Catholicism. For centuries, popes have recognized the "Catholic Kings" of Spain as "protectors of Catholic Holy Land interests."

During the coronation of King Carlos in 1975, the archbishop of Madrid celebrated the mass and bestowed the blessings of the church upon him. Carlos has also been privileged to have several private audiences with the Pope himself.

Today he is a practicing Roman Catholic and has been since the time of his birth. In fact, this royal citizen of Spain was made an honorary citizen of Rome in 1981.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. King Juan Carlos is not only a member of the Illuminati's Inner Circle, he is also a member of Opus Dei, a powerful and secretive Roman Catholic Order.

In delivering a speech to the Argentine Republic concerning the issue of democracy, Carlos once defied Jesus Christ to remove him from power, saying, "Never must any idea of the state or any Messianic deliverer come to wrest from us our dignity as free men."

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

Perhaps.

On February 23, 1981 as the Spanish Congress was about to elect a new Prime Minister, two hundred soldiers and members of the paramilitary Civil Guard stormed into the Spanish Congress of Deputies firing automatic weapons and shouting orders, taking over three hundred fifty hostages.

Simultaneously, many military leaders led by General Milans del Bosch, declared a state of emergency and ordered tanks out on the street in Valencia.

With his government in shambles, and his authority in much question, Carlos began making phone calls to certain military contacts looking for supporters. After securing the allegiance of the elite paratroop division, he stormed onto television at 1 AM, voicing his condemnation of the coup and ordering the insurgents to allow Spain's democratic process to continue peacefully.

The result of this display of iron-willed intrepidity was learned early the following morning, as the rebels in control of Congress surrendered without harming a soul, having held hostage Spain's Parliament and Cabinet for eighteen hours.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No. Egypt and Spain maintain strong relations, a fact reflected by their mutual tourism industry and encouraged by the exchange visits of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to Spain and Spanish King Juan Carlos to Egypt.

Mr. Anthony Figara, President of Spanish and European Chambers of Commerce, and Head of the Barcelona Fair, affirmed that Spanish officials are very keen on promoting Spanish-Egyptian relations, and in February of 2001, Egyptian Tourism Minister Mamdouh Al-Beltagui described the Spanish-Egyptian relations as warm and cordial.

Beltagui cited President Mubarak's visit to Spain in 2000 as the single event most responsible for Egypt's 12% increase in tourism that year and that it contributed greatly to the cause of promoting benevolent relations between the two countries.

Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar recently held talks with Egyptian Tourism Ministry officials to discuss the establishment of a Spanish-Egyptian Tourism Committee whose purpose would be to annually explore new methods of promoting tourism cooperation.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 2/8

4) Mikhail Gorbachev, former leader of USSR

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No. In 1931, Gorbachev was born to a peasant family in a small village in southwestern Russia. The entire USSR was then ruled by the iron hand of Joseph Stalin. Gorbachev experienced firsthand the horrors of the famine caused by the implementation of collectives. His grandfathers were both arrested by the infamous KGB and then released. The arrival of World War Two saw Gorbachev's home occupied by German forces in 1942 and 1943, and later liberated by the Soviet army.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No. Although he benefited from the occasional goodwill of a superior, as any good employee does, the reason for his success can ultimately be traced to his own ingenuity and hard work.

In spite of all the hardships and difficulties he experienced as a youth, he retained his faith in the Soviet system of government. He became involved with the Communist Youth League in 1946, and through hard work and good academics, Gorbachev received several honors and was admitted to the law school in Moscow State University in 1950. He became a full member of the Communist Party in 1952, and after his graduation in 1955, Gorbachev moved steadily up the political ranks.

After being promoted to the regional committee of the Communist Youth League in 1961, he transferred to the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) where he served faithfully, working hard and earning the respect of the regional First Secretary, receiving more than half a dozen promotions over the next seventeen years.

In 1978 Gorbachev relocated to Moscow to take up the position of Central Committee Secretary responsible for Soviet agriculture. One year later he became a non-voting member of the Politburo, the top policy-making body of the Soviet government, and the following year he was granted full member status, the youngest person to be accorded that honor at forty-nine years of age.

After the deaths of three different Soviet leaders in three years, Gorbachev was appointed General Secretary of the Soviet Union through his connections to one of the deceased leaders, making him the leader of the USSR in 1985.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. Although the predominant religions of his country are Russian Orthodox and Muslim, Gorbachev has remained an atheist. In recent years, however, he has made certain statements which make it appear as though he endorses Roman Catholicism, praising the Pagan church for its moral fortitude and meeting with Pope John Paul II in 1989 at the Vatican to denounce seventy years of religious oppression by the USSR.

Gorbachev has said that religion should and will have a growing place in the 21st Century, as people must be permitted to follow certain principals of morality, and declared that true freedom cannot be obtained apart from religious freedom.

Gorbachev, who rose to power in the context of the atheistic, militaristic, Russian Communist empire, is today seeking to project the image of a moralistic, peaceful leader who desires to establish a New World Order based on Democratic values.

However, he is the opposite of all that he outwardly represents: an atheistic man who has rejected Russian Orthodoxy and Islam, and who will ally himself with whatever organization or faith that will provide him with the best opportunity to see his global vision a completed reality.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. In fact, Gorbachev credits Jesus Christ as the father of Socialism rather than the Son of God.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

Yes, if one considers his many economic reforms, which were bold in the context of Soviet history.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 4/8

5) Louis Farrakhan, Leader of the Nation of Islam

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No. Louis Farrakhan, born Louis Eugene Walcott on May 11, 1933 in the Bronx, New York, was blessed with an abundance of talent and became well educated, but his lineage is undistinguished.

His grandfather was a Bermudian dockworker and his father dies when he was three years old. Raised in a highly disciplined household by his mother, who worked hard as a seamstress and housekeeper in order to support the family, Louis learned early the value of work and responsibility, a hard upbringing in which the silver spoon of privilege was noticeably absent.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. Raised a devout Episcopalian, Louis converted to Islam in 1955 and dedicated his life to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. He believes that God is not a Spirit, but a man. He denies the resurrection of Jesus, and regards the Bible as an unholy, "poison book." He also identifies himself as the Messiah, declaring, "I am that Elijah that was to come and now is."

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

Yes. A musical and intellectual genius, Louis was given a violin prior to his sixth birthday and by age thirteen had played with the Boston College Orchestra and the Boston Civic Symphony. At fourteen he won the Ted Mack Amateur Hour, as one of the first blacks to appear on the popular show.

Graduating from high school at age sixteen, he earned an athletic scholarship for his superior athleticism as a track sprinter and attended Winston-Salem Teacher's College in North Carolina, excelling in the study of English.

After college he became a successful performing artist, known affectionately as "The Charmer," and achieved fame in Boston as a vocalist, calypso singer, dancer, and violinist.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 4/8

6) Bill Gates, Founder of Microsoft

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No. Gates' success can be attributed to the many individuals and corporations he stole from and lied to in order to establish his presence within the micro-computing industry, including MITS, Apple, Seattle Computing, Digital Research, Sun Microsystems, Netscape Corp., Real Networks, Corel, Quarterdeck Corp., STAC Electronics, Go Corp., IBM, Burst, Sendo, Oracle, Sybase, Electronic TV Host, Mozilla, Borland, VMS, BSD, Gary Kildall, Dan Bricklin, and Steve Jobs.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. Gates is an agnostic, which means he does not regard any god.

In an interview with Time magazine he was questioned about his religious beliefs. When asked whether there was anything special, perhaps even Divine, about the human soul, he replied, "I don't have any evidence on that."

Earlier in the interview he had stated, "I don't think there's anything unique about human intelligence. All the neurons in the brain that make up perceptions and emotions operate in a binary fashion. We can someday replicate that on a machine. Eventually we'll be able to sequence the human genome and replicate how nature did intelligence in a carbon-based system."

Asked if he goes to church, he replied that his wife is Catholic and she goes, but for himself, "Just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. There's a lot more I could be doing on a Sunday morning."

He revealed that his wife, in an attempt to make the idea of attending church more palatable to him, offered to relinquish control of their daughter's Catholic education if the two of them would begin faithfully attending a denomination of his choice. Gates told Time that he would prefer one with "less theology and all," such as the United Church of Christ.

In a November 1995 PBS interview, Gates confided to journalist David Frost, "In terms of doing things, I take a fairly scientific approach to why things happen and how they happen. I don't know if there's a god or not, but I think religious principles are quite valid."

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes, for the same reason listed above.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

Yes. He certainly is greater, richer, and more dominating than his associates.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 4/8

7) Jacques Chirac, President of France

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

Yes, from a certain perspective. Although he won re-election in 2002 by an 82% to 18% landslide, in the French Presidential election of 1995, Chirac received only 1,582,383 more votes than his opponent – a measure representative of only 2.6% of the population and 5.2% of all votes cast.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Possibly. A Catholic, Chirac has banned all religious symbols from public schools, a law whose scope may be widened to include government and public buildings.

On October 22, 2004, The New York Times reported, "To enforce its new law banning religious symbols from public schools, the Ministry of National Education has decided to get tough. This week it held formal disciplinary hearings and began expelling students who violated the law. The goal was to get rid of those defined as hopeless cases before the 10-day All Saints school vacation that ends with a national holiday honoring all of Catholicism's saints. The French government sees no contradiction or irony here. Nine female Muslim students who have refused to remove their Islamic head coverings have been thrown out of schools across France. After the All Saints break, dozens of cases that are pending will be reviewed."

According to CBS News.com's February 15, 2004 report, "They arrived as they do every December: gaily wrapped gifts destined for children at a kindergarten in rural northern France.

"But this year, teachers unwrapped a few, took a look and sent all 1,300 packages back to City Hall. The presents were innocent, but strictly speaking, illegal: seasonal chocolates shaped like Christian crosses and St. Nicholas.

"As Christmas approaches, France is awakening to the realization that a new law banning conspicuous religious symbols at schools - a measure used mainly to keep Muslim girls from wearing traditional Islamic headscarves to class - can cut both ways.

“"It's an unhealthy political affair. Absolutely regrettable," said Andre Delattre, mayor of the northern town of Coudekerque-Branche, which has shipped the traditional chocolates to local schools for 11 years.

“"What's the point? It's the children who are being penalized for this difference of opinion," he said. "They've been deprived of a festive moment."

“The law, which took effect in September, bans overt symbols such as Islamic headscarves, Jewish skullcaps and large Christian crosses at public schools.

“More than a dozen teenage Muslim girls have been expelled from high schools for refusing to remove their scarves, along with three Sikh boys kicked out of a Paris-area school for wearing turbans.

“But last week's dispute over the chocolates was the first time the law - France's response to what many perceive as a rise in Muslim fundamentalism - has been used to challenge Christian imagery.

“A spokeswoman for the Education Ministry said Monday she was not aware of any other incidents involving Christian symbols in violation of the ban.

“To be sure, even at Christmas time, few public school classrooms are decorated with crosses or other religious imagery in France, a traditionally Roman Catholic yet proudly secular country.

“"In 1968, the slogan was, `It's forbidden to forbid.' In 2004, it's, `Forbidding is a must,"' Bruno Frappat, editor of the Catholic daily La Croix, wrote in a weekend commentary. "And one of the phobias most in vogue is Catho-phobia."

“The situation in France differs sharply from that in neighboring Italy, where a 1924 law says schools must display the crucifix.

“Pope John Paul II clearly had the French restrictions in mind when he waded into the fray in October to exhort Christians to more boldly display signs of their faith. The practice neither infringes on separation of church and state nor breeds intolerance, he said.”

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. The god of Roman Catholicism is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More “Stout” Than His Fellows?

Perhaps. Jacques Chirac is described as one of the most powerful presidents in recent French history. Now in his second term as France’s head of state, the seventy-five year-old has full control over the National Assembly, the Senate, and enjoys the support of the constitutional council - the country's legislative watchdog.

It is the crowning moment of a lifetime in politics that has also seen him serve twice as Prime Minister. He founded his own party - the RPR (Rally for the Republic) - in 1976 and for eighteen years held the powerful office of Paris Mayor.

Inspired by General de Gaulle to enter public life, he was already Economy Minister in the late 1960’s, and has served in both the national and European parliaments.

Chirac has been characterized as “a political beast par excellence.” He is what the French call "un bon gars" - a grand lad. His legendary appetite, his strapping frame, his

past reputation with the ladies, his loving wife and daughters, his penchant for sumo wrestling - all have helped create a public image which is popular and enduring.

Indeed, it is a testament to his appeal as a seasoned campaigner that even now - with age and scandal counting against him - he is preparing for another Presidential term.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No. The Arab Republic of Egypt is a major economic partner of France, and trade relations between the two have increased significantly in the last few years. France is Egypt's fourth leading supplier and fifth-ranking foreign investor, with one hundred-twenty French companies operating in the country.

French Foreign Trade Minister Delegate François Loos met with Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Obeid on May 10, 2003 for an in-depth exchange of views on economic and trade relations and bilateral cooperation. The visit afforded an opportunity to examine the possibilities for further increasing exchanges between the two countries in the context of an excellent bilateral relationship.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 5/8

8) Vladimir Putin, President of Russia

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin was born on October 7, 1952 in St Petersburg, then known as Leningrad. He was raised as an only child; his two brothers died young, one shortly after birth, the other of diphtheria during World War II. His father, Vladimir Spiridonovich Putin, was a factory foreman and died in August 1999. His mother, Maria Ivanovna Putina, died six months earlier.

A biography, *Ot Pervova Litsa* (*First Person*), based on interviews conducted with Putin in 2000, speaks of humble beginnings, including early years in a supposedly rat-infested tenement in a communal apartment .

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No. Although he was initially appointed to the position of President by one man, it was a commission confirmed by popular vote – an election he won by a decisive margin. (Eighteen million votes ahead of his nearest opponent.)

Putin studied law at State University in St Petersburg, then known as Leningrad. After graduating in 1975, he worked in the KGB's foreign intelligence service, mainly in Germany.

He left the KGB in 1990 and became an ally of liberal Anatoly Sobchak, the Mayor of St. Petersburg, whom he met during his study. He first became Sobchak's head of external relations and then served as Deputy Mayor from March 1994.

When Sobchak lost power in 1996, it was another liberal Deputy Prime Minister, Anatoly Chubais, who recommended him for a job in the Presidential administration. There he rose to be Deputy Chief of Staff, and in July 1998 was asked to take charge of one of Russia's new security services, the Federal Security Bureau (FSB), replacing Nikolai Kovalyov.

Subsequently, President Boris Yeltsin appointed him as head of the powerful Security Council. After Boris Yeltsin dismissed Sergei Stepashin in August 1999, he became Russia's Prime Minister. On the final day of the twentieth century, Boris Yeltsin resigned and appointed him acting President.

Presidential elections were held on March 26, 2000. Putin received 52.94% of all votes. The inauguration took place on May 7, 2000.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

No. Although it was officially prohibited by Communist law, Putin was baptized in the Russian Orthodox faith and has continued to publicly practice this religion.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. By embracing a religion other than that of Judaism or Christianity, he has rejected the God desired by Hebrew women.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

No. Far from charismatic, he has an expressionless face, rarely smiles, and speaks softly. Until the presidential elections, Vladimir Putin had no experience in elected office. Putin was not renowned as a charismatic speaker, and for years had a reputation as the "Grey Cardinal," a man who wields power quietly, and behind the scenes.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No. According to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Russia and Egypt have agreed to activate joint work on the fight against terrorism.

Upon completion of talks in the Kremlin with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, Mubarak said: "We have discussed issues of the fight against terrorism and agreed to activate joint work on this direction."

The Russian and Egyptian intelligence service heads took part in Russo-Egyptian extended-format talks.

Putin discussed with the Egyptian leader "possible steps on the resolution of the Palestino-Israeli conflict," and declared that, "The path to this lies in the return to the

Road Map plan adopted by the Quartet of international intermediaries on the Iraqi settlement and approved by all sides."

In the President's words, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak thanked Russia for the role it plays in the Quartet.

"We are united in opinions that the realization of commitments (on the Road Map) should be reciprocal, balanced, and controlled by the mechanism to be created by the Quartet," Mubarak said.

The Russian President noted the importance of consultations with the President of Egypt - one of the key states of the region, saying, "The President of Egypt has come to Moscow at the right time, as we know what events are taking place in the world. Consultations with the region's key country are very important for us."

According to the Russian President, special attention at the talks was paid to trade and economic ties. "We talked about contacts between the businesses, investment projects, and cooperation ties," he said.

In his opinion, cooperation in the spheres of energy, aircraft manufacturing and space research is promising. "Russia and Egypt have a great potential and a solid will to develop our relations," Putin said.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No. Russia has supplied Greek Cypriots with weapon systems in accordance with a multi-million dollar Cypriot arms deal, despite Turkish saber rattling and arguments that Russia’s actions are threatening to both Turkish Cypriots and Turkey.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 2/8

9) Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel

Is He Jewish?

Yes, but Sharon, an Ashkenazi Jew, is not descended from the house of King David. Although this author has elected to render the primary query concerning a candidate's viability for the position of Antichrist as "Is He Jewish?" the issue is a bit more complex than that.

It is not enough that the Son of Perdition be descended from Abraham. Indeed, in order to be accepted by Judaism as its long-awaited Messiah, it is mandatory that he be a lineal heir of the Psalmist. The Jews will accept no other as their Christ, regardless of the deeds accomplished on their behalf.

Thus, Sharon's Jewish heritage alone cannot satisfy the requisite which demands that the Messiah spring from David's loins.

According to "The Thirteenth Tribe," by Arthur Koestler, "The Ashkenazic 'Jews': A Slavo-Turkic People in Search of a Jewish Identity," by Dr. Paul Wexler, and studies which have been published in the New York Times, it is revealed that the Ashkenazi Jews have no bloodline to Abraham.

Many of those who identify themselves as Jews are not Jewish at all and have no claim to the land of Palestine, for they are not genetically related to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Research suggests that, on the basis of linguistic evidence, the Ashkenazic Jews (Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern Europe and Germany) were not predominantly part of the Diaspora from the Middle East, but were members of another ethnic group that adopted Judaism.

Some have declared that Yiddish began as a Slavic language that was "relexified," with most of its vocabulary replaced with German words.

Koestler suggests that the Ashkenazic Jews were not Semitic at all, but were largely descended from the Turkish Khazars, who converted en masse to Judaism in medieval times.

Wexler contends that the Ashkenazic Jews are predominantly converted Slavs and Turks who merged with a tiny population of Palestinian Jews from the Diaspora.

If true, then Sharon, an Ashkenazi Jew, is no relation to King David or any other Hebraic father, but the descendant of a people who converted to Judaism sometime between classical antiquity and the Italian Renaissance, which is to say from A.D. 476 to 1453.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No. He was born in 1928 at Kfar Mallah, an early Jewish farming settlement in the central Sharon valley of what was then British-mandated Palestine. His parents were farmers Shmuel and Dvora Scheinerman, ardent Zionists who had emigrated from Russia following World War I.

Growing up at a time when the Arab-Jewish struggle over Palestine intensified, young Sharon combined a high school education with membership in the underground Jewish military organization, the Haganah, and in 1945 began a military career which continued until 1973.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No. He was elected with 62.5% of the total vote, as compared to his opponent's 37.5%.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. Sharon is a secular Jew, which means that while he embraces his heritage, he does not acknowledge the God of his fathers. In fact, Israel has never had a Torah-educated Prime Minister skilled in the art of statesmanship. Such a person would understand that the Jewish people have an absolute and God-given right to the land of Israel and would therefore have no doubt about the righteousness of Israel's cause.

An observant Jew would also know how to apply Jewish philosophy to action, being fully cognizant of the spiritual motivations of Israel's enemies. Lacking a Torah education, however, Sharon does not grasp the metaphysical depth and world-historical

function of this hatred. Without such knowledge he is unable to teach the Jewish people about their enemies, today the most urgent task of a Jewish statesman.

He is also incapable of turning the hearts of Israelis back toward their God, and instructing them (as well as the nations) in the way of righteousness - the most important of Messiah's responsibilities, according to Judaic tradition.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. The God of Jewish women and the God of Jewish fathers are one and the same.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

Yes. In 1942, at the age of fourteen, he joined the Gadna, a paramilitary youth battalion, and later joined the Haganah, the underground paramilitary force and the Jewish military precursor to the Israeli Defense Force.

Upon the creation of the State of Israel, the Haganah was transformed into the Israeli Defense Force, in which Sharon was a platoon commander. Sharon was severely wounded in the groin by the British-led Arab Legion in the Second Battle of Latrun, an unsuccessful attempt to relieve the besieged Jewish community of Jerusalem. His injuries healed.

In 1949 he was promoted to company commander and in 1951 to intelligence officer. He then took leave to begin studies of history and Middle Eastern culture at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. A year and a half later he was asked to return to active service, given the rank of major, and was made the leader of Unit 101.

Unit 101 launched a series of retaliatory raids against Palestinians and neighboring Arab states that helped bolster Israeli morale and strengthen its deterrent image. However, the unit was also criticized for targeting civilians as well as Arab soldiers, resulting in the widely-condemned Qibya massacre in the fall of 1953, in which more than sixty Jordanian civilians were killed in an attack on their village.

In the documentary "Israel and the Arabs: 50 Year War," Ariel Sharon recalls what happened after the raid, which was heavily condemned by many countries in the West, including the United States.

Sharon related, "I was summoned to see Ben-Gurion. It was the first time I met him, and right from the start Ben-Gurion said to me, 'Let me first tell you one thing: it doesn't matter what the world says about Israel, it doesn't matter what they say about us anywhere else. The only thing that matters is that we can exist here on the land of our forefathers. And unless we show the Arabs that there is a high price to pay for murdering Jews, we won't survive.'"

Shortly afterwards, Unit 101 was merged into the 202nd Paratrooper Brigade (with Sharon ultimately becoming the unit's commander), and continued to attack military targets.

Rising to the position of infantry brigade commander, he received a law degree from Tel Aviv University, and was promoted rapidly to Infantry School Commander and then to Major General.

In the 1967 Six-Day War, Sharon commanded the most powerful armored division on the Sinai front, which made a breakthrough in the Kusseima-Abu-Ageila fortified area. In 1969, he was appointed the Head of IDF's Southern Command.

At the beginning of the Yom Kippur War on October 6, 1973, Sharon was called back to duty and assigned the command of a reserve armored division. His forces did not engage the Egyptian army immediately, but it was Sharon who helped locate a breach between the Egyptian forces which he then exploited, capturing a bridge on October 16 and constructing another across the Suez Canal the following day.

He violated his orders from the head of Southern Command by advancing to cut the supply lines of the Egyptian Third Army, isolating it from the other Egyptian units. The divisions of Sharon and Avraham Adan passed over this bridge into Africa, advancing to within 101 kilometers of Cairo. They wreaked havoc on the Third Army's supply lines, cutting them off and encircling the Egyptians, thereby forcing them to surrender.

Tensions flared between the two Israeli generals, but a military tribunal later found his action militarily effective. Sharon's action was regarded by many Israelis as the turning point of the war in the Sinai front, forcing the Egyptians to retreat from Sinai and to negotiate a cease-fire. Thus, Sharon is viewed by many as a war hero who saved Israel from defeat in Sinai. A photo of Sharon wearing a head-bandage on the Suez Canal became a famous symbol of Israeli military prowess.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

Quite possibly. Egypt has been an antagonist of Israel since biblical times and has never been fully trusted. Speaking to the Israeli Knesset on November 20, 1978, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat addressed the issue of disputed Israeli territories which the sons of Ishmael claim as their own, demanding that they be returned will all due alacrity to their rightful owners, including the Sinai region in particular, which was annexed by Israel in the 1973 war.

Sadat declared, "To speak frankly, our land does not yield to bargaining...We cannot accept any attempt to take away... one inch of it nor can we accept the principle of debating or bargaining over it."

With regard to other disputed territories, Egypt has made no secret of the fact that it would prefer no Jewish state to exist in the Middle East in any form whatsoever, and would award the entirety of Israeli land to the Arabs, not just the portions which remain in dispute. To wit, Egypt's maps of the region depict all of Israel as "Palestine," as does the PLO stationery logo.

In fact, there is no solid evidence that any within the Arab-Islamic world presently accept the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East, nor is there any indication that such acceptance will be forthcoming in the foreseeable future. To the contrary, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, as well as Egypt (despite its peace treaty with Israel) have been engaged in a military build-up whose only objective is to ensure the destruction of Israel.

Furthermore, the late Yasser Arafat's PLO, which was created by Egypt, has but one function: to truncate Israel and thereby facilitate the coup de grace.

Following the death of Yasser Arafat, Egypt announced that it would collaborate with Israel in the creation of new industrial zones and is considering returning its

ambassador to Israel, whom they recalled at the outset of increased hostilities in the year 2000.

No timetable, however, has been provided, and although Egyptian President Mubarak recently praised Ariel Sharon as a man "capable of pursuing peace," only a year ago he described Sharon as a warmonger with "no intention to start working for peace."

Thus, there is reason to remain skeptical of Egypt's newfound goodwill, and some have suspected that the government's gestures (including releasing a captured Israeli spy; stationing seven hundred-fifty troops on the border between Egypt and Gaza to guard the frontier after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza; and the retraining of several hundred Palestinian security officers in an attempt to mediate a cease-fire among Arab factions) are actually directed toward improving its image in the eyes of the United States, which has criticized Egypt for its lack of democracy and for official media that is often stridently anti-U.S. and anti-Israel.

Although Israel has established formal diplomatic relations with Egypt despite the Arab-Israeli conflict, one cannot help but wonder whether the civility is forced, and for public benefit. While there is a history of these two sovereignties verbally declaring peace, no lasting evidence of mutual trust has ever materialized.

A decade after the signing of the Camp David Accords and the Treaty of Peace Between Egypt and Israel, the "peace" between Egypt and Israel was still characterized as "delicate." It was originally thought that these relations would lead to a reconciliation between Israel and the Arab states, but even now after nearly three decades, this development has yet to occur.

The process of improving Egyptian-Israeli relations has also been disrupted by a number of developments perpetrated by Israel, including the June 1981 Israeli bombing of an Iraqi nuclear reactor, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon directed against Palestinian forces a year later, the establishment of an increasing number of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the increased apathy for the autonomy of the Palestinian inhabitants within the disputed territories.

Another issue that has impeded the progression of peaceful relations between Egypt and Israel has been the disposition of Taba, an enclave on the Gulf of Aqaba in the Sinai Peninsula which was claimed by both countries, but occupied by Israel.

A September 1988 ruling in Egypt's favor by an international arbitration panel resulted in Israel surrendering land to Egypt once again, as in March of 1979, Israel signed a formal peace treaty relinquishing to Egypt the Sinai peninsula - land which Sharon helped to acquire during the Yom Kippur war.

Relations between the two countries improved somewhat during Shimon Peres's 1984-1986 tenure as Israeli Prime Minister, but were strained anew following the establishment of the Likud-led cabinet in 1988 and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir's rejection of Israeli participation in an international peace conference with the PLO.

These behaviors can only serve to further antagonize both parties and jeopardize the peace process. Regardless of what strides are announced in the name of peace between these two nations, Egypt ultimately supports the Arab claim to the region, yet in the words of Sharon himself, "This land is ours. God gave us the title deeds."

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

Yes. Although Greece has signed defense cooperation agreements with Israel since 1994, and has in recent years hosted several meetings of Israeli and Palestinian politicians to contribute to the peace process, Greece has been traditionally supportive of Arab claims, and Greek-Israeli relations have been complicated by Israel's strategic alliance with Turkey.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 6/8

10) Bashar Assad of Syria

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No. Although Assad's father, Hafez Al-Assad was the head of the Syrian government from 1970 until his death in 2000, it can be argued that the manner in which he ascended to power, like that of Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, was illegitimate.

On June 10, 2000, the day of Hafez al-Assad's death, the People's Assembly altered the constitution so that Syria's president could be as young as thirty-four (as opposed to the constitutionally-mandated forty).

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No. Upon his father's death, Assad was nominated by the People's Assembly to succeed as President, a choice ratified in a national referendum in which he received over 97% of the votes cast.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. Although Assad is a Muslim, his particular brand of Islam (Alawite) is considered anathema to the sensibilities of most Mohammedan faithful.

Those of the Alawite derivative proclaim, "There is no God but Ali, no veil but Mohammed, and no door but Salman," for they believe in a Trinity whose Supreme manifestation is Muhammad, Ali, and Salman al-Farisi.

Considered a "ghulat" (cult) and its adherents regarded as Ghali (heretics) by other Muslims, its creed farther from Mohammed's teachings than even Christians and Jews, Alawites have been condemned by orthodox Muslim scholars such as Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab, founder of Wahhabism, who issued a "fatwa" (legal judgment) against the Alawites with rather harsh language. He said they were not trustworthy, "they were greater infidels than the Christians and Jews...greater even than idolaters." He authorized

Jihad against them, saying it was legal to take their property and blood, unless they showed evidence of repentance.

In 1097 the Crusaders initially massacred a group of Alawis, but learning they were not true Muslims, the Roman Catholics tolerated them and even aided them in fighting the Shi'ite Isma'ilis.

Several of their customs include observing communion, including the drinking of wine. As do Catholics, they believe that the wine is transubstantiated into deity, albeit Allah.

While almost all Shi'ites believe that Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, was the rightful first caliph, Alawites believe Ali is a member of a Trinity of Allah. Most Muslims deny any Trinity.

Attending Mosque is not important to most Alawites, they celebrate Christmas and Epiphany, and believe that women do not have souls, maintaining that women were created from devils.

While Mohammed taught against astrology, Alawites have embraced astrology, and believe the stars in the Milky Way are actually the deified souls of believers.

Bashar's father, Hafez, also an Alawite, was constantly harassed by the Muslim orthodoxy, and nearly assassinated by them. He made numerous attempts to appease the religious majority of his country but made very little progress, eventually invoking the army to restore order by force.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

No. Assad came to power only with great reluctance. Initially he was not thought of as his father's successor. As this was a role his brother was intended to fill, Bashar moved to London and became an ophthalmologist. When his brother Basil was killed in an automobile accident in 1994, Hafez called his youngest son back to Syria, where he was gradually trained to become a politician.

Some reports describe him as weaker and less officious than were his father and brother. Friends have characterized him as being a meek and awkward figure, yet nice, friendly, and very polite.

In certain political circles, Bashar is known as "the evil moron who's running Syria."

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No. Egyptian-Syrian relations have been intimate for centuries.

In fact, in February 1958, Syria merged with Egypt to create the United Arab Republic, with Egyptian Gamal Abdul Nasser as President.

The two nations also joined forces in 1973 to launch a surprise attack against the Israeli forces in the occupied Sinai and Golan Heights. In only a few days, Syrian troops nearly managed to liberate all the occupied territories, but success was thwarted due to a massive United States airlift operation which greatly aided the Israelis.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No. Greece and Syria have a mutual enemy in Turkey, as one of Syria's greatest international issues concerns the Turkish hydrological projects regulating upper Euphrates waters.

As some prognosticators have put it, "the issue of the next world war will be water rights."

According to Jeffrey Rothfeder in the January 6, 2002 edition of the Boston Globe, "Today, nearly 2.2 billion people in more than 62 countries (one-third of the world's population) are starved for water. The worst conditions are in places such as Haiti, Gambia, and Cambodia, where residents subsist on an average of fewer than six liters per day.

"Water scarcity is reaching crisis proportions now because of skewed supply and demand. But it was man's ill-conceived attempt to control water almost solely for commercial means rather than protect it - repeated over and over since the first dams were built on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers thousands of years ago - that led to the problem's urgency today.

"Global population has tripled in the past 70 years while water use has grown sixfold due to industrial development, widespread irrigation, and lack of conservation. If, as expected, the number of people on earth increases by more than a third, to more than 8 billion by 2025, 40 percent more water will be needed.

"And while the supply of freshwater is theoretically always the same, in reality it's diminishing. The natural course of rivers, streams, and lakes has been compromised by centuries of damming, diversion, sprawl, and industrial pollution.

"As a result, the usable water in aquifers, where most of the freshwater we use is stored, is no longer replaced as quickly as people need it. The High Plains Ogallala aquifer, which runs 1,300 miles from Texas to South Dakota, is drawn down eight times faster than nature refills it.

"In Israel, extraction has surpassed replacement by 2.5 billion meters in the last 25 years. And in Africa, the aquifers barely recharge at all. On top of that, governments in rich and poor regions alike have allowed water infrastructures to deteriorate where they even existed at all, viewing repairs as a nuisance expense, not a necessity.

"The social, political, and economic toll of water scarcity is enormous. There are 250 million new cases of water-related diseases annually, chiefly cholera and dysentery, and 10 million deaths. Without enough usable water, people die young and work forces are depleted; children aren't well enough to attend school; crop irrigation founders, leading to increased malnutrition; and people spend so much time collecting what small amounts of water they can find that it's impossible to be productive in other ways.

"Wealthy nations pay the price for this, because potential new trading markets fail to develop and weak economies have to be artificially bolstered. What's more, vital regions are destabilized as contending countries - Malaysia and Singapore; Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan; Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Syria - dispute who controls limited water resources. It's no wonder that Ismail Serageldin, the former World Bank vice president, said, "The next world war will be over water."

When the issue of water becomes critical, it is probable that in order to conserve water for itself, Turkey will begin to impede the flow of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers which supply Syria and other countries with fresh water – an issue over which Syria will most certainly go to war.

As the proverb states, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," and Syria, already protesting Turkey's Southeastern Anatolia Project, will find Greece a ready ally.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 3/8

11) Kim Jong Il of North Korea

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

Yes. His father, Kim Il-Sung was the former leader of North Korea.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

Yes. He succeeded his father, Kim Il-Sung, who had led North Korea since 1948. He was elected using a system whereby he was the only candidate for the role of leader, thus the many were denied a voice in the process, and he was elected due to the machinations of a few.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. North Korea is traditionally Buddhist and Confucianist, yet the leaders of the nation have been infatuated with establishing personality cults.

In 1954, Kim Il-Sung created an austere, militarized and highly regimented North Korean society that worshipped him as a deified leader.

Today, work has begun in North Korea to propagate a cult around Kim Jong Il's current wife Ko Yong Hee. The propaganda is seen to indicate the start of preparations to groom Jong Il's second son, Kim Jong Chol, born of Ko, as the leader's successor.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

No.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No. One does not equip one's enemy, and North Korea has been exporting missiles, technology, and technical experts to Egypt since 1987.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 3/8

12) Emperor Akihito of Japan

Is He Jewish?

Yes. Not only is he Jewish, it is said that his lineage can be traced back to David, and that the stone tablets inscribed with the ten commandments are in his possession.
He believes that a global Judaic theocracy must be established, and he believes that an enormous temple erected in 1984 in central Japan functions as the rebuilt temple of King Solomon.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

Yes. He was heir-apparent to the Chrysanthemum throne from the moment of his birth.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. As a member of the Japanese religious cult known as Mahikari, Akihito believes that Jesus escaped the crucifixion and returned to Japan where he married and died at the age of one hundred and six.

The Mahikari believe that a special individual will arise from out of a degenerate world and obtain world supremacy by using the Star of David as his holy symbol bequeathed to him by God and will be assisted in his quest by the "Chosen People."

Akihito was enthroned in 1990, and in spite of the 1946 Japanese constitution drawn up by General MacArthur which prohibits the Emperor from once again assuming "Divine Status" (a condition of their surrender), he has once again assumed just such a mantle.

The world's largest and most powerful religious cult, state Shintoism, has therefore once again regained its object of worship and is reestablishing its presence, being greatly influenced by such groups as the Mahikari.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

No.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No. Egypt and Japan have traditionally enjoyed cordial relations.

Considering Egypt to be a very important country for the stability of the Middle East, Japan regards its Japanese-Egyptian relations as one of the pillars of its diplomacy in the region.

In May 2003, Prime Minister Koizumi visited Egypt and held talks with President Mubarak. The leaders discussed the reconstruction of Iraq as well as the peace process in the Middle East, and agreed to promote cooperation between Japan and Egypt in providing assistance for the reconstruction of Iraq in such fields as medical services. They also agreed to establish a Japan-Arab Dialogue Forum comprised of business people and experts with a view to strengthening the collaboration between Japan and the Arab countries.

President Mubarak visited Japan in April 1999, when former Prime Minister Obuchi and President Mubarak decided to adopt the "Japan-Egypt Joint Statement" in order to increase and diversify bilateral consultations and cooperation on global, regional and bilateral issues with emphasis on such important issues as peace, economy, environment, cultural exchange, and education.

President Mubarak's visit to Japan in March 1995 was especially significant, as it laid the foundations for a new phase in the development of bilateral relations. Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's visit to Egypt in September 1995 resulted in an agreement on the strengthening of Japanese-Egyptian relations to contribute to peace in the Middle East.

Since President Mubarak's visit to Japan in 1983, bilateral relations have steadily developed through increased political, economic, and cultural exchange between the two countries.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No. Greece and Japan have been on friendly terms with each other (except for the temporary interruption during the Second World War), ever since the "Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation" was concluded in June of 1899.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 3/8

13) Hu Jintao of China

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No. Hu Jintao was born in December 1942. He studied hydraulic engineering at China's most prestigious polytechnic, Tsinghua University in Beijing, and graduated in 1965. While a student, he joined the CCP in 1964, and was hired the following year as a researcher and political instructor.

In 1968, two years after the Cultural Revolution inaugurated a decade of political upheaval, Jintao was relocated to the poor and remote province of Gansu to be "reeducated" through manual labor for a housing construction team.

When his sentence was concluded, he joined an engineering bureau of the Ministry of Water Resources and Electric Power, and served successively as a technician, office secretary and deputy Party secretary, a post in which he developed an affinity for Party affairs work.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

Yes. He was chosen by President Jiang Zemin to succeed him when his term ended in 2003.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

Yes. He is believed to be from a family with strong Buddhist leanings, yet Jintao seems to have become associated with Ye Xiaowen, who, since the early 1990's has been the director of China's Religious Affairs Bureau (later renamed the State Administration for Religious Affairs).

Xiaowen, a self-professed atheist and committed Communist, has evidentally convinced Jintao that China's Communist and state authorities have the right to force religious thought into a mold compatible with the official socialist and secular worldview of China's ruling Communist Party, thereby dispensing with any religious tenet which does not conform to those principles which have been approved by the state.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

Yes. No Chinese communist since the earliest days of the Party has been promoted sp highly in such a short period and remained in office despite the lack of a strong power base. Jintao's impressive string of promotions have brought him from local communist functionary in 1980 to the pinnacle of power in Beijing in 1998.

He is also said to have a photographic memory.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No. China and Egypt established diplomatic relations on May 30,1956, and the relationship between the two countries has been developing very smoothly.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations on May 6, 1972, bilateral relations between the People's Republic of China and Greece have been developing and progressing steadily, reflecting the mutually shared sentiments of friendship between the two peoples.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 5/8

14) Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

No. Annan is a Christian, and Ghana is predominately a Christian nation. Graduating from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn., the Institut Universitaire de Hautes Edudes Internationales in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Annan attended a Methodist primary school in his native Ghana.

He credits his religious teachers and the Holy Bible with instilling in him the principles that guide his life and work. According to his staff, he faithfully attends a number of Protestant churches in New York.

In a speech given by Annan at Tübingen University, Germany on December 12, 2003, he said, “No religion or ethical system should ever be condemned because of the moral lapses of some of its adherents. If I, as a Christian, for instance, would not wish my faith to be judged by the actions of the Crusaders or the Inquisition, I should be very careful to judge anyone else's faith by the actions that a few terrorists may commit in its name.”

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. As world leaders pursue a One-World Government, they look to incorporate within the framework of a global faith the values of each religion which can be considered to have a universal appeal, and dispense with those doctrines which define any faith as an exclusive belief system.

Only within this great central faith is it affirmed that every man and woman is endowed with the fundamental right to freedom of religion: to worship; to establish and maintain places for worship; to write, publish and teach; to celebrate holidays; to choose their own religious leaders; and to communicate with others at home and abroad.

Those who continue to insist on the exclusive claims of any one religion are considered to be outside the World Faith and of necessity outside the bounds of legality.

Speaking at the Millennium Summit of Religious Spiritual Leaders at the UN Assembly Hall on August 29, 2000, Annan remarked, "Dag Hammarskjöld once said, 'The United Nations stands outside - necessarily outside - all confessions. But it is, nevertheless, an instrument of faith. As such, it is inspired by what unites and not by what divides the great religions of the world.'

"As the world's religious and spiritual leaders, you embody humanity's deepest yearnings. You have traveled many paths to this time and place. Some of you have been imprisoned for your beliefs. Some have survived the Holocaust, or seen your people targeted for genocide. Still others have lived through other tribulations and indignities.

"Whatever your past, whatever your calling, and whatever the differences among you, your presence here at the United Nations signifies your commitment to our global mission of tolerance, development and peace. For that, we must all be profoundly grateful. It is my sincere hope that you will maintain your engagement with these issues. With your help, through prayer and good works, that mission can succeed."

Regrettably, Kofi Annan has set aside solid Bible doctrine in order to worship the god of Ecumenicism.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

Yes. On December 10, 2001, the Secretary-General and the United Nations received the Nobel Peace Prize. In conferring the Prize, the Nobel Committee said Mr. Annan "had been pre-eminent in bringing new life to the Organization".

The Secretary-General is also fluent in English, French and several African languages.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

Possibly. United Nations troops presently patrol the island nation of Cyprus. As the United Nations implements its "Annan Plan" for peace in that region, it is entirely

possible that Grecian Cypriots and Greek soldiers may ultimately find themselves firing upon UN troops.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 4/8

15) Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Britain

Is He Jewish?

No.

Does He Have a Claim to Royalty?

No. His father was a barrister (lawyer) and lecturer whose ambitions to stand for Parliament were frustrated after suffering a stroke.

Blair's early claim to fame was music, as during his college years he played guitar and sang for a rock band called Ugly Rumours.

Did He Come to Power with the Help of a Few?

No.

Has He Disregarded the God of His Fathers?

No. Predominately an Anglican country, Britain's head of state is a self-professed Christian.

More accurately, Blair is an Anglican of the High Church or Anglo-Catholic tendency, while his wife is Roman Catholic and his children are brought up in that faith.

Blair has declared that his political beliefs have been profoundly influenced by his faith, which he has begun to acknowledge publicly, leading some to suggest that he is the most devout Prime Minister since William Ewart Gladstone.

In quiet fashion, the Prime Minister is putting religion at the center of his New Labour project, reflecting his own deeply felt beliefs that answers to most of life's questions can be found in the Bible.

Blair is permitting Christian organizations and other faith groups a central role in policy-making, in a decisive break with British traditions which maintain that religion and government should not be conjoined.

The devout Prime Minister, who keeps the Bible by his bed, is aware of the risk he incurs by revealing the importance he places on religion as it pertains to his political decisions. He is also aware of the discomfort many of his key officials are experiencing with regard to the admittedly central role of God in his life.

Alastair Campbell, Blair's communications director, was quoted as saying, "We don't do God," in an interview with Vanity Fair concerning the Prime Minister's religious beliefs. When Blair expressed his desire to conclude his televised address to the nation at the commencement of the war in Iraq with the benediction, "God bless you," he

was advised against it, and was warned against using religion to win votes in the 2001 general election.

In connection with Blair's overt support of Christianity, former Labour deputy leader Lord Hattersley declared "evangelizing" a dangerous practice and predicted it might alienate him from certain sections of society.

"This is an agnostic nation," he said. "People don't take it [religion] seriously. To evangelize on behalf of one point of view, whatever it is, might just alienate people of a different sort. I think that is a very real danger."

In spite of the growing opposition, including one attempt at impeachment, Blair remains committed to his faith and to the god of his fathers.

Has He Disregarded the God of Women?

Yes. Unfortunately, the triune god he worships bears little resemblance to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who declared in Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 44:6, Matthew 12:29, and Galatians 3:20 that He is One God.

Among its many heresies, his faith denies the name of Jesus with respect to its baptismal formula, encourages the practice of prayer to and on behalf of the dead, imputes to extra-biblical writings the authority of scripture, and rejects the traditional Bible in favor of its own canon.

Is His Countenance Fierce and His Look More "Stout" Than His Fellows?

Yes. As of February 6, 2005, he is the Labour Party's longest-serving Prime Minister, the youngest British Prime Minister in nearly two hundred years, the first Labour Prime Minister to win a full second term, and the youngest person ever to lead the Labour Party when he assumed the post in 1994.

A significant achievement of Blair's first term was the negotiation of the Belfast Agreement, in which the British and Irish Governments and most Northern Irish political parties established an "exclusively peaceful and democratic" framework for sharing power in Northern Ireland.

On November 26, 1998, Blair became the first Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to address the Parliament of the Republic of Ireland. Though the agreement has yet to be implemented in its entirety, the cease fires and political structures it established have increased the chances of sustaining the peace.

Does He Have Reason to Attack Egypt?

No.

Does Greece Have Reason to Attack Him?

No.

Total Prophecies Fulfilled: 3/8

Conclusion

As the following chart shows, none of the previously discussed leaders fits the biblical profile of Antichrist so well as Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and thus he remains a fascinating candidate to observe over the next few years.

Whether he becomes the antithesis of Christ or that role falls to another, it would behoove students of bible prophecy to consider future candidates against the biblical backdrop of divinely apportioned stipulations, rather than to qualify individuals on the basis of their degree of involvement in the affairs of the Middle East peace process or due to an Italian patrilineage, craggy features, ill-temper, or diminutive stature.

The suggestion of Erdogan is then simply that: a man capable of becoming the prophesied "lawless one," but not necessarily predestined for the role, with a legitimate candidacy for having met the biblical criterions.

While there may exist additional potentials who have thus far remained unnoticed, and of course others may yet emerge as each new year dawns, at present it seems there is only one viable candidate for Antichrist visible on the world scene, and as such, prudence dictates that an ever-vigilant eye remain trained on the leader of Turkey.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan	8/8
Ariel Sharon	6/8
George W. Bush	5/8
Jacques Chirac	5/8
Hu Jintao	5/8
Mikhail Gorbachev	4/8
Louis Farrakhan	4/8
Bill Gates	4/8
Kofi Annan	4/8
Prince Charles Windsor	3/8
Bashar Assad	3/8
Kim Jong-Il	3/8
Emperor Akihito	3/8
Tony Blair	3/8
King Juan Carlos	2/8
Vladimir Putin	2/8

32. Conclusion

"*Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.*" – Revelation 22:7

The admonishment of this scripture is to take the prophecies contained in this book to heart and to heed the warnings and predictions contained therein.

Yet how can the truth be embraced if it cannot first be recognized? Many contradictive interpretations have been offered and expert opinions abound, and the seeker of truth, bewildered and dispirited by the reams of variant data, is left to conclude that the sixty-sixth book of the Bible is either wholly incomprehensible, or that the Preterists are correct in their belief that the prophecies were intended solely for the early

church, whose methods of eschatological interpretation must have been derived from ancient wisdom far in advance of that which is available to modern man.

It is the belief of this author that such ideas are erroneous and that much confusion has been needlessly perpetuated by the reliance of the laity upon the personal opinions and pre-conceived notions of the experts rather than upon the solid Word of God, which is quite capable of interpreting itself.

By functioning as a modern "Watcher on the Wall," the purpose of this manuscript is to turn the thoughts of its readers Heavenward, toward that incorruptible inheritance which will never perish, spoil, or fade.

There is a Heaven to gain and a Hell to shun. Above all else, we must remove our eyes from the things of this world and set our affections on things above.

Scripture admonishes in 1st John 2:15, "*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*"

Those who would lavish excessive affection upon this world would do well to recall that the cares of this life will succeed in choking out the Word of God.

"*Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*" – James 4:4

Indeed, the time is short. From this point until the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "*those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them, for this world in its present form is passing away.*" – 1st Corinthians 7:29-31

For Christians, the best advice toward facilitating the arrival of one's own soul in Heaven is to simplify life to the greatest extent possible, and to remember those actions which are notable for their ability to attract the attention of the Lord. Cornelius, in Acts chapter ten, discovered that prayer and giving are two such distinctions. Humility (Daniel 10:12), fasting (Joel 2:12), and seeking after the face of God (2nd Chronicles 7:14) are three others. Love one another fervently and be quick to forgive.

For those whose souls will be required prior to the Lord's return, my prayer is that your houses will have been swept and put in proper order, and that you will enter your inheritance with great joy.

For those whose souls are presently unprepared for eternity, caught up in the many cares of this life, which are both necessary and yet superfluous in light of eternity, Revelation 22:12 provides a chilling admonition which should galvanize you to action:

"*Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.*"

The first seal of the Holy Spirit has been opened. The second seal of great war has been broken. The third and fourth seals of economic collapse and violent death have also been opened, the consummation of which are just moments away!

The next marvel on the schedule of endtime events is the glorious appearing of Christ, as he returns to retrieve from the earth those who have been attentively anticipating his arrival. I plead with you – do not miss his coming!

"*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice*

magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." – Revelation 22:12-15

If this work has inspired you to simplify your life, to prune back the cares of this mortal existence which threaten to choke out your spiritual life, if it has filled you with a profound fear of being left behind and thus motivated you to prioritize your relationship with the God of all Creation, then it has accomplished its purpose.

"*The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"*

"And let him who hears say, "Come!"

"Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." – Revelation 22:17, 20

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

33. 41 Frequently Asked Questions

1) Do the seven churches typify seven church ages?

This question stems from the theory that each church represents a certain period of time in church history from the first century until the return of Christ. The church at Ephesus is viewed as the Apostolic Church Age and is considered to have endured from 30 A.D. until approximately 100 A.D. Smyrna is seen as representing the Persecuted Age, etc.

Actually, the letters dictated to John were addressed to seven literal congregations, each with specific commendable qualities as well as problem areas which needed to be addressed. While the sins detailed in these letters may well be transgressions with which all Christians struggle, and therefore have a universal application, there is no scriptural foundation upon which to claim that each of the selected assemblies were physical incarnations of prophetic phases of Christianity.

2) Who are the angels of the churches?

They are not supernatural beings of the spirit world, but rather the human couriers who delivered Christ's Book of Revelation to the seven churches of Asia Minor.

The word "angel" is simply the anglicized form of the Greek "aggelos," and has been transferred from the early Greek texts to the modern Bible without translation. It comes from the root "ago" (to bring forth) and literally means "to bring tidings" – thus, a messenger. It is employed throughout the Bible to indicate both human and supernatural representatives, impersonal agents of nature, and cherubim both holy and evil. The precise meaning in any given instance must be established by the context.

Concerning Revelation, then, recall that John was exiled to the island of Patmos and could not, therefore, deliver the letters personally; instead entrusting them to messengers, or aggelos (angels).

3) Who are the four horsemen?

The white horse is a representation of the Holy Spirit, specifically that latter rain outpouring which descended upon the earth in 1906. The red horse is the embodiment of the great wars which have so characterized the twentieth century, beginning with the Great War of 1914. The black horse represents a global economic collapse, of which the Great Depression of 1929 was but a minor foretaste. The pale horse is a spirit of death that, well before the rapture of the Church, will decimate the population of the earth through famine, disease, rioting, and wild animals.

4) How do the four horses of Zechariah figure into the events of Revelation?

There are those who equate the four chariots and their accompanying equines of Zechariah 6:1-8 with the four horses of Revelation. To do so, however, is to produce an unbalanced equation.

Zechariah's vision represented events from Israel's history, beginning with their captivity in Egypt and concluding with the return of the exiles from Babylon and the reconstruction of the temple during the life of Zechariah. The vision of John involved events that would transpire just before the end of the New Testament age.

In addition, the colors of Zechariah's horses do not match those of John. Zechariah saw red, white, black, and grizzled creatures. "Grizzled," according to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, is "brownish fur or hair tipped with gray; streaked with or partly gray."

The four horses of Revelation were white, red, black, and pale. "Pale" is defined by the dictionary as "whitish in complexion; pallid. To whiten, lighten, or bleach out."

The pale horse is not the brown or brownish-gray horse of Zechariah. The pale horse of Revelation is mostly white, while the grizzled horse of Zechariah was mostly brown or perhaps light black. These two are on opposite ends of the color spectrum and therefore not the same horse.

5) Have any of the seals been opened?

The first seal was opened in 1906, as it was symbolic of the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was loosed at that time, beginning first at Azusa Street, California, USA.

The second seal was opened prior to 1914, when the face of global conflict changed from that of simple war to great war, involving multitudes of nations and affecting the entire planet.

That the third seal had been opened was evident by the end of 1929, when the rider of the black horse first reared its head through a mysterious darkening of the global economy.

It is obvious that the fourth seal has also been opened, for one has only to look as far as the nearest newspaper to see an unprecedented increase of disease, wild animals, and civil unrest.

The only events associated with the fifth seal are those which transpire in Heaven and are thus undetectable by those on earth. Mankind will know that the fifth seal has been opened only after the events of the sixth seal (which herald the rapture of the Church) come to pass.

6) When will the rapture occur?

According to Jesus in Matthew 24:21, 29, 30, the rapture will occur only after the commencement of a great tribulation so intense that its equal has never before been experienced, nor will it be again.

That tribulation begins with the opening of the sixth seal. One prophetic hour after the Antichrist defiles the temple at the mid-point of the Israeli treaty (a literal 15 days, 4 hours, and 48 minutes), the Lord will return.

Many believe that day will coincide with that of the Jewish Feast of Trumpets, an Autumn celebration which is held on the first of Tishri - various dates throughout the months of September/October (anywhere from September 5th to October 4th through 2030 in the Gregorian calendar).

7) Is the "last trumpet" of 1st Corinthians 15:52 the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15?

The phrase "last trumpet" is most likely a reference to the Jewish Feast of Trumpets, held on the first day of the seventh month of Tishri, the Jewish civil New Year (also known as Rosh Hashanah).

According to Smith's Bible Dictionary, "It differed from the ordinary festivals of the new moon in several important particulars. It was one of the seven days of holy convocation. Instead of the mere blowing of the trumpets of the temple at the time of the offering of the sacrifices, it was 'a day of blowing of trumpets.'"

The trumpets are blown at the appearance of the new moon on the first of Tishri to signify the commencement of the feast day. They are then sounded throughout the day and into the next in varying sequences and differing blasts (the tekiah, a three-second sustained note; the shevarim, three one-second notes rising in tone; the teruah, a series of short, staccato notes sounded over a period of approximately three seconds; and the tekiah gedolah (literally, "the Great Blowing"), the final climactic blast of the celebration, lasting for as long as human lungs can possibly sustain it.

This last trumpet blast, the tekiah gedolah, is most likely the "last trumpet" to which the Apostle Paul was referring in 1st Corinthians 15 which will mark the inception of the rapture.

This will coincide with the mid-point of the seven-year treaty with Israel.

8) Will the rapture be a silent, secret event?

There are those who believe that the rapture will occur in such a secret and silent manner that unbelievers will be at a loss to explain the resulting mass of disappearances.

Scripture, however, is at odds with this theory.

"*For the Lord himself will come down from Heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*" – 1st Thessalonians 4:16

Although the loud command, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet call of God are cited as auditory signals of the return of Christ in scripture, some claim that these can be heard only in the realm of the spirit, and are thus inaudible to the unbeliever – resulting in the bewildering instantaneous, silent disappearance of a select number of people. It is theorized that if the heathen recognize the rapture for what it is, they will do so only after the fact, or perhaps not at all.

Further scripture invalidates such thinking.

"*At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is,*

in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather." – Matthew 24:23-28

According to Jesus, many people will attempt to deceive the elect by testifying that Christ will return secretly: in the middle of a remote, desolate wasteland; in the cloistered rooms of a labyrinthine edifice; or in other such manner as will prevent the masses from detecting the event.

However, his warning to the Church is "*do not believe it*."

Why? "*For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*"

As a carcass does not go unnoticed by the vultures, neither will the coming of the Son of Man go undetected by the world.

"*At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.*" – Matthew 24:30, 31

Jesus testified that as he appears in the sky, "*all the nations will mourn* [because] *they will see the Son of Man coming*," an event attended by "*a loud trumpet call*."

In Revelation 1:7, it is affirmed that "*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*"

"*Every eye will see him.*" That includes the eyes of the unbelievers, "*even those who pierced him*." Who was guilty of piercing Christ? The unbelieving religious establishment and the ungodly political institution; two factions that will witness his triumphant return. In fact, "*all peoples of the earth*" will bear testimony to the event.

Revelation 6:12-17 details the effects of the sixth seal which shortly precede the rapture:

"*I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.*

"Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?' "

As the sign of the coming of Christ appears in the Heavens, "*the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man*" will seek refuge from the wrath of the Lamb. How can this task be accomplished if these are unaware of his return? Indeed, such action cannot be taken unless the face of the Lamb is beheld, and that great day is recognized.

9) Will the Holy Spirit be removed from the earth at the time of the rapture?

There is no scripture to support such a claim, although 2nd Thessalonians 2:1-8 is considered by many to accomplish just that.

"*Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.*

"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

"Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.

"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming."

According to Paul, the rapture will not come "*until the rebellion occurs*" and the Antichrist is revealed, opposing and exalting himself over everything that is godly, establishing his throne within the temple of God, and declaring himself to be God.

In order for the Antichrist to be revealed, Paul says a rebellion must first erupt. The word "rebellion" is the Greek "apostasia," and means "a falling away; defection." It is the feminine form of the Greek "apostasian," which means "divorce."

Thus, the rebellion is more properly a divorce effected by a wife, rather than the husband. This divorce is that which enables the appearance of the Antichrist, and thus must be spiritual in nature rather than indicative of any specific earthly marital discord.

This is a highly significant conclusion, for the Church is referred to as a bride many times.

"*Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.*" – Revelation 19:7, 8

"*At that time the kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*" – Matthew 25:1

Jesus likened the Kingdom of Heaven to a multitude of women, and just as five of the ten virgin women "fell away," so also will a portion of his Church divorce him in the last days. It is this divorce, drafted by the Church, which will facilitate the emergence of Antichrist.

Conversely, then, it is the faithfulness of the Church (not the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth) which prevents the appearing of the Man of Sin and restrains him from doing all that he wishes to accomplish.

Why, then is the Church referred to as a "he" in verse 7?

"*For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*" (KJV)

The "he" in verse 7 (he who now letteth) is the Greek "arti," and does not refer to gender at all, but means "at this time, this very moment."

Nor does the second "he" (until he be taken) refer to gender. It is the Greek "ginomai," meaning "to come to pass."

Thus, the proper rendering of verses 6 and 7 should be:

"And now you know what keeps the Antichrist from being revealed at this time, for that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority, which will enable his appearance, is already at work. At this present time, however, that which prevents the Antichrist from making his appearance [the faithfulness of the Church] will continue to prevent it, until the appointed time of the rebellion comes to pass."

At some period prior to the mid-point of the treaty with Israel, those who had formerly counted themselves among the sheepfold of Christ will disown him and divorce themselves from such associations.

This great "falling away" will allow Satan a free hand in the affairs of this world, for there will no longer exist a godly presence within the earth of sufficient strength to resist him.

When the Lord returns, many of those who will call "*to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'*" will be former Christians with the ability to correctly identify the event.

10) Will the rapture be a Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib, Post-Trib, or Pre-Wrath event?

Perhaps Pre-Wrath best describes the rapture, for it will certainly not precede the tribulation spoken of by Christ in Matthew 24:29, 30.

As the tribulation begins at the mid-point of the Jewish treaty and endures for a period of three and-a-half years, a Mid-Tribulation rapture would occur one year and nine months into the tribulation.. Scripture, however, indicates that the rapture will occur merely fifteen days after the start of the tribulation, thus disqualifying the Mid-Trib definition.

Finally, the rapture will not occur at the end of the timeline, for there must still remain sufficient time for the final seal to be opened, seven trumpets to sound, seven thunders to roar, and seven bowls of wrath to be upended before the end of the age is realized and the Millennial Kingdom is established.

The sixth seal rapture does, however, occur prior to the dispensing of the bowls of God's wrath, and even before the sounding of the seven trumpets of judgment, and therefore the Pre-Wrath label adheres well to its person if one must affix such a tag.

11) How many times will Christ return?

Scripture speaks of a time when Christ will return to the skies of earth where animate saints will be preceded by those who have crossed over from life to death, and both will be changed in the twinkling of an eye as they are caught up to meet him in the air. It is not recorded that the feet of Jesus ever touch down upon the earth at this time.

While the saints in this instance are traveling outward in direction from the earth toward Jesus Christ, they in a later event are following behind the Father, mounted upon white horses and arrayed for battle as they approach the earth and the armies gathered outside Jerusalem.

In this latter episode, Jesus indeed touches down upon the planet, first at Bozrah of Jordan and then at the Mount of Olives where he leads the 144,000 sealed Jews

eastward to safety through the canyon that is created by the earthquake which rends the mountain in two and fractures the city of Jerusalem into three portions. It is at this point that the Millennial Kingdom of Peace will be established.

Thus, he will return once at the Glorious Appearing to gather the saints to himself, and again on the Day of the Lord when the nations will be defeated.

The notion that these two events are one and the same is opposed by three elements of scripture.

Firstly, the rapture occurs just after the opening of the sixth seal. If the rapture is thought to occur just prior to Armageddon, how can the seventh seal be opened, the seven trumpets blow, the seven thunders speak, and the seven bowls of wrath be upturned in the amount of time remaining before the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom?

Secondly, many consider the first objection to be resolved by declaring the seals, trumpets, and bowls as concurrent events rather than sequential, yet no trumpet blast can be determined a parallel action with respect to the opening of any seal, for the trumpets are not presented to the angels until the seventh seal.

Thirdly, at the rapture of the Church, 144,000 Messianic Jews are sealed by God and protected from Satan for a period of three and-a-half years. If the rapture (and therefore the sealing of the Jews) takes place at Armageddon, why then do the Jews need to be protected for three and-a-half years from a Satan who has just been sentenced to a one thousand-year period of incarceration within the Abyss?

The two events are distinct indeed, and are separated by a period of approximately three and-a-half years.

12) What is the difference between the tribulation and the Great Tribulation?

The Great Tribulation is a term coined by Jesus in Matthew 24:21 to describe the degree of persecution which the Antichrist will loose upon the world after declaring himself God in the Holy of Holies; an event which will occur at the mid-point of the treaty with Israel. The Great Tribulation, then, will commence three and-a-half years into the treaty and will endure until the end of the age.

Any tribulation occurring prior to this point is referred to by Jesus as "*the beginning of birth pains*" and precedes the treaty period, even extending back unto the first century.

13) Will there exist a city of refuge during the Great Tribulation?

The nation of Jordan will provide the 144,000 Jews with a safe haven for the duration of the Great Tribulation, but any others who flee to that location to escape the persecution will have both their bodies and souls destroyed by the hand of the returning Christ at the end of the age.

14) Is the concept of Tribulation Christians valid?

While the Bible does not explicitly answer this question, there are several reasons for believing it to be true.

Consider that the rapture occurs at the mid-point of the seven-year treaty, yet for perhaps as much as two years, the two witnesses continue to testify to the life-changing power which can be found in Christ and the abundant life which can be obtained by the repentant seeker of God. If no remaining soul can take advantage of God's grace, then to what end is the testimony given?

Recall, as well, that the Antichrist begins to wage war against the rest of Israel's offspring (New Testament saints) only after the Jews are sealed and protected from him within the nation of Jordan – an event which occurs either simultaneously with that of the rapture or just after it; proving that any subsequent persecution cannot be brought to bear upon the Church, for it is no longer present. New believers, however, will arise after the departure of the Church and will be pursued by the Son of Perdition. These are described in Revelation 12:17 as "*those who keep God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus*." Many of these converts will no doubt have been influenced by the testimony of the two witnesses.

In addition, as the Millennial Kingdom is brought into existence, John "*saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*" (Revelation 20:4)

Numbering among those who will reign over the earth together with Christ for one thousand years are those who had refused to worship the beast or his image and would not permit his Mark to be placed within their bodies. As the Mark is not given and the image is not fashioned until after the treaty mid-point in which the Antichrist declares his deity from the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and the Church is raptured out of the world almost immediately thereafter, the only ones capable of refusing the Mark and worship of the image are those who will exist on the earth after the enactment of those laws. With the Church raptured and the Jews sealed, the multitude which resists the Beast system of government must then be culled from among a post-rapture populace.

Many believe that it will be impossible for salvation to be achieved after the event of the rapture because it is thought that the Holy Spirit will be removed from the earth at that time.

This concept, however, did not originate from scripture (see question number nine.), but from a Thompson Chain reference note.

In Genesis 6:3, God declared, "*My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal.*" It is man's mortality which precludes an enduring propinquity with the Spirit of God, not a return of the Messiah.

As the Holy Spirit's presence remains within the earth to the end of the age and beyond, it is available to all until death, providing blasphemy of the Spirit is not committed and the Mark is refused.

15) What is the Mark of the Beast?

The Mark of the Beast will most likely take the form of a microchip implanted beneath the skin of the forehead or right hand, without which an individual will be excluded from participating in the newly-crafted global society. It would seem that some

sort of Satanic allegiance will be confirmed by the bearer at the time of application, for the Bible records that all who receive it will be eternally condemned to Hell.

16) What is the meaning of 666?

It is the number of the name which the One-World Government will bear. It is a Babylonian number in an ancient system of calculation based on the integer sixty; a sexagesimal figure which, when converted into the decimal system, equals 21,966. It is a numeric designation of Nimrod's Babylon.

17) Why will the Mark be placed into the right hand or forehead? Why not the left hand?

The miniaturized circuitry of certain implants derives power, not from a battery, but from the body itself, receiving electrical stimulation from a natural source of thermal energy. Studies have identified the forehead and back of the right hand as the biological regions most capable of providing a constant source of energy for these implants. The left hand, while outwardly identical to that of its symmetrical mate, does not function as effectively as a steady source of biotic power.

18) Will the Lord extend forgiveness unto an individual who desires to repent after first accepting the Mark of the Beast?

No. The taking of the Mark irrevocably seals one's fate. For this reason, some believe that a mandatory utterance of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will accompany the implantation, for Jesus said in Matthew 12:31, 32, "*I tell you that any sinful thing you do or say can be forgiven. Even if you speak against the Son of Man, you can be forgiven. But if you speak against the Holy Spirit, you can never be forgiven, either in this life or in the life to come.*" (CEV)

19) Who is the Antichrist?

2nd John 1:7 states, "*Many imposters (seducers, deceivers, and false leaders) have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge (confess, admit) the coming of Jesus Christ (the Messiah) in bodily form. Such a one is the imposter (the seducer, the deceiver, the false leader, the antagonist of Christ) and the antichrist.*" (AMP)

The Antichrist of Revelation will not only deny that Jesus was the Christ, but will claim to be that Christ, himself. He will possess a global platform from which to preach his false gospel, as well as the means to enforce it upon the world. He will create a treaty of peace with Israel for seven years, or confirm one which has already been drafted, but will break it after three and-a-half years. Possessed by Satan, he will be preceded and then accompanied by a False Apostle who will perform many miraculous signs by the power which has been granted him by the Prince of Darkness. Defeated at the Battle of Jerusalem (commonly referred to as Armageddon) by the Host of Heaven, his identity has yet to be revealed to mankind and may not be disclosed until after the treaty with Israel is confirmed.

At the time of this writing, if pressed to hazard a guess, this author finds Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan a fascinating candidate.

20) Will the Antichrist be Jewish?

It depends on whether or not the Jews will be deceived by his claim to be the Messiah.

Jewish Orthodoxy states that "Moshiach" must meet the following requirements:

He must be a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin and a direct blood descendant of King David. He must be well-versed in Hebrew oral tradition as well as the Torah. His spiritual leadership must result in a renewed interest in and obedience to the Torah – first in Israel, and then throughout the world. He must prove himself to be an astute political leader who will bring an end to the Diaspora, instituting a lasting peace throughout the world by defeating the enemies of Israel and establishing Jerusalem as the capital of the world. He will also be responsible for the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple upon the Temple Mount in eastern Jerusalem, and will re-ordain the daily sacrifices there.

Jews believe that the "Moshiach ben David" will be recognized by his ancestry and actions. According to Jewish ideology, there is always a potential "Moshiach" living in some region of Israel. Whether or not he is the complete fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies depends upon how many of the requisites he meets. If he is successful in forging a peace between Israel and its neighboring Arab states, if he completes the reconstruction of the Jewish Temple, if he is successful in re-instituting the daily sacrifice, and if, through his charisma, he engenders a renewed study of and adherence to the Torah within Israel as well as throughout the world, there will be little doubt in the minds of Orthodox Jews as to whether or not he is the one for whom they have long awaited.

Judaism does not expect Yahweh to manifest Himself in the flesh, nor does it await the arrival of a "Son of God," believing that Messiah will simply be an exceptionally gifted descendant of King David, and despite Matthew 24:27-31 which declares the return of Christ as a tumultuous event, it is believed that the Moshiach will arrive quietly and without fanfare.

The Jews will not be deceived by a Gentile, even were he to accomplish all that is expected of the "Moshiach ben David," for his lineage is of paramount importance and the foundational issue upon which all else rests. If the Jews are to be deceived, it will require a Jewish agent of Perdition.

The question, then, is whether or not the sons of Jacob will be deceived by the son of Satan. To answer this question, one must turn to Matthew 24:24 in which Jesus said, "*False Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible.*"

The word "if" in this passage is highly significant. It is the Greek "ei," a conjunctive primary particle of conditionality, and means "if." It is truly a diminutive rudder which directs the entire passage, for had it meant "because, since, as, or for" the denotation of the missive would have been altered drastically and the elect would fall prey to the impressive credentials and dazzling performances of the Antichrist and his False Apostle. Yet the "if" declares that the elect will prove unsusceptible to such deception.

Who, then, are the elect? Paul in Romans 11:7 explains that the elect is not Israel: "*What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did.*"

The word "elect" is the Greek "eklektos," and according to Strong's means "picked out," "chosen by God," "to obtain salvation through Christ," and adds that "Christians are called 'chosen' or 'elect' of God."

According to The Family Bible Encyclopedia by Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, "In the New Testament, those who believe in Jesus are called the elect 20 times. Twice Jesus is called God's chosen one. Since everyone has sinned, no person can do anything to deserve being chosen by God. All people are trapped in sin and cannot free themselves. Because of God's great love, he chose Christ, and those who believe in him belong to him. This choice of God is called election. God chose people 'in Christ' before the earth was made. It is God's plan that the people He has chosen will become like Jesus Christ."

Zondervan's New International Bible Dictionary states that "The church of God is an elect race replacing the old Israel in the purposes of God."

Thus, "the elect" is a term which refers to the New Testament Church and not the adherents to Judaism. Ergo, the Jews will be deceived by the Antichrist and will designate him their long-awaited Messiah.

If the Jews accept him as the "Moshiach ben David," then there is no question but that the Man of Sin springs from Jewish stock.

Incidentally, the deception of the Jewish people will end at the mid-point of the treaty when the Antichrist enters the Holy of Holies in direct violation of Hebrew law, abolishes the daily sacrifice, attempts to transform the Holy Feast Days into festivals which honor himself, and proclaims that he is their Jewish God.

The Jewish conception of the Messiah is that he is a man; an exceptional specimen to be sure, but a mortal all the same. He is not the incarnation of God, and with such a claim emanating from their Messiah's lips, the Jews will realize their error, although by this time Jerusalem will be surrounded by the Antichrist's armies (Luke 21:20-24) and many "*will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations.*"

21) Will the Antichrist be homosexual?

This question stems from an imperfect rendering of Daniel 11:37 by some translators. The King James Version renders it, "*Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all*," leading some to conclude that he will not desire the affection of women, and therefore exhibit a lifestyle of homosexuality.

In truth, the topic of this passage is that of his God, whether it be that which was worshipped by his ancestors, that which is favored by women, or any other. It does not depart from this topic in mid-thought to inject an addendum concerning his sexual orientation.

This was later corrected in the authorized revision to the KJV as "*He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women; he shall not give heed to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.*" (RSV)

While homosexuality is an invention of Satan and he in his incarnated flesh may well practice it, there is no scriptural basis for insisting upon it, for Daniel 11:37 is dealing entirely with another subject.

22) From what nation will the Antichrist arise?

In Daniel 8:8, 9 it is foretold that the Antichrist will rise from one of the four kingdoms which emerged from the fractured Greek empire of Alexander the Great: either Greece itself, Egypt, Turkey, or Babylon.

Daniel further reveals that the Man of Sin will originate from a territory located northwest of Israel and that he will engage the Greeks in war. Such a description excludes Greece (unless his own nation has revolted against him), Babylon (which can in no manner be considered an eastern nation within the Middle Eastern theater of endtime operations), and Egypt (which in the same manner cannot be considered a northern nation), and is therefore a designation of the Turkish empire; a conclusion which explains many other hitherto inexplicable elements of biblical eschatology.

23) Will the Antichrist be resurrected from the dead?

Yes. Revelation 13:3 declares that he will recover from a fatal wound. In verse 14 of the same chapter it is revealed that he will be wounded by a sword and yet survive.

24) Who is the False Apostle?

In 2nd Corinthians 11:13-15 Paul declares, "*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.*"

The False Apostle will be a servant of Satan, masquerading as a servant of Christ. His function will be to prepare the world for the arrival of the Antichrist, and will acclimatize the populace with demonstrations of the supernatural.

Upon the Antichrist's declaration of deity, he will fashion an image of worship to which all must bow, and issue the Mark of the Beast. To him will fall the responsibility of ensuring global compliance with the edicts of Satan.

He will be captured along with the Antichrist at Armageddon and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

As to his identity, it is unknown at this time. If pressured to theorize, this author is amazed with how closely Catholic Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the Jewish Archbishop of Paris, fits the False Apostle profile. If he is not appointed to the Pontificate, however, then his qualifications will remain a novelty and the true servant of Satan has yet to be discovered.

25) Will the False Prophet be imbued with genuine miraculous power?

Yes. According to Revelation 13:13, "*he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from Heaven to earth in full view of men.*"

It is due to these miracles that he is able to deceive the inhabitants of the earth.

26) Who are the two witnesses?

The witnesses are men who will testify to the power of God and prophesy over the earth for 1,260 days. They will have the power to punish the inhabitants of the earth with impunity and will be resurrected and caught up into the Heavens three and-a-half days after their death at the hand of Destroyer, chief among those spirits which were freed from the Abyss at the sounding of the fifth trumpet.

The probability of their identities being revealed as Enoch and Elijah is quite high.

27) In which three and-a-half year period do the two witnesses testify?

Their ministry bridges both periods by a significant margin.

28) Is there any mention of the United States in prophecy?

Yes. The eagle of Daniel 7:4 represents the United States of America, but its inclusion within the text serves only to facilitate the identification of Great Britain, represented by the lion.

In later prophecy, the United States is always coupled with Great Britain and both are represented by the symbolic lion. All that is known about the USA prophetically is that it will comprise a portion of the Antichrist's New World Order of government.

Three of the ten regional governors will revolt against the iron teeth of the Beast System, and Daniel reveals that Greece will be numbered among those nations. According to the current blueprint drafted by the Club of Rome, Greece is registered to the second global region known as the European Union which also includes Great Britain.

Thus, if the governor of Region Two (which includes Great Britain) is one of these three insurgents, and if the actions of the United States of America are to mirror those of Great Britain as scripture suggests, then the United States of region one (Nafta) will join with its progenitors as well as Grecian citizens in a rebellion against the wicked regime of Antichrist, and therefore the governor of Region One can be identified as the second of this rebellious triumvurate.

This, however, is highly speculative, and should not be construed as biblically-supported fact.

29) What is the significance of King Nebuchadnezzar's statue?

No portion of Nebuchadnezzar's statue has any significance with respect to endtime events. Its purpose was to indicate the approximate period of Christ's birth and resurrection.

30) Will a revived Holy Roman Empire form the nucleus of a One-World Government?

No. The One-World Government is founded upon Babylonian principles, not Roman.

31) What is Mystery Babylon?

According to Grolier's 1996 Encyclopedia, "The term mysteries is generally used to refer to those cults of the ancient world whose members believed that by means of the performance of particular secret rituals they would gain knowledge not available to the uninitiated and thus effect a mystical union with the divine. In contrast to traditional religion, which emphasized the gulf between God and humankind, the mystery cults promised a share in the life of the gods, most importantly in their immortality.

"Because these cults focused on the search for eternal life, the central figures were usually gods who had died and were then reborn. The initiates thus guaranteed immortality for themselves by reenacting the death and rebirth of the divinity."

This entirely explains why the Antichrist must die and be resurrected, for he cannot be identified as a God of the Babylonian Mysteries otherwise.

The mystery religions originated in the post-flood society of Babylon, and it is this system of worship, of Nimrod (Marduk) and Semiramis (Ishtar), to which the Lord refers in Revelation 17:5.

32) What do the ten horns represent?

They represent the ten kings who will administer the ten regions into which the United Earth will be apportioned. Three of them will be deposed by the Antichrist who will then function as their replacement.

33) Will the Jews construct a third temple?

Yes. It is this temple which the Antichrist will defile when he enters it at the mid-point of the treaty to proclaim his deity.

34) What is the Abomination of Desolation?

This refers to the shameful outrage of Jerusalem, the city of God as it exists after the treaty mid-point, devoid of any godly presence. Even as the Antichrist enters the Holy of Holies, his armies will be encompassing the city and the construction of an image of the Man of Sin will begin at the command of the False Apostle.

At this time, a decree will issue forth from the Most Holy Place that the Antichrist is the Jewish God come in the flesh, and that in place of the daily sacrifice all must worship the image of "God" which is being erected upon a wing of the temple.

Aghast at such a brazen display of effrontery, those loyal to Yahweh and Christ will flee the city only to fall into the clutches of the Antichrist's armies (although 144,000 Jewish Christians under the supernatural protection of God will be delivered into the Jordanian haven of refuge).

Thus, the Antichrist's declaration of incarnate deity and the command to worship his living image are responsible for the abandonment of Jerusalem by the godly. As such,

both the Antichrist and the image itself are referred to as "the abomination which causes desolation." (Daniel 9:27)

To synopsize, the "abomination of desolation" mentioned in Matthew refers to the fact that due to both a blasphemous decree and image, Jerusalem will be bereft of any godly presence – an abomination in the sight of God.

35) What are the locusts of Revelation chapter nine?

The locusts originate from the Abyss, a colloquial term for Tartarus, that lowest region of Hades in which fallen angels are imprisoned. These creatures described as flying insects, then, are devils.

36) From what nation do the 200 million troops proceed?

These "mounted troops" are the same devils previously described as locusts, and proceed from the spirit realm rather than any earthly nation.

37) What happens after Armageddon?

After the Battle of Jerusalem (commonly referred to as Armageddon) the Millennial Kingdom of Christ is established.

At the conclusion of the one thousand years of peace, Satan will be released once more into the world and will incite the nations to rebel against Jerusalem. This is the war of Gog and Magog spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel.

With Satan's defeat, the Great White Throne Judgment will then commence and the righteous will dwell forever in the presence of the Lord, while the wicked will be eternally tormented in a lake of fire and brimstone.

Imperfection will never again rear its head within the realm of the living, confined for all eternity to the abode of the damned.

38) When does the battle of Gog and Magog occur?

This battle takes place at the conclusion of the one thousand years of peace, known as the Millennial Reign of Christ.

39) What is the Bride of Christ?

"The New Testament uses the image of bride and groom to explore the relationship between Christ and his church (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:21-33; Rev. 19:7-9). The imagery suggests that betrothal has taken place. But the consummation of the marriage and the fullness of joy are yet to come." (Zondervan's New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words)

Currently, the Church endures on earth as a virgin engaged to Christ. At the return of Christ, the marriage will take place and the bride and groom will be united in holy matrimony for eternity. Whether Tribulation Saints and those born during the Millennial Reign are inducted into the Bride is a matter of much speculation.

40) Is the New Jerusalem a literal city?

No. Its foundation consists of Christ and his twelve original apostles. Its gates are composed of the twelve tribes of Israel. It is a city without walls, (Zechariah 2:1-5) for God will function as its bulwark.

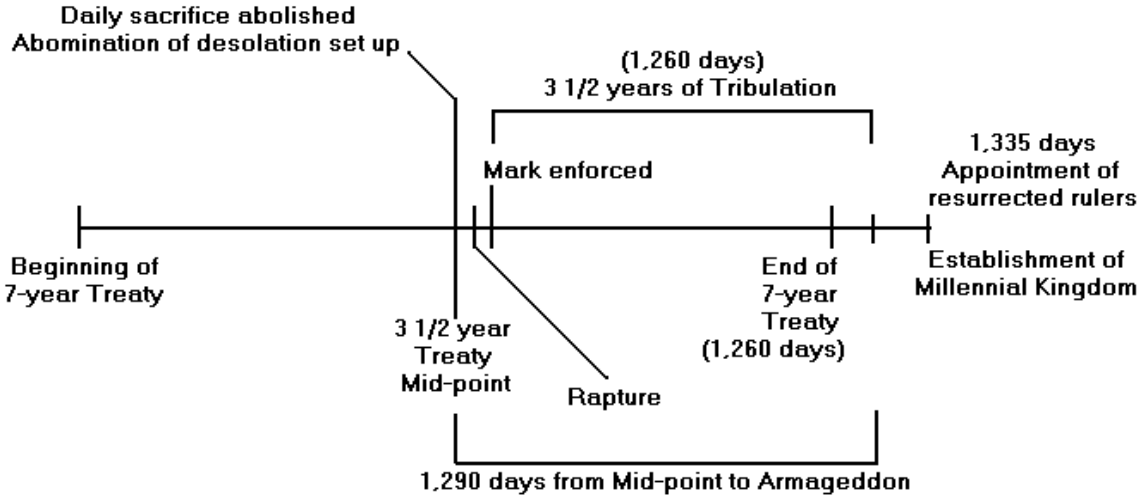
The New Jerusalem descending from Heaven as a bride is not a physical city, but the body of Christ. The redeemed of the Lord, His ecclesia, have become a holy city, perfect and ablaze with the jewels of righteousness.

A city constructed with living stones and shining with the glory of God, it will house no temple nor will the sun or moon illuminate it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will function as its temple and its light.

Such a description, then, is highly symbolic rather than literal.

41) What is the significance of the 1,260 - 1,290 - 1,335 days?

With an understanding that the rapture will occur one prophetic hour after the Antichrist defiles the temple at the mid-point of the Israeli treaty (a literal 15 days), these numbers are easily comprehensible.



Although the Tribulation will indeed commence upon the breaking of the Jewish treaty, it is a logistical impossibility to enforce the Mark upon billions of people within the self-same hour of its decree.

Although many will undoubtedly receive the Mark on the day it is mandated, it will take a certain amount of time for the news of this edict to be disseminated throughout the world, and even longer for it to be implemented and enforced.

Thus, despite the issuance of a Mark which will redefine life on this planet, many will experience no immediate discernible change. To wit, the Great Tribulation will not yet have commenced in actuality, and will require a period of time to be realized.

This period of time is the difference between the 1,260 and 1,290 days. Scripture declares that the rapture will occur "*immediately*," even before the effects of the

tribulation can extend to the entire world, yet even this "immediacy" is one prophetic hour, or fifteen days, in length.

After the passage of an additional fifteen days, the Great Tribulation will be firmly established and will continue for a space of three and-a-half years (1,260 days), a duration which surpasses the treaty period by thirty days.

Daniel revealed that forty-five days beyond the Battle of Jerusalem, a blessed event will occur. The only event of note occurring betwixt the Battle of Jerusalem when Satan is bound (Rev. 20:1-3) and the time when he is released to incite the nations once again at the Final Battle (Rev. 20:7-10), is found in Revelation 20:4-6.

"*I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God.*

"They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)

"This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years."

In Daniel 12:12, the angel told Daniel, "*Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.*"

Is there any mention in Revelation 20:4-6 of an event attended by persons declared to be "blessed?"

"*This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection.*"

There is indeed: the resurrection of those Tribulation Christians who, after the rapture, refused to worship the beast or his image and did not accept Satan's Mark. These who were "*beheaded for their testimony for Jesus*" were resurrected following the imprisonment of Satan and "*reigned with Christ for a thousand years,*" while those who perished in the Great Tribulation as God's enemies will not be resurrected until the Millennial Kingdom is concluded – resurrected to face sentencing at the Great White Throne Judgment.

So it would appear that the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom will take some time to accomplish – a period of forty-five days.

Thus, "*blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days,*" for these will see Jesus reigning as King, and will be given authority along with him.

Although due to its being labeled as "*the first resurrection,*" some may take issue with this post-tribulation ressurection being described as a separate event from that which occurs at the rapture, the Revelator was not attempting to rank every resurrection to occur from the inception of history (Son of Shunamite woman; Lazarus; Tabitha; Daughter of Jairus; Son of widow at Nain), nor was he attempting to provide an orderly list of the resurrections which would occur en masse (those who died previous to the crucifixion in Matt. 27:52, 53; those who were raised to life at the rapture and caught away with Jesus).

Rather, he was delineating between two specific resurrections which were being discussed closely together: one resurrection which would occur prior to the thousand years of peace (the first resurrecton), and one which would take place at the end of the thousand years (the second).

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Tribulation Survival Guide

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Timeline of Endtime Events

Tribulation Survival Guide

NOTE: The author does not guarantee that any of the information contained in this guide is correct, workable, or factual. The author is not responsible for, nor assumes any liability for, damages, injury, or death resulting from the use of any information contained herein. It is crucial that the reader conduct his own research with regard to the subjects presented and not rely solely upon the opinion of the author.

"*The wise look ahead to see what is coming, but fools deceive themselves.*" – Proverbs 14:8 (NLT)

"*A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.*" – Proverbs 22:3

Having been forewarned of the coming trials, it would behoove the prudent man to act, even as Noah, who being warned of the impending disaster about to befall mankind in the unseen future, took good heed and moved with fear, constructing an ark to the saving of his household.

The following is intended as a survival guide for those to whom Proverbs 14:8 applies, providing an overview of the major calamitous events with which the whole of the human race will soon become intimately acquainted, and suggesting possible methods by which individuals may improve their odds of survival "off the grid" despite the physical upheavals and the economic sanctions imposed as a result of the implementation of a global "Mark of the Beast," without which no man may buy or sell.

Before commencing such an endeavor, however, one must "count the cost" and make a determination as to whether or not the fortitude required to endure such tribulation is possessed.

"*For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?*" – Luke 14:28 (RSV)

Even the most diligent of preparations will not suffice to advantage those whose hearts will fail due to fear, for the soul afraid of acknowledging Christ before men and in the face of persecution is a soul which will find itself unacknowledged before the Father in Heaven (Matthew 10:32,33), and of course the cowardly will have their part in that lake of eternal damnation which blazes with fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8).

One must love God to such an extent that the affection bestowed upon family and self seems a bitter hatred by comparison (Luke 14:26).

As Ephesians 5:29 attests, no man hates his own flesh, but rather cherishing his body, he nourishes it and carefully protects it. Even so, if your hand puts a stumbling block before you and causes you to sin, the recommendation of Christ is to sever it from the body. If the foot becomes a cause of stumbling into sin, the suggested course of redress tendered by the Son of God is amputation. If the eye engenders communion with iniquity, it is declared by the holy scriptures to be a more profitable and wholesome occupation to pluck it out, for to enter the kingdom of God maimed or crippled is to be preferred over the eternal agony of an unbroken body interred within the depths of Hell. (Mark 9:43-48)

"*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.*" – Mark 8:35

If a family relation becomes a snare which prevents one from gaining that Heavenly inheritance prepared by the Father before the creation of the world, it becomes imperative that the trap be foiled prior to its acquiring a firm grasp upon the foot. If a kinsman becomes a weight which hampers one's ability to run the good race with all due speed and determined perseverance, if a kinswoman entangles the legs as a confounding cord producing weariness and faintness of heart, the offending encumbrance must be severed and discarded with celerity. (Hebrews 12:1)

"*Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'*

"*Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*" - Matthew 10:34-38

"*He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.*" – Luke 8:21

The love for God must abundantly exceed that which is lavished upon self and family.

"*Another of the disciples said to Him, Lord, let me first go and bury [care for till death] my father. But Jesus said to him, Follow Me, and leave the dead [in sin] to bury their own dead.*" – Matthew 8:21, 22 (AMP)

"*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" – 1st John 2:15

"*You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.*" – James 4:4 (AMP)

"*What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.*" – 1st Corinthians 7:29-31

"*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" – Mark 8:36 (KJV)

The reader is encouraged at this point to determine whether or not this degree of love is possessed. To that end, the words of Joshua, though spoken many centuries ago, nevertheless remain pregnant with momentous purpose for the present generation:

"*But if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.*" – Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

A missionary family of this author's acquaintance was about the Father's business in a foreign land when soldiers broke into their home and put a gun to the head of their newborn baby, ordering them to renounce their faith in Christ. Had this godly man and

woman loved their son more than God, it is probable that he would be alive today. Recognizing, however, that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above (James 1:17), and acknowledging that innocent bundle of precious life as a wonderful gift from God, they released him back into the superintendence of his Maker in a manner reminiscent of Abraham's return of Isaac to Yahweh and of the reciprocal responsibility which Hannah fulfilled with Samuel. Upon refusal to disclaim their faith, the infant was executed and then hurled through a nearby window.

Their attitude was on a par with that of Job:

"*The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.*" – Job 1:21

"*Job replied, "Don't talk like a fool! If we accept blessings from God, we must accept trouble as well.*" – Job 2:10 (CEV)

Can you, dear reader, claim such a love for the Lord?

In August of 1999 in southern Russia, two members of the Grozny Baptist Church were murdered while two more were kidnapped in the chaotic Chechen capital. One of the murder victims, an 82 year-old widow named Zhenya, was abducted from her apartment, tortured and raped before being strangled to death. She had been the sole eyewitness of the March 12th abduction of Grozny church leader Alexandr Kulakov, whose severed head was found several weeks later at a local marketplace.

In November of 2000, Turkmenistan's political police launched a brutal crusade against its Protestant Christian citizens. Four known believers in the capital of Ashgabad were subjected to repeated beatings, electric shocks, partial suffocation and other forms of torture while under interrogation, prosecution and ongoing harassment.

The four Turkmen Christians were identified as Batir Nurov, 23; Babamurat Gaebov, 27; Shokhrat Piriyev, 27; and Umit Koshkarov, 25. All are members of a Protestant house church group in Ashgabad pastored by Piriyev.

For three days the men were subjected to what one source described as "repeated sessions of beatings, electric shock and suffocation to the point of blacking out."

The four were excused from prison terms in exchange for oppressive fines (everything they owned), which they were forced to declare in writing as "voluntary gifts to the President of Turkmenistan." They were released with a promise of harsher treatment in the future, which left them fearful for their families. Nevertheless, they walked out of the KNB building expressing the love of God to their interrogators.

Vietnamese Pastor Ba and others were severely beaten during a police raid of the pastor's home during a prayer meeting in August of 2003. According to reports received by Freedom House, the incident occurred after police entered the home illegally, shoving and beating the occupants.

Pastor Ba's wife was manhandled and then collapsed in a faint from the stress. Pastor Ba was beaten in front of his family when he begged assistance for his wife.

In prison he was chained to a post and beaten by plainclothes police before subjected to a lengthy interrogation. After questioning, he was stripped of his clothes and thrown into a cell without bed, blankets, or mosquito netting, and held for thirty-six hours without food or water.

Police have refused to protect a pastor in Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan who has received death threats from local men and strongly-worded warnings to leave the

community. "People phone and come to my house to threaten us but the authorities have refused to help," Pastor Khalid Babaev told Forum 18 News Service.

Pastor Babaev fears for the safety of his wife and son, and does not know if it will be safe to continue holding services. Local Muslims have threatened to sacrifice Babaev as a holy duty and to halt all Christian activities in Nakhichevan. If Pastor Babaev holds another service, he has been told that a mob will be collected to attack his house.

In Egypt, a thousand Christians were "manacled to doors, then beaten and tortured with electric shocks to their genitals," according to a recent report issued by prison Fellowship founder Charles W. Colson. "Babies were not spared. Mothers were forced to lay their infants on the floor and watch helplessly while police struck them with sticks."

In Sri Lanka, pastors and their families have had their lives threatened, been attacked with swords, and been thrown out of their homes, yet the police have not moved to prevent such injustice from occurring.

Young Christian girls in Pakistan are often abducted and raped. They are a powerless minority without effective rights or recourse for crimes committed against them by Muslim men. They are often abducted and forcibly "married."

The Laotian government considers Christianity to be a violation of Lao custom and an “imperialist foreign religion” backed by political interests in the West, particularly the United States. Christians are therefore regarded as subversives and enemies of the state. Persecution has escalated continuously since the Communists assumed the mantle of leadership in 1975.

Since the late 1990’s, Lao believers have been beaten, imprisoned, tortured and forcibly removed from their lands for refusing to sign the government's "Voluntary Resignation From a Foreign Religion" document.

According to Christian Solidarity International, more Christians have died for their faith in the twentieth century than at any other time in history. Global reports indicate that over 150,000 Christians were martyred last year, chiefly outside of the United States. However, statistics are changing, and persecution of Christians within even the USA is on the rise.

Recently, a woman in Houston, Texas was ordered by local police to stop handing out gospel tracts to children who knocked on her door during Halloween. Officers informed her that such activity is illegal, (it isn’t) and that if she persisted in engaging in such behavior she would be arrested.

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago warned that plans by Southern Baptists to hold a convention in the Windy City might foment "hate crimes" against minorities, causing some Christians to fear that speaking openly about their religious beliefs will soon be considered a crime.

In May 1995, U.S. District Court Justice Samuel B. Kent of the Southern District of Texas decreed that any student uttering the word "Jesus" would be arrested and serve a maximum prison sentence of six months. Said Kent, "Make no mistake, the court is going to have a United States Marshal in attendance at the graduation. If any student offends this court, that student will be arrested and will face up to six months incarceration in the Galveston County Jail for contempt of court. Anyone who thinks I’m kidding about this order better think again. Anyone who violates these orders, no kidding, is going to wish that he or she had died as a child when this court gets through with it.”

On November 29, 2000, Robert and Mary Murphy of New Milford, Connecticut received a letter from the town's zoning enforcement officer ordering the Murphy's to suspend the weekly prayer meetings and Bible studies they have been hosting at their home since 1995, saying the zoning commission has determined that such activity is not permissible.

The letter also states that the town will take legal action against the family if they continue to hold the prayer meetings in their home. This is not a case about zoning or parking problems – it is a bold move by a local government body to censor the religious expression of a family whose only desire is to use their own private residence for prayer in a legal and lawful manner.

Such incidents are increasing rapidly within the Land of the Free, for there are invisible forces controlling the halls of power throughout this planet while kings and presidents are but pawns in a deadly endgame, posturing and strategizing according to the dictates of the invisible ones in a spiritual realm.

The Evil One has patiently manipulated unregenerate architects of American society for over five decades, employing both visible and invisible principalities to discredit Christian causes.

Indeed, a casual observance of the facts reveals a growing isolation of Christians as a people group, especially school age believers. Faculty and peer efforts to convince public school children that America was not founded on Christian ideals, and that our forefathers actually wanted a secular society, permeates public school interaction. History revisionists labor to eliminate any and all contradictory historical evidence from public school curriculum, and mockingly stereotype Christians as an unenlightened fringe group.

Dr. Paul Vitz, former Professor of Psychology at New York University, worked with a committee which examined sixty social studies and history textbooks in widespread use by public schools across the United States. The committee was amazed to discover that almost every reference to the Christian influence of early America had been systematically removed. They concluded that the authors of America's most commonly used textbooks exhibited a marked paranoia of the Christian religion and intentionally censored Christianity's positive role in American history.

Intolerant, Christ-hating censors of religious expression target the media and public school curriculum due to its demonstrated ability to indoctrinate children and thus manipulate the future political and cultural landscape. If one succeeds in separating godly principles from public education and the media, citizens will be denied the knowledge of righteousness and prevented from embracing the laws of God. Perpetrators of such wickedness are pawns of evil who subvert and destroy both the message and the messengers of righteousness.

The moral condition of this nation will only grow worse. The reader must first acknowledge that fact, and then consider whether his relationship with Christ is sufficiently stalwart to endure the most intense persecution this world has ever experienced.

A choice must be made. A lord must be chosen.

Are you an atheist, whereby the armed men coming down the street will leave you and your family alone, or are you a Christian whom they will torture and slay? To whom will you be true? You cannot serve two gods at once. Loving one god, you will end up

hating the other. Adoration of one will feed contempt for the other. (Matthew 6:24) Do not put off such a decision until tomorrow.

"*I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.*" – 2nd Corinthians 6:2

"*He who observes the wind [and waits for all conditions to be favorable] will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.*" – Ecclesiastes 11:4 (AMP)

"*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*" - 1st Peter 4:12, 13 (KJV)

Having addressed the important issue of faithfulness, this guide will now focus on matters of physical survival. At the time of this writing, the first four seals of Revelation chapter six have been opened, however, the objectives of three and four have yet to be realized.

I. Global Economic Collapse

The rider of the black horse is responsible for the first major adversity with which mankind must cope: global economic collapse.

A devalued currency will cause basic necessities to become so exorbitantly priced as to be beyond the reach of the common man. Observing beforehand the imminent inability to purchase such items, it follows that a contingency plan must be developed to obtain them in some other fashion.

Food

Finding themselves in a most unenviable state of affairs are those readers who have been caught unprepared for the "Greater Depression" and are stranded without food. If this is your lot, skip to the section below entitled "The Wild." The difficulty of preserving your life has just increased tenfold due to a lack of preparation.

For those fortunate enough to be reading this book in advance of the coming economic destruction, it is imperative that the example of Joseph be followed and the stockpiling of provisions begun.

"*Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.*" – Genesis 41:48, 49

To that end, the following section will provide information regarding the types of survival foods available and the type of situation for which each is optimal.

Home Canning

The most economical method of obtaining food involves a home garden and canning system. If you don't know how to can your own food, you can obtain free literature from your county extension agency, and of course, the library is always an excellent source of free reference material.

Depending on temperature, properly canned food will last 40 years. Keep it in a cool, dry location away from light. Almost any food can be preserved in this manner – fruit, vegetables, even meat.

A family of four can easily consume over 1,000 canned goods in six months. The recommendation of this author is to lay in a year's supply and to begin immediately. If you are skilled in the art of horticulture, you should have no problems producing food for the project. If not, another trip to the library may be in order.

The type of seeds you purchase will play a critical role in determining the success or failure of this endeavor. Most modern seeds are hybrids, germs which have been genetically engineered to resist pests and diseases. Unfortunately, hybrids are incapable of generating a second harvest, as the seeds they produce are sterile. If one desires a garden with the capacity to reproduce itself, one must obtain non-hybrid seeds. A one-year supply can be affordably purchased from *The Ark Institute* at www.arkinstitute.com or 1-800-255-1912.

Supermarket Comestibles

At the outset of fiscal disaster, the initial supply of edible fare will consist of those groceries currently stocked in the cupboards and refrigerator.

Regarding these, many homes are not stocked with enough for more than one or two weeks, a brief period which, as the result of an inevitable power failure, will be further reduced due to the spoilage of those victuals which require refrigeration. With a measure of advanced planning, however, this period can be extended to span one or two months.

Assuming a consumption of three meals per day, a 720-can reserve of food is required to sustain a family of four for two months (900 cans for a family of five). Such an inventory should be accumulated gradually for two reasons.

Firstly, a stockpile of this size can easily cost $1,000, and is therefore unaffordable in one allotment. Consequently, one should acquire extra provisions by degrees. If you generally purchase two cans of stew when at the market, begin to pick up three or four. If your custom is to buy four cans of pasta and meatballs, select six and add the additional wares to your survival cache. The steady acquisition of merely ten extra cans per week will reach the goal of 720 in just eighteen months.

If that seems lengthy, consider that those months will pass whether you choose to begin preparations or not. It would be preferable that at the end of 18 months you and your family are four times better equipped to survive than the average person, than for you to have maintained precisely the same position which you occupy at this moment.

Secondly, through loyalty card programs, supermarkets have been recording the grocery purchases of individuals into a permanent database for some years now, and since October of 2001 they have been able to purchase detailed information on other aspects of consumers' lives and link it to their shopper card records.

The Florida-based AccuData assists supermarkets in obtaining far more detailed customer profiles than shopper card records alone can provide, creating "penetration profiles" which involve analyzing trends in demographic, psychographic, and purchasing characteristics and appending this detailed external data to each customer's club card record. It is probable that your local supermarket is in possession of far more detailed records concerning you and your family than you would have ever thought possible.

According to Katherine Albrecht, founder of Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering, although one might expect a supermarket's privacy policy to indemnify one against the use and handling of non-public personal information, one study found that only 19 percent of financial institutions abided by their own privacy policies.

Among retailers, the percentage is estimated to be a much lower figure. Footaction, for example, a national retailer with 450 locations and an online store at www.footaction.com, recently put their list of Loyalty Club member information up for sale. The listing, at Walter Karl Interactive (one of the most respected names in Internet Direct Marketing and the industry leader in Email List Management, List Brokerage and Internet Marketing services), included selectable items such as phone number, date of birth, and the dollar amounts of purchases, despite a promise within its own privacy policy not to disclose the financial information of its customers.

In addition to private sector scrutiny, club card records can be seized by Federal and state law enforcement agencies. Constitutional protections against unlawful search and seizure prevent the Federal government from conducting investigations into the private lives of innocent citizens. No such restriction, however, has been imposed upon private corporations, permitting them to collect any desired volume of personal data – which any law enforcement agency may access via a search warrant.

In an article prepared for the Denver Law Review, Ms. Albrecht outlines a list of real and potential abuses of information gathered by grocery stores. After September 11, 2001, grocery shopping information was provided to Federal intelligence agencies to assist in the identification of individuals with Middle Eastern diets.

In another instance, a grocery store threatened to use information about a man's purchases of alcohol to defend itself in a "slip and fall" case. Health maintenance organizations are considering using dietary information to determine insurability. Subpoenas are being issued to surrender grocery store records in alimony cases to establish the accuracy of reported income. A proposal before the National Institute of Health requests that dietary information be obtained for the targeting of specific people groups in an attempt to approve their health habits. Suspected marijuana dealers may soon have their grocery records checked for the presence of resealable sandwich bag purchases.

The desire for just such a tool to monitor the intake of groceries at the household level was voiced by government leaders and molders of global society even as far back as 1992. Dr. Ramesh P. Sharma, an agricultural economist in the Food Security Service of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Commodities and Trade Division, wrote a paper entitled, "Monitoring Access to Food and Household Food Security," adapted from "Approaches to Monitoring Access to Food and Household Food Security," published by the FAO Committee on World Food Security, 17th Session, Rome, Italy, March 23-27, 1992, a lengthy treatise whose purpose was stated in its opening sentence:

"The objective of this paper is to identify indicators that could be used for monitoring household-level access to food on a regular and sustained basis and with global coverage."

With the monitoring of supermarket receipts, any unusually large purchases of food will be noted and the customer tagged as a possible social agitator, religious

extremist, or nonconformist – these citizens overtly stockpiling provisions will be among the first to be visited by soldiers of the New World Order, hence the importance of building such a supply in modest installments becomes obvious.

If for some reason items *must* be purchased in bulk, avoid credit cards, store loyalty cards, and pay in cash. Even then, a sufficiently large purchase may trigger a request for videotape from the store's security cameras positioned at the checkout lanes, and your face entered into a Federal database of driver's license photos and matched to your name. In order to avoid suspicion and subsequent detection, it is essential that your purchases remain "ordinary."

With the proper arrangements, the average two-week supply of perishable goods in your refrigerator and freezer can be preserved without electricity, postponing consumption of the initial two-month canned reserve and increasing the immediate total survival time from eight weeks to ten.

At the earliest opportunity, the storage life of frozen food should be extended by filling empty freezer spaces with containers of frozen water. When the power fails, covering the freezer with blankets will provide a measure of insulation – take care to ensure that the air vent is not obstructed. Food contained within a well-enclosed, well-filled freezer will keep for two or three days providing the door is kept closed.

In the meantime, use perishable food from the refrigerator. Refrigerated foods must be kept at or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. If your refrigerator is not equipped with a thermometer, this accessory would make a fine addition to your survival gear, especially an external model which can report the internal temperature without one having to open the door (an inefficient method of monitoring which allows valuable chilled air to escape).

When the temperature of the refrigerator reaches 40 degrees Fahrenheit, the food can be transferred to a small propane-powered refrigerator.

Lehman's sells a compact model (inside dimensions: 13 1/8"H x 19 1/8"W x 8 11/16"D) for about $400 which operates for two days on a small disposable 1-lb propane cartridge. An adapter can be purchased for $10 which will allow it to connect to a standard 20-lb tank of liquid propane. In this manner, your perishable items will keep until such time as they can be consumed.

As the last of the refrigerated items are expended, the freezer will become the next source of food. In a well-insulated, well-filled freezer, ice crystals should still remain in the centers of the food – a sign that it is safe for human consumption. As with the refrigerator, if the temperature in the freezer rises above 40 degrees Fahrenheit, the food should be transferred to the propane refrigerator.

In this manner, the bulk of your perishables can be saved, providing you with perhaps an additional two weeks of provisions before requiring the canned reserve you so sagaciously stockpiled in advance.

To minimize the number of times the refrigerator and freezer doors are opened, post a list of the contents, plan meals ahead of time, and open the doors only long enough to retrieve the food.

Once your perishables are depleted, begin to use the inventory of canned goods.

Long Shelf-Life Food

One of the disadvantages of conventional canned food in a survival situation is its relatively short shelf-life. Another is that this kind of food typically contains liquid, making transportation of such provisions difficult, especially in bulk amounts.

An alternative is the long shelf-life canned food, which is dehydrated or freeze-dried, packaged in double-enameled cans, and flushed with nitrogen to ensure freshness and extended storage life; characteristically 10 to 15 years.

Two varieties of this food is available from B&A Products Ltd. Co, at www.baproducts.com or (918) 696-5998. A family kit which provides four people with an entire year's supply of food sells for about $3,100.00, averaging about .70 per meal per person – an exceptional value.

A one-year supply of long shelf-life food is highly recommended.

Remember that dehydrated and freeze-dried food will require clean water to reconstitute.

MRE's (Meals, Ready-to-Eat)

MRE's were formulated by the U.S. military, an improvement over the former K and C-rations.

The Army introduced the C-ration (combat ration) in 1938. At the outset, a day's portion added almost six pounds to soldiers' packs. They took an immediate dislike to its taste. C-rations consisted of canned meat and vegetables packed in preservatives, along with hard biscuits, providing 3,800 calories per day in battle conditions when it wasn't feasible to assemble a mess hall. The Army was required to maintain an inventory of the rations despite a limited shelf-life. Furthermore, the cans tended to rust. Labels would fall off, leaving one to speculate as to what each can held. As the food expired, troops either ate it or let it cycle into the trash bin while they hitch-hiked into town for real food.

In 1942, the Army issued the K-ration, an even less appetizing meal than the C, but lighter and higher in calories (8300) and therefore improved for combat situations. The lemonade powder in the K-ration was so acidic that it was reported to work better as a floor cleaner than as a drink.

Today's combat ration is the MRE. MREs are highly processed, well-packaged food. Tin cans have given way to a specially designed triple-layer pouch of light-weight plastic. They are available in twenty-four menu varieties including Chinese, Mexican, and Jamaican. The food is sealed, cooked, and not exposed to air until opened. Some even have chemical heaters. (Add water, and a reaction takes place in an outer sleeve, making the meal warm.)

By all reports, MREs are lighter, tastier, healthier, and at 5-7 years (if stored in a cool environment), preserve far longer than the former C-ration. Still, when Desert Storm troops repeatedly found themselves eating MRE's, they promptly re-christened them: "Meals Rejected by Everyone." (Of course, prime rib would soon lose its exquisite taste if one were forced to eat it three times a day, seven days a week.)

MRE's are available in full meals containing a meat, vegetable or fruit, peanut butter, high protein crackers, freeze-dried fruit bar, beverage base, accessory packet and spoon. Typical entrees include chicken a la king, barbecue pork with rice, spaghetti with meat sauce, and omelet with ham. Individual entrees and other pieces can also be purchased separately.

A supply of MRE's makes an excellent survival food supply. Cooking or preparation of any kind is unnecessary, they are light enough to be transported, and do not require the addition of water (save for the drink base). A typical MRE full meal costs less than $7, and occasionally bargains can be found at local Army & Navy stores.

As these meals do not require water (a precious commodity which will become even scarcer over time), they are an ideal source of nutrition for the latter portion of your survival period. Equip your storeroom with a two-year supply.

Thus prepared, you and your family will be supplied with a good four years' worth of edibles. The duration of tribulation from the third seal until the rapture is anyone's guess. Although there are many pundits who defend a seven-year tribulation with the rapture occurring at the median of that term, there is no scripture to support such a claim. In truth, the tribulation may begin in advance of the seven-year treaty with Israel, or it may commence a year or two thereafter – it is impossible to be dogmatic about such an unprovable scenario.

The determination of how much time to prepare for, then, is a decision which remains solely within the purview of the reader. Does six months seem a reasonable period, or is it unconscionable only to be prepared for such a short period of time? Is two years a practical number? Is it even financially feasible to arrange for a four or five-year term of surviving "off the grid?"

A typical response to planning for long-term food requirements is an expression of impotence. After calculating the amount of inventory necessitated by a one or two-year period of self-sufficiency, the total price is deemed far too uneconomical, and the result is that nothing is accomplished.

I would encourage you not to attempt to finance the entire project in one transaction. (As was pointed out previously, this would attract undesired attention in any event.) Instead, fractionate your purchases and build your inventory slowly but steadily.

Storage space is also a legitimate concern, and the construction of a root cellar or some similar storage facility may be necessary. On the other hand, there are many places a creative mind can find within the home to store provisions, such as the closet, basement, attic, garage, inside rarely-worn shoes, the space beneath the bed or couch, desk drawers, or gym bags.

Read this book, study the scriptures, weigh the words of various prophecy authorities, and determine a likely "go to ground" period, create the required space, and begin your planning. It is more advantageous to be one year premature with respect to emergency preparation than one minute too late.

"*If you are too lazy to plow in the right season, you will have no food at the harvest.*" – Proverbs 20:4 (NLT)

Food Bars

Food bars are high-protein wafers which have been specially formulated to permit the consumption of solid nutriments without triggering the thirst craving, each bar exceeding the recommended daily requirements for vitamins and minerals.

With a shelf-life of five years, they are capable of enduring extreme temperatures, ranging from minus forty degrees to three-hundred degrees Fahrenheit. Due to the flexible storage temperature, as well as the small size and weight, they are an ideal addition to any emergency kit and can easily be stored within the trunk of a vehicle where

the temperature may vary from below zero in winter to more than one-hundred degrees in summer.

A typical three-day package contains nine bars of four-hundred Coast Guard-approved calories each and costs less than $10.

A small supply of these (perhaps one week's worth per person) will serve you well if it becomes necessary to venture out from your shelter on short-term scouting missions for firewood or some such emergency from time to time.

The Wild

If you exhaust your supply of stores (or failed to lay in any kind of survival provisions), your sustenance must be derived from nature. You must learn to hunt, trap, and gather food in the tradition of the formerly primitive tribal races of North America.

If you are reading this in advance of the global economic collapse, purchase a few survival guidebooks for your home library and learn to identify wild plants that can supplement your existing diet. This author recommends a copy of the *Official Boy Scout Handbook*; the *U.S. Army Survival Manual FM 21-76*; *Wilderness Survival* by Greg Davenport; *Tom Brown's Field Guide to Wilderness Survival* by Tom Brown, Jr., Heather Bolyn, and Brandt Morgan; *Outdoor Survival Skills* by Larry D. Olsen; or *Primitive Wilderness Living and Survival Skills* by John and Geri McPherson.

If the worldwide financial catastrophe has caught you unawares and these reference works are not available, a brief guide will be provided shortly.

Unfortunately, hunting and gathering, while excellent methods of supplementing your traditional menu during prosperous times, may be unreliable sources of sustenance during this particular period of earth history (and will fail altogether in short order).

Sportsmen regularly complain of the overcrowded conditions in forests nationwide on opening day, afraid to fire their weapons for fear of striking a fellow hunter, or disgusted at the overwhelming ratio of human predators to available wild game.

When this nation as a whole becomes entirely dependent upon the forests for its very survival, the existing population of edible game will be decimated over night. Local woodlands will be inundated with hunters, many of whom will return empty-handed or lose their lives within the boscage due to disputes relating to repast ownership. Others will expend more calories in the hunt than will be provided by the food they obtain.

If you do decide to hunt, select one good location and wait for the animals to come to you. Keep in mind that you can survive for as long as four weeks without eating food, provided you are getting plenty of rest, keeping warm, and have an adequate supply of water. Eating food will trigger a craving for water, so be sure to rehydrate yourself during meals.

While fishing is a more efficient option with respect to the issue of energy expenditure versus aliment return, it is also an obvious one, and may therefore prove to be an even more popular choice of provision procurement than hunting.

The consumption of wild plants is a risky proposition for the novice. Many contain poisonous substances which can only be neutralized via strict adherence to proper preparation techniques, while the deleterious effects of others cannot be negated by any means.

While some regions of the country will no doubt provide sufficient resources to support sustenance hunting and gathering if the ratio of guns to game favors the inhabitants of the wood, such locales will be extremely rare. You may be able to supplement your food supply with some game, but the key to survival is advanced planning. Without a well-stocked survival cache, there is little this guide can offer; nevertheless, the following tips may prove useful:

With relatively few exceptions, the human being can eat any living creature, provided the natural aversion to particular sources of food is overcome. Historically, starving people have resorted to eating everything imaginable for nourishment. A person who ignores an otherwise healthy food source due to a personal bias, risks his own survival. Although it may prove difficult at first, a survivor must eat whatever is available in order to maintain his health.

The Wild – Food Sources

Insects

Insects are the most abundant life-form on earth and are composed of 65% to 80% protein (compared to beef's 20%), making them an important food source.

Do not eat insects which sting or bite, avoid hairy or brightly-colored insects, as well as those which have a strong odor. Always avoid spiders and common disease carriers such as ticks, flies, and mosquitoes.

Excellent places to search for insects include grassy areas and underneath stones, boards, or other materials lying on the ground.

Insects with a hard outer shell such as beetles and grasshoppers will have parasites and must therefore be cooked prior to eating. Most insects can be eaten raw (remove any wings and barbed legs first). A quantity of insects can be ground into a paste, cooked, and mixed with edible vegetation to improve their taste.

Worms

Worms are also excellent sources of protein. They can be located by digging in damp soil or by watching for them on the ground after a rain. Worms can be cleansed by soaking them in a source of clean, potable water for several minutes, after which they may be eaten raw.

Fish

Fish are excellent sources of protein and fat, and are more plentiful than wild mammalian game. Generally, fish will emerge from the depths of their languid nooks most often prior to a storm, taking advantage of the final few moments of clear water in which to feed before the torrential downpour churns debris and sediment into a roiling froth of cloudy water. As the initial rumbling booms of distant thunder herald the impending cloudburst, explore deep pools, investigate under overhanging brush, and in and around submerged foliage, logs, or other objects of concealment.

Although there are no poisonous freshwater fish, the spinous dorsal fin of some species is comprised of sharp quill-like protrusions which are capable of inflicting painful puncture wounds.

All freshwater fish should be cooked in order to destroy harmful parasites.

Birds

All species of birds are edible, if not savory. During the nesting season, some species will not abandon their nests even when approached by man.

Throughout the spring and summer, then (prior to August 1st), pigeons, pheasants, quail, mallards, and grassland songbirds such as meadowlarks, dickcissels and grasshopper sparrows can be taken from their roosts by hand, as incubating birds are reluctant to leave the nest even when approached by the powerful roar of an advancing tractor mower.

Indeed, according to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, in a decade-long study of nesting pheasants, 72% of all hens killed or injured on the nest were hit between June 10th and July 1st by grassland-trimming lawn mowers. (If a bird is not going to budge for the spinning blades of a 62-inch mower deck welded to the frame of a $14,000 John Deere garden tractor of over 750lbs, propelled 8.5mph by a roaring 24-horsepower, liquid-cooled Yanmar diesel engine bearing down upon its fragile nest of twigs, string, and newspaper scraps, then it's not going to leap up in a cloud of feathers to beat a hasty retreat at the approach of a stealthily advancing, sneaker-shod, half-starved fugitive from a barber shop.)

Birds have a propensity to establish fixed flight paths from roost to feeding area and from roost to water source, rarely deviating from these customary patterns. The location of these flyways can be discerned through patient observation, revealing ideal locations for positioning nets to ensnare flying game.

While readily serving as a source of meat, nesting birds may also provide the survivalist with fresh eggs. Upon locating a store of eggs, do not appropriate the entire clutch, but rather remove all but two from the nest, taking care to mark those which remain. Seeing the nest at less than full capacity, the bird will continue to lay additional eggs in order to replenish the clutch. Continue to remove the fresh eggs, leaving the older ones which you marked.

Mammals

Mammals are excellent sources of protein and are considered the most appetizing of wild food sources. The procurement of such food, however, presents a number of challenges.

One involves the previously discussed scarcity of such creatures.

Another involves the risk of detection, as the sound of rifle fire can alert others to your location. The presence of traps or snares will also indicate your presence, and the enemy needs only to monitor the area until such time as you return to check on these nettings in order to apprehend you.

Thirdly, all mammals have teeth and nearly all will attack in self-defense. Even squirrels can inflict serious wounds, and any bite presents a serious risk of infection. Mothers are extremely aggressive in defense of their young, and any animal with no route of escape will fight when cornered.

The Wild – Methods of Obtaining Food

Traps and Snares

Trapping or snaring wild game is an excellent alternative to rifles for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the sound of a rifle shot will announce your presence to all within range of the report. Secondly, several strategically-placed traps are capable of netting a considerably greater quantity of game than one man can bring down with a rifle.

No single trap is effective for every animal. Each one must be engineered precisely according to the physical attributes of each species.

Traps are used to crush, choke, hang, or entangle prey. A quality trap will employ more than one of these snaring principles. The mechanisms that provide power to the trap are very simple: the victim's struggles, the force of gravity, or the suppressed tension of a bent sapling.

Baiting a trap will greatly increase its effectiveness. The effectiveness of an unbaited trap is contingent upon its location. As can be illustrated with fish, a baited trap will attract animals to it. The bait should be familiar to the animal, yet not so readily available in the immediate area that the animal can easily obtain it elsewhere. A trap baited with corn in the midst of a cornfield, for example, would not be a wise design. Too, if corn is not an indigenous food source, a corn-baited trap may be regarded with suspicion and therefore function as a repellent rather than an enticement.

Peanut butter and salt have both been proven effective bait for small mammals and should be scattered about the trap to provide prey with an opportunity to sample and develop a craving for it. In this way, the animal will overcome its instinctual caution with regard to the bait and will then approach the trap much more readily.

Traps and snares should be positioned along runs and trails, near tracks and droppings, in the vicinity of chewed or frayed vegetation, at nesting, roosting, feeding, and watering sites, and in every other location in which evidence of animal traffic can be ascertained.

In order to prevent detection by human enemies, concealment of traps and snares must be given a high priority. At the same time, you must avoid creating a disturbance in the environment that will alarm the animal and cause it to flee the area. If any digging is necessary, all fresh dirt must be removed from the area, as most animals will instinctively avoid pitfall-type traps.

The various parts of a trap or snare should be assembled off-site in order to avoid disturbing the local vegetation. Do not use freshly cut, green vegetation to construct a trap or snare. Freshly cut vegetation will release sap that has a distinctive odor which alerts animals to danger.

The human scent must be removed from all traps. Although birds do not have a highly-developed sense of smell, nearly all mammals rely upon scent more than sight. Even the slightest human scent on a trap will alarm the prey and cause it to flee the area.

In order to mask your scent, sprinkle the trap with the gall bladder fluid or urine of previously captured animals. Do not use human urine. Mud, especially from a site with an abundance of decaying vegetation, is also effective. Apply a thin layer of mud to your hands prior to handling the trap and use a liberal quantity to coat the trap when setting it. While it is true that animals will become alarmed at the scent of fire, they are not fearful of the after-scent. Smoking the component parts of your trap, then, is also an effective method of masking the human scent. A fourth technique is to allow the elements a few days to weather the trap, then handle it only with mud-coated hands.

Snare Construction

A simple snare can be very effective if implemented properly, however correct usage and placement are difficult for even skilled survivalists to master. There must be no evidence of the snare's location which might warn an animal to its presence. Performed properly, a yield of one success per ten snares is a satisfactory ratio. Novices can expect their snares to perform at a much smaller proficiency level.

At its most basic, a snare is merely a noose designed to tighten over an animal's neck. Cord or rope may eventually loosen due to the animal's struggling about and become unbound. Wire snares are therefore ideal for small animals. If wire or rope is unavailable, fishing line or shoelaces may suffice.

Snare construction begins with a noose. Create an eye at one end of the wire by curving the end over and twisting it several times. The other end should pass through the eye to form a noose. If the snare is constructed out of a more flexible material, the eye should be fashioned with a slip knot, or running knot, as it is also known.

Standard Snare

The noose should be placed vertically across the trail or den hole and if constructed from wire, will hold itself open. If made from rope or cord, small twigs or blades of grass can be used to hold it open.

With the noose positioned on the trail, the other end must be anchored securely to a tree or firmly-planted stake. If an immobile object is unavailable, anything which the animal would find heavy and awkward to drag may be used.

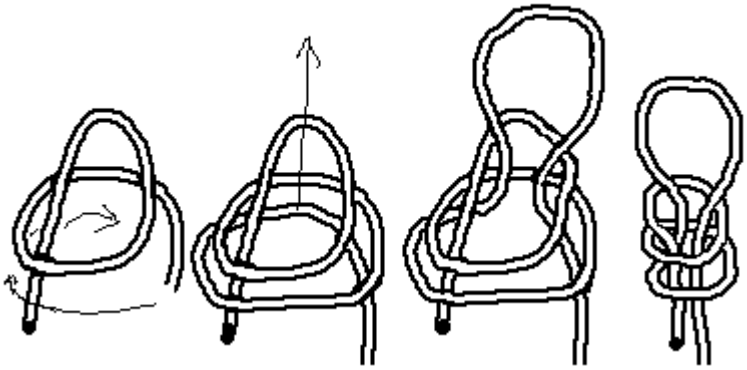
A properly constructed snare will encircle only the animal's head – not its shoulders. As the noose begins to tighten, the animal will lunge and begin to thrash about, constricting the neck ever tighter. The result is that the animal will relax and remain motionless until retrieved, or will expire of asphyxiation or a broken neck.

In general, success with snare hunting is directly proportionate to the quantity employed. The greater the number of snares, the better your odds.

Rabbits often traverse clearly-defined runs concealed by thick foliage, and snares placed in such locations should be quite effective. Secure one end of the snare line to an overhanging branch and position the snare so that it remains three to four inches above the ground with a four-inch diameter noose. In this manner, multiple snares can be placed approximately ten yards apart along each run.

Although requiring a snare constructed of much stronger material, it is possible to capture deer in this manner, as well. In order for this to be successful, the snare must be positioned along a deer trail which at some point runs narrowly between two strong trees. Ensure that the noose measures about three to four feet in diameter at waist height and that the slip knot is

How to Tie a Slip Knot



able to run easily. The other end of the snare should be secured to a substantial tree limb.

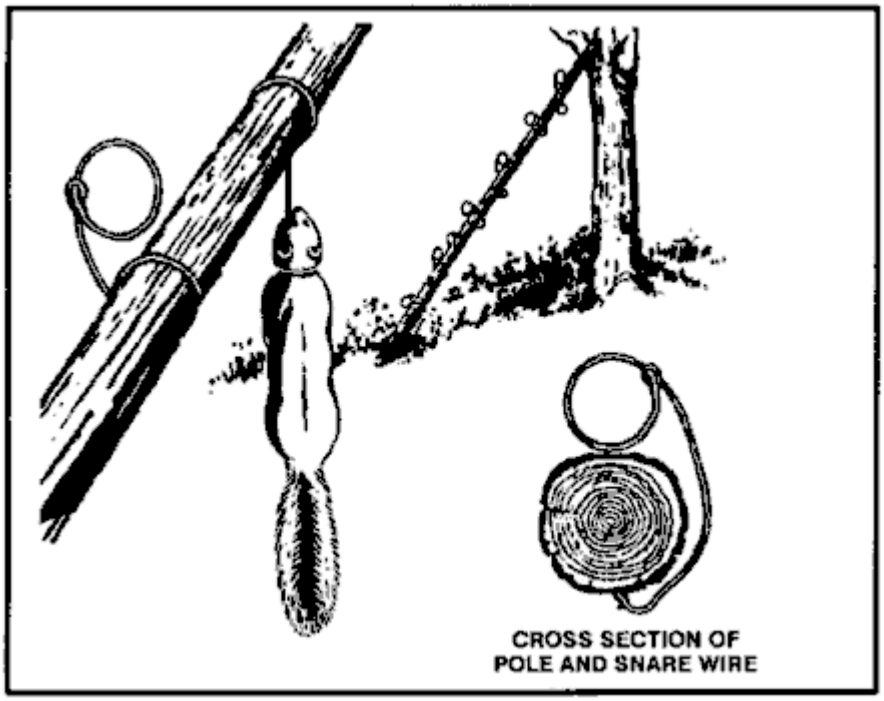
Other excellent locations to place snares include den openings, burrow entrances, stream-bank holes, and cavities at the base of hollow logs or trees which may harbor small game. Fasten the snare to an immovable base near the entrance, such as a sturdy post driven into the ground with a rock. The noose must be of a smaller diameter than that of the entrance aperture. With the snare thus emplaced, the probability is high that any creature moving in or out of the den will be captured.

Fallen logs which span fordable streams are conducive to snare emplacement. Many animals often prefer to remain dry if at all practicable, and will elect to cross over a body of water rather than swim through it. Positioning snares at opposite ends of such timber to capture small game, therefore, is an idea worthy of merit.

In a similar method, Cherokee pole snares are an effective means of netting squirrels. Preferring slopes to vertical inclines, if presented with a lengthy pole or branch leaning against a tree, a squirrel will choose to ascend via the pole rather than climb the trunk.

Consequently, if several wire nooses, approximately two and-a-half inches in diameter, are fastened to the pole with the loops curving up and around so that they stand up vertically from the top of the pole, squirrels, who are naturally curious animals, will, after an initial period of caution, attempt to ascend or descend the pole and become entangled. The struggling animal will then fall from the pole and strangle. Other squirrels will come to investigate and suffer the same fate.

Spring-loaded snares which will elevate game above the ground are ideal scavenger-defeating devices. Construction of this type of snare will require two "y"-shaped branches.



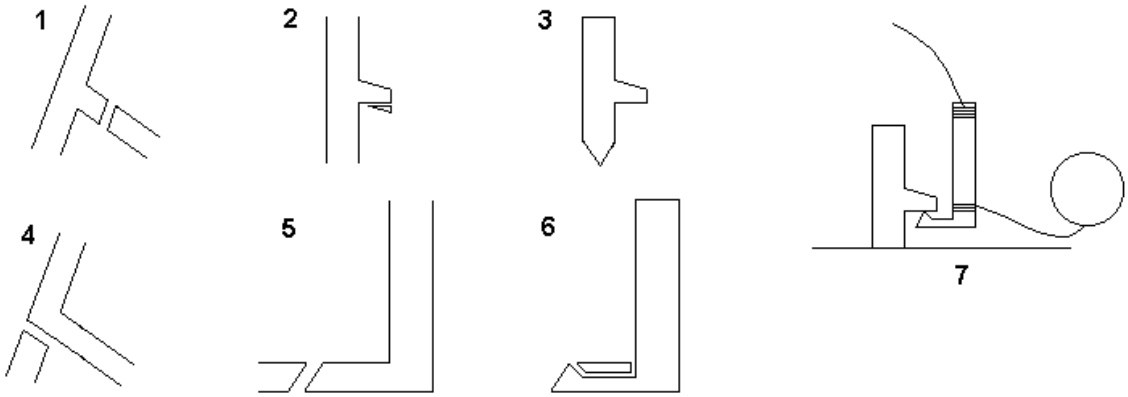
Note that the "y" shape is formed by a long main branch and a smaller off-shoot. Position the first branch with the "y" upside-down, and with an axe or knife, crop the off-shoot short and close to the larger limb. (Fig. 1) Orient the main branch vertically and make a smaller cut along the underside of the short off-shoot, creating a straight edge parallel to the ground. (Fig. 2) Square off the top of the branch and sharpen the bottom, creating a stake which can be driven into the ground with

a hammer or large rock. (Fig. 3) Ensure that the pointed end is long enough for the off-shoot to remain approximately six inches above ground after anchoring.

With the second "y"-shaped branch positioned upside-down, remove the entire portion of the main branch which extends below the off-shoot, creating an "L"-shaped limb. (Fig. 4) With the "L" aligned backwards and right-side up, trim the off-shoot three to four inches from the main limb and perform the cut at a forty-five degree angle. (Fig. 5) Finally, cut a wedge-shaped section out of the off-shoot to create a point. (Fig. 6)

To set the trap, locate a resilient sapling and pull a branch down to the ground, taking note of the point at which the limb meets the earth. Drive the stake-fashioned "y"-branch into the ground at this point. Lash the sapling to the "L"-shaped branch with cord or string and then lock the sapling into place by securing the arrow point of the "L" to the retaining edge of the stake. (Fig. 7)

Fasten the snare to the "L"-shaped branch, and the struggles of a captured animal will spring the trap.



NOTE: Serious injuries can occur if one doesn't exercise the utmost caution when rigging this type of trap.

Several yards of wire or fishing line will serve you well for use in rigging snares.

Primitive Weapons

There are five devices that can assist you in food procurement: the rabbit stick, the spear, the bow and arrow, the sling, and the gorge.

Rabbit Stick

The most primitive weapon you can devise is the rabbit stick; a thick staff the length of your arm which can be hurled with considerable force. It is effective against small game that halts motionless in response to aggressive action.

Spear

Spears can be fashioned from long, straight saplings. The end can be sharpened to a point, or affixed with a knife, jagged shard of bone, or sharpened piece of metal. An alternative method is to split the shaft a few inches down from the end and to insert a

piece of wood to function as a spreader. The two separated halves can then be sharpened to points.

Jab with the spear, do not throw it, especially if the point is a knife. You cannot afford to lose a knife in a survival situation.

Bow and Arrow

Primitive bows constructed from inferior materials by amateurs will soon break or suffer tension degradation and become useless. Such a weapon, then, must be replaced often.

Begin by selecting any dead, dry hardwood branch approximately one yard in length and ensure that it is free of knots and limbs. The amount of pressure required to flex one end of the branch several inches downward should be equal to the force necessary to likewise compress the opposite end.

Identify the natural curve of the branch, and with a knife or shard of rock, scrape down the inside_surface until the tension on both ends is uniform. (Any modification made to the forward-facing edge of the bow will weaken its structural integrity to the breaking point and drastically decrease the life of the weapon. Indeed, the force exerted by simply drawing the bowstring at this point may overstress the frame and snap it in two.)

To increase the bow's total tension (and consequently its range), fashion a second bow and lash the two together face to face. When completed, the device should resemble an "X" when viewed from the side. Bind the two upper ends together with cord, repeat the procedure with the two lower ends, and affix a bowstring to one bow only, leaving the reverse end unstrung.

Arrows should be fashioned from the straightest dry sticks available, measuring half the length of the bow. Remove the bark in its entirety and smooth out any irregularities in the shaft.

Warped arrows can be straightened by heating them over hot coals, provided the shaft is not scorched or burned. The wood will become pliable when sufficiently heated and can be held straight until it cools. Incidentally, wood which is treated by fire in this manner will harden and become stronger than before.

Sharpen one end of the shaft to a sharp point, allowing it to fire-harden, and notch the other end for the bowstring. Adding feathers to the notched end of an arrow will improve its flight characteristics, but is not a necessary component.

Sling

Made famous by a little boy named David, this weapon can be fabricated by attaching two six-inch pieces of cord to opposite ends of a palm-sized piece of leather or cloth. Place a stone in the cloth, wrap one cord around the middle finger and keep it gripped within your palm. Hold the other cord between your thumb and forefinger.

To launch the projectile, swing the sling several times in an overhead circle and then release the cord held between the thumb and forefinger. Your accuracy will improve with practice.

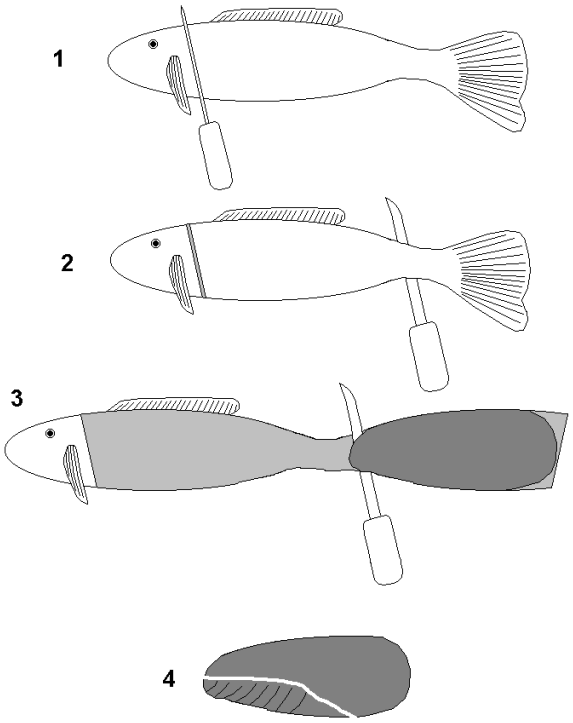
Gorge

An improvised fishhook, a gorge is a small shaft of wood which is sharp on both ends and notched in the middle where the fishing line is secured. When a fish swallows the attached bait, it will also swallow the gorge.

Preparation of Fish and Game

There are several ways to prepare fish, but filleting will provide you with clean portions of meat with no skin, scales, or bones.

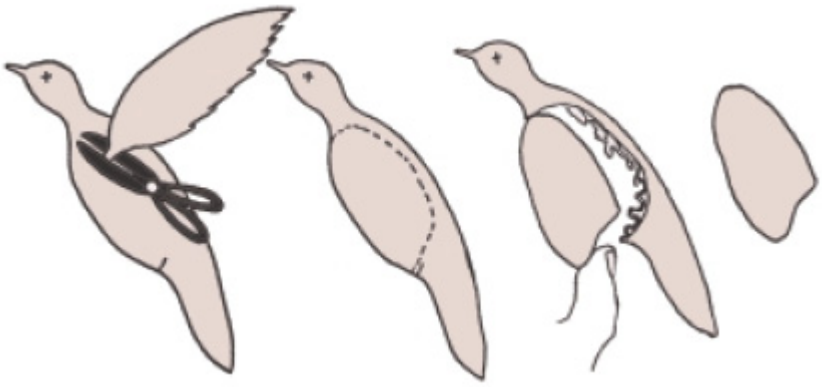
On a flat surface, lay the fish on its side and place a sharp knife just behind the front fin. Press down on the knife so that it cuts into the skin (as if to cut off the head) and stop when the blade hits the backbone running from head to tail below the dorsal fin.



Turn the knife sideways and slice through the body towards the tail and stop just before reaching the tail. As if turning the page of a book, flip the loose piece of the fish's body over so that it lays flat against the table and slice between the meat and skin until the knife emerges at the end and the filet comes free.

Locate the small section of filet containing small curved rib bones, and cut them out. Turn the fish over and repeat the process on the other side.

Small birds yield little meat, the largest portion being that of the breast. To harvest breast meat, first sever the wings by cutting as close to the body as possible. After locating the anus, place your thumb between it and the breastbone, and with a twisting motion, rend the breast from the body. Remove the skin by tearing it away from the meat.



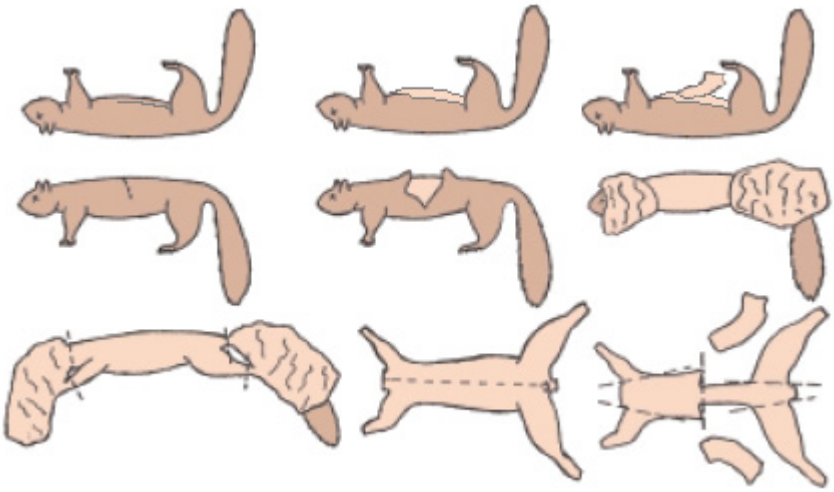
For squirrels and rabbits, place the animal on its back and make an incision from the anus to the ribcage, ensuring that the entrails and gall bladder are not pierced (this will contaminate the meat or at the very least, befoul the flavor).

Remove the entrails from the chest cavity by grasping them with your fingers and pulling them toward the tail.

Sever the head, feet, and tail. Flip the animal onto its chest and make an incision from left to right across the back. Insert both thumbs into this slit and pull in opposite directions, removing the skin.

Make sure that the meat does not become contaminated by hair, as hair oils or foreign particles lodged within the follicles can spoil the meat.

Remove each front leg by elevating them away from the chest wall and carving around each shoulder blade. Sever the hind legs by splitting the pelvis along the backbone on either side. Finally, divide the back into two parts by cutting behind the last rib on each side and removing them from the bony tail section where the hind legs were formerly attached. This will provide you with six serving-size portions of meat (four legs and two haunches).



Preparing deer is a complex process, and can be broken down into three parts: dressing, skinning, and butchering.

Dressing:

1. Prop animal up on its back in a flat location where it can't roll downhill.
2. Make a shallow, 2-3 inch cut to one side of penis or udder, cutting only through skin.
3. Cut to neck.
4. Cut through breastbone to free innards.
5. Circle anus with point of knife.
6. Pull out intestine, and tie off with string to prevent feces from contaminating the carcass.
7. Cut through muscle over center of rump to locate center of pelvic bone (will appear as a white line) and cut through it.
8. Push down on both legs to snap pelvic arch apart.
9. Cut esophagus and windpipe.
10. Roll carcass over, spilling out intestines.
11. Cut diaphragm (tissue separating chest cavity from abdominal cavity) to release upper organs from chest.
12. Remove liver and heart.
13. Prop carcass up so that blood drains out.

Skinning:
1. Hang by head.
2. Cut skin around base of head and peel away with fingers.
3. Peel hide down over shoulders.
4. Saw off front legs above the joint after cutting along inside of each leg and peeling off hide.
5. Skin down to rump.
6. Sever tailbone.
7. Cut off hind legs above knee.
8. Cut hide along inside of each leg and pull it completely off.

Butchering:
1. Pull front leg away from body and slice between leg and rib cage until you reach the shoulder.
2. Remove leg by cutting between shoulder blade and back.
3. Repeat with other leg.
4. Remove layer of brisket meat over ribs – grind for burger.
5. Cut meat at base of neck to begin removing a backstrap. There is one on each side of the spine.
6. Make two vertical incisions from shoulder to rump on either side of backstrap. (One cut following spine, other cut along the rib tops.)
7. Cut off backstrap at rump – backstraps can be butterflied for steaks or cut into roasts.
8. Repeat for other backstrap.
9. Cut one hind leg away, exposing ball and socket joint.
10. Push leg back to pop joint apart, then cut through joint.
11. Slide knife around tailbone and pelvis to remove leg.
12. Repeat for other leg.
13. Trim flank meat from below last rib and cut tenderloins from inside body.
14. Remove ribs by sawing along backbone. Cut around base of neck and twist backbone off.
15. Separate neck and head.
16. Bone neck to grind for burger.
17. Trim meat from ribs by cutting away ridge of meat and gristle along bottom.
18. Bone the meat between ribs for burger.

Hind leg:
1. Remove the rump portion of hind leg (edge of the shoulder). Cut the rump off at the top of the hip bone after first removing the thin, transparent layer of skin (silverskin) and pulling the muscle groups apart with your fingers. Rump can be roasted or sliced into steaks.
2. Cut leg into inch-thick steaks, working around leg bone with a fillet knife, then sliding meat down off the bone.

Front leg:
1. Cut along bony ridge in middle of shoulder blade.

2. Small side will be boneless chuck "tender," suitable for stews.
3. Bone the other side to make a shoulder roast.
4. Trim remaining meat from bones and grind shank meat (meat of shin bone) for burger.

Preserving Meat

Smoke Method

To smoke meat, fasten together two ponchos and place over a small fire to retain the smoke. Green wood or partially wet wood will produce the most smoke. Do not allow the fire to grow too hot or too large, as the goal is not to generate heat, but smoke.

Cut the meat into thin slices and drape them over a framework within the poncho enclosure, taking care to ensure that each strip of meat is separated from the others. The smoke must be able to "coat" the entirety of the surface area. If several pieces were to overlap, the parts touching each other would prevent the smoke from accomplishing its preservative function at these points of contact, and the result would be improperly cured (and therefore inedible) pieces of meat.

(Remember the Achilles heel principle: When the Fates prophesied that Achilles would die in the Trojan War, Thetis bathed her infant son in the River Styx to make him immortal. The waters made him invulnerable except for the heel by which his mother held him, and eventually he was struck a fatal wound in that location. Remember this principle and do not produce smoked meat with portions left raw.)

Meat smoked overnight in this manner will keep for approximately one week, while two days of continuous smoking will extend the shelf-life for two to four weeks. Meat properly smoked will resemble a dark, curled stick, and can be eaten without further cooking.

Dried Method

To preserve meat by drying, cut it into extremely thin strips, following the natural grain of the meat. Cover the meat strips to prevent contamination from insects, and hang them on a drying rack out of the reach of animals in a location receiving direct sunlight and plenty of breeze.

Allow the meat to dry completely before eating. The drying process is complete when the meat develops a dry, crisp texture and does not feel cool to the touch.

Freeze Method

In cold temperatures, meat can be preserved for an indefinite period of time by freezing. Of course, freezing is not a method of preparing meat. It must still be cooked before eating.

Brine and Salt Method

Meat can also be preserved by saturating it in saltwater, or by completely covering it with salt. The salt should be rinsed off before cooking.

Plant Food

Plants can be excellent sources of nutrition because they are plentiful, easily harvested, and in combinations can supply 100% of the vitamins and minerals the body requires to maintain good health.

Conversely, there are poisonous plants capable of causing illness or death, so it is important to eat only those plants which can be positively identified as safe for human consumption. Poison hemlock, for example, has killed people who mistook it for its relatives, wild carrots and wild parsnips.

Now is the time to obtain a book on edible plants, and to learn as much as possible about the foliage in your geographical region. Some plants have both edible and toxic parts, many are safe to eat only at certain times of the year, and others may have poisonous relatives which closely resemble their comestible brethren. For these reasons, a book with color photographs is best.

If the economic collapse has found you unprepared and such a book is not available, the Universal Edibility Test can be used to determine which plants are safe to consume and which are to be avoided.

There are many plants throughout the world. Tasting or swallowing even a small portion of certain varieties can cause severe discomfort, extreme internal disorders, and death. If you have the slightest doubt concerning the edibility of any given plant, apply the Universal Edibility Test before eating any portion of it.

Universal Edibility Test

1. Test only one part of a potential food plant at a time.
2. Separate the plant into its basic components - leaves, stems, roots, buds, and flowers.
3. Smell the food for strong or acid odors. Remember, smell alone does not indicate a plant is edible or inedible.
4. Do not eat for eight hours before starting the test.
5. During the eight hours you abstain from eating, test for contact poisoning by placing a piece of the plant part you are testing on the inside of your elbow or wrist. Usually fifteen minutes is enough time to allow for a reaction.
6. During the test period, take nothing by mouth except purified water and the plant part you are testing.
7. Select a small portion of a single part and prepare it the way you plan to eat it.
8. Before placing the prepared plant part in your mouth, touch a small portion (a pinch) to the outer surface of your lip to test for burning or itching.
9. If after three minutes there is no reaction on your lip, place the plant part on your tongue, holding it there for fifteen minutes.
10. If there is no reaction, thoroughly chew a pinch and hold it in your mouth for fifteen minutes. **Do not swallow.**
11. If no burning, itching, numbing, stinging, or other irritation occurs during the fifteen minutes, swallow the food.
12. Wait eight hours. If any ill effects occur during this period, induce vomiting and drink a lot of water.
13. If no ill effects occur, eat a quarter cup of the same plant part prepared the same way. Wait another eight hours. If no ill effects occur, the plant part as prepared is safe for eating.

CAUTION
Test all parts of the plant for edibility, as some plants have both edible and inedible parts. Do not assume that a part that proved edible when cooked is also edible when raw. Test the part raw to ensure edibility before eating raw. The same part or plant may produce varying reactions in different individuals.

Before testing a plant for edibility, make sure there are enough plants to make the testing worth your time and effort. Each part of a plant (roots, leaves, flowers, and so on) requires more than twenty-four hours to test. Do not waste time testing a plant that is not relatively abundant in the area.

Consuming large portions of plant food on an empty stomach may cause diarrhea, nausea, or cramps. Two good examples of this are such familiar foods as green apples and wild onions. Even after testing plant food and finding it safe, eat in moderation.

You can see from the number of steps and the amount of time involved in testing for edibility just how important it is to be able to identify edible plants. To avoid potentially poisonous plants, stay away from any wild or unknown plants that have:

- Milky or discolored sap.
- Beans, bulbs, or seeds inside pods.
- Bitter or soapy taste.
- Spines, fine hairs, or thorns.
- Dill, carrot, parsnip, or parsley-like foliage.
- "Almond" scent in woody parts and leaves.
- Grain heads with pink, purplish, or black spurs.
- Three-leaved growth pattern.

Although using the above criteria as eliminators when choosing plants for the Universal Edibility Test will cause you to pass on the occasional edible plant, these guidelines will help you to avoid a greater number of plants that are potentially toxic to eat or touch.

WARNING
Do not eat mushrooms in a survival situation! The only way to tell if a mushroom is edible is by positive identification. There is no room for experimentation. Symptoms of the most dangerous mushrooms affecting the central nervous system may not show up for several days, after it is too late to reverse their effects.

Vitamins

As the global conflict known as World War Two was raging in the East, an ex-military pilot was flying over the rugged wastelands of Alaska when an equipment malfunction forced him to make an emergency crash-landing on a frozen lake in a remote area far from civilization.

He was an experienced outdoorsman who immediately began to prepare for an extended period of enforced isolation. Unfortunately, he perished after a relatively short time and the location of his body remained a mystery for over a decade. The rescue team who recovered his remains discovered a journal in which the man had recorded his actions from the time of the crash.

In the 1970's, the journal attracted the attention of the U.S. Air Force, who distributed copies to various sections to assist in survival training, for it seems there were many lessons to be learned from the dead man's mistakes. Identified as the chief contributing factor in the death was his imperfect assessment of the human body's nutritional requirements.

According to his journal, there was a dearth of big game in the woods around the lake, but the rabbit population was quite extensive and he experienced no difficulty in obtaining meat. Curiously enough, however, he began to notice a rapid decline in his weight. Soon his strength began to desert him, and his writing stopped completely. His last entry detailed his confusion of starving to death as he ate rabbit after rabbit. In the end, he starved to death on a full stomach.

Had he possessed a firmer grasp of nutritional health, he may well have survived. For instance, he would have greatly benefited from the knowledge that in a survival situation, the human body requires fat and oils. Unfortunately, although other portions of the animal contain these nutrients, the flesh of a rabbit is lean.

Ignorant of the fact that within the rabbit's stomach were contained the vitamins B, C, and E from leafy green grasses, that the eyes were rich in salt, and that the liver, heart, and kidneys contained vitamin A, these organs were discarded and the man succumbed to starvation due to a diet consisting largely of protein.

In this, the man's death is entirely instructive, for it is not enough to consume food – one must partake of the right types of food. Chart A lists the vitamins essential to human health, their benefits to the body, and from what sources they are derived.

In addition to vitamins, there are four other classifications to consider: carbohydrates, fats, proteins, and minerals. These are listed in Chart B.

Generally, a good diet will provide all of the vitamins that the body requires, but when a balanced diet cannot be maintained, sufficient levels of these essential nutrients can be derived from vitamin supplement tablets.

Not all multivitamins are created equal. Some are absorbed well by the body while others pass through relatively intact, their vitamin content untapped.

Studies of typical "one-a-day" or "A to Z" type hard tablet vitamins conducted by The Centers for Disease Control involving one million patients over a seven-year period showed absolutely no reduction in death rates from heart disease and stroke.

"These results are not surprising," explained Wayne Gorsek, founder of Nutraceutical Sciences Institute. "Many nutrients, like ginkgo, grape seed extract and CoQ10 are missing entirely. Additionally, the level of nutrients is pitifully low in these products. Plus, the forms of the nutrients are generally the least expensive, many of the minerals are just ground-up rock and they simply don't work nearly as well as the best forms."

The most effective forms—Natural Blend of Vitamin E, Ester C®, L-OptiZinc®, and Betatene™— are up to twenty times more powerful than standard nutrients.

Essential Vitamins

Vitamin	Benefit	Source
A	Prevents degenerative vision, maintains immune system, and assists in the functioning of most major organs.	Dairy products, animal fat, leafy green vegetables, stomach contents of plant-eating animals (which generally can be added to soups without being much noticed).
B Complex (B1, B2, B3, B5, B12)	Strengthens the nervous system, maintains healthy skin, fuels new cell production, aids in digestion, sustains the respiratory tract, produces bone marrow, and assists the metabolism.	Dairy products, leafy green plants such as dandelion and bannana leaf, meat, stomach contents of plant-eating animals, pine nuts, walnuts, wild grains, and wild rice.
C	Helps to build healthy tissues and tendons, increases iron absorption, essential for healthy teeth and gums, and speeds the healing of wounds and fractures.	Fresh fruit, vegetables, and pine needles (from which a primitive tea can be brewed).
D	Assists in the building of bone and cartilage, and regulates the absorption of phosphorous and calcium in the body.	Eggs, dairy products, and fatty fish (tuna, salmon, sardines, oysters).
E	Associated with muscular function.	Wild rice, leafy green vegetables.
K	Assists in the clotting of blood.	Egg yolks, leafy green plants, fish liver oil, and stomach contents of plant-eating animals.

Chart A

Chart B

Additional Considerations

Nutrient	Benefit	Source
Carbohydrates	These are excellent sources of energy, and prevent the nausea often caused by the breakdown of body fats.	Sugars, honey, fruit, cattail roots, tubers (always cook), and cereals.
Fats	These are an excellent source of concentrated energy (and require water to digest).	Most animals and fish, certain plants, eggs, milk, and nuts.
Proteins	Occurring in all living matter, these promote tissue growth and repair, supplying amino acids which are necessary for good health.	Meat, eggs, fish, nuts, and grains.
Minerals	Minerals (sodium, calcium, potassium, phosphorous, chlorine, magnesium, sulfur, flourine, iron, iodine) are necessary for good health.	Salt water may be boiled to produce sodium, and the eyes of animals contain salt. The remainder can be obtained by eating a variety of foods, where they occur naturally.

Nutrient quantity is another important consideration. Many companies will include certain essential nutrients in their products, but in trace amounts providing no benefit to the body. Labels must be examined very closely in order to detect this type of deception. Beware of nutrients which are listed as multiple ingredients. If the label reads, "Calcium (carbonate, citrate)," this is an indication that up to 99% of the less effective carbonate form of calcium was included as opposed to just 1% of the more powerful citrate form (which is up to eleven times more readily absorbed by the body). If a nutrient has no dosage listed, then the amount is virtually zero. Daily supplements which do not contain 500 mg of calcium citrate and 700 IU of Vitamin D are not providing enough nutrients to significantly protect bone mass and reduce fractures.

Capsules are to be preferred over tablets. Many tablets contain hard-to-digest fillers, binders and coatings which are compression-formed at high temperatures, destroying nutritional value. Your supplements should contain highly-concentrated nutrients, bioactive forms, and digestive aids in order to achieve maximum absorption, such as the previously-mentioned Ester-C® and L-OptiZinc®, Bioperine™, chelated minerals, and digestive enzymes. Pharmaceutical grade capsules are easier to swallow than rock-hard tablets and dissolve more rapidly for maximum absorption.

Manufacturers of quality supplements observe Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP's), and you should verify that any company you patron has established a GMP. The purpose of a GMP is to ensure that the label accurately represents the constitution of the final product; that it disintegrates, is bioavailable, and unadulturated. Request that your retailer inquire as to the GMP of their supplier.

Supplements should be hypoallergenic and free of extraneous ingredients such as artificial flavor, colors, or preservatives. Although some of these may be safe, many are not, and their presence is a sign that the manufacturers are not concerned with quality.

As a rule, the most economically-priced supplements do not meet the potency claims made on the label and may be made with inferior raw ingredients. Prices which seem too good to be true, probably are. If several reliable brands are priced between $9 and $12 per hundred capsules, and the same ingredients are found elsewhere for $4 - $6 per hundred, you need to be very suspicious. These may have contamination problems or solubility issues.

Most "timed-release" products are not worth the extra money and may even be less effective than the standard form. Some nutrients are effective only in very high doses, and with timed-release pills, these levels are not attained due to slow dissolution and absorption. In addition, timed-release pills are often improperly timed, causing the tablet to disintegrate and dissolve at a time or place not conducive to proper absorption by the intestinal tract. As quality standard supplements are fairly well-absorbed and utilized by the body, slow-release forms are simply unnecessary.

Supplements should be taken with food. Nutrients occur in nature as combinations with each other and work together to improve digestion, absorption and other physiological processes. Supplements are concentrated, and sometimes they can cause digestive upset or abdominal discomfort. When taken in large doses on an empty stomach, multivitamins can produce nausea.

Supplements can be stored at room temperature in dry conditions. They should not be left for prolonged periods in high heat, nor should they be stored in the refrigerator. Each time cold bottles of supplements are opened in a warm external

environment, condensation will form on the surface of the pills. Eventually, they will become wet and begin to dissolve. If kept cool and dry, most supplements will last for years. Minerals do not deteriorate with time. The best course of action is to buy what you need for a four-year period and store unopened bottles in a cool, dark room.

While the subject of nutrition is a vast and complex field, the reader has herein been presented with the basics necessary for survival. If forced to procure food in the field, make sure any plants you harvest are positively identified as safe for human consumption. Most of the vegetables and fruits available for purchase at your local supermarket can be found in the wild. It is important to cleanse them thoroughly, but do not soak them in water, as a prolonged inundation will reduce the vitamin content. A preferable alternative is to boil them in soups or stews to retain most of the vitamins that would otherwise be lost. While the idea of eating certain foods may be repulsive to some, the alternative is a slow death by starvation.

If vitamin supplements cannot be obtained, make sure to consume a variety of foods, and thus a variety of vitamins and minerals. Eat plenty of green leafy plants, gather eggs, nuts, pine needles and other sources of food. Set out fish traps. Consider eating the parts of an animal you would not usually consider a "prime cut."

Survival is not for the weak of heart. Those who do whatever is necessary still have no assurance of survival. Nonetheless, the will to survive, some advanced planning, and a steady supply of various foods can increase your chances of survival.

Water

If food will be difficult to procure, the precious commodity of water will prove an all but impossible resource to obtain via traditional methods.

In addition to your food cache, you need to maintain a rotational supply of fresh water. Due to the expense of commercially bottled water, the greater portion of your reserve should consist of tap water.

Human beings require a minimum of one gallon of drinking water per day. Unlike food, water will for a time remain a renewable resource through rainfall, and therefore a four-year stockpile is unnecessary. (In any event, water has a relatively short shelf-life of approximately six months and must be rotated out, the containers cleaned, and then refilled with a fresh supply.)

The size of your water stockpile is entirely contingent upon how quickly it can be renewed. Obviously, if you could guarantee the collection of four gallons of water per day, every day, for a family of four, then a one-day supply would be sufficient. Suppose, however, that it does not rain for several days, or a couple of weeks, or even a month. Your water reserves must be of sufficient size to enable replenishment prior to depletion. 150-200 gallons will sustain a family of five for four to six weeks.

It is important that water is stored in containers specifically designed for that purpose. Harmful chemicals will seep into the water from containers made of plastics and other materials unless properly treated to prevent contamination. Water should be stored at moderate temperatures away from direct sunlight and chemicals such as gasoline and pesticides.

To ensure that drinking water is safe for consumption, ten drops of liquid chlorine bleach (Clorox) should be added per gallon of stored water, purging it of any micro-organic life-forms. Containers should be filled completely to the top in order to force out

all air. A slight scent of chlorine is common and harmless. Boil the water if you are concerned.

The replenishment of water reserves can be accomplished by various means, including the collection of freshwater from ponds and streams, rainfall accumulators, and melted snow.

Rainfall

A naturally soft water, rain is free of minerals, chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals. It is usually collected from the roofs of houses and picks up very little contamination when it falls. You can procure a remarkable amount of rainwater from your gutters via a network of rain barrels.

Rainwater in rural areas is relatively pure apart from a small quantity of dispersed gas particles which may adhere to it while falling through the atmosphere, however, urban rainwater is not completely free of pollutants. It may contain sediments, dust, aerosols, and synthetic gases resulting from industrial emissions. Carbonates, nitrates, and sulfates in the atmosphere can react with water vapor and form carbonic, nitric, and sulfuric acids, forming acid rain. Even if raindrops could traverse the atmosphere and remain pure water, they would become unsanitary the moment they hit your roof, acquiring traces of dirt, bird droppings, debris, rust, leaves, and other contaminants as they coursed across the shingles. Older roofs comprised of materials such as tar and gravel or asbestos will also generate harmful contaminants.

Precautions, then, must be taken to purify such bounty "freshly squeezed from the clouds" before the water is consumed.

The following mathematical formula will provide you a means by which to measure your approximate rainfall collection capacity: 1 inch of rainfall per 1,000 square feet = 600 gallons of rainwater.

Your roof area is equal to the total square feet of your house, plus the extension of your eaves. You need not factor in the angle of your roof, as rain falls evenly across every portion of it. A house with the exterior dimensions of 36 feet by 46 feet and an eaves overhang of 2 feet per side, will total 40 feet by 50 feet. Multiplying 40 times 50 results in a total collection area of 2,000 square feet.

As one inch of rainfall provides approximately 600 gallons of water for a 1,000 square foot collection area, and this house has a 2,000 square foot collection area, a multiplication of 600 gallons by a factor if 2 will result in 1,200 gallons. In a region with an average rainfall of 20 inches per year, this structure will provide a potential 24,000 gallons of water in one year.

Of course, rainwater harvesting systems are not 100% efficient, having been estimated under practical conditions at 70% to 90%. No rainwater harvesting system can collect every drop of water which contacts your roof. A portion will undoubtedly spill out of the gutters, and a quantity is sure to be blown clear away. Additional buildings such as barns or sheds can also be used to increase your harvest.

All systems should employ covered barrels or cisterns that prevent the water from accumulating leaves and other contaminants. They should also include a filter; a funnel with mesh in the bottom and overlaid with gravel will work admirably. The first few minutes of rainwater should not be collected because it is the most contaminated.

To construct a rainwater system, a little more preparation is required than simply placing a barrel under a gutter downspout. First, level the ground for your barrel and set two cinder blocks in place. Place the barrel on the blocks. You will need an additional downspout fitting, an "elbow" which will extend the rain conduit out from the side of the house several inches. Place the new elbow against the downspout with the bottom of the new piece reaching to an inch above the barrel. Mark the existing downspout where it will be trimmed to allow for the addition of the elbow. Set the barrel and elbow aside and measure down two inches from the mark on the downspout. The extra inches will provide sufficient room for the old downspout to fit into the elbow securely. Use a hacksaw to cut off the old downspout and then fit the new elbow over the end of the downspout and fasten it in place with sheet metal screws.

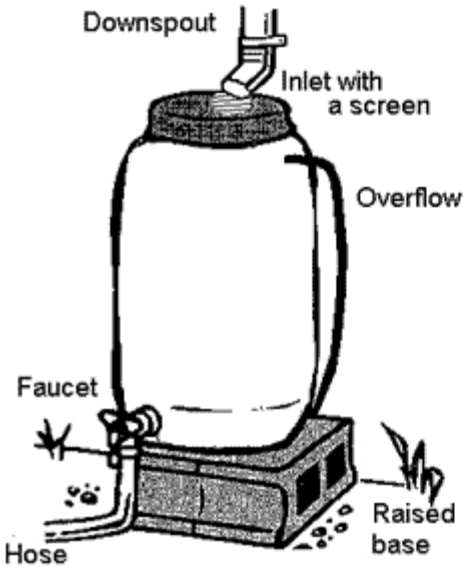
Drill a ¾-inch hole in the barrel about six inches from the bottom. Squeeze caulk around the hole on both sides. Assemble a spigot and coupling, wrapping a piece of Teflon tape on each threaded section to form a tight seal. Slip on a washer and poke the threaded end of the coupling through the hole from the outside. On the inside of the barrel, put a washer over the pipe and fasten everything together with a bushing.

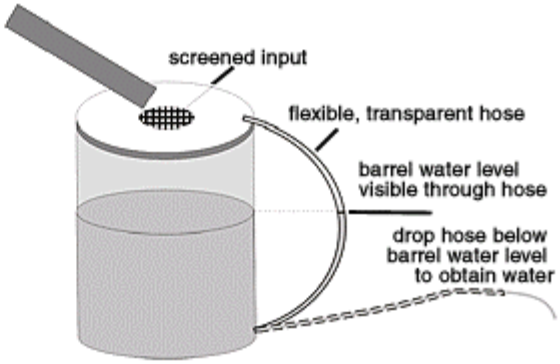
Several inches from the top of the barrel, drill another ¾-inch hole for the overflow valve. Squeeze some caulk around the hole, both inside and out, place a washer on a hose adapter accessory and push it through the hole. On the inside, slip on a washer and Teflon tape, and tighten everything together with the lock nut. With a garden hose connected to this safety valve, the overflow can be directed out into the yard.

Finally, cut a hole in the barrel lid where the new downspout elbow will drain into it. Cover the hole with a small piece of screen to prevent mosquitoes from gaining access.

Set the completed barrel on the concrete blocks, make sure the downspout will direct the water properly, and await the rain.

Note: If you attach a transparent hose to the spigot at the bottom, you will be able to monitor your water level by flexing the hose upward above the barrel top. Water will flow into the hose only as high as the level within the barrel.





In addition to having a bad odor and taste, contaminated water can contain microorganisms that cause diseases such as dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis. You should purify all water of uncertain purity before using it for drinking, food preparation, or hygiene.

There are many ways to purify water. None is perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods. Three easy purification methods are outlined below. The first two measures will kill most microbes, but will not remove other contaminants such as heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals. Before purifying, let any suspended particles settle to the bottom, or strain them through layers of paper towels, coffee filters, or clean cloth.

1. **Boiling** - Boiling is the safest method of purifying water. Bring water to a rolling boil for ten minutes, keeping in mind that some of the water will evaporate. Let the water cool before drinking. The taste of boiled water can be improved by putting oxygen back into it. This can be accomplished by pouring the water back and forth between two clean containers. This will also improve the taste of stored water.

2. **Disinfection** - You can use household liquid bleach to kill microorganisms. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, color-safe bleaches, or bleaches with added cleaners. Add ten drops of bleach per gallon of water, stir and let stand for thirty minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand an additional fifteen minutes.

While the two methods described above will kill most microbes in water, distillation will remove microbes that resist these methods, as well as heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals.

3. **Distillation** - Distillation involves boiling water and then collecting the vapor that condenses back to water. The condensed vapor will not include salt and other impurities. To distill, use a clean pot with a lid that has a knob-type handle in the center. Fill the pot halfway with water. Turn the pot lid upside-down, tie a cup under the handle so that the cup will hang right-side-up (make sure the cup is not dangling into the water) and boil the water for twenty minutes. The water that drips from the lid into the cup is distilled.

Ponds and Streams

Purify water from lakes, ponds, swamps, springs, or streams. In addition to the methods above, water can be purified by:

- Using water purification tablets. (Follow the directions provided.)
- Placing five drops of two percent tincture of iodine in a canteen full of clear water. If the canteen is full of cloudy or cold water, use ten drops. (Let the canteen of water stand for thirty minutes before drinking.)

By drinking unpurified water, you may contract diseases or swallow organisms that can harm you. Examples of such diseases or organisms are:

- Dysentery - Severe, prolonged diarrhea with bloody stools, fever, and weakness.
- Cholera and typhoid - You may be susceptible to these diseases regardless of inoculations.
- Flukes - Stagnant, polluted water often contains blood flukes. If you swallow flukes, they will bore into the bloodstream, live as parasites, and cause disease.

- Leeches - If you swallow a leech, it can hook onto the throat passage or inside the nose. It will suck blood, create a wound, and move to another area. Each bleeding wound may become infected.

Snow and Ice

Do not eat without melting and purifying. Eating snow and ice can reduce body temperature and will lead to dehydration. Keep in mind that snow and ice are no purer than the water from which they came.

Shelter

As the black horse of the third seal plunges the world into economic chaos, the issue perhaps most critical to survival will be that of housing, for it is commendable that a man provide his family with many years' worth of provisions, but such efforts are ultimately unproductive if he is evicted from the dwelling he has stored them within.

Those who have not yet paid off their mortgages will find banks unsympathetic to the economic crisis and will be ordered to meet their financial obligations or else vacate the premises. As landlords inflate rent prices to exorbitant rates beyond the means of an impoverished citizenry, housing will become a major issue, especially in regions experiencing cold temperatures and icy winds.

The result is that scores of homeless families will tread the streets, many crowding into abandoned buildings and broken-down vehicles, while others frequent the underneath of bridges and interiors of subways and sewer systems. Many lives will be lost due to the exposure, thirst, starvation, and violence so prevalent within the homeless community, and many other casualties will ensue from the struggle between the authorities and those forcibly resisting eviction.

Even home owners and those fortunate enough to remain in their residences unmolested will be cut off from utility services – no electricity, no gas, no water, no phone, and therefore no refrigeration, no cooking appliances, no air conditioning, no heat, no toilets, no showers, no lighting, and no communication.

The scarcity of these necessities, then, must be anticipated and augmented in advance according to a well-designed plan of survival. In addition to stocking your house with sufficient quantities of these indispensables, you should also prepare a "crisis bag" which can be grabbed at a moment's notice if you and your family must flee with little warning. To assist you in putting together such a kit, the following suggestions have been provided:

Light

Flashlights – Two or three small flashlights will provide excellent illumination. Do not carry a large supply of batteries in your crisis bag, as they will add an inordinate amount of weight to the pack while reducing space for other necessities. On the other hand, there is no reason a large amount cannot be stored about your home. Also make sure you have a spare bulb or two.

Although krypton, halogen, and xenon bulbs are hundreds of times brighter than ordinary flashbulbs, these dazzlingly brilliant marvels of illuminative technology also drain battery power at an alarming rate, prompting the development of a new, longer-

lasting source of power known as the lithium cell. For best battery performance, buy flashlights with traditional incandescent bulbs.

An LED flashlight is one which you may want to consider. It is many times more efficient than a halogen or fluorescent bulb, uses much less power, and lasts for up to ten years.

For about $40, the Coleman Free Play Flashlight will provide you with a source of light independent from batteries. With a built-in hand crank and a direct drive generator, the Coleman Free Play will provide six minutes of illumination in return for thirty seconds of cranking.

Priced affordably at $15.00, the Economy Forever Flashlight is a magnetic flashlight. It uses simple electromagnetic induction to charge a capacitor instead of a battery. Unlike a battery, the capacitor will never lose its ability to store a charge. Fifteen to thirty seconds of shaking provides up to six minutes of super bright light from the LED. A Micro Economy model is also available, and both can be found at www.modernoutpost.com.

Modern Outpost also offers a solar flashlight for $17.00. The dual battery-compartment design of the solar flashlight is unique, as one powers the flashlight and recharges the NiMh or NiCd rechargeable batteries, and the other powers the flashlight with ordinary alkaline batteries or rechargeables. The charging compartment is connected to a solar panel, so that during daylight hours, the panel will charge the batteries. A full charge will provide four and-a-half hours of light. When using both compartments, the flashlight will draw power from both sets of batteries, thus extending the flashlight run-time.

Candles – Flashlight illumination can be supplemented with candlepower. Nuwick candles, BCB candles, and candle lanterns are items that you should stock up on. These survival candles will provide you with up to one hundred-twenty hours of light, a small measure of heat, and a flame to cook with when the situation arises. They can be found at many Army-Navy stores. Make sure to stock up on matches or lighters.

Light Sticks – Light sticks, or glow sticks, as they are also known, provide a disposable form of illumination which is activated by "cracking" the outer plastic case. These lights burn for approximately ten hours, and have a shelf-life of two years. They are frequently available in a wide range of colors.

Although light sticks normally sell for about $1.50 each in department stores, bargains can be found over the internet where companies such as www.glowrus.com sell five hundred six-inch sticks equipped with lanyards for $195, or thirty-nine cents each! Four-inch versions which glow for six hours can be had for only twenty-five cents per piece.

Lamps – Oil lamps are a time-honored solution, and can be found cheaply in many Dollar Stores. Oil can be obtained at Wal-Mart.

Heat

Candles – As mentioned above, survival candles can be obtained from Army-Navy stores which will provide a measure of heat.

Wa*rmer Packs* – Grabber Mycoal (grabberwarmers.com) sells a variety of warmer packs which are air-activated. Foot warmers fit inside shoes or boots and provide five hours of heat. Toe warmers adhere to the exterior of socks and provide six hours of

one hundred degree comfort. Body warmers cling to clothing and generate one hundred twenty-seven degrees of heat for twelve hours. Hand warmers fit in gloves or pockets and provide a portable heat source of one hundred thirty-five degrees for seven hours. Mega Warmers last for twelve hours, and Ultra Warmers are good for twenty-four hours.

Similar products can be found at Army-Navy stores or in the camping department of your local Wal-Mart or K-Mart.

Blankets – Although traditional blankets are much too bulky too add to your crisis bag, you should have plenty stored away in your closets, perhaps four or five per person. When the temperature drops below freezing, you will be glad of the extra insulation.

For your emergency kit, you can include survival blankets, also known as "space blankets" due to the shiny reflective foil. Better blankets are coated on *both* sides with a special heat-reflective metallic surface which reflects the vast majority of radiated body heat back to the individual while forming an impermeable barrier to rain and wind and reducing heat loss caused by evaporation.

Wet Weather Gear - Rain ponchos can be found for less than a dollar at your local Wal-Mart which weigh next to nothing and are compact enough to fit in a pocket. They do tend to be susceptible to gusts of wind and will blow up around your shoulders in heavy gale.

On the other hand, a good G.I. poncho is heavier and can also be used as a ground covering and sleeping bag of sorts. These will cost closer to $30.00 and will take up more storage space in your crisis bag, but a liner can be added for an additional $30.00 which will not only insulate you better against the cold, but can be used as a blanket.

A couple of large umbrellas can also be arranged on the ground in such a way as to fashion a make-shift shelter. Simply lash the handle and several of the ribs to stakes in the ground and you will have a secure refuge from the wind and rain while you rest or sleep.

Toilet

Bruce and Phyllis Hopkins of Best Prices Storable Foods (www.internet-grocer.net) sell a Make-A-Potty for $25.00. This is a plastic toilet seat which attaches to any standard bucket with a twelve-inch opening. Add a trash can liner, and you're in business. From the camping department of your local Wal-Mart store, you can buy a twelve-pack of Bio-Blue Toilet Deodorant. Pour two quarts of unfiltered water into the trash can liner, add one pouch of the toilet deodorant, and you will have an odor-free commode which will last for days. Dispose of the liner bag when the odor becomes noticeable.

The Preparedness Center (www.preparedness.com) sells a snap-on seat which fits any standard five or six-gallon bucket for $16.00.

For $30.00, Major Surplus and Survival (www.majorsurplusnsurvival.com) sells two five-gallon buckets, one snap-on hinged toilet seat and cover, and one container each of Bio-gel and Bio-blue to digest and deodorize waste. (Bio-gel solidifies waste to prevent splash-up.)

You will also want to have on hand a large supply of toilet paper and hand sanitizer.

In the outdoors, a toilet can be fashioned by digging a hole at least two feet deep. Throw in a layer of dirt after each use and cover it completely when the waste is one foot from the top. In order to dig the hole, you will need a compact shovel for your crisis bag.

Also, while outdoors (or if you run out of toilet paper), it might occur to you to wonder how previous civilizations dealt with the issue of cleanliness and sanitation before name brand toilet tissue was invented.

It seems that for purposes of personal hygiene, the common practice in early rural America was to leave a corncob hanging from a string in the outhouse, or to provide a box of "disposable" cobs. In later years, paper from discarded books or newspapers was preferred. Today in India, the preferred technique is to stand outdoors and pour a small pitcher of water over the buttocks while the left hand functions as a scrubber.

The advice of this author is to seek out public facilities in such places as libraries, restaurants, stores, government office buildings, or any structure which appears to be operating. Failing that, visit the portable potties at the park, or select a good campsite in a forested area, grab a handful of leaves, and break out the collapsible shovel.

TravelMate Personal Hygiene Solutions (www.travelmateinfo.com) offers the TravelMate accessory which allows females to urinate while standing up, dispensing with the need to "hover" uncomfortably over dirty toilet seats and eliminating the difficulties inherent in answering emergency "calls of nature" alongside the highway or in the woods.

Storage is simple - after a quick wash under the faucet, the device can be slipped into a carrying case, which easily fits into a purse or the front pocket of a standard pair of jeans, using less storage space than a pair of sunglasses.

There's also no need to worry about breaking it, because the flexible, yet durable medical-grade plastic is a type which springs back to its original shape after being sat on, twisted, or otherwise bent. It sells for $4.59, or a three-pack for $12.95.

Cleanliness

Your advance planning has provided you with water to drink, but this precious commodity should not be wasted on bathing. The solution is "Quick Bath," an alternative bathing system designed to remove dust, dirt, and perspiration without soap, water or towels. Each Quick Bath package contains eight cotton-blend washcloths pre-moistened with an evaporating no-rinse cleanser and soothing moisturizer.

According to the manufacturer, each bag provides two adult baths, and one can easily handle three small children. Each compact resealable bag weighs less than five ounces, so a dozen or so will fit easily into your crisis bag, and many more can be stored in your home. Each Quick Bath is $3.60 plus shipping, and can be ordered from Best Prices Storable Foods along with a No-Rinse Shampoo.

Medical

It is likely that professional medical care may be unavailable. A good first aid kit, then, is an absolute necessity. Many commercial first aid kits are seriously deficient. Most include little more than a few band-aids and bandages to cope with minor cuts or scrapes, some aspirin and salve, and perhaps a compress and triangular bandage. Many low-budget commercial survival kits include even less in the way of medical supplies.

These hardly come close to the sort of supplies that might be needed in a survival situation. Authorities on wilderness and survival medicine stress the importance of carrying a comprehensive medical kit with plenty of extra compresses and large capacity bandages and dressings to cope with serious traumatic injury.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that it is unlikely that an ambulance will be available to transport you to a hospital around the corner. This is where wilderness and survival emergency medical treatment differs from traditional first aid or EMT training. In fact, the terms "first aid" and "first aid kit" become something of a misnomer when used in the context of survival. Certainly, there will be a period of "first aid," but "survival medical treatment" and "medical kit" are a more correct description. It goes far beyond initial first aid.

Wilderness Medical (www.wildernessmedical.com) offers a variety of top-quality medical kits from $165 to $1,000. Consider their Kilimanjaro kit when circumstances demand that you be the best-equipped medical facility within practical reach.

The Kilimanjaro is intended for adventurers whose base camp will be reached with the assistance of a Sherpa, bush plane, river raft, or yak; in places where rescue and timely evacuation are simply not an option. The Kilimanjaro contains a broad range of expedition medications, medical equipment, and supplies. If you customize your kit with prescription items, you will be prepared for virtually any emergency.

The contents of the Kilimanjaro have been chosen in accordance with the highest medical standards and currently accepted wilderness medical practice. The modular organization, module contents lists, and directory list make finding items easy. Each Kilimanjaro kit contains an instruction manual keyed to the most common wilderness medical emergencies, which will assist you in the proper use of the supplies and medications. The kit is priced at $990.

Outdoor Research (www.orgear.com) offers a more affordable line of kits. The Expedition, their largest kit, is priced at $198 in kit form or $56 in a pouch.

Intended for truly large trips to the far reaches of the globe, the Expedition represents the most sophisticated, comprehensive outdoor medical kit available, short of an EMT kit. Intended for long stays in wilderness areas, this kit contains the most important items a group is likely to need. It goes light on the easily obtainable over-the-counter pills and concentrates on providing sufficient quantities of supplies for serious injuries.

The most important ingredient in effective first aid is knowledge. This kit includes the best kit-sized sources available: “The Pocket Doctor,” a terrific manual written by OR Medical Advisory Board member Dr. Steve Bezruchka, and “First Aid,” a reprint of the first aid chapter in “Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills.”

Whether you choose a ready-made kit or design your own, make sure to keep it current. Medication generally loses its effectiveness after a certain period of time and must be rotated out.

Towelettes, pads or swabs of various antiseptics, adhesives, cleansers and the like, packed in individual application packets are very convenient, yet the shelf life of this packaging tends to be pretty short, much less than if the product was in liquid form in a bottle. All too often you tear open the package to discover the pad is dried out and useless because the packaging leaked or was punctured. If you rely on these sorts of packaged products, be sure to replace them with fresh ones every year or two.

If you do make use of the medical supplies, don't forget to replace them at the earliest opportunity. Otherwise, over time, you will deplete the kit of the essential supplies you may need one day. The manufacturers can supply replacement items and modules, or you might find them at a local safety or medical supply store.

Cooking

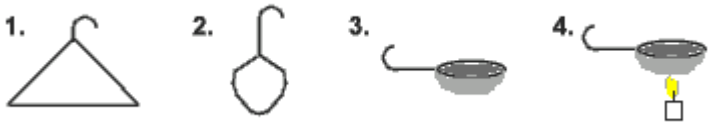
For the home, a wood-burning stove with a cook-top would be quite a luxury, provided an ample supply of timber is locally available. Remember that fires produce smoke, and a dark column of haze spiraling from your dwelling is sure to attract attention, so it may be prudent to do your cooking at night.

Of course, if you are out in the open, a blazing campfire will also betray your position to others, so be aware of the possible consequences when starting a fire and do your best to eliminate or reduce your vulnerability.

A camp saw will be needed to harvest firewood.

Life Lite survival candles can be purchased from www.philoxia.com and are designed for cooking. The Omega Life Lite features four wicks and can boil two cups of water in less than ten minutes. It can burn continuously for one hundred hours, and costs approximately $40.00. Smaller cooking candles can be purchased for as low as $16.00.

If you have a metal coat hanger and some aluminum foil handy, you can fashion a frying pan with which to boil water or cook food. Simply bend the triangular portion of the hanger into a circle, and wrap foil around the sides to make the pan. Add water or food, and place over a burning candle for about thirty minutes.



Don't forget your outdoor grill as a potential cooking appliance.

For outdoors, be sure to include some form of firestarter in your crisis bag, whether a flint and steel sparking device, waterproof matches, or lighters.

For $250, you can have a solar oven which will cook meals with the power of sunlight. The Global Sun Oven is portable unit measuring 19" x 19" and 11" deep. Essentially, it consists of a box minus its lid, with four reflective panels sprouting upward from each side; a design which directs rays into the oven where temperatures of up to 400 degrees Fahrenheit are achieved. The unit is available from B&A Products or directly from the manufacturer, Sun Ovens International, at www.sunoven.com.

If the price tag is too high, a quite satisfactory home-built solar oven can be constructed for $5-10 in materials (cardboard, aluminum foil, Elmer's glue, and a piece of glass for the lid) and one or two evenings of work. Solar Cookers International (www.solarcookers.org) sells books on solar cooking and detailed sets of plans for as low as $5. Free on-line plans for a variety of designs can also be found at www.solarcooking.org/plans.htm.

Refrigeration

The Pot-in-Pot Preservation Cooling System was developed recently in Nigeria by local teacher Mohammed Bah Abba. It requires two differently sized clay pots, sand, and a small cloth.

Place a small earthenware pot inside a larger one and fill the intervening space around the sides with sand which should be constantly kept moist. Fill the small inner pot with fruit, vegetables, or a canned drink, and place a wet cloth over the top. Place this desert refrigerator in a dry, well-ventilated area, and as water in the sand evaporates through the surface of the outer pot, it will draw away the heat located in the center and destroy harmful microorganisms. Abba's experiment now keeps eggplants fresh for twenty-seven days rather than the usual three, and other vegetables keep for up to three weeks.

Communications

Cell phones and land lines will most likely be out of service. CB's can be powered by battery packs which can be re-energized with solar chargers. Generally, CB's have a five-mile range, depending on the antenna, however, the parties with whom you wish to keep in touch must have CB radios, as well, must reside within the operating range of the unit, and of course the frequencies can be easily monitored by others.

Two-way radios use an FM frequency and have a one to two-mile range. They are powered by standard batteries and are more private than CB radios, but can still be monitored by others. Since anyone can pick up your channel, provided their equipment has the same number of channels as yours, manufacturers have designed some models with a privacy code or private call feature. While others can still tune in on your channel, the private call feature scrambles your voice so your conversation won't be understood by outside parties.

Make sure you get a radio which operates on FRS (Family Radio Service) frequencies and not the GMRS (General Mobil Radio Service). The GMRS radios have a five-mile range, but require you to buy a license and to pay a fee for use of the extended-distance radio. Communication on the frequency may only be transmitted by the license holder and immediate family members. Be aware that some of these radios will self-license, which means they can be tracked even if you haven't registered with the FCC. Licensing creates public records of licensees and their radio frequencies, and the FCC has records of every system for enforcement purposes. An operator of a malfunctioning radio, or one that is causing interference on other channels, can be identified easily.

A two-mile Bell South 2252 FRS radio with twenty-two channels and thirty-eight privacy codes can be purchased from K-Mart for $13.00.

For monitoring standard AM/FM bands for news purposes, Grundig manufactures a Self-Powered Radio which also provides two bands of shortwave frequencies. Due to its built-in generator, this radio can provide one hour of news and information with just one minute of cranking. Retailing for about $40.00, this radio can be found in most department stores.

Alternative Shelters

If it has not been taken from you, your home will provide you with protection from the elements, but has it been sufficiently fortified to protect you from invading thieves and murderers intent on robbing you of your resources and harming your family?

Windows and doors provide access into your home and therefore must be reinforced. Security windows make break-ins difficult. Windows are normally the weakest static construction element in a house and are therefore the favored point of entry for burglars and thieves.

Modern window technology counteracts these problems. An investment in high-tech security windows is the most important step in safeguarding your family and property. Investigate these options for yourself, especially if you are considering replacement windows anyway.

Consider boarding or bricking up certain windows once disaster strikes. Iron bars can also be installed.

Your doors should be solid wood or steel and reinforced by deadbolts and locks such as the Door Club™ or Taylor Brothers Door Lock which cannot be picked or forced.

After securing all means of access, consider construction of a secret "panic room" which will be undetectable to intruders. If your home security measures are defeated, your family can retreat to this "hiding place" until hostile forces depart. Ideally, your survival cache will be located within this safe room both for use during extended stays and to prevent their theft by looters.

Preferably, it will be fireproof, bulletproof, and if you have young children or babies who may be unable to remain silent, the room should be soundproofed. Finally, always leave yourself an escape route in case of discovery.

If forced to retreat outside of the home, you must be able to construct a shelter out of available material in order to provide protection from the sun, insects, wind, rain, snow, extreme temperatures, and enemy observation.

The most common error in making a shelter is to make it too large. A shelter must be large enough to protect you, yet also small enough to contain your body heat, especially in cold climates.

When selecting a site upon which to build, keep in mind that it must contain enough material to construct the type of shelter you need. Consider, as well, whether the site provides concealment from enemy observation; has camouflaged escape routes; provides protection against wild animals, rocks, and dead trees that might fall; and is free from insects, reptiles, and poisonous plants.

You must also remember the problems that could arise in your environment. Avoid flash flood areas in foothills, avoid avalanche or rockslide areas in mountainous terrain, and avoid sites near bodies of water that are below the high water mark.

Select a small, secluded location which blends in with the surroundings, and design your shelter to have a low silhouette and irregular shape.

Several designs of wilderness shelters are provided below:

Poncho Lean-To

Requiring only a minimum of time and equipment to construct, the primary component is a rain poncho. In addition to the poncho, you will need four lengths of cordage, two trees, and two stakes fashioned from broken branches. Before selecting the trees you will use, ensure that the rear of your lean-to will face the wind.

To begin, unsnap the sides of the poncho so that when spread out it forms a square. Secure each of the upper corners to two trees at waist height with lengths of cord,

and tie the lower corners to stakes which will anchor the bottom to the ground, making sure the poncho is suspended at an angle, creating one-half of a tent. (Make sure the hood hangs down, covering the neck opening, or you will have a hole in the center of your shelter. The hood can also be tied closed.)

The lean-to can be improved by adding a center support (secure the poncho hood to an overhead branch after tying it closed), installing drip lines (small twigs or strings attached to the edges of the poncho to prevent rainwater from running into the shelter), and placing brush at the sides for additional protection from wind and rain. To reduce heat loss, place some type of insulating material, such as leaves or pine needles, inside your lean-to.

Poncho Tent

Unsnap the poncho and tie off the hood. If the poncho is equipped with O-rings built-in to the sides, they can be used for attaching cordage. (Attach a rope to the O-ring in the center of each side and secure to a tree.) Otherwise, run a long length of cord from between two trees, ensuring that it is tight, with no play. Drape the poncho across the cord, forming the peaked roof of the tent. Then secure the bottom sides to the ground with stakes.

Field-Expedient Lean-To

Locate two trees six to ten feet apart which will function as the primary support structure. With an axe, cut down a sapling equal to the distance between the two trees or perhaps just a bit longer.

Secure the sapling to the trees at waist to chest height. This is the horizontal support. Place half-a-dozen additional saplings or long, thick branches against the horizontal support, creating one-half of a sloping roof. Crisscross smaller saplings or vines across these beams, and cover the framework with brush, leaves, pine needles, or grass, starting at the bottom and working your way up.

Place straw, leaves, pine needles, or grass inside the shelter for bedding.

Swamp Bed

In an area with standing water or continually wet ground, the swamp bed will provide you with a dry place to rest or sleep.

Locate four closely grouped trees naturally forming a small rectangle, and fashion two poles long enough to span the width of the rectangle. These must be stout branches capable of sustaining your weight. Secure these two poles to the trees, making sure that they are high enough above the ground to escape additional flooding.

Cut additional poles to dimensions that will span the rectangle's length, and tie them in place them across the two side poles. Cover the top of the bed frame with broad leaves or grass to form a soft sleeping surface.

Debris Hut

Find a thick, sturdy branch or small tree from which the central roof support beam can be constructed, approximately ten feet in length. Secure this pole at one end to a tree at about waist height, with the opposite end resting on the ground.

Prop large sticks along both sides of the support beam at an angle wide enough to accommodate your body, and steep enough to shed moisture. Create a lattice pattern by placing fine sticks and brush horizontally across the framework, and on top of this add a three-foot layer of insulating material composed of light, dry debris. A final shingling layer of branches will prevent the insulating material from blowing away.

Inside the shelter, lay down a "carpeting" of soft debris one foot high in order to provide insulation from the ground and to improve the level of comfort.

Position insulating material near the entrance that can be used once inside the shelter in order to seal the entrance or build a door.

Tree-Pit Snow Shelter

If you are in a cold, snow-covered area where evergreen trees grow and you have a digging tool, you can make a tree-pit shelter.

Find a tree with bushy branches that provides overhead cover. Dig out the snow around the tree trunk until you reach the depth and diameter you desire, or until you reach the ground. Pack the snow around the top and the inside of the hole to provide support. Find and cut other evergreen boughs, placing them over the top of the pit to provide additional overhead cover. Place evergreen boughs in the bottom of the pit for insulation.

Natural Shelters

Finally, don't forget the many natural formations capable of providing shelter, such as caves, rocky crevices, clumps of bushes, small depressions, large trees with low-hanging limbs, and fallen trees with thick branches.

RV's

If you own one, an RV situated in the woods and camouflaged from view can provide all of the comforts of home even though you have fled into the wilderness, especially if it has been outfitted with a solar-powered water well and a solar battery array.

To begin with, an RV is equipped with a water storage tank. It can be filled with water obtained from any source and used for the shower and toilet. If the water is reasonably pure, a water filtration device installed on the kitchen sink faucet will provide clean drinking water, even if it originated from a pond or creek.

A second advantage is that RV's operate on a twelve-volt electrical system. This means that as long as the battery has power, you will have lights and pressurized water lines. (There are solar panel kits which are designed specifically for RV's and will keep the battery charged indefinitely.)

RV's also use propane for both heating and cooking. A 500-gallon LP tank buried nearby will provide you with many months of cooking and heating. Equipped with twelve-volt blower motors, RV's supply central heat to every room in the vehicle.

Another benefit of the RV involves restroom facilities: RV's are equipped with sewage holding tanks, and as long as there is some sort of water supply and a charged battery, you will have working toilets. A supply of yeast and the occasional draining of the tank will preclude the need for a septic tank.

Finally, RV's are equipped with propane refrigerators, providing a way of preserving meat.

A well-stocked RV, hidden in thick woodland, will enable you to live like a king in the middle of the worst economic disaster ever to befall the earth! Living quarters, bedrooms, central heat, working toilets, refrigeration, radio, oven, food and water, the RV goes well beyond providing the necessities and furnishes luxurious alternative shelter. Although Class-C RV's can cost well over half-a million dollars even used, late 1970 models can be found for as low as $3,000 and 1980/1990 designs can be had for less than $20,000.

One idea might be for two families to split the cost, as some sleep eight comfortably. Purchase a piece of heavily wooded land out in the middle of nowhere and park the RV on it. You can use it as a camping hideaway until the economy collapses and relocate when disaster strikes.

Consider water availability, timber, sun, garden area, privacy, access, etc. Wooded land is generally cheaper than developed land, and better for your purposes at any rate. Land with a body of water on it will cost more, but will prove invaluable, especially if it is stocked with fish.

Defense

Having provided for the long-term needs of your family, you must be prepared to defend your resources from those who would take them from you by force. The man who stocks up on food, water, and other basic supplies and yet fails to incorporate a defense plan into his survival program, has succeeded only in supplying the first thief who comes along with a well-stocked survival cache.

In 1st Timothy 5:8, Paul said that a man who does not provide for his family has no right to say he is a Christian and in fact, is worse than an infidel. While food, clothing, shelter, love, and godly instruction are requisite provisions which a father must supply, so too must he provide protection.

While martyrdom will certainly be determined upon the Church during this period and is to be viewed by the Christian as a privilege according much prestige in eternity (Matthew 5:11,12; Luke 6:22, 23), many men fully willing to make the ultimate sacrifice themselves would yet spare their wives and children as much pain as was in their power to prevent, and indeed, the aforementioned scripture affirms that such is not only a reasonable desire, but the duty of every God-fearing man. It is your responsibility to protect both your family and your resources from murderers, raiders, and brigands.

Before discussing this topic in detail, several general recommendations are in order.

First, it is important that you not draw attention to yourself. Do not broadcast the fact that you have a significant quantity of survival goods, and be careful not to reveal your abundance unintentionally. For instance, do not fire up the grill in your backyard when lunchtime rolls around and expect a starving neighborhood to not smell roasting meat. Such an episode will almost certainly result in a desperate mob storming your home in search of food and other resources.

Secondly, do not attempt to profit from your advanced planning. Selling survival goods at high prices will only incite the wrath of an impoverished and desperate community, and encourage burglary attempts.

Third, strive for an abandoned look to your home. Keep away from windows, avoid making noise, do not allow smoke, smells, or lights to be detected emanating from

your residence, and do not leave or return in daylight. Although you may have to deal with the occasional looter, angry mobs are not in the habit of besieging empty houses.

Building Your Armory

Battle Rifle

Quantity: one for every adult capable of firing it
Ammunition: minimum of one thousand rounds each

Although a single firearm can easily cost thousands of dollars, the weapons recommended below have been chosen due to their affordability as well as effectiveness.

SKS
Weapon price: $150-$300
Caliber: 7.62x39mm
Magazine capacity: 10
Ammo price per 1000 rounds: $400
Muzzle velocity: 2,410 ft/sec
Rate of fire: 40 rounds/min
Range, maximum effective: 383yds

The Samozaryadnyi Karabin Sistemi ("self-loading carbine system"), also known as the SKS, is a true military surplus rifle, a term identifying it as an authentic military piece rather than a civilian imitation. It is an early semi-automatic rifle with a ten-round internal magazine, attached folding bayonet, and fixed stock.

A Russian design, the SKS is a 7.62x39 carbine and was used by many communist nations prior to the widespread introduction of the AK-47. Chinese, Romanian, Albanian and Yugoslavian variants are still available, differing slightly in design from the original Russian model. The Yugoslavian rifles are well-respected and tend to be priced lower than other models. In addition to the milled receiver, screwed in barrel, milled trigger group and underfolding blade bayonet, the Yugoslavian versions have an integrated NATO-standard 22mm grenade launcher and flip-up sight.

A reliable battle rifle, jams are almost unheard of, and the bore is chrome-plated to protect it from the effects of corrosive ammunition. Forgiving even when dirty, it is relatively easy to disassemble for cleaning, and in fact, a cleaning kit and rod can be stored in the butt stock. Its short stock and light recoil make it an attractive defensive weapon for women.

Although the adage, "you get what you pay for" has been proven time and again, the SKS is a notable exception. For the money, there is no better battle rifle, regardless of its country of origin.

WARNING: *Never, under any circumstances, attempt to fire this weapon with the handguard-gas cylinder removed, or with a defective handguard latch! The gas port is angled to point directly toward the user's face, and severe injury will result from high-pressure gas and flame. The handguard-gas cylinder must be firmly latched in place before firing.*

AK-47
Weapon price: $400-$500
Caliber: 7.62x39mm
Magazine capacity: 30 (40 rds box magazines and 75 rds drums)
Ammo price per 1000 rounds: $400
Muzzle velocity: 2329 ft/sec
Rate of fire: 600 rounds/min
Range, maximum effective: 328yds

The AK-47 replaced the SKS as the primary Soviet battle rifle in the mid 1950's. The infamous rival to the M-16, the Russian AK-47 is widely considered one of the finest and most reliable firearms ever designed.

As with all 7.62mm Kalashnikov assault rifles, the AK-47 can be fired in either semi-automatic or automatic mode, can mount a grenade launcher, and are capable of functioning normally even after total immersion in mud and water. The fully-chromed barrel ensures effective operation even at very low temperatures.

In general, AK-47's are extremely rugged and reliable guns, simple to operate and field strip, without any small parts which may be lost in field conditions. The most copied assault rifle in the world, an officially licensed clone is still manufactured in Finland as the Sako/Valmet; an improved copy of the Valmet is built in Israel as the Galil; a copy of the Galil is built in South Africa as the R-4 and R-5. The design of many other assault rifles, such as the FN FNC, has been influenced by the immortal AK-47.

AR-15
Weapon price: $600-$1000
Caliber: .223 REM (5.56mm NATO)
Magazine capacity: 20/30/40
Ammo price per 1000 rounds: $200
Muzzle velocity: 3,100 ft/sec
Rate of fire: 800 rounds/min
Range, maximum effective: 600yds

The AR-15 is an automatic rifle designed by Eugene Stoner of the Armalite corporation. It has been manufactured by various companies in both automatic and semiautomatic versions, in many configurations. Within the U.S. military, the rifle is known as the M16.

Originally a rifle with numerous design flaws, it has become what many consider to be the most reliable firearm available in the world. Early AR-15's often jammed, and were despised by U.S. soldiers during the Vietnam War.

Their problems with the weapon stemmed from the fact that the U.S. military issued these guns without cleaning kits, did not require troops to clean their weapons, and the rifle's original magazines were not reliable. In addition, incorrect powder was used in the military cartridges, resulting in a weapon which cycled far too rapidly. Even worse, the calcium carbonate used in the ball powder often clogged the gas tube of the rifle, causing it to cease functioning altogether. Finally, the chambers of these early guns lacked any chrome-plating and soon rusted in the humid environment of Vietnam.

Once the AR-15 was modified, troops trained, and the correct ball powder used, the rifle became much more reliable. As with other older weapons systems, the rifle has

been steadily improved, until today the AR-15 is the most reliable rifle being manufactured.

The number of accessories and replacement parts available for the AR-15 is enormous, permitting a wide variety of configurations with various stocks, pistol grips, and handguards. The AR-15 is an excellent choice for self-defense, and its reputation as the most reliable rifle made to date is largely undisputed.

Any of these rifles will serve you well in suppressing the advance of hostile forces intent on gaining ingress into your home to molest or injure your family. Although these are not the only choices available to you, they are several of the most affordable.

When selecting your weapon, keep in mind ammunition availability and material composition. If your weapon fires an uncommon caliber, finding additional ammunition will be difficult, whereas 9mm and .223 cartridges are likely to be available from downed enemies. Plastic copies of original wood firearms may be distasteful to collectors, but preferable for survival since plastic is much more immune to the adverse effects of weather and temperature, and lighter to haul around.

Whichever firearm you select, learn how to break it down for cleaning, and become proficient at firing it.

Hunting Rifle
Quantity: one for every two adults capable of firing it
Ammunition: minimum of five hundred rounds each

In addition to your battle rifle, you need to include a hunting rifle in your armory. Your need for this gun will become obvious a short time later when the wild animals of the fourth seal of Revelation are loosed upon urban civilization. The following rifles have been recommended due to their status as the six best-selling bolt-action rifles in America, all of which are capable of killing large game animals.

Savage Model 110
Price: $400 - $500

Though not one of the most attractive rifles ever designed, the Savage 110 has a well-deserved reputation for strength and accuracy. One of the reasons for its fine accuracy is the reason many call it ugly - the barrel locknut. Other reasons include its plain wood stock and dull exterior metal surfaces. The Savage 110 was not designed to delight the eye, but to perform in the field, and as such, it is a durable, practical, and accurate operator. Its unsurpassed accuracy, outstanding performance, and unbeatable value are the determining factors which decide customers on the Savage, not its appearance.

This rifle and scope package is one of the best values on the market, although the standard scope is a simple variable power 3-9x40mm with crosshairs. It does not have distance estimation marks, mil-dots, or other features provided by premium scopes, but then it doesn't cost more than a new car, either. The optics are very bright and clear, and the adjustment controls are obvious and easily modified, providing ¼"@100-yard click stops for elevation and windage. If you are going to be shooting much further than two hundred yards, you will need a more powerful scope, but for hunting deer in the one hundred to two hundred-yard range, it is quite acceptable.

On some models, the proprietary Accutrigger feature is available, which allows trigger pull to be adjusted anywhere from six to one and-a-half pounds.

In terms of accuracy, the Savage rifles hold their own, often exceeding the Remington and Winchester competition, which can cost twice as much. For pure practicality, utility, and affordability, nothing matches the Savage 110 series of bolt-action rifles.

Winchester Model 70

Price: $400 - $850

The Winchester Model 70 is perhaps the best-known rifle in the world, its history spanning four major design eras.

From 1936 to 1963, the Model 70 was manufactured with very little change. These models were highly regarded, and have come to be known as pre-64 style Winchester 70's. Today they are collector's pieces and are quite valuable.

The manufacture of the pre-64 versions was a time-intensive, laborious process requiring much of the work to be performed by hand, resulting in a higher-priced product. In order to compete with the more economically-priced Remington and Savage bolt-action rifles, the decision was made in 1964 to automate more of the manufacturing process, with the design of the Model 70 modified to accommodate this new production method. The result was the post-64 version, which was roundly criticized and did not sell well.

In 1972, the Model 70 was redesigned again, recapturing its previous quality, if not past glory. Many people were still upset with Winchester over the 1964 design and would not reverse their negative opinion of the company, refusing to allow the new model to stand on its own merits.

Winchester restored many of the original pre-64 components to its Model 70 in 1992 while retaining the good features of the 1972 version. This was named the Classic, which is the standard Winchester Model 70 of today.

Through all the changes, the Model 70 has remained a high-quality firearm, capable of fine accuracy. Certain features have been widely praised and copied by other rifle manufacturers, and its Model 70 Classic Featherweight was named the "Bolt-Action Rifle of the Century" by the Shooting Times magazine. No other rifle compares to the Model 70's combination of classic good looks, reputation for dependability, and proven accuracy.

Browning A-Bolt

Price: $700 - $1,000

The A-Bolt II is one of the most popular bolt-action rifles made today. Regardless of model, Browning firearms are noted for their high level of quality, and their ability to successfully wed homespun practicality with the magnificence of chrome and polished gold.

Taking its name from the block "A" formed by the top of the receiver, the A-Bolt (replaced by the A-Bolt II in 1994) has been made in a variety of grades and variations, and is a comfortable, unique, well-made, and attractive rifle.

What sets the A-Bolt apart from the competition is its highly refined, smooth, and adjustable trigger system; its easily accessible top-tang, thumb-operated safety which can

be actuated without disturbing the aim by having to remove the shooting hand from the grip and trigger; its detachable box magazine, making it simple and fast to load spare magazines; and its 60° throw bolt, which is set at an ergonomically perfect angle. Due to its unique, patented cartridge depressor, the Browning A-Bolt II is also one of the smoothest operating bolt action rifles on the market.

The brilliance of these efficient, high performance features are matched only by the dazzle and resplendency with which they are implemented. Gold triggers grace their gloss-finished forms, and beautiful walnut stocks are offset by intricately-engraved receivers (some trimmed in gold) and rosewood grips. To complete the effect, the owner may personalize the work of art by having his name engraved on the bolt sleeve.

As a bonus, all new A-Bolt rifles are shipped with either a free trigger lock, padlock, or chamber lock (depending on model) to assist in the safe storage of firearms.

The Browning A-Bolt II is a reliable, accurate, and popular rifle of premium quality, yet priced just above that of a standard rifle; an affordable union of masterful artistry and quality craftsmanship.

Remington Model 700

Price: $400 - $650

The Remington Model 700 is an enduring firearm and the best-selling American bolt-action rifle of all time.

From the time of its inception in 1963, the design of the Model 700 has been dictated by its manufacturing process, a method which relies on the economy of mass production as opposed to the costlier and more time-consuming method of manufacturing parts by hand. The company was more successful in their endeavor than Winchester, who would duplicate this method of production one year later.

Refined over time, today the Model 700 is available in twenty-two models and six custom versions, some plain (like the LV SF), and some handsome (like the Mountain Rifle LSS). The Remington Model 700 has enjoyed an excellent reputation for over forty years, and remains America's most popular rifle.

Ruger Model 77

Price: $700 - $800

The original bolt-action Ruger Model 77 rifle, introduced in 1968, was quite similar to the pre-64 Winchester Model 70 and the famous Mauser Model 98, yet, while borrowing the best features from those guns, the Model 77 also incorporated superior technology and metals into its design, and thus improved on both of its predecessors.

This was a distinctive characteristic of Ruger, who today is the largest manufacturer of sporting arms in the world, as their guns were not so much inventions as they were refinements and improvements of other designs, combined with improved manufacturing techniques which resulted in a better product. The Model 77 bolt action rifle was no great departure from the other good bolt gun designs of the day, except for the methods used in production.

In 1989, the original Model 77 was replaced by the M77 Mark II, which sports an improved safety (taken from Winchester's Model 70), a non-adjustable trigger, and a handful of other refinements.

Unfortunately, the new trigger assembly is inferior to the original and results in the rifle firing less accurately than it should. The serious shooter who purchases a new Model 77 will need to pick up an aftermarket trigger assembly, and a barrel, as well, for Ruger holds the loosest and most inconsistent specifications on its internal barrel tolerances with regard to SAAMI (Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute, Inc.) regulations than that of any other major arms manufacturer.

According to Petersen's Rifle Shooter, there are several major factors which contribute to the accuracy of bullet placement, and the first has nothing to do with the rifle, but rather the ability of the shooter. The second most important factor is the quality of the barrel, and the third is the quality of the trigger; the two areas in which Ruger has failed to produce consistent, satisfactory results, at least with respect to the Mark II.

Like other brands, Ruger rifles have the potential to shoot well, but due to the inferior barrels and trigger assembly, they are less accepted in the precision shooting community. For consistent precision shooting, the Ruger Model 77 is not a top choice, yet it functions well as a hunting rifle, and is sufficiently accurate for that purpose and the ranges involved.

On the positive side, Ruger bolt-action rifles will meet your need for reliable, accurate and convenient scope mounting. You will never have to buy traditional separate scope mount bases, because all of Ruger's bolt-action rifles are produced with their patented integral scope-mounting system. The Ruger scope rings attach directly to the receiver's machined mounting surfaces, eliminating a potential source of imprecision (and therefore inaccuracy) in the field. Ruger scope rings, a $60 value, are included at no extra cost. No other American rifle maker offers this system, but it comes free with every Ruger bolt-action rifle.

Weatherby Mark V

Price: $1,000 - $2,000

Designed for maximum strength in 1957 by Roy Weatherby, the Mark V propelled the Weatherby company into the ranks of the top firearm manufacturers.

When Roy launched his enterprise in the late 1940's, his goal was to produce cartridges which would generate a tremendous amount of "shock power" in order to kill animals quicker and more effectively. It was his belief that to accomplish this goal, lighter bullets traveling at extremely high velocities were required. (At the time, traditional wisdom held that larger bullets could accomplish this same objective at slower speeds.)

Roy's initial experiments resulted in the .220 Rocket, and a line of hot rod cartridges soon followed, known as Weatherby Magnum. Roy quickly expanded into firearms, building guns from scratch and rechambering customer firearms for his magnum cartridges. Near the end of the 1950's, he introduced "the world's most powerful cartridge," the .460 Weatherby, which generated nearly 8,000 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle (nearly four tons).

In 1957, Weatherby introduced the Mark V Magnum Action to go along with his line of cartridges. Since the magnum cartridges were so powerful, a stronger-built rifle was needed which would be able to safely withstand the tremendous pressure (up to 200,000 copper units of pressure—nearly three times that of other popular actions), and to absorb the energy of blown primers and ruptured caseheads without incurring damage.

To those ends, the Mark V was designed with a recessed bolt face and counterbored barrel breech which, when combined with the front receiver ring, surrounded the cartridge with three rings of steel. Three gas ports were added to the body of the bolt to permit the venting of gases if the primer became pierced, and an enclosed bolt sleeve diverted any remaining gases away from the shooter's face and downward through the rear of the action.

In addition, nine locking lugs of the same diameter as the bolt body itself were included. In contrast to the two-lug design, the nine-lug Mark V action was exceptionally smooth, non-binding, and superior in terms of overall strength and structural integrity. The nine-lug design also delivered a 54-degree bolt lift, virtually unheard of in the firearms industry, which allowed for faster chambering on follow-up shots and a greater bolt-to-scope clearance for fewer battered knuckles.

Today, the Mark V action is billed as "the world's strongest bolt-action," and remains the cornerstone of all Weatherby rifles.

The Cadillac of rifles, the Weatherby bristles with deluxe features. The safety is extremely quiet in operation, and a cocking indicator at the rear of the bolt informs the shooter at a glance whether or not the rifle is cocked. The trigger is exceptionally precise and can easily be adjusted without having to dismantle the assembly. The weapon is outfitted with a unique Monte Carlo stock, which boasts an oversize butt area and top quality recoil pad.

The stock is reinforced with a steel bar in the pistol grip, and steel pins are strategically located throughout the action mortise and epoxied in place to increase structural integrity. The forearm is ingeniously angled in three dimensions for a very secure grip under heavy recoil.

As to aesthetics, the Mark V Deluxe features a distinctive Claro walnut stock with a rosewood forearm tip and grip cap complemented by line spacers made from thin slices of maplewood. The pistol grip and forearm are checkered in a French skip-line point pattern, and maplewood diamond inlay adorns the pistol grip cap. A durable high gloss finish shows off the wood to maximum effect. It is a strikingly handsome stock, and the inletting and bedding are very precisely done.

The receiver, bolt sleeve, and floorplate can be beautifully etched with an English scroll pattern with selective 24kt gold-plated border, and all parts are polished to a high luster finish.

Weatherby guarantees that every Mark V rifle will deliver 1.5 inch or smaller three shot groups at one hundred yards from a cold barrel using Weatherby factory loaded ammunition. This is superb performance for a magnum hunting rifle by any standard, but incredibly, most Mark V rifles will perform considerably better than that right out of the box.

For those who demand the very best, the Mark V Royal Custom retails for $6,239, and the Crown Custom is priced at $7,757.

Originally manufactured in Germany, production facilities for the Mark V rifle were later based in Japan, where they remained for many years until the 1995 relocation to the United States. Although the hands which constructed the Mark V have changed through the years, Weatherby's high standards of quality, assembly, fit, finish, and accuracy have remained constant.

Small Game Rifle

Quantity: one for every male adult and youth

Ammunition: minimum of five thousand rounds each of either .22LR High Velocity or Hyper Velocity hollow point

Depending on your situation, a .22 rifle may be essential for survival. Although capable of light defense, the .22 cartridge is ideal for hunting small game, which, being more plentiful than large animals, will most likely serve as the mainstay of your diet if stored provisions are not available.

Your .22 rimfire should be chambered for the common .22 Long Rifle cartridge. The advantages of the .22LR include excellent accuracy, very light recoil, and relatively quiet report. The fact that it is the best-selling cartridge in North America means this ammunition is widely available, and chances are good that you will be able to acquire it from alternative sources even after it is no longer available in stores. Ammunition is cheap and you can get five hundred rounds for about $10.00, so stock up.

Primarily intended for small game hunting, the rifle must be capable of placing a bullet in the head of squirrels and rabbits at a distance of at least seventy-five yards. This requires the accuracy of a target rifle and telescopic sight, yet most target rifles, while incredibly accurate, are too heavy and unwieldy to carry for any length of time in the field, therefore the model you choose must strike a balance between weight and accuracy.

Since small game is frequently on the move, a repeating rifle will increase your chances of hitting the target. While cheap .22 rifles are certainly an option, the best resemble centerfire hunting rifles in both form and price (the bolt-action models listed above).

Deluxe bolt, lever, autoloading, and pump action rifles are all suitable for small game hunting, and the following models come highly recommended:

Deluxe bolt: Anschutz 1416D ($785) and 1710 ($1,200), Kimber Model 82C ($1,100), Remington 504 ($700), Ruger M 77/22 ($600), Sako Finnfire Hunter ($850), and Winchester Model 52B ($650)

Deluxe lever: Browning BL-22 ($400 - $500), Marlin 39 ($550), and Winchester 9422 ($400)

Autoloader: Browning .22 Semi-Automatic ($500), and Remington 552 BDL Speedmaster ($400)

Pump: Remington 572 BDL Fieldmaster ($400)

The autoloading Browning Semi-Automatic and lever-action Marlin 39 are collapsible, making transport a snap. Another compact design is the AR-7 .22 LR Takedown Survival Rifle ($170), a lightweight sportsman's version of the famous U.S. Air Force survival rifle which breaks down in seconds, enabling barrel, action and magazine to fit neatly into its waterproof stock. The Henry U.S. Survival Rifle ($200) is a new and improved version of the AR-7 .22.

More affordable rifles include the Ruger 10/22 ($250), Remington 597 ($170), Savage 64FXP with scope ($150), and the Marlin 60 ($190).

Smaller single-shot youth versions of the .22 rifle are also available, such as the Henry Mini Bolt ($200), Savage Mark I-GYXP with scope ($150), the Marlin 915Y ($240), and the Rogue Rifle Company's Chipmunk ($140 - $200).

A good scope is a practical necessity. A compact fixed power scope of three or four power is ideal, and manufacturers Burris, Bushnell, Leupold, Simmons, Tasco, and Weaver offer scopes which have been specifically designed for .22 rimfire rifles. A 3x9 scope can be had for as little as $50.

Shotgun

Quantity: one 12-gauge for every large adult, one 20-gauge for smaller-statured adults

Ammunition: five hundred rounds #1 buckshot (12-g), five hundred rounds #3 buckshot (20-g), and 100 rifled slugs

Perhaps the most flexible firearm in your battery is the shotgun. In addition to home defense, it can be used to harvest small as well as deer-sized game. The ideal home defense shotgun consists of a short-barreled model, eighteen to twenty-two inches long, chambered for either twelve or twenty-gauge.

Although shotguns come in a variety of actions, pump-action shotguns offer a distinct advantage over other action types as the pump operation tends to be mechanically reliable, even in the worst conditions. They often represent the best choice for home defense because they can be stored or carried in a relatively safe condition: magazine loaded, chamber empty, safety on, hammer down. From this state the pump can be brought to bear on an assailant very quickly.

A reliable, well-made pump action shotgun can usually be purchased at a cost less than a comparable quality handgun. Advantages of the shotgun are threefold: There exists less danger of harming third parties through walls in the event of an errant shot; the potential for inflicting wound trauma to a criminal assailant is maximized, thus halting a violent confrontation quickly; and it is easier to hit an assailant with the wide dispersal pattern of a shotgun than with the pin-point fire of a handgun.

Among the many choices suitable for home defense, the following models are presented for your consideration due to reputation, quality, and affordability:

Ithaca Deerslayer Storm ($399) is the newest addition to the tradition of quality and craftsmanship found in the Ithaca Gun family. The Storm is essentially the Deerslayer II model, but with a higher enhancement of durability. With its fixed, free-floated barrel, the Storm achieves the same rifle-like accuracy found in all Deerslayer guns, but with the addition of a synthetic stock and forend, and all metal parts having a parkerized finish, the Storm is rendered virtually element-proof. A Limb-Saver recoil pad is also included, reducing felt recoil substantially. It comes standard with adjustable rifle sights, and is also drilled and tapped for your favorite scope mount. Available in either twelve or twenty-gauge, the barrel is twenty-four inches long, and magazine capacity is five cartridges.

Remington 870 Express ($332) has been in production for almost half a century, the best-selling shotgun of any type in history, with over six million made. The Model 870 Express is built on the action of the best-selling, most tested shotgun ever made: the legendary Model 870 Wingmaster®. The Express is just as strong, just as reliable, and just as durable, with an action that cycles just as smoothly. The 870 Express is regarded by many as the ultimate shotgun with regard to strength, durability, silky-smooth bind-free action, and sleek classical lines. Offered with a wide selection of gauges and barrel

configurations, all wood and metal surfaces have a non-reflective, non-revealing finish. The twelve and twenty-gauge models are offered with your choice of a twenty-six or twenty-eight-inch barrel.

Winchester 1300 Defender ($343) is easy to pack and carry, and handles both buckshot and rifled slugs easily. The rugged Defender features an eight-shot magazine capacity, 18" cylinder bore barrel, non-glare metal surfaces and a composite stock and forearm. Choose from the full stock version with a removable front Truglo® fiber optic sight, the pistol grip model, or the combo version with both pistol grip and full stock included. The full stock model is available in both twelve and twenty-gauge.

Mossberg 500 Persuader ($353) offers a remarkable combination of modern design, custom-type features, and affordability. All come in an array of stock, barrel, finish and combo options that make it the perfect, versatile choice for novices and seasoned veterans alike. Available in twenty-gauge with a six-shot capacity magazine and an 18.5" barrel, or in twelve-gauge with your choice of a six-shot capacity and 18.5" barrel, or a slightly cheaper ($341) eight-shot capacity model with a 20" barrel.

Model	Barrel Length	Overall Length	Total Weight	Gauge	Capacity	MSRP
Ithaca Deerslayer Storm	24"	43 3/4"	7.06 lb	12, 20	5	$399
Remington 870 Express	28" / 26"	48.5" / 46.5"	7.5 lb / 7.25 lb	12, 20	4	$332
Winchester 1300 Defender	18"	39.5"	6.5 lb	12, 20	8	$343
Mossberg 500 Persuader	18.5" / 20"	38.5"	6 3/4 lb	12, 20	6 / 8	$353

* Specs are based on the 12-gauge model

Shotgun Ammunition

A shotgun pellet produces wound trauma by crushing the tissue it comes into direct contact with as it penetrates. In order to produce wound trauma that will be effective in quickly stopping an attacker, the pellets must penetrate the body deeply enough to pass through a vital cardiovascular structure and cause rapid fatal hemorrhage to quickly deprive the brain of oxygenated blood needed to maintain consciousness.

Shotgun pellets are classified into two general categories: 1) birdshot, of which individual pellets are typically less than .20 caliber in diameter, and 2) buckshot, which varies in diameter from .24 caliber to .36 caliber.

Birdshot, because of its small size, does not have the mass and sectional density to penetrate deeply enough to reliably reach and damage critical blood distribution organs. Although birdshot can destroy a great volume of tissue at close range, the permanent crush cavity is usually less than six inches deep, and this is not deep enough to reliably include the heart or great blood vessels of the abdomen.

A gruesome, shallow wound in the torso does not guarantee a quick stop, especially if the bad guy is chemically-intoxicated or psychotic. If the tissue crushed by the pellets does not include a vital cardiovascular structure, there is no reason for it to be an effective wound.

Many people load their shotguns with birdshot, usually #6 shot or smaller, to minimize interior wall penetration. Number six lead birdshot, when propelled at 1,300 fps, has a maximum penetration depth potential of about five inches in standard ordnance gelatin, however this potential is rarely achieved. Most will penetrate to about four inches.

12-Gauge Shotshell Ammunition

For personal defense and law enforcement applications, the International Wound Ballistics Association advocates #1 buckshot as being superior to all other buckshot sizes. Number one buck is the smallest diameter shot that reliably and consistently penetrates more than twelve inches of standard ordnance gelatin when fired at typical shotgun engagement distances. A standard 2 ¾-inch twelve-gauge shotshell contains sixteen pellets of #1 buck. The total combined cross-sectional area of the sixteen pellets is 1.13 square inches. Compared to the total combined cross-sectional area of the nine pellets in a standard #00 buck shotshell (0.77 square inches), the # 1 buck shotshell has the capacity to produce over thirty percent more potentially effective wound trauma.

In all shotshell loads, #1 buckshot produces more potentially effective wound trauma than either #00 or #000 buck. In addition, #1 buck is less likely to over-penetrate and exit an attacker's body.

For home defense applications, a standard velocity 2 ¾-inch #1 buck shotshell (16 pellet payload) from Federal, Remington or Winchester is your best choice. The Federal Classic 2 ¾-inch #1 buck load is slightly better than the same loads offered by Remington and Winchester, as the Federal shotshell uses both a plastic shot cup and granulated plastic shot buffer to minimize post-ignition pellet deformation, whereas the Remington and Winchester loads do not.

20-Gauge Shotshell Ammunition

This author is unaware of any ammunition company offering a twenty-gauge shotshell that is loaded with #1 buckshot. The largest shot size commercially available is #2 buck. From a strict wound ballistics standpoint, the Federal Classic three-inch twenty-gauge Magnum #2 buckshot cartridge is the best choice, yet the Federal Classic load may produce too much recoil for some people.

Given this consideration, Remington's Premier Buckshot 2 ¾-inch twenty-gauge #3 buckshot cartridge is the next best choice. This load contains twenty pieces of nickel-plated, hardened lead shot that is buffered to reduce pellet deformation from post ignition acceleration and terminal impact. The Remington buckshot load will probably produce the tightest shot patterns in twenty-gauge shotguns.

Handgun

Quantity: one per person

Ammunition: one thousand rounds each

The average shooter can handle 9mm and .38 calibers without much trouble. After a bit of practice, an average shooter can learn to shoot well with handguns in the .40, .45, and .357 calibers. 10mm, .41, and .44 Magnum calibers are not recommended due to gun and ammunition costs, as well as the combination of high muzzle blast and recoil, which results in flinching and poor shooting.

Most people prefer shooting revolvers in either .38 or .357, due to the low cost of ammo and the absence of kick – the same reasons these calibers have been standard issue in police departments nationwide for over sixty years. By simply changing the grips, the

total “feel” of a revolver can be changed to accommodate individuals with large or small hands.

A 4” barrel is well-suited for defense and home protection, while a 6” barrel is better suited for hunting. A snub-nosed revolver (2 1/2” or less) is best suited for concealment and self-defense. Fixed sights are recommended over target sights, primarily for their durability.

If you choose a .357 revolver, you can shoot the cheaper .38 Special ammo in it for practice and load it with .357 Magnum ammo for defense.

The average person will find the 9mm and .40 semi-automatic pistols very easy to use. This, combined with the ability to carry more ammo in the gun, are the primary reasons most police departments have switched from revolvers to pistols over the past ten years. The average shooter will find that either the 9mm or .40 will probably be all the caliber that they want or can shoot well. (After all, high speed misses don’t count.)

While you can purchase higher-priced models from manufacturers such as Smith & Wesson, Taurus, Colt, Ruger, Beretta, and Glock for between $400 and $600 (or even higher), you may want to consider the much more affordable Hi-Point Firearms (www.mkssupply.com).

Based in Dayton, Ohio, Hi-Point Firearms manufactures semi-automatic handguns in several calibers, as well as semi-automatic carbines. All Hi-Point firearms are made in the United States of America with no imported components or parts, and are available at a very affordable price. Every gun is test-fired prior to shipment to ensure proper and safe functioning, and Hi-Point has one of the lowest return/repair rates in the firearms industry.

Their 9mm Compact retails for only $137, while the Compensated 9mm (with reduced felt recoil) is priced at $159. Both the .40 and .45 models cost $179, and most models are available with laser sighting for an additional $60.

While most would tend to doubt the quality of a weapon with such a low price tag, Hi-Point firearms are well-made, accurate, and reliable. The 9mm has been selected by Police Chief Heath of Seiverville, Tennessee as his official duty weapon. As he puts it, “It is not a "cheap" gun, it is just affordable.”

Hi-Point’s 9mm carbine ($199) outperformed the Ruger PC9 ($575) when tested by Gun Tests Magazine. According to their experts, the Ruger was less accurate and more difficult to shoot, making it difficult to justify its significantly higher price. The quality of Hi-Point Firearms has not gone unnoticed by police departments, many of whom have outfitted their officers with the Model 995c carbine.

Hi-Point firearms have outperformed Glocks in competition, and NRA certified instructors recommend them to their students.

Some may prefer to purchase their handguns from manufacturers with an established reputation, but find that models such as the .40 Smith & Wesson SW99 at $667 are too expensive to equip each member of their family with one. On the other hand, they do not want to trust the lives of their precious loved ones to cheap, generic brands which may prove unreliable at the most inopportune moment, and desire a quality, economical self-defense weapon. For those who find themselves in this category, High-Point Firearms is definitely worth your consideration.

The battery outlined above is a good arsenal that, when used properly, can help you to protect your family in many situations. You will be able to carry the pistols concealed if you are not expecting imminent trouble but wish to be prepared. The shotguns are excellent close-quarter combat weapons, ideal for defending your home. The .22 will provide you with small game and light defense, while the hunting rifle can provide larger game as well as sniping ability. The battle rifles are not only intimidating, they are capable of sustaining a high level of suppressing fire while providing both offensive and defensive fire.

A nightvision monocular may also prove useful as part of your defensive armament. First generation models such as the ATN NZT-1 can be bought new for under $150.

This time of economic chaos will be painful for everyone, regardless of societal status. Many will not survive. Some will succumb to the elements, some will die of hunger and thirst. Many will lose their lives due to violence, and others will commit suicide. Those who were caught unprepared will look desperately to government for a salvation which will never come, while the farsighted will consider themselves blessed of God to have known ahead of time what was to come.

"*Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*" – Revelation 1:3

"*A prudent person foresees the danger ahead and takes precautions; the simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.*" – Proverbs 22:3 (NLT)

II. Famine, Disease, Riots, and Wild Animals

The four-fold death dispensed by the fourth seal will likely occur immediately after the global economic collapse. Those who have availed themselves of the information provided thus far to facilitate survival off the grid will find themselves largely equipped to endure these additional adversities, as well.

Famine

The dictionary defines famine as an acute insufficiency or severe shortage of food (as through crop failure) resulting in violent hunger, starvation, and death.

The first famine mentioned in scripture was so grievous, Abraham was forced to travel to the land of Egypt (Gen. 26:1). Another is mentioned as having occurred in the days of Isaac, causing him to go to Gerar (Gen. 26:1, 17). The most remarkable of all, however, was that which arose in Egypt in the days of Joseph, which lasted for seven years (Gen. 41-45).

Famines were sent as an effect of God's anger against a guilty people (2 Kings 8:1, 2; Amos 8:11; Deut. 28:22-42; 2 Sam. 21:1; 2 Kings 6:25-28; 25:3; Jer. 14:15; 19:9; 42:17, etc.), and no doubt the purpose for this final drought remains the same.

As Joseph prepared ahead of time for the famine which was to come, so also must a modern people plan for the event in advance if they would survive it.

Those who neglected to lay in a store of provisions during the time of abundance will most assuredly perish. Plants and crops will fail, and wildlife dependent upon a

healthy ecosystem will perish, as well. As the undermost portions of the food chain begin to expire, the entire pyramid will crumble and the apex will be dashed to pieces.

While previously scarce and outrageously priced, food will now become all but impossible to obtain, for it will no longer exist. Grocery stores will have nothing to market, seeds will not produce a harvest, and wildlife will be hunted to near extinction. If you have not prepared for this in advance, there is nothing that can be done at this late date to procure food.

Providing conditions are ideal, the human body can survive for one month, perhaps two without food. These conditions, however, will be far from ideal.

Disease

While the Bible does not specifically list the types of diseases that will race unchecked across the globe, they have been loosed for the specific purpose of causing death. Consequently, it can be assumed that the most virulent strains of malady known to this planet will be in abundant evidence.

HIV, Malaria, Tuberculosis, SARS, Ebola, Anthrax, Smallpox, Lassa Fever, Marburg, Dengue… How is one to prevent infection from such diseases?

One method requires no training or special equipment: washing your hands. Maintaining good hygiene is one of the best ways to avoid becoming ill with an infectious disease. Direct contact with other people, contaminated surfaces, foods, animals, and waste products will produce an accumulation of germs on the surface of your body.

Hands which are not washed frequently will eventually introduce these germs into the body by touching the eyes, nose, or mouth, and can contaminate other surfaces, ensuring that the virus will continue to replicate itself within the bodies of others who have touched these same surfaces.

Developing good personal hygiene is essential not only for the health of the individual, but also for the protection of those with whom the individual remains in close proximity.

For the same reasons, sanitary conditions in your shelter must be maintained at all times. Clean spaces are a necessity, as dirt breeds disease. Maintaining a clean, healthy environment reduces the chances of illness.

Bathe and change underwear daily, or as often as it is practical to do so in a survival situation. After bathing, dry your body thoroughly, paying special attention to the feet in order to prevent fungal growths.

Do not ignore minor injuries. An untreated cut or scratch can lead to infection, loss of a limb, or death. If your wound cannot be treated immediately, wash the injury with soap and clean water. (Large wounds should not be washed, but covered with a clean dressing until they can be attended to.)

Your first aid kit should be equipped well enough to manage the care of scratches, punctures, lacerations, stings, bites, and burns.

Beware of the insects (use repellent), and keep a close eye on any wild game you procure. Do not eat any sick animal.

Human beings are also potential carriers of disease, so avoid others as much as possible. You do not want to catch whatever it is they may have.

Riots

Civil disturbances are threatening to property as well as people. When riots erupt, your knowledge of what to expect, your reaction, and your advanced planning will help to improve your odds of survival.

It is important to determine in advance the level of risk to which you will be subjected. Those in urban population centers are much more likely to become personally affected by civil disorder than those in rural settings, as population density is the primary factor in determining the rate at which a civil disturbance will spread.

If you estimate your level of risk to be high, you should seriously consider the establishment of an alternative shelter in a remote area and locate the bulk of your survival cache on this site. As mentioned previously, a concealed RV on a heavily wooded lot would be ideal. Head for your alternative shelter at the first hint of trouble.

Prudence suggests that you plan multiple routes for reaching your survival retreat in the event that your primary route is obstructed by traffic, crowds, or barricades. A four-wheel drive vehicle may be required if you are forced to leave the road.

If you believe your danger level to be low and will be remaining within your residence, then do not exit the premises or call attention to yourself in any way. If at all possible, avoid physical confrontation, but if your home is about to be set ablaze, then by all means get involved. You cannot afford to lose your survival provisions, especially if you have accumulated years worth of supplies.

If the arsonist is alone or somewhat isolated from the crowd, the quiet report of a .22 rifle may be able to dispatch the assailant with no one the wiser as to the bullet's origin, and the mob may move on. **Do not** allow yourself to be discovered unless you are willing and able to defeat the entire crowd.

For professional advice on surviving a riot, the book "Secrets of Street Survival – Israeli Style; Staying Alive in a Civilian War Zone" by Eugene Sockut may prove invaluable.

Wild Animals

As described in chapter fourteen, humankind will become ensnared in a garrote of wild beasts, including mountain lions, bison, coyotes, wolves, bears and dogs.

Mountain Lion

Known by several names (puma, panther, cougar), the mountain lion is a slender cat averaging one hundred seventy-five pounds and seven feet in length, with either yellow-brown, red-brown, or gray fur.

Mountain lions are known to inhabit nearly every type of terrain and climate, including mountains, grasslands, deserts, and both temperate and tropical forests. Common to Central and South America, the animal is also found in Florida and parts of the northeastern United States.

Solitary hunters (you will not find them running in packs), the mountain lion preys on animals up to the size of deer. Under normal conditions, mountain lions will avoid contact with humans, and attacks are rare, however these are far from ordinary times. Hunger, combined with diseases such as rabies, will greatly alter the animal's temperament.

Extremely agile and cautious, the mountain lion can remain undetected while stalking its prey and a human will generally have no indication of the animal's presence until it leaps upon him. Situational awareness, then, cannot be stressed enough if one must travel or make shelter outdoors.

In order to prevent or survive an attack by a mountain lion:

1. Remove all tall or dense growth within thirty yards of your shelter. This prevents wild animals from observing you at close range while remaining undetected.
2. Do not walk alone in mountain lion territory during the hours from dusk to dawn, and avoid walking near dense growth, rock outcroppings, or under ledges at any time of day. Remain alert by keeping a constant watch above and behind you, and wear a hat or hood with eyes painted on the top and back.
3. You should not show fear if you encounter a mountain lion, nor should you attempt to calm it with soothing words and sounds. This conveys an image of a gentle, defenseless creature which poses no threat to it, and invites attack. Actually, the beast will not back down unless you are regarded as a predator greater than itself.
4. Do not bend over, crouch, kneel, turn your back, or run from a lion. Instead, make loud, aggressive noises. Bare your teeth and make snarling or growling noises. Make yourself look bigger than you really are by opening wide your jacket, standing tall, and inflating your chest. If there is more than one of you, bunch together to appear larger, and pull children close or put them on your shoulders to prevent them from running away.
5. Do not advance on the creature. Instead, ensure that a way of escape is open to it.
6. If the animal attacks, use anything available which might serve as a weapon, but do not turn your back, crouch, kneel, or bend over to procure one.

The prepared survivalist should carry a rifle on his person at all times when venturing out into the field. Mountain lions are not much larger than deer, and for that reason any caliber rifle cartridge capable of netting deer will provide a sufficient defense from these large cats. In fact, below the class of brown bear, there is very little game which cannot be dispatched by the standard .30-06.

Bison

Surprisingly to many, bison in Yellowstone National Park have caused more human injuries than all other animal species combined, including bears. Since 1978, grizzlies have injured thirty people and killed two individuals in Yellowstone, while there were 81 recorded bison attacks during that same time period, one of which resulted in a fatality. (Another bison-related death occurred in 1971.)

The largest land animal of North America, and often described as the most ferocious animal of that same region, the bison (also known as buffalo) stands approximately six and a-half feet high, measures nine to twelve feet long, and weighs eighteen hundred to twenty-four hundred pounds, yet can run up to thirty-five miles per hour and change direction more swiftly than a horse.

Today, well over two hundred thousand bison live in protected areas and on private ranches in the United States. Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, the Moise

National Bison Range in Montana, and the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma accommodate the bulk of the species' population.

With the exception of older bulls, bison are usually found in groups. For much of the year females and young form smaller herds, while mature males found their own associations, with the two merging in spring or autumn to search for food and water.

Unlike mountain lions, you will not be caught unawares by the presence of bison, as the roar of bulls during mating season can be heard nearly three miles away. If you encounter bison, whether singly or in groups, do not approach to within twenty-five yards of them (one hundred yards is even safer). These animals may appear tame, but are wild, unpredictable, dangerous creatures, and difficult to kill.

If they decide to charge, injury (or worse) will occur via one of three methods, depending upon the inclination of the bovine behemoth. 1) They may choose to charge right over their intended target, trampling it under hoofs which support the comparable weight of a small car. 2) At the moment of impact, they may decide to impale their quarry on the sharp points of their horns, flipping high into the air. 3) Rather than simply override its prey, the bison may opt to stomp it into the ground.

Powerful medium-bore rifles, such as the Remington Model 673 Guide Rifle ($825), or large-bore such as the Remington Model 700 Safari ($1,500) are required for dropping buffalo. A thick-skinned animal (class CXP4 game which also includes rhino and elephant), deep penetration is the secret to successful shooting.

Medium-bore rifles are chambered for cartridge calibers between .33 and .39. Large-bore rifles are defined as .40 caliber and greater, while small bores are assessed at below .33.

All powerful medium-bore calibers produce more recoil than the average shooter can manage, yet the kickback of the .350 Remington Magnum is the least violent of all and therefore recommended over the popular .338 Winchester Magnum or large-bore calibers.

As of January 2004, the .350 cartridge is only available in the Remington 673 Guide Rifle, a well-rounded model which is light enough to carry and yet heavy enough to reduce massive recoil to a manageable level, given enough practice.

In order to attain the necessary penetration depth, the rifle should be loaded with heavy-duty bullets of high sectional density (.300 or better), providing four to five thousand ft/lbs of muzzle energy. (A ft/lb is the amount of energy needed to raise an item weighing one pound, a distance of one foot.) Examples of such bullets include the Barnes X-Bullet and CT Fail-Safe.

Few humans - armed or otherwise - could survive a surprise attack by a single aggressive buffalo weighing more than two thousand pounds, let alone an entire stampede.

Jack O'Connor, experienced big-game hunter, once recounted a harrowing battle with a Cape buffalo in May of 1979. It took ten shots to bring the animal down: four from a Winchester .375 with 300-grain solids and six from a Westley-Richards .470 double-ejector rifle. Three were head shots and every one of the others penetrated shoulders and lungs.

At the battle's end, Jack remarked that evidently the only certain means of killing a bison is to shoot it a dozen times with a 20mm cannon, remove the creature's entrails

and bury them, and then to sever its head, weigh it down with stones and drop it into a lake.

The best preventative action, therefore, is to maintain a safe distance. Failing that, put a very solid obstacle between you and the beast, such as a cement truck or a house, or rapidly ascend a very stout tree.

Coyote

Closely related to the wolf, the coyote has erect, pointed ears, a long snout, and green eyes. It measures two and a-half to three and a-half feet long and weighs between twenty and forty-five pounds.

Most active at night, they generally prefer to hunt alone or with others which are scattered over a wide distance. They are not usually seen in packs, but where there is one, there are probably others scattered about the general vicinity.

Coyotes subsist on a diet of carrion, birds, large insects, rodents, rabbits, sheep, and weakened deer. Of course, when these sources of food begin to wane they will not hesitate to attack humans, and they are capable of reaching speeds of more than forty miles per hour.

Already coyotes occupy suburban areas of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, and their ability to breed with both wild dogs and wolves is producing greater and greater numbers of predators with which mankind must one day reckon.

As a rule, coyotes will go to great lengths to avoid humans, but they are discovering that people are a good source for food. Coyotes are resourceful and adaptable, and when the food chain breaks down they will press their advantage over soft, slow human beings. In some urban areas and national parks, the coyotes are already changing their behavior.

Coyotes are more intelligent than the average dog and are not to be trifled with. They are smart, they learn quickly, and they are equipped with sharp teeth and lightning reflexes. Coyotes frequently attack and devour cats and small dogs. If you encounter a coyote, take notice of its tail. A bushy tail raised to a horizontal position is a sign of aggression.

The Winchester Model 70 in .223 Remington makes an admirable coyote rifle, but then, so does almost any rifle. Although overpowered for coyote, many hunters simply use their favorite deer gun.

Wolf

There are two species of wolves, the grays and the reds. Gray wolves, also known as timber wolves, are found mostly in Canada, Alaska, northern Europe, and Russia. The red wolf is found only in Texas and the southeastern United States.

The larger of the two species, gray wolves measure up to six and a-half feet in length (including the tail), and weigh up to one hundred seventy-five pounds.

Wolves travel in packs, especially in the cold months of winter as they band together to search for food, which generally consists of small animals and birds. Occasionally the pack will also attack reindeer, caribou, sheep, and other large mammals, targeting the weak, old, or very young of these larger animals for easier capture. When live prey is not available, they will subsist on carrion or berries.

If a wolf becomes debilitated in some way, perhaps injured by a gun or trap, it can begin to seek easier-caught animals, including children, and once attacked, humans become an alternative source of food. When one wolf acquires this knowledge, it can spread to other members of the pack.

The reason incidents of wolf attacks on people are intermittent is due to the fact that wolves do not rely entirely on people as a food source. By the time of Revelation's fourth seal, however, the value of human beings as much more convenient and plentiful sources of nutrition will have greatly increased from the perspective of the wolf.

The following is a reprint of a North Dakota newspaper article of 1888 (provided by T.R. Mader, Research Director of Abundant Wildlife Society of North America) which may bear a resemblance to the behavior of wolves during this period of God's judgment:

"NEW ROCKFORD, DAK, March 7 - The news has just reached here that a father and son, living several miles northeast of this city, were destroyed by wolves yesterday. The two unfortunate men started to a haystack some ten rods from the house to shovel a path around the stack when they were surrounded by wolves and literally eaten alive. The horror-stricken mother was standing at the window with a babe in her arms, a spectator to the terrible death of her husband and son, but was unable to aid them. After they had devoured every flesh from the bones of the men, the denizens of the forest attacked the house, but retired to the hills in a short time. Investigation found nothing but the bones of the husband and son. The family name was Olson. Wolves are more numerous and dangerous now than ever before known in North Dakota." - Saint Paul Daily Globe, March 8, 1888

During the harsh winters of 1886-1888, many western ranchers were ruined and food was scarce. It is thought that the severe climate was a factor in the attack. If so, then what will mankind experience during this period of hardship so unbelievably intense that the world has never seen its like before? What unimaginable horrors will befall the species of homo sapiens as it is toppled from the pinnacle of the food chain?

According to the Abundant Wildlife Society of North America, wolves attack humans due to four reasons: disease, such as rabies; extreme hunger; no fear of man (either by reason of easy familiarity or simply aggressive personality); and when people unwittingly disturb them in the midst of a hunt or whilst eating their kill.

If you are caught out in the open by a wolf, take note of its body language, and be prepared to use your firearm. Position of the ears, tail, and lips are important in wolf communication. An aggressive wolf carries its ears up; a fearful wolf pins them back against the skull. An aggressive wolf carries his tail straight behind, while a submissive one tucks the tail between its legs. A wolf ready to fight curls its lips back fully, bares its teeth, stares intently, and raises its hackles. It may growl or it may not. A stare is considered a direct challenge and can bring an attack if the animal cannot flee. Screams, cries, and quick movements are prey characteristics, and such action only invites the animal to attack.

Remember that wolf jaws are much stronger than those of a dog. If attacked by a pack of the creatures, follow the example of the survivor in the next account (also provided by T.R. Mader) and hurry up a tree:

"*John James Audubon, of whom the Audubon Society is named, reported an attack involving 2 Negroes. He records that the men were traveling through a part of*

Kentucky near the Ohio border in winter. Due to the wild animals in the area the men carried axes on their shoulders as a precaution. While traveling through a heavily forested area, they were attacked by a pack of wolves. Using their axes, they attempted to fight off the wolves. Both men were knocked to the ground and severely wounded. One man was killed. The other dropped his axe and escaped up a tree. There he spent the night. The next morning the man climbed down from the tree. The bones of his friend lay scattered on the snow. Three wolves lay dead. He gathered up the axes and returned home with the news of the event. This incident occurred about 1830." - Audubon, J.J., and Bachman, J.; The Quadrupeds of North America, 3 volumes. New York, 1851 – 1854

As with mountain lions, any rifle capable of slaying deer will kill wolves. To lessen your odds of having to deal with the animals, keep in mind these four precautions: keep campsites and fire rings clean of food scraps; avoid intruding on dens (these can be caves, hollow tree trunks, thickets, or holes in the ground); maintain a safe distance and scare away any wolf which might attempt to advance on your position; and absolutely do not feed them.

Bear

Bears are largely solitary creatures, forming temporary groups only in exceptional circumstances when food is plentiful in a small area.

The largest predators on earth, they have excellent hearing and a keen sense of smell – some can detect odors from over a mile away. Equipped with powerful jaws and immense strength, they are capable of moving silently through dense forests and rugged terrain, and while slower than other carnivorous predators, a running bear can still attain speeds of up to thirty miles per hour.

The bears of North America can be placed into three categories: Black bear, Brown bear (this includes the varieties of Grizzly, Kodiak, and Alaskan), and Polar bear.

Black Bear

Although specified "black," the coloring of these bears can range from red to gold to white. Secretive creatures of the forest, black bears are found throughout North America, including most of the contiguous United States, Alaska, Canada, and northern Mexico.

The smallest of North America's three species of bear, the black bear can measure up to six feet in length and can weigh anywhere from ninety to six hundred-sixty pounds.

While the black bear subsists mostly on a diet of grass, green plants, fruit, and nuts, they will occasionally feast upon young deer and moose, and will attack humans if sufficiently provoked.

Highly adaptable, many have become acclimated to the presence of humans, who have remained blissfully unaware of their frequent presence in suburban backyards during the winter.

According to the National Biological Service of the United States Department of the Interior, the numbers of black bears are increasing, even in eastern states where the human population is intensely concentrated. It is estimated that there are between six hundred-fifty thousand and seven hundred thousand black bears in North America, and even with over forty thousand being killed by hunters each year, those numbers are continuing to increase.

Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi have listed the black bear as a "threatened" animal and have prohibited all hunting of the creatures; (Florida may soon follow this example) an imprudent decision which will result in even greater numbers of bear. The effect of this increased population will be a depleted deer population and a much diminished fear of man. Within two generations, black bears will begin to look upon human beings as viable sources of food; creatures of approximately the same size as their natural prey, yet easier to catch.

The Minnesota-based American Bear Association strongly suggests that people who come into contact with bears not attempt to run away, for a bear can easily outrun a human. Instead, the association advises that people remain calm and avoid direct eye contact with the bear, speak to the bear in a soothing voice, make yourself appear larger by raising your arms over your head (see the mountain lion prevention techniques), slowly back away from the bear and retreat from the area, making a wide detour around the bear.

If the bear you encounter is a black bear, **do not** attempt to climb a tree. Black bears are excellent climbers and will simply follow you. Black bears only attack if they are starving, injured, or somehow provoked, and will not back down easily. Playing dead or climbing a tree will not halt these types of attacks; you must defend yourself with all the force you can muster.

Bear spray or pepper spray can be effective deterrents, providing you with the time necessary to beat a hasty retreat. Aim for the face and eyes of the bear. An incapacitated bear will turn and run away, trying to remove the spray by rubbing at their eyes or by brushing their face over brush in the area.

Most black bears are shot in chance encounters by deer hunters, so once again, any caliber suitable for deer hunting is effective for black bear. Great numbers of the beasts have been dispatched with .30-30's and 30-06's.

Brown Bear

The large bony protrusion jutting out from the shoulder, the upturned nose, and the massive bulk are characteristics which distinguish the brown bear from other species. The fur of the so-called "brown" bear runs from yellowish-white to ebony, including several shades of the ubiquitous brown.

The largest of the bear species (along with the polar bear), brown bears can weigh between two hundred pounds to more than one thousand seven hundred pounds, depending on their diet. It is common for coastal bears such as the Alaskan and Kodiak bear to weigh three times the size of inland bears (also known as Grizzlies) due to the large quantities of fatty fish which they consume. Grizzlies, on the other hand, subsist mostly on plants, insects, and some occasional meat appropriated from wolves or procured themselves.

Found throughout Europe, Asia, and North America, the brown bear has adapted to a wide variety of habitats, including frozen tundra, mild forests, and blistering deserts. Within these regions, populations are mostly small, isolated, and restricted to remote areas.

The brown bear population is estimated at thirty-two thousand in Alaska, one thousand in North America (and therefore protected), less than ten remaining in the Pyrenees Mountains between Spain and France, a similar number surviving in the Italian

Alps, and fifty-five hundred continuing to roam about Eastern Europe. In Russia, where the largest remaining population abides, there are approximately one hundred twenty thousand specimens.

If a chance encounter with a brown bear were to occur, it is recommended that the surprised human scramble up the nearest tree. Most brown bears do not climb trees, especially if they are of adult size, but the species is resourceful and may succeed in clambering up after its quarry. If this occurs, one should move upward or outward towards slender branches incapable of supporting the massive weight of a pursuing bear.

If the safety of the trees cannot be reached in time, the best option is to play dead. Lie face down, hands clasped behind the neck to protect it from being bitten, and legs spread apart to prevent the bear from rolling you over. Remain perfectly still, keep absolutely quiet, and wait until the bear has left the area before attempting to rise.

It is essential that you remain motionless until you are positive the bear has left the area. Bears can and will return to attack a second time if you show signs of life or make noise. Be still and wait it out.

There have been documented cases of brown bears burying humans under leaves and brush or guarding them for hours before wandering off. Continue to play dead even after being buried, and when you are sure the bear has left the area, get up slowly and carefully back away. Do not attempt to run.

A powerful rifle is required for slaying brown bear. Three thousand foot pounds of muzzle energy is a good minimum, and heavy bullets of high sectional density are a must. The smallest caliber recommended for these monstrosities is the 30-06, with the .300 magnum, .338 magnum, and .375 magnum being ideal.

Polar Bear

The largest species of bear (along with the brown bear), polar bears can grow to a length of seven feet and weigh over one thousand seven hundred pounds.

Native to the polar regions of the Northern Hemisphere where its white fur blends perfectly with the ice and snow of its Arctic habitat, polar bears are active primarily along the coastline and among ice fields, however their dens can be located up to thirty miles inland.

Their total population, spread out over five Arctic regions located within Greenland, Norway, Russia, Canada, and the United States, is estimated at between twenty-two thousand and twenty-seven thousand.

The scarce amount of vegetation in their sub-zero environment forces polar bears to be more carnivorous than any other species of bear, with seals and young walruses their principal fare. Unchallenged by any predator in the Arctic wasteland, they fear nothing and will hunt and kill any living creature, including man.

Unable to hunt seals during the summer months, polar bears travel far inland in search of alternative food sources. Bears cover vast areas in search of food and remember in detail the terrain they traverse, returning to locations where they have had success locating food in previous seasons.

While most bears are able to climb trees, the polar bear's massive weight precludes this activity, making it a viable escape route if available.

As the Arctic species is similar in size and weight to brown bears, the same weaponry used to dispatch the latter will suffice for the former. A bullet of sufficient size

placed within the chest cavity and striking the heart, liver, or lungs should provide a clean kill. The animal may be disabled by targeting the front shoulder, however this type of shot may not prove fatal. A spinal shot will almost always kill or immobilize a bear, but the spine is a difficult target. Head shots are not recommended, as the bear's skull is made of heavy bone, and the brain case within is an exceedingly small target.

Regardless of shot placement, a running bear is difficult to kill, due to the high probability of simply wounding the animal and angering it further. If time and circumstances permit, it is best to wait for a stationary target.

Dog

Many human beings have an incomprehensible desire to form relationships with animal life, even going so far as to confer upon them the status of "family member."

Whether horses, monkeys, cats, birds, snakes, or dogs, mankind seems always to have had a need for domesticated, and at times exotic companionship, lavishing upon the lower orders of creation a measure of attention and affluence over and above that which is paid their fellows. Indeed, in thirty-eight percent of divorce proceedings involving dog owners, neither spouse is willing to part with the family pet.

It is an infatuation which will contribute to the demise of one-fourth of the world's population; seventy-five million in the United States alone.

After the collapse of the economy when mankind can no longer afford to feed himself, let alone his pets, he will find himself a prisoner in his own home; prey to the four-legged savagery that will possess the streets in rabid, ravenous packs.

Those inevitably wounded by such creatures will find themselves delirious with contagion, and a frightened population will discover that rabies is the world's deadliest infectious disease.

There are many documented cases of indoor family dogs, breeds known for gentleness and considered harmless, reverting to their wild states and forming vicious packs within three months of being permitted to roam the streets at night. These animals will attack, maul, and kill children, adults, and livestock. If this behavior is observed in well-fed "pets," what can society expect from huge packs of the creatures, running wild, diseased, and starving?

Those dwelling in make-shift shelters and living off the land must be prepared for an attack, for the packs will detect the smells of camp and will be drawn to your location like a magnet.

The dogs will find you. Perhaps for a time you will enjoy a period of peace, but their coming is inevitable. The scent of dead flesh will waft upon the winds as you clean game. The aroma of cooking meat will be dispersed throughout the region upon currents of air. The scent of a human, for which they will have acquired a taste, will announce your presence downwind. They will come. When fifty wild, snarling, half-starved animals attack with lightning speed, what will you do? If armed, how many rounds does your clip hold?

In the barren wasteland of apocalyptic America, you will either establish that you are the top predator of your area, or you will be prey.

Dogs are essentially domesticated wolves - genetically they are nearly indistinguishable from their feral relatives. Regardless of how domesticated, the pack mentality is an instinctive behavior impressed upon the engrams of every canine brain,

each animal programmed by nature to recognize and submit to a central authority or else to become an authority unto itself.

The pack leader, also known as the alpha male, dominates and commands the other members of the pack and determines the course of action for any given circumstance.

If the human owner does not act as the hierarchical leader, the dog will assume the role – often with tragic results. In the home, the owner, his family, and any other pets become the dog's surrogate pack. It is the responsibility of the owner to establish himself in the alpha position. Failing this, the dog will do it as a natural behavior.

Many people assume that they are in charge by default inasmuch as humans are obviously superior to animals, but this is not at all the case. You must be the pack leader, exuding an air of authority which demands complete obedience.

Only by a process called "subordination" can a pack animal become a full member of the group. This process begins almost immediately after birth and continues throughout early adolescence. Healthy puppies are assertive animals and will ascend as high throughout the social ranks of the pack as they are permitted. In order to peacefully cohabitate with a canine, then, you must establish yourself as the pack leader and maintain that position for the life of the animal.

One method of maintaining discipline within a pack is through eye contact. The unwavering stare of the alpha male reinforces his position as leader of the pack.

A human who initiates eye contact with a puppy is declaring alpha status and conditioning the pup to realize its position within the pack is not situated at its head.

Staring directly into the eyes of an established alpha male, however, is not a wise course of action. An alpha dog will not look away and if you avert your gaze or even blink your eyes, you will have confirmed the dog's alpha status and will be dealt with accordingly as an inferior who dared to challenge its position.

If you encounter an aggressive dog, avoid eye contact and walk away without making any sudden movements. Do not run. The predatory instinct in dogs will cause them to give chase, and they can run decidedly faster than you can. You will be dragged down and mauled.

If an aggressive dog approaches you, stand your ground and repeatedly command the dog as if you were its owner. Raising your hands in a defensive posture may antagonize the dog and cause it to attack. Keep your hands at your sides and continue your efforts to prevent the dog from attacking by using voice commands.

If the dog's stature is diminutive enough to preclude a bite to the neck, a good swift kick to the nose or body may cause it to flee. If a larger dog launches an attack, adopt a sideways stance with one leg in front of the other and crouch down slightly to maximize balance (If you fall, it is unlikely that you will survive).

Since the primary objective of the dog is to rip out your throat, protecting this area of your body becomes your chief defensive priority.

If you are wearing a heavy jacket or sweater, remove it and wrap it around your arm, presenting it as an easy target for the animal. When it bites down, use your free hand to incapacitate the dog by repeatedly striking vicious blows to the nose and eyes, slashing the throat with a knife, or by twisting the ears 180°.

If you can remove your belt, you may be able to use it as a garrote to strangle the beast.

A powerful kick to the rib cage may knock the wind out of it, stunning it long enough for you to retreat.

Pepper spray or electronic whistles modulated to a frequency which produces intense auditory discomfort are also viable alternatives.

If you are being stalked by a pack, the most aggressive animal is very likely the alpha male. Presuming you have a firearm, make sure the alpha is dispatched first. The beta male (second in command) may call off the attack at that point simply to exert its newfound authority over the pack in a manner contrary to the will of its former leader. (If this occurs, it is but a temporary respite. Once solidifying its position as the new alpha, the pack will be back.)

Kill the beta (the next most aggressive) at the same time as the alpha, and the leaderless pack may flee in confusion. Act quickly, however, because an attack which has begun in earnest cannot be called off.

The presence of a single wild dog is cause for concern. A common pack strategy is to employ a gentle-looking female (such as a collie) as a decoy. As the decoy draws the attention of the prey, the pack will unobtrusively surround it and begin to stalk closer. Upon reaching striking distance, both the decoy and the pack will charge.

Dogs are formidable adversaries, and packs are routinely used to bring down bear. They have extremely quick reflexes, will meet your aggression with more of their own, can withstand an extraordinary amount of pain, and will bite continuously if you fight back. Large dogs can quite literally snap your forearm with the pressure exerted by their jaws, and their sharp teeth will easily tear through flesh, tendon, and bone. The pain and shock of a powerful dog bite is likely to overwhelm any thoughts of defensive maneuvers, and even if you are successful in destroying the animal or driving it off, you will almost certainly sustain severe injuries in the process. The contraction of zoonotic disease then becomes a very legitimate concern.

On the other hand, it's still a dog and you're still smarter than it is. Dogs can be defeated (they have vulnerabilities just as humans do), but the task is not easy to accomplish.

While dogs can appear vicious and intimidating, a ninety-five pound dog cannot compete with a two hundred pound man. Aside from the weight disadvantage, a dog’s only weapon is its mouth, of which it has but one. When its only means of attack becomes otherwise engaged, a man is still equipped with two hands, two feet, knees, elbows, higher intelligence, and a mouth of his own, to say nothing of firearms, knives, sprays, clubs, and electrocution-style devices.

To effectively defend against a single attack, control the head and crush the body with your weight. If there are multiple aggressors, climb a tree if possible and either wait for the animals to leave, or shoot them from your perch.

During this bleak period of human history and indeed, from this point forward, you will either establish that you are the top predator of your territory, or you will be prey. It is imperative that a substantial shelter be located and all possible means of ingress secured - this is no time to be caught outdoors by the wild savagery of Revelation’s fourth seal.

Centerfire deer rifles, .45 handguns, and twelve gauge shotguns loaded with #1 buckshot will generally deliver the required firepower to dispatch wild dogs, however,

multiple shots may be required depending on the breed, its mindset, and the weapon involved.

III. Earthquake

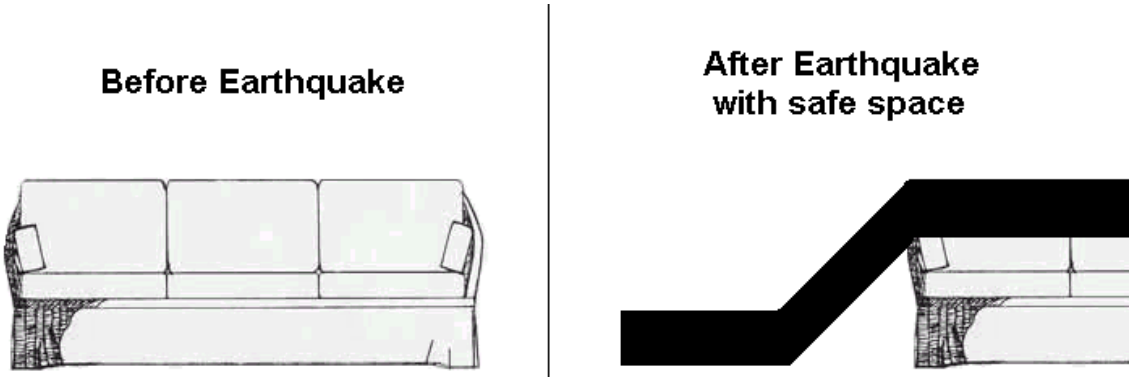
After dispensing its quaternion of death, the galloping hoofbeats of the pale horse will be drowned out by the grinding roar of "*a great earthquake*," in which "*stars in the sky [fall] to earth,*" and "*every mountain and island [is] removed from its place.*" (Revelation 6:12-14)

In 1996, Doug Copp (Rescue Chief of the American Rescue Team International and United Nations expert in Disaster Mitigation) demonstrated that the commonly accepted "duck and cover" survival technique is incapable of preserving life during an earthquake.

In Copp's simulated earthquake, the ten synthetic persons placed within a house and school in the "duck and cover" position were found crushed after the buildings were collapsed. Ten others, placed in fetal positions next to large pieces of furniture, remained intact.

When a building collapses, the weight of the ceiling will crush the objects or furniture it falls upon, but not completely. In the space beneath, there is room to survive.

It is critical that you be positioned directly against the object, however, as the decreasing distance between the fallen ceiling and floor is inversely proportionate to the increasing distance from the object's edge, creating a small triangular safe space.



The larger and stronger the object, the less it will compact. The less it compacts, the larger the adjacent safe space will become.

According to Copp, "Everyone who simply ducks and covers when buildings collapse is crushed to death, every time without exception."

Position yourself next to a sofa or another large bulky object which may compress slightly but still leave a safe space next to it. If you find yourself in bed when the earthquake occurs, simply roll off it and assume the fetal position. This will allow you to survive in the small safe space which will be created around the bed.

Staircases are the first element to collapse and should therefore be avoided. A staircase which appears otherwise intact may have been weakened sufficiently to collapse under the weight of a person attempting to traverse it to safety.

Avoid the bottom floor if you can help it. The greater your height, the less weight is above you. Lower floors will have the combined weight of the entire building (as well as the objects inside) pressing down upon them, while the upper floors will have less weight above them and therefore do not usually collapse during earthquakes.

Do not seek shelter within a doorway. Although this was once thought to be a safe location and was taught thus in the past, it is now known that the mortality rate for those who shelter within a doorway is 100%. If the door frame falls forwards or backwards, the ceiling will drop from above and crush whoever lies beneath it. If the door frame falls sideways, anyone below will be cut in half by the doorway.

As it is unusual for the earth outside to be torn open (Hollywood movies to the contrary), the safest place to be in an earthquake is outside. If you are already outside when the earthquake occurs, remain outside and move away from buildings, trees, streetlights, and power lines. Crouch down and cover your head. Many injuries occur within ten feet of building entrances. Bricks, roofing, and other materials can fall from buildings, injuring persons nearby. Trees, streetlights, and power lines may also fall, causing damage or injury.

After the initial quake, be prepared for the aftershocks, which can occur within minutes, days, weeks, or months of the original event, and can register at even greater levels of magnitude. Aftershocks are common and can cause additional damage. If still functional, find the location of your gas, electric and water main shutoffs, and turn them off if there is a leak or electrical short.

Be alert for fires. Fire is the most common earthquake-related hazard, due to broken gas lines, damaged electrical lines or appliances, and previously contained fires or sparks being released. Several ABC fire extinguishers may be a wise investment.

IV. Rapture

"*At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.*" – Matthew 24:30, 31

"*For the Lord himself will come down from Heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*" – 1st Thessalonians 4:16, 17

"*After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" – Revelation 7:9, 13-15

To this point, life, while incredibly difficult, has been potentially manageable through advanced preparation. Gone are the luxuries of department stores, fast food

restaurants, television, concerts, and video games. Absent too, are the necessities of modern life; namely grocery stores, power plants, water treatment centers, and medical facilities.

Every day has become a struggle to survive amidst the critical food shortages, infectious diseases, riots, and wild animals. There are no allies within this brave new world, no loyalties to friends, no love for family.

"*Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death."* – Matthew 10:21

Impacted most are those formerly affluent souls unaccustomed to trial and tribulation, often attired in formal black or highbrow white, and incapable of functioning apart from microwave ovens, air conditioning, cell phones, computers, and credit cards.

Also grievously affected, although to a much lesser extent, are the destitute, the homeless, and the criminal element – a class of people experienced in surviving "off the grid" and well-acquainted with hardship and the scarcity of food, water, shelter, electricity, and law enforcement officers.

Although the weight under which mankind has struggled these past months is considerable, with the advent of the rapture it will begin to increase at an exponential rate, crushing humanity like an aluminum can in a steadily, ever-compressing vise.

"*For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again.*" – Matthew 24:21

It is interesting to note that while the church remains on the earth, the tribulation plaguing humanity is manageable provided an alert populace takes the necessary precautions. With the departure of the church, however, there is little which can be done to diminish the intensity of the remaining plagues.

The Mark of the Beast system of economics (*no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark* – Rev. 13:17) will be fully implemented by this time, presented to and embraced by the world as a solution to managing the problems of food and water shortages, inadequate housing, and the rampant violence perpetrated by creatures both human and ferine.

Tribulation Christians and those who refuse to participate in the system will be systematically hunted down and removed from society.

"*If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.*" – Rev. 13:10

V. Earthquake

A second earthquake will follow the first, after which hail and fire mixed with blood will rain upon the earth, a deadly phenomenon which will scour clean the face of the earth, destroying shelters and killing scores of people and animals.

How ironic that the Mark of the Beast, accepted into the right hand or forehead for the purpose of preserving life, is incapable of preventing these deaths. Had these people known just a short time before that their deaths were imminent, might they not have chosen to submit themselves to God and escape this great tribulation via the rapture?

Those with a measure of foresight will have looked ahead to the promised judgment and prepared their souls to avoid it. Those remaining defiant of the Almighty

will rush underground where sewers (if not flooded), subway tunnels, caves, or other subterranean shelters will shield them from the falling flame and hail.

VI. One-Third of the Oceans Destroyed

One-third of the ships in the sea will be destroyed, one-third of the world's oceans will be turned to blood, and one-third of the indigenous aquatic life will perish.

With the earth stricken by famine in seal four, the One World Government will turn to the oceans for food, yet one-third of their ability to harvest such fare will be denied them at this time. An industry capable of nourishing one billion people can now sustain but two-thirds of that original number, resulting in the starvation deaths of more than 300,000 marked and compliant citizenry (the equivalent of the entire populations of Grenada, Monaco, the Marshall Islands, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu, and San Marino).

The act of taking the Mark will not benefit these unfortunate souls in the attempt to preserve their earthly lives. The execution of Tribulation Christians notwithstanding, these would have been better off reconciled to God, for they will die just as surely, yet will go to an evil reward.

VII. One-Third of Drinking Water Contaminated

One-third of the earth's fresh water will become tainted and a great number of people will die as a result.

As has been detailed previously, water will be a resource in short supply during these perilous times. Unless you have accepted the Mark of Satan into your right hand or forehead and have consented to worship him as God, this most precious of commodities will not be available to you.

Yet not even this duly authorized and legally-distributed resource can be guaranteed as safe for human consumption. Thus, many who accept the Mark in order to prevent a premature death will die just the same, their souls condemned to a devil's Hell.

VIII. One-Third of the Sun Darkened

According to Drew Shindell of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, if the total output of the sun were to significantly diminish, the atmospheric circulation of certain earth regions would be dramatically altered, reducing winter temperatures to levels sufficient to produce a mini ice age (equivalent to America's bitter winters of 1976-1979, among the coldest on record for the eastern and central U.S.).

By way of illustration, the 1977/1978 winter season in Kentucky saw 35.7 inches of snowfall (a record which still stands today), and 65 days with minimum temperatures at or below freezing.

With one-third of the sun's output reduced, these may be the conditions with which mankind must contend. If so, many more people, without proper shelter and unprotected from the elements, will die from exposure and the dehydration which results from eating raw snow (it should be melted first).

Consequently, the citizens of a united earth will discover their Marks quite incapable of warding against the cold, and will curse the Name of God, who renders such judgment.

IX. Stinging Locusts

At this time, every human being upon the earth without the seal of God in their foreheads will be subject to the torturous attack of two hundred million devils.

Released from their otherworldly prison with a fallen angel named Destroyer at their vanguard, the unholy horde will descend upon the earth like a black cloud of locusts blotting out the sun. Temporarily limited to non-fatal lancing maneuvers, their stings inflict a torment akin to the strike of a scorpion with the effects persisting for five months.

In this instance, the Mark cannot be deemed an asset. Quite the contrary, it functions more as a homing beacon guiding the ethereal adversaries to their temporal targets.

The attack cannot be thwarted, diverted, or prevented, nor can the incessant pain be cured or lessened. Those who fall victim to the aggression perpetrated by these spiritual forces of evil must allow the torment to run its full course. The only persons denied to the dark lords of wickedness are those who have received the seal of God in their foreheads; namely the 144,000 Jews and perhaps those Tribulation Christians who have refused to accept the Mark of the Beast and have repented, been baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the absolution of their sin, and blessed with the Holy Spirit infilling.

"Oh, sinner man, where you gonna run to?"
"Oh, sinner man, where you gonna run to?"
"Oh, sinner man, where you gonna run to, all on that day?"

X. One-Third of Mankind Destroyed

Four devils that have been restrained for millennia from spawning a gushing swell of bloodshed are finally released to satiate their lust for gruesome slaughter in unspeakable acts of carnage that will effectively halve pre-tribulation population figures.

The previous restriction concerning the use of lethal force now dismissed, the two-hundred million force of demonic troops, now led by a quaternion of Luciferian spirits and impervious to a World Government's arsenal of earthly weapons, will roam the earth with impunity, slaughtering one and-a-half billion human beings at will.

Numbering among the bodies of the dead are those who swore allegiance to the New World Order, accepted the Mark of the Beast, and worshipped Satan as their Lord and Master. Such is the reward which the Adversary bestows upon his loyal disciples. In stark contrast, the God of Love has removed His faithful Church and sealed His remaining elect against this danger.

If it has not yet been made patently clear, consenting to the implantation of Satan's Mark will not save you. If you are destined for death regardless, why not reconcile yourself to God and save your eternal soul?

"*I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.*" – Luke 12:4, 5

XI. Storm, Hail, and a Mighty Earthquake

According to Revelation 11:18, what has transpired thus far upon the earth has caused the nations to seethe with rage, but only now does a patient God indulge His own wrath. What the world has experienced to this point has been the even temper of a righteous judge, dispassionately dispensing justice. The time has now come, however, to destroy those who, for millennia, have been destroying His Earth.

They have destroyed life with murder, they have obliterated peace with violence; love has been executed by hate, and marriage denigrated by homosexuality. Innocence has been shattered by iniquity, honesty betrayed by guile, and everything that is true and noble and pure and right has been dragged through the mud of disgrace, shackled by the chains of promiscuity and sacrificed upon an altar of depravity whilst immorality is praised as a virtue.

As the anger of the Almighty kindles white-hot against the wicked, a corrupt and profane civilization will realize that "*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" – Hebrews 10:31 (KJV)

God's temple in Heaven will open, revealing the ark of the covenant in an emblematic rolling up of sleeves as the Lord prepares to manifest His supreme power, a cosmic orchestration with a raging tempest and earthquake as a prelude.

XII. Sores

A plague of foul and virulent sores is the judgment of all who have taken the Mark of the Beast. The epidemic is quite possibly caused by a supernaturally-induced fracture of all lithium ion-powered microchips, with the hazardous substance interacting with unprotected human tissues to produce a rash of intensely painful, festering sores.

To wit, the Mark microchips implanted beneath the skin will rupture, tormenting the very flesh they were designed to protect.

XIII. Death of all Aquatic Life

No longer will the oceans provide food for the people of the earth, for everything within them will perish as the water becomes blood. With the famine of the fourth seal still in effect, there is no food forthcoming either from land or by sea.

Were the Lord to delay His coming, the entire population of the earth would perish from starvation within a month. In the beginning, many will undoubtedly accept the Mark of the Beast in order to provide their families with food, however the freedom afforded by the Mark to purchase food is of no value when no marketable wares exist.

XIV. Fresh Water Turns to Blood

While previously this resource was smitten in part, it now becomes completely polluted and unfit for human consumption. Not a single pure source of drinking water remains upon the planet.

Such is the vengeful judgment of a furious God, appointing a sentence of death upon mankind which would be consummated within three days, were His return not sooner.

Man's only chance to procure water during this period lies with condensation stills and dew harvesters.

Condensation Still

The condensation still operates according to the general principle of the "greenhouse effect." Sunlight passing through a transparent membrane such as plastic warms the soil underneath, causing moisture to evaporate which condenses on the underside of the plastic barrier above. A receptacle collects this condensation as it falls back to the ground, providing clean, pure water.

In fact, water from condensation stills is of a better quality than bottled water due to the distillation process. Because it is slowly evaporated rather than rapidly boiled, even the taste of the water is superior.

Contaminants such as salt, chlorine, heavy metals, bacteria, micro-organisms, sediment, sand, rust, and fluoride are completely removed. Thus, the still has the ability to purify tainted water, and will condense pure water from just about any type of liquid. Even urine will produce clean, drinkable water. Radiator fluid, however, is a notable exception, as its toxins will vaporize and poison the water.

1. Dig a pit approximately four feet wide and three feet deep.
2. In the center of the pit, dig another small hole deep enough for the water container.
3. Place the container inside, then run tubing from the container to the outside of the pit.
4. Blanket the pit with a plastic sheet, making sure that it does not touch the bottom of the pit, and anchor the corners with rocks.
5. Place a small, rounded rock in the center of the sheet, directly above the water container. This will keep the plastic centered and control any flapping from the wind. Gently push down on the center weight until the sides slope to a 45º angle. If the pit is dug deep enough, this should leave the center weight just a few inches above the water container.
6. Secure the edges of the plastic sheet with rocks and dirt. Make sure there are no openings through which moisture can escape.
7. Tie off the end of the tubing with a knot, or fold it over and tie it closed.

Within two hours, the air inside the still will become saturated with moisture and begin to condense onto the underside of the plastic sheeting. Because of the angle of the plastic, the water will run down towards the center and fall into the water container.

As the container fills, simply sip fresh, sterile water from the plastic tubing. If tubing is not available, you will have to dismantle the still to retrieve the water, and then reconstruct the assembly.

If constructed properly, the condensation still can yield about one quart of water per day.

A variation of this model is the vegetation still. Gather enough fresh vegetation to fill most of a plastic bag. Crush the plants in order to break through the leaves' outer water-resistant skin. As in the condensation still, a greenhouse effect will cause water to evaporate from the leaves, condensing onto the upper portion of the plastic and then trickling down into the bottom of the bag.

It is important to note that in this variation, chemicals from the leaves will be absorbed into the water, giving it a pungent leafy flavor. The inclusion of any poisonous plants will produce toxic water.

1. Fill the bag with air by turning the opening into the breeze or by "scooping" air into the bag.
2. Fill the plastic bag half to three-fourths full of leafy green vegetation. Be sure to remove all thorns or sharp sticks which might puncture the bag.
3. Place a small rock inside the bag.
4. Close the bag and tie it off securely. If tubing, a small straw, or a hollow reed is available, insert one end into the mouth of the bag before you close it and then tie off or plug the tubing so that air will not escape. This tubing will allow you to drain the condensed water without having to untie the bag.
5. Place the bag, mouth downhill, on a slope in full sunlight. Elevate the mouth of the bag so that it is slightly higher than the lowest portion of the bag.
6. Seat the bag securely in place, ensuring the stone occupies the lowest position within the bag.
7. Water from the still can be accessed through the straw or tubing, or by untying the bag and allowing the water to drain into a cup. (The vegetation should be replaced from time to time as the collected quantity of water begins to decrease.)

Dew Harvester

Heavy dew can also provide water. Tie rags or tufts of fine grass about your ankles and simply walk through dew-covered grass before sunrise. As the rags or grass tufts absorb the dew, wring the water into a container. Repeat the process until you have a supply of water or until the dew is gone. In Australia where this method of water collection is fairly common, it is reported that up to one quart per hour can be harvested.

Note, however, that these methods of water procurement, if even possible at this time (providing there is moisture remaining within the soil, and providing God does not miraculously change any newly-acquired water into blood – see Exodus 7:19), will provide but a fraction of the water a human being needs to survive.

Human beings require a minimum of one gallon of drinking water per day, yet a single condensation still will provide at best only one-quarter of that amount per day, and not much more than that can be collected by a dew harvester before the dew evaporates in the radiant sunlight of morning.

At this rate, a family of four will require the construction of sixteen stills just to provide the minimum one gallon per day, or else each person must stride through the wet pre-dawn grass for four hours each morning, expending more energy than this quantity of collected water can replenish.

More suitable for supplementing existing sources of water rather than as primary methods of collection, any individual relying upon these measures alone to provide their daily portion of water is doomed to die, Mark or no.

XV. Scorching Sun

"*And the fourth angel shedded out his vial into the sun, and it was given to him to torment men with heat and fire. And men parched with great heat [And men sweltered with great heat], and blasphemed the name of God having power on [upon] these plagues, neither they did penance, that they should give glory to him.*" – Revelation 16:8, 9 (WYC)

"It has been affirmed that the majority of the sun's harmful radiation emanates from the band of ultraviolet. Consequently, if humanity is experiencing an adverse reaction to the sun, the malefic effects must be originating from the UV spectrum." (From chapter 26)

While these effects may not last more than a day or two, there are a few preventative measures which can be taken to reduce your exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

Firstly, if shelter is available to you, do not venture into the open sun until after 3:00pm, when UV rays are at their weakest. Wear protective clothing such as hats, long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and sun-resistant fabrics. Umbrellas and sunscreens with a high Sun Protection Factor may also be effective. Finally, if at all feasible, relocate to the lowest possible ground elevation, preferably below sea level. (Generally, each one kilometer increase in elevation intensifies ultraviolet radiation by six percent.)

Some believe that the fourth bowl of plague will cause the sun's output to increase by a factor of seven (Isaiah 30:26), scorching humanity with a blazing, blistering fire. If so, then the interior of any given shelter will become like an oven due to extreme temperature, forcing a vulnerable humanity outside under the harsh ultraviolet radiation of the sun.

The implication is that there may be no escaping the full effects of this judgment which has been levied upon mankind by a wrothful God. A wicked and rebellious generation will therefore be consumed by the greatness of His majesty and fierce anger just as touchwood and dry pine needles, which, when cast into the flames of a roaring fire, at once turn to ash.

XVI. Darkness

Descending upon the throne and kingdom of the beast, this darkness may be confined to the nation of Turkey and adjacent Middle Eastern territories, or it may completely envelop the entire world.

Whichever area is affected, the darkness will bring with it a chilling cold on an even greater scale than that produced by the fourth trumpet judgment. While that previous plague of darkness affected one-third of the day and night, the darkness of this latest calamity will be total and the temperature more extreme.

XVII. Great Earthquake and Hailstorm

The final cataclysm will wreak havoc on an unprecedented scale, dwarfing even the considerable upheavals which have recently occurred.

The seventh bowl of God's wrath contains a violent storm, hailstones of up to one hundred pounds in weight, and an earthquake of such magnitude that its equal has never before been measured.

Every island will succumb to the violent convulsions of the roiling oceans, enormous swells crashing upon their faces, splintering rocks and trees before submerging them in their entirety. Raging seismic waves will rattle the earth with a thunderous, rumbling roar, causing every pinnacle formed of earth and rock to tremble and quiver before cracking into scores of cragged sections and plunging thousands of feet to the heaving earth below, bursting upon impact into billions of petrous fragments or disappearing altogether into a profusion of vast gaping chasms created by the mighty rending of the seven tectonic plates. Cities and structures designed to withstand the mightiest earthquakes will convulse and topple, reducing formerly elegant and substantial metropolitan areas to blazing heaps of rubble composed of smashed glass, twisted metal, and broken flesh.

Two fissures will incise the great city of Jerusalem, forming three disassociated partitions; yet it will not fall. If a topographical survey were to be performed at this point, one would discover the earth to be of a largely singular elevation, save for three conspicuously intact portions of Jerusalem, the city of God.

XVIII. The Battle of Jerusalem

Those remaining upon the earth after enduring the Great Tribulation will look up in the sky to see a vertical tear within the fabric of time and space split the upper atmosphere, a glimpse of Heaven visible through the celestial gash.

Through the fissure comes a galloping white stallion, bearing a stately rider whose eyes blaze with a righteous fire and crowned with many crowns. His blood-soaked robe flaps in the wind, trailing the gore of human hemoglobin from the massacre at Bozrah. (See "Preserved for Judgment" in the Appendix)

It is the Almighty God, arriving in Jerusalem with His garments stained a deep crimson by the blood of Edom's seed. Vengeance fills His heart, a righteous and all-mighty fury which only moments before resulted in the snapping of bones, the breaking of bodies, and the splattering of blood.

Appalled at the lack of righteousness within the land, His fury was so exceedingly great that His wrath alone was sufficient to sustain Him. He trampled the nations in His anger, and in His wrath He spilled their blood.

Having already cut a swath of blood and destruction, leaving death and eternal torment in His wake, the Lord has already slaughtered many, and He now arrives in Jerusalem to confront the Adversary and his minions.

"*'The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth. The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD will bring charges against the nations; he will bring judgment on all mankind and put the wicked to the sword,' declares the LORD.*

"*This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Look! Disaster is spreading from nation to nation; a mighty storm is rising from the ends of the earth." At that time those slain by the LORD will be everywhere—from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be mourned or gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground.*

"Weep and wail, you shepherds; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock. For your time to be slaughtered has come; you will fall and be shattered like fine pottery. The shepherds will have nowhere to flee, the leaders of the flock no place to escape.

"Hear the cry of the shepherds, the wailing of the leaders of the flock, for the LORD is destroying their pasture. The peaceful meadows will be laid waste because of the fierce anger of the LORD. Like a lion he will leave his lair, and their land will become desolate because of the sword of the oppressor and because of the LORD's fierce anger." – Jeremiah 25:30-38

Accompanied by the armies of Heaven, also mounted on white horses and dressed in pure white raiment, the age-old battle between Good and Evil will draw to a close as the forces of Heaven converge upon the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies.

The beast fought with fury, but its might was not equal to that of the Almighty, and its capture was swiftly effected. Also seized was the False Apostle who had performed so many miraculous signs on behalf of the beast, deceiving those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

Without hesitation, these two workers of iniquity which led the whole world astray through false doctrine were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur while the remainder of their armies were slain, the birds gorging themselves on their flesh.

Descending from Heaven with a massive chain and the key to the Abyss, a mighty angel receives into custody that ancient serpent known as Satan. Binding him from head to foot, the agent of God delivers the accuser of the brethren to the Abyss, locking it and affixing a seal which will hold for a thousand years.

Against this judgment there is but one preventative measure: to become reconciled to God today.

"*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" – 2nd Corinthians 6:2 (KJV)

This is accomplished by repenting of your sin, being obedient to the Word of the Lord concerning baptism in the Name of Jesus, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Upon fulfillment of these basic requirements one must go on to maturity, meeting the needs of those "least worthy" individuals (Matt. 25:31-46), practicing the religion that is pure and faultless (James 1:27), and producing an increase within the Kingdom of God (Matt 25:14-30).

"*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

"*Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*" – 2nd Peter 1:5-11

For more information, read "The New Birth" by David Bernard, available through Word Aflame Press (ISBN 0-912315-77-6), or online at http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/pentecostal/New-Top.htm.

Conclusion

This Tribulation Survival Guide was written to accomplish two objectives: First, to provide believers with the information necessary to survive the "Beginning of

Sorrows," including that early portion of the Great Tribulation which the Church will endure; and secondly to emphasize for unbelievers the importance of becoming reconciled to God.

Accepting the Mark of the Beast may provide you with a few supplies in the beginning, but it will quickly become a worthless and malfunctioning medley of miniaturized circuitry, unable to ward against earthquakes, food and water shortages, darkness, extreme cold, overt demonic attack, hailstones, storms, sores, or scorching sunburn.

Out of a global population of six billion people, more than three billion will perish in the violent upheavals which mark the end of the age. To wit, the odds of any given person surviving until the establishment of Christ's Millennial Kingdom are less than fifty percent.

Unbelievers marked with the seal of Satan will comprise the majority of those three billion casualties, demonstrating the truth of Matthew 16:25 which states, "*whoever wants to save his life will lose it.*"

The irony is that those three billion souls accepted the beast's mark in order to preserve their lives, and yet lost not only their earthly bodies, but their eternal souls, as well.

To half of the world's population I say this: your life on earth is forfeit. The lifeless body of a formerly compliant citizen of the New World Order and the still form of an executed Christian will be just as dead, yet one will go on to eternal life while the other will proceed to eternal torment.

If one's body is destined for death regardless of its spiritual affiliation, then why not prepare your soul for eternal life with the Father?

The remaining half of the world should know that "*if anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.*" - Revelation 14:9-11

You cannot hide from the Almighty God, there is no escaping His justice.

"*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*" - Hebrews 4:13

"*O LORD , you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD . You hem me in - behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*"

"*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the Heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.*

"If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you." - Psalm 139:1-12

My prayer is that in reading this, the manifold plan of God should be made known to the rulers of this earth and to every nation, that no man may claim ignorance. I pray that according to His glorious riches, the God of all creation may grant you the earnest Holy Spirit of your inheritance, which is the indwelling of Christ within your inner being.

I pray that you will become firmly established in love and that your life, together with all the saints, will abundantly flow with blessing and power as you enjoy an intimate relationship with Christ.

The depths of His love, while transcending all human understanding, are fully comprehended by those who have been given the mind of Christ and who will one day be filled to complete measure with all of the fullness of God.

To Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever.

May God richly bless you!

The Two Witnesses of Revelation: Mysterious Personages

"*I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.*

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

"*Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.*

"For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

"*But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from Heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to Heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.*

"*At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of Heaven.*" - Revelation 11:1-13

The identity of the two witnesses is a perplexity of long standing and a fascinating exercise in deductive reasoning. Who are these men who will perform miracles in plain sight of modern man? Endowed with the capacity to summon fire from Heaven, prohibit any emission of precipitation, inflict plague, and transform water into blood, the primary function of the two witnesses is to testify from a global proscenium to the sovereign authority of Yahweh Elohim.

Traditional scholarship identifies these men as Moses and Elijah chiefly due to three dialectic contentions:

1. The miracles performed by the two witnesses are of the same order as those accomplished by Moses and Elijah.

Fire will devour those who attempt to harm the Jerusalem witnesses, a phenomenon reminiscent of that which was manifested by the prophet Elijah in 2nd Kings chapter one when, at the bidding of the man of God, fire descended upon one hundred of King Ahaziah's soldiers, a contingent which had been dispatched for the purpose of effecting his capture.

The witnesses will secure the firmament in order to prevent any outlet of precipitation, a judgment levied upon King Ahab by Elijah in 1st Kings chapter seventeen until such time as the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were destroyed.

The two men will convert the hydrogen and oxygen elements of water into protoplastic particles of blood, a thaumaturgical action which Exodus 7:14-24 reveals as having originally been performed by Moses in an attempt to persuade the Egyptian Pharaoh to grant the Israelites a peaceful departure from that nation.

Finally, they are imbued with the power to strike the earth with every variety of plague; an authority which had been conferred upon Moses, as evidenced by the ten plagues he visited upon Egypt in Exodus chapters seven through eleven.

As the miracles performed by the mysterious personages of Jerusalem appear to coincide with those performed by Moses and Elijah, the assumption advanced by conventional erudition is that the identity of the pair in the latter instance is an exact match for the former – an odd position in light of the following scriptures:

"*And Jesus coming up spoke to them, saying, 'All power has been given me in Heaven and upon earth.'*" - Matthew 28:18

"*The words that I have spoken to you," Jesus said to his disciples, "do not come from me. The Father, who remains in me, does his own works.*" - John 14:10 (TEV)

"*The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"*

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed." - Acts 4:5-10

Jesus testified that apart from the Father, he was quite incapable of performing the wondrous miracles which had been attributed to him, crediting the Father with "*all power*" and affirming that "*the Father… does His own works.*"

The power and authority wielded by Jesus Christ were not intrinsic to his person, but were conferred upon him by the Father in whom omnipotence dwells.

In like manner, when the teachers of the law asked of Peter and John, "*By what power or name did you do this?*" Peter was unable to claim a personal responsibility, attributing the miraculous occurrence entirely to Christ.

Seeing as all power is derived from God rather than mundane humanity, displays of the supernatural energy of God as manifested through terrestrial creatures should not be construed as behavior which defines the self.

Mankind is in no more control of the miraculous energies of God than Balaam's donkey or the burning bush of Horeb. Were the reader to be employed on the morrow by God to function as His agent of the fantastic, he/she would not then become a miracle-worker, for the ability to initiate, regulate, or discontinue the working of the Spirit is not within the grasp of mortal man.

Thus, the conclusion that the two witnesses of Jerusalem are Elijah and Moses simply due to a similarity of the supernatural phenomenon involved is insufficient evidence for such a determination. In truth, Elijah and Moses performed no miracles;

rather the Father performed the works through these channels of flesh. To wit, the miracles of Revelation chapter eleven are not a visible manifestation of the powers of Elijah and Moses, but the power of Almighty God who can direct His energy through any vessel of His choosing.

Were the two witnesses described as a web-spinning individual with the ability to traverse walls horizontally and a man of x-ray vision who flies through the air, one might be capable of identifying them as the superheroes of certain comic books, due to the powers which originate within themselves.

However, the power accorded the witnesses of Jerusalem does not originate from within their persons, but from Almighty God. In exercising His sovereignty, the power of God is dispatched at His pleasure to any vessel of His choosing, and thus it is possible that the two witnesses may be individuals other than Moses and Elijah.

Consider the following:

Unto Elijah was granted the power to cause fire to descend from Heaven, yet the ability did not emanate from his own person. He was not bitten by a radioactive spider. He was not an extraterrestrial. His DNA was not mutated by a nuclear blast. Scripture testifies to the fact that "*Elijah was a man just like us*" in James 5:17. Thus, the calling down of fire from Heaven is not an "Elijah Power," but a power of God.

In 1st Chronicles 21:26, King David also called down fire from Heaven, and in 2nd Chronicles 7:1, King Solomon did the same.

In Luke 9:54, James and John were prepared to engulf the Samaritans with a consuming fire from Heaven. Although they did not follow through on their intention, they did not question their ability to do so.

The power to call down fire from Heaven, then, was not ability exclusive to Elijah, for it was shared by David, Solomon, James, and John, and ultimately originated with God, as seen by Genesis 19:24 and Revelation 20:9.

The reader is no doubt familiar with Moses' parting of the Red Sea, yet in 2nd Kings 2:8, Elijah also parted a body of water, and Elisha did so as well in 2nd Kings 2:14. This power should not be construed as a "Moses Power," for not only was it not exclusive to him, it was God – not Moses – who parted the waters. These were not miracles of man, but miracles of God manifested through various vessels of flesh.

Consider for a moment the power to resurrect the dead. This was an ability shared by Elisha (2nd Kings 4:18-35), Paul (Acts 20:7-12), Peter (Acts 9:40), and Jesus (John 11:43, 44; Mark 5:41,42).

Although Jesus fed multitudes in Luke 9:10-17, Elisha accomplished the same in 2nd Kings 4:42-44.

Elisha purified toxic water (2nd Kings 2:19-22), and Jesus transformed water into wine (John 2:7-9). Elisha in verse 21 revealed the source of his power as Jehovah, and in the same manner, Jesus credited God the Father as the source of his own power (John 14:10).

To identify the two witnesses as Moses and Elijah due to the specific miracles performed is to imply that God is incapable of manifesting these particular phenomena through any other vessels – a concept which elevates man to a height which even God must strive to attain.

In truth, Moses and Elijah were nothing apart from the Father, and just as surely as the Lord granted to a donkey the power of speech, He can confer His power upon any vessel He chooses.

If He so desired, the Lord could indeed select Moses and Elijah to serve as His witnesses in Jerusalem, but the miracles, in and of themselves, are in no way proofs of identity.

2. The Mount of Transfiguration.

The second reason for Moses' and Elijah's popularity as the two endtime prophets of Jerusalem is due to their post-mundane appearance with Christ upon the Mount of Transfiguration. The conclusion drawn from this event is that this was a pattern of future events establishing Moses as the partner of Elijah, documenting their conversation with Christ concerning his imminent death, and forecasting their later demise after returning to Jerusalem at the end of the age.

Unfortunately, this is a supposition entirely bereft of scriptural support.

The transfiguration event is recorded in Matthew 17:1-8:

"*After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.*

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus."

Scripture does not indicate that this is to be considered as a pattern of any kind, nor is the nature of the conversation indicated. The transfiguration event no more proves a partnership between Moses and Elijah due to their mutual presence than Satan's propinquity to the archangel Michael in Jude 9 demonstrates a partnership between the forces of light and darkness.

As a matter of fact, if the prophet Elijah ever had a partner, it was Elisha – a statement for which there is scriptural support.

3. The "destiny of death" clause of Hebrews 9:27, 28.

"*Just as* ***man is destined to die once****, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.*"

The logic here employed is that since scripture identifies death as the destiny of all men, it is assured that all men will die. If Moses and Elijah have not yet tasted of death, then it follows that at some point they must return to receive the portion which has been allotted them.

While the logic is sound, the statement that Moses and Elijah have yet to fulfill their destiny of death is one which must be examined further.

2nd Kings 2:11 indeed records that Elijah was taken from this earth without tasting of death:

"*As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to Heaven in a whirlwind.*"

Thus, according to the biblical definition, Elijah is definitely one of the two witnesses.

Some allege that Elijah died as he ascended, yet the Bible makes no such claim.

Some say that his appearance as a transfigured form is evidence that he experienced a death-like process as he was caught up by the whirlwind – a type of former rapture.

Firstly, scripture does not indicate Moses and Elijah were transfigured – it states that Christ was transfigured. Secondly, if transfiguration is a sign that one has died, then how many times did Christ die?

"*Nor did he enter Heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.*" - Hebrews 9:25 – 28

Scripture states that Christ died once, fulfilling at Calvary, not the Mount of Transfiguration, the destiny which is appointed unto every man.

Elijah never died. It is appointed unto him, however, that he *will*.

Concerning Moses, scripture records in Deuteronomy 34:6 that God buried him. The fact that the burial was performed by God, coupled with the fact that the body of Moses has never been located, is cited as evidence in support of the supposition that Moses was also taken to Heaven without suffering a physical death.

Scripture states otherwise:

"*Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar.*

"Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it."

"And Moses the servant of the LORD ***died*** *there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is.*

"Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when ***he died****, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.*" - Deuteronomy 34:1-8

"*After the* ***death of Moses*** *the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "****Moses my servant is dead****. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.*" - Joshua 1:1, 2

The Bible chronicles the death of Moses – an event which the Israelites recorded, and a fact which the Lord Himself attested to.

Unless one is prepared to argue that the Lord engaged in a deception, or that He intended a meaning apart from what He said, one must conclude that Moses really died.

In addition, the Hebrew word used to describe the death of Aaron in Deuteronomy 10:6 (muwth – to die) is the same word which was used to relate the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34:5.

If one holds to the idea that Moses did not die a physical death, then one must also insist that Aaron's death was also a supernatural departure, based on the identical application of the original verbiage. Either both died, or both were "taken by God."

Thus, Moses is disqualified as a possible candidate for the remaining position of Jerusalem witness.

What, then, is the identity of the second prophet? Has there been anyone else in the history of the Bible who has not died, but was "taken" by God?

There is. His name is Enoch.

"*When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. And after he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Jared lived 962 years, and then he died. When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.*" - Genesis 5:18-24

"*By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.*" - Hebrews 11:5

Enoch "*was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death*."

If it is appointed unto man that he must die, then Enoch has yet to experience the sting of death – a destiny which can be fulfilled if he is one of the two witnesses.

Concerning the destiny of death, there are two key objections to the use of Hebrews 9:27, 28 as evidence by which the identity of the two witnesses is determined.

Firstly, the phrase "*destined to die once*" is cited as an indication of numeration. Scilicet, despite the guaranty of a singular dissolution, it is an averment to which exceptions have been made.

Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the woman with the cruse of oil, and those holy individuals who had died prior to the crucifixion of Christ all experienced a double portion of death, having been resurrected after tasting of death to die once again.

The twice-deceased would seem an exception to the rule of destiny, and it is therefore argued that where one exception exists, others may abound – disqualifying Hebrews 9:27, 28 as pertinent to the identification of the Jerusalem prophets.

In truth, this does not at all negate the scripture or its relevance to the two witnesses, for all men *are* destined to die once. Conversely, all men are *not* destined to die twice, even though some of them *may*.

Those who were resurrected from the dead and perished again may have died twice, but in doing so, they must first have died once in fulfillment of scripture.

Thus, careful examination of scripture shows that this objection is not an obstacle to truth, but merely a clever smokescreen designed to discredit and confuse.

Those searching for an exception to the rule of human destiny then attempt to make their case by an appeal to rapture doctrine.

"*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'*"' - 1st Corinthians 15:51-55

The apostle Paul writes the Corinthian church to reveal that "*we will not all sleep.*" To wit, all men will not all die (from the Greek "koimao," a metaphor for death), even though it is appointed unto man once to die – hence the paradox.

The mortality of man prohibits him from inheriting the kingdom of God, and therefore those who remain at the time of Christ's return will be clothed with immortality.

How can this happen? This is the mystery, for all are destined for death and yet some will elude its sting to become transformed in the twinkling of an eye into immortal beings.

Consequently, for a precise assembly of individuals at a specific period in time, the law of destiny will be suspended in order for existent believers to enter the Kingdom of Heaven at the rapture without having to endure the executions which have been determined upon the balance of the earth's population.

"*In fact, unless the Lord shortens that time of calamity, the entire human race will be destroyed. But for the sake of his chosen ones he has shortened those days.*" – Mark 13:20 (NLT)

Unless the Lord is willing to permit the total annihilation of His people prior to His return (a scenario He has promised to preclude according to Mark 13:20 and Matthew 24:34 – "*I tell you the truth. The people who are living then, will not die before all these things happen.*" (WE)), there must exist a provision to accommodate the entry of saints into the Kingdom of Heaven at that time apart from the portal of death.

That concession is the instantaneous granting of immortality to those who have endured to the time of Christ's return – an exclusive moment which will never transpire again, resulting in a singular exception for a specific purpose which can never again be duplicated.

The existence of this one exception, then, does not at all establish grounds for dismissing the law of destiny as a factor in determining the identity of the two witnesses, for it in no way provides for the possibility of additional exceptions to the rule.

To conclude, there have been many individuals over the millennia who have found favor in the eyes of the Lord, including David, Joseph, Daniel, Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul, and Philip.

With so great a distinguished body of saints, what extraordinary qualities could Enoch and Elijah have possessed that so elevated them above their brethren?

Could Enoch and Elijah have been more righteous than everyone else? Not according to Isaiah 64:6 – "*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*"

Could it be that God loved them more than anyone else? Not according to Acts 10:34 – "*Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism*."

Why is it, then, that God would spare these men the sting of death when He did not spare any others?

Could it be that He has a purpose for them? Could it be that there was a reason that they not yet taste of death? Could it be that their work is not yet finished? Could it be that they are the two witnesses who are appointed to testify to the world of Him?

Is it not odd that in the entirety of human history only two men have been spared the destiny of death, and the Jerusalem witnesses will be two men? Not three or four men, or one man and one woman, but two men.

Coincidence?

It is the belief of this author that it is the will and the plan of God.

In summation, this account is in harmony with the final point raised by those of the Moses/Elijah persuasion (in that all men are destined to die once), but the scripture cited does not support the inclusion of Moses. Rather, the correct identification should be Enoch and Elijah.

Preserved For Judgment

In Matthew 24:21, Jesus declared that the Great Tribulation would be a period of "*great distress unequaled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again.*"

Many Christians will lose their lives during this time prior to the rapture, and many unbelievers will perish as well.

Seeing that such atrocities will be perpetrated upon mankind, many have scrambled to locate a scriptural haven of refuge from which they can safely observe the unfolding of endtime events.

In fact, the Bible reveals just such a locale; a nation encompassed by a divinely-emplaced hedge which the arm of Antichrist is unable to penetrate. It may yet prove a location to avoid, however, due to danger from an entirely different quarter.

Revelation 19:11-16 is an excellent starting point for this topic in that it describes the return of Christ for the purpose of dispensing punishment upon the unrighteous and establishing the Millennial Kingdom of peace:

"*I saw Heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of Heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*"

Zechariah 14:3-5 elaborates:

"*Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.*"

Many eschatologists have taken special notice of Zechariah 14:5, which states that the Lord will come with all of His holy ones. Interpreting the "holy ones" as a phrase indicative of the 144,000 sealed Jews that will remain on the earth throughout the tribulation, it is reasoned that if God arrives in Jerusalem with the 144,000 in His entourage, then He must first have rendezvoused with them at some earthly location prior to His arrival in Jerusalem.

Thus, the theory is born which claims that upon Christ's return at the end of the age, he will first meet the 144,000 in whatever region they have found refuge and continue on toward Jerusalem and the armies of Armageddon with the faithful elect following behind him.

Isaiah 63:1-6 is cited as corroborating evidence:

"*Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength?*

"*It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.*"

"*Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress?*

"*I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground.*"

As this passage certainly describes the destruction of the nations at the return of Jesus Christ, there are eschatologists who believe that the first verse of Isaiah sixty-three provides grounds for claiming that the Lord will arrive at Jerusalem to destroy the nations only after an initial stop in Bozrah of Edom – the city of refuge in which they believe the sealed Jews have been dwelling for three and-a-half years.

According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, the name "Bozrah" means "enclosure," or "fortress," and was the city of an early Edomite King named Jobab. Today, it is called el-Busseireh, located within the mountain district of Petra, twenty miles southeast of the Dead Sea.

Additional evidence for the theory which posits a prevenient tarriance in Bozrah is seemingly found in Micah 2:12, 13:

"*I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people. One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head.*"

Scripture states that the Lord will assemble the remnant of Israel as sheep which are brought together in a pen. There are those who claim that the word "bozrah" is not just a term for an enclosure, but designates a specific type of enclosure; namely, a sheep pen.

Thus, the Bible is interpreted in such a way as to declare that the 144,000 sealed Jews will be found dwelling in Bozrah, the sheep pen.

The "one who breaks open the way" is Jesus, who will break through the gate and lead them unto Jerusalem.

The rationale which follows is that if the remnant of Israel is located within Bozrah and there preserved from the hand of Antichrist until the time of the end, then the spiritual hedge of protection which encircles the chosen seeds of Jacob may also benefit any additional persons cohabiting the region – establishing Bozrah as a modern city of refuge, a haven of peace during the time of the Great Tribulation which is protected by God and excluded from the orbit of Antichrist.

It is a teaching which ignores a large and ominous portion of scripture, revealing Bozrah to be a city marked for special execution. Those fleeing to that region to secure peace and safety may instead find horrific destruction!

Note that in Isaiah 63:1-6, the Lord is described as coming from Bozrah with blood-spattered clothing. His arrival in Jerusalem does not herald the commencement of bloodletting, for there are grapes within the winepress of the Lord's wrath which have already been crushed, and indeed, the violent massacre began in Bozrah.

"*Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."*

"*Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground.'*""

The Almighty arrives in Jerusalem with his clothing already spattered with blood. The inhabitants of Bozrah were mutilated by the personal hand of God, whose garments became stained a deep crimson by the blood of those whose bodies burst apart. Although He is a God of love and mercy, at that moment, only vengeance fills His heart, a righteous and all-mighty fury resulting in the snapping of bones, the breaking of bodies, and the splattering of blood.

Appalled at the lack of righteousness, His fury was so exceedingly great that His wrath alone was sufficient to sustain Him. He trampled the nations in His anger, and in His wrath He spilled their blood.

His raiment is observed to be stained with blood even before His arrival at Jerusalem, for He has already cut a swath of blood and destruction, leaving death and eternal torment in His wake. He has already slaughtered many, and He has come from Bozrah.

"*'The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth. The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD will bring charges against the nations; he will bring judgment on all mankind and put the wicked to the sword,' declares the LORD.*

"*This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Look! Disaster is spreading from nation to nation; a mighty storm is rising from the ends of the earth."*

"At that time those slain by the LORD will be everywhere—from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be mourned or gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground.

"Weep and wail, you shepherds; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock. For your time to be slaughtered has come; you will fall and be shattered like fine pottery. The shepherds will have nowhere to flee, the leaders of the flock no place to escape.

"Hear the cry of the shepherds, the wailing of the leaders of the flock, for the LORD is destroying their pasture. The peaceful meadows will be laid waste because of the fierce anger of the LORD. Like a lion he will leave his lair, and their land will become desolate because of the sword of the oppressor and because of the LORD's fierce anger."

Consider the work of the Lord's hand with regard to the sheep as it sweeps through the sheep pen of Bozrah:

"*Those slain by the LORD will be everywhere…they will not be mourned or gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground.*"

Consider the work of the Lord's hand as it strikes the shepherds of the fold:

"*Weep and wail, you shepherds; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock. For your time to be slaughtered has come; you will fall and be shattered like fine pottery.*"

Consider the sheep pen itself in view of the work of the Lord's hand:

"*The LORD is destroying their pasture. The peaceful meadows will be laid waste because of the fierce anger of the LORD. Like a lion he will leave his lair, and their land will become desolate*".

From these passages it is clear that the Lord Himself will return to destroy Bozrah! The sharp sword proceeding from the mouth of Jesus Christ in Revelation 19:15 will be wielded in assault upon Bozrah and Edom.

Edom, meaning "red," was originally the name of Esau.

"*He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)*" - Genesis 25:30

The land of Esau, or Edom, was also known as the land, or the mountain of Seir, and was indeed a mountainous region, extending from the head of the Gulf of Akabah to the foot of the Dead Sea. It contained, among other cities, the rock-hewn Sela, which is more commonly known by its Greek appellation of Petra. A wild and rugged region traversed by fecund valleys, its ancient capital was Bozrah.

At the time of the Exodus, the Edomites inelegantly refused the Israelites permission to advance across their land, and ever afterwards maintained toward them an attitude of hostility.

Conquered by both King David and King Amaziah of Judah, they later regained their independence and waged war against Israel during the decline of the Jewish kingdom. After supporting the Chaldeans at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem, they subsequently invaded and retained possession of the south of Palestine as far north as Hebron.

Earning the wrath of God early on, destruction has been promised to the inhabitants of Edom through prophecy after prophecy.

"*Concerning Edom: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Is there no longer wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed? Turn and flee, hide in deep caves, you who live in Dedan, for I will bring disaster on Esau at the time I punish him. If grape pickers came to you, would they not leave a few grapes? If thieves came during the night, would they not steal only as much as they wanted? But I will strip Esau bare; I will uncover his hiding places, so that he cannot conceal himself. His children, relatives and neighbors will perish, and he will be no more. Leave your orphans; I will protect their lives. Your widows too can trust in me."*

"*This is what the LORD says: "If those who do not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, why should you go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, but must drink it. I swear by myself," declares the LORD, "that Bozrah will become a ruin and an object of horror, of reproach and of cursing; and all its towns will be in ruins forever.*

"*I have heard a message from the LORD: An envoy was sent to the nations to say, "Assemble yourselves to attack it! Rise up for battle!"*

"Now I will make you small among the nations, despised among men. The terror you inspire and the pride of your heart have deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks, who occupy the heights of the hill. Though you build your nest as high as the eagle's, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD.

"Edom will become an object of horror; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds. As Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown, along with their neighboring towns," says the LORD, "so no one will live there; no man will dwell in it.

"Like a lion coming up from Jordan's thickets to a rich pastureland, I will chase Edom from its land in an instant. Who is the chosen one I will appoint for this? Who is like me and who can challenge me? And what shepherd can stand against me?"

"*Therefore, hear what the LORD has planned against Edom, what he has purposed against those who live in Teman: The young of the flock will be dragged away; he will completely destroy their pasture because of them. At the sound of their fall the earth will tremble; their cry will resound to the Red Sea. Look! An eagle will soar and swoop down, spreading its wings over Bozrah. In that day the hearts of Edom's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labor.*" - Jeremiah 49:7-22

"*Is there no longer wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed?*" – A grandson of Esau, Teman was a duke of Edom. The southern portion of Edom was named after him, the land of "the sons of the east." The land of Teman was noted for the wisdom of its inhabitants, and yet the Lord taunts them in this passage when He says, "You who are wise, where is your wisdom? You who are sensible, where has your advice gone? Have your minds decayed? Where is the great knowledge that is reputed to be found among you?"

"*Turn and flee, hide in deep caves, you who live in Dedan, for I will bring disaster on Esau at the time I punish him…I will strip Esau bare; I will uncover his hiding places, so that he cannot conceal himself. His children, relatives and neighbors will perish, and he will be no more…I swear by myself," declares the LORD, "that Bozrah will become a ruin and an object of horror, of reproach and of cursing; and all its towns will be in ruins forever…. Edom will become an object of horror…Like a lion coming up from Jordan's thickets to a rich pastureland, I will chase Edom from its land in an instant.*"

The language is forceful and explicit in declaring Bozrah, Teman, Petra, and the cities of Edom as marked for unusual demolition at the end of the age.

In clear language, the Bible proclaims that "*Bozrah will become a ruin and an object of horror, of reproach and cursing.*"

The sheep of Edom are to be destroyed: "*The young of the flock will be dragged away.*"

The pasture of Edom will be destroyed: "*he will completely destroy their pasture.*"

Bozrah itself, in fact, will be destroyed: "*Look! An eagle will soar and swoop down, spreading its wings over Bozrah. In that day the hearts of Edom's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labor.*"

"*My sword has drunk its fill in the Heavens; see, it descends in judgment on Edom, the people I have totally destroyed. The sword of the LORD is bathed in blood, it is covered with fat— the blood of lambs and goats, fat from the kidneys of rams.*

"For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in Edom. And the wild oxen will fall with them, the bull calves and the great bulls. Their land will be drenched with blood, and the dust will be soaked with fat.

"For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause. Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever.

"From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again. The desert owl and screech owl will possess it; the great owl and the raven will nest there.

"God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of chaos and the plumb line of desolation. Her nobles will have nothing there to be called a kingdom, all her princes will vanish away. Thorns will overrun her citadels, nettles and brambles her strongholds. She will become a haunt for jackals, a home for owls." - Isaiah 34:5-13

For a time, these cities will function as places of refuge from the Antichrist, only to preserve the inhabitants for the judgment which the Lord will personally mete out.

"*He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand.*" - Daniel 11:40, 41

This passage attests to the military prowess of the Antichrist, affirming his conquest over many nations, including Israel, but the realms of Edom, Moab, and Ammon will escape his grasp.

The ancient regions of Edom, Moab, and Ammon have today become consolidated into the nation of Jordan.

Thus, the modern Jordan will be a nation of refuge from the Antichrist.

"*When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.*" - Revelation 12:13, 14

Above: the modern nation of Jordan

Right: the ancient nations of Ammon, Moab, and Edom in relation to the nation of Israel at the time of the twelve tribes

The dragon is a representation of Satan, and the woman in this instance represents the 144,000 sealed Jews who are taken to a place where, for three and-a-half years, they will find refuge from Satan and his Antichrist.

The fact that the remnant of Israel is conveyed to a haven of refuge, coupled with the fact that just across the eastern border the nation of Jordan will remain an autonomous territory for the duration of the tribulation, would seem to indicate that Jordanian accommodations will be afforded the Jewish 144,000.

While this author is not prepared to specifically claim Bozrah as the Messianic Jewish abode, the preponderance of evidence would seem to heavily favor a dwelling located at some point (possibly even multiple locations) within the borders of modern Jordan, for it is not only the Bozrah, Petra, and Teman regions of Edom that will function as havens of refuge, but so also will the territories of Moab and Ammon escape the wrath of the Antichrist, thus establishing the entire area of Jordan, or at least the vast majority of it, as a nation of safety throughout the tribulation period.

At the conclusion of the Great Tribulation, however, it will become a bloodbath upon the arrival of Yahweh, who will grind the bones of those in Bozrah and effect great carnage throughout all of Jordan.

Jesus said in Luke 12:4, 5: "D*o not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.*"

The Antichrist is quite capable of destroying the body, but his authority ends at that point. The Lord, however, is not subject to the constraints of death, for He is able to inflict eternal torture upon the soul. An individual in Jordan may be protected from the Antichrist, but he is not protected from the wrath of Almighty God.

Those excluded from the rapture of the church should not expect to be able to escape destruction by fleeing to Jordan, for such action only exchanges the wrath of Antichrist for the wrath of God.

God has preserved the inhabitants of Jordan from the hand of the Antichrist in order to punish the kingdoms of Edom, Moab, and Ammon Himself.

Why?

"*'Because you harbored an ancient hostility and delivered the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their calamity, the time their punishment reached its climax, therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will give you over to bloodshed and it will pursue you. Since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you. I will make Mount Seir a desolate waste and cut off from it all who come and go. I will fill your mountains with the slain; those killed by the sword will fall on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines. I will make you desolate forever; your towns will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'*

"*'Because you have said, "These two nations and countries will be ours and we will take possession of them," even though I the LORD was there, therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will treat you in accordance with the anger and jealousy you showed in your hatred of them and I will make myself known among them when I judge you. Then you will know that I the LORD have heard all the contemptible things you have said against the mountains of Israel.*

"*You said, "They have been laid waste and have been given over to us to devour." You boasted against me and spoke against me without restraint, and I heard it.*

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. Because you rejoiced when the inheritance of the house of Israel became desolate, that is how I will treat you. You will be desolate, O Mount Seir, you and all of Edom. Then they will know that I am the LORD."' – Ezekiel 35:5-15

Why is the Lord angry with these nations?

"*Because he pursued his brother with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, I will send fire upon Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah.*"

In Malachi 1:2-4, God declared: "*"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals." Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD.""*

Why such hatred for Esau and his descendants, and those who have taken up residence within his country?

"*Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.*

"*The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob.*

"*Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them. The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.*

"*Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)*

"*Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."*

"*"Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"*

"*But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.*" - Genesis 25:21-34

The concluding sentence is key: "*Esau despised his birthright.*"

Although he claimed to be at the threshold of death, Esau was not at the point of dissolution. He was merely hungry, and rather than prepare a meal himself, he desired the bowl of soup that had already been prepared. He was hungry and he was feeling lazy. These were the circumstances surrounding his exchange of the birthright.

The real reason Esau traded it away was that he despised it. It meant nothing to him, which is why he was willing to forfeit it in exchange for such a minor luxury.

This mighty hunter could have prepared his own soup, or procured meat to eat, but the convenience of a ready-made meal was more attractive. He wanted to get something without having to put out anything for it, and he considered his birthright to be nothing.

While the birthright gave special privileges and advantages to the first-born son, the one who received it also became the priest of the family.

Esau despised the priesthood. He despised God.

"*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" – Romans 9:13

While Esau hated God, Jacob desperately coveted the responsibility of the priesthood.

Esau's eventual reconciliation to his brother did nothing to rectify his situation with the God whom he scorned and despised, and his descendants continued down the ungodly path he had blazed, harboring within their hearts a special hatred for their Israelite brothers, rudely refusing to grant them safe passage through Edom during the Exodus.

"*Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: "This is what your brother Israel says: You know about all the hardships that have come upon us. Our forefathers went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our fathers, but when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory."*

But Edom answered: "You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword."

The Israelites replied: "We will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot—nothing else."

Again they answered: "You may not pass through." Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. Since Edom refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them." - Numbers 20:14 – 21

The Edomites continued to stoke the hereditary fires of malice against Israel, fanning into a blazing conflagration the flame which Esau had originally ignited against Jacob. Indeed, the descendants of Esau would never be reconciled to the descendants of Jacob, but would hate them with a perpetual hatred.

The Edomites "*delivered the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their calamity*." Rather than engage them upon the field of battle with integrity as fair and open enemies, the sons of Esau would alternately ambush and capture retreating survivors from engagements with foreign invaders (Obadiah 1:14), or drive them back upon the sword of their pursuers.

Seeing as how they were brothers and neighbors with whom they had lived peaceably for years, to take advantage of their distress was an act of extreme cruelty as well as cowardice. It was the height of betrayal to attack them secretly while strangers openly invaded them.

Obadiah 1:6-14 elaborates upon the destruction of Edom and the reason behind it.

"*But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged! All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it.*

"*"In that day," declares the LORD, "will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, men of understanding in the mountains of Esau? Your warriors, O Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.*

"Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.

"You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble. You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor look down on them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble.""

Edom will be destroyed for attacking his brother Israel. Instead of coming to Israel's aid, as a brother should do, Edom stood aside and permitted destruction to fall upon Israel. Rather than defend their blood relatives, Edom joined in the battle against them and delighted in their troubles.

God declared a curse upon Edom: "*Because he pursued his brother with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, I will send fire upon Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah."*

"*Jacob I have loved. Esau I have hated.*"

Esau despised God, and his descendants despised God's people. Although all of the nations will suffer judgment for the sins they have committed, the Edomites will be dealt with personally by God, for they were family.

"*Everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.*" – Obadiah 1:9

"*There will be no survivors from the house of Esau.*" – Obadiah 1:18

"Edom will be conquered." – Numbers 25:18

"*My sword has drunk its fill in the Heavens; see, it descends in judgement on Edom, the people I have totally destroyed… the sword of the LORD is bathed in blood… the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in Edom… Their land will be drenched in blood.*" – Isaiah 34:5-7

"*Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of the violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood.*" – Joel 3:19

"*Since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you… I will fill your mountains with the slain; those killed by the sword will fall on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines.*" – Ezekiel 35:6,7

"*I will bring disaster on Esau.*" – Jeremiah 49:8

"*Bozrah will become a ruin and an object of horror, of reproach and cursing.*" – Jeremiah 49:13

"*Though you build your nest as high as the eagle's, from there I will bring you down", declares the Lord. Edom will become an object of horror; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds.*" – Jeremiah 49: 16, 17

"*I will chase Edom from its land in an instant.*" – Jeremiah 49:19

"*I will stretch out my hand against Edom and kill its men and their animals. I will lay it waste, and from Teman to Dedan they will fall by the sword.*" – Ezekiel 25:13

"*O Daughter of Zion, your punishment will end; he will not prolong your exile. But, O Daughter of Edom, he will punish your sin and expose your wickedness.*" – Lamentations 4:22

"*Edom is there, her kings and all her princes; despite their power, they are laid with those killed by the sword.*" – Ezekiel 32:29

The books of Numbers, Lamentations, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and Obadiah all decree judgment and destruction upon Edom.

The wrath of God will not fall solely upon the descendants of Esau, who today may dwell in various regions the world over, but rather "*everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.*" – Obadiah 1:9

Judgment has been previously decreed upon those who are living in the land of Esau. "H*ear what the LORD has planned against Edom, what he has purposed against those who live in Teman.*" - Jeremiah 49:20

The reason for God's anger concerning Edom is evident, and the nations of Ammon and Moab will share in His displeasure, for the Moabites and Ammonites were relatives of Edom and partners with them in collusion against their cousins, the sons of Abraham.

"*"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Because Moab and Seir said, "Look, the house of Judah has become like all the other nations," therefore I will expose the flank of Moab, beginning at its frontier towns—Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon and Kiriathaim—the glory of that land. I will give Moab along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession, so that the Ammonites will not be remembered among the nations; and I will inflict punishment on Moab. Then they will know that I am the LORD."*" - Ezekiel 25:8-11

According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, "The Ammonites were the descendants of Ammon, the son of Lot. From the very beginning of their history until they are lost sight of, this tribe is closely associated with the Moabites.

"Both of these tribes hired Balaam to curse Israel. The Ammonites were probably more of a predatory tribe, moving from place to place, while the Moabites were more settled.

"They inhabited the country east of the Jordan and north of Moab and the Dead Sea, from which they had expelled the Zamzummims or Zuzims. They are known as the Beni-ammi, Ammi or Ammon being worshipped as their chief god. They were of Semitic origin, and closely related to the Hebrews in blood and language.

"They showed no kindness to the Israelites when passing through their territory, and therefore they were prohibited from "entering the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation" (Deuteronomy 23:3). They afterwards became hostile to Israel.

"Jephthah waged war against them, and "took twenty cities with a very great slaughter" (Judges 11:33). They were again signally defeated by Saul. David also defeated them and their allies the Syrians, and took their chief city, Rabbah, with much spoil.

"The prophets predicted fearful judgments against the Ammonites because of their hostility to Israel."

Like the Edomites, the Ammonites were Semites kin to Israel.

"The Moabites were a tribe descended from Moab, the oldest son of Lot from an incestuous birth. From Zoar, the land in which they originated, on the south-eastern border of the Dead Sea, they gradually spread over the region on the east of Jordan. Shortly before the Exodus, the warlike Amorites crossed the Jordan under Sihon their king and drove the Moabites out of the region between the Arnon and the Jabbok, and occupied it, making Heshbon their capital. They were then confined to the territory south of the Arnon.

"On their journey from Egypt, the Israelites did not pass through Moab, but through the wilderness to the east, finally reaching the country to the north of the Arnon. Here they remained for some time until they had conquered Bashan. The Moabites were alarmed, and their king, Balak, sought aid from the Midianites. It was while they were here that the visit of Balaam to Balak took place.

"After Israel took over the Promised Land, the Moabites maintained hostile relations with the Israelites, and frequently harassed them in war along with the Edomites." – Easton's Bible Dictionary

The Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites were three relative peoples: a son of Isaac, and two sons of Lot who forsook their brethren, the sons of Jacob, delighted in their misfortune, and collaborated with their oppressors.

All were members of the family of God, and their punishment will be kept "within the family," as it were.

The Egyptians were foreigners, not related to Israel. The Philistines were not family. The Ethiopians and the Libyans were not relatives. While the Arabs are technically related through Ishmael, the son of Abraham's concubine, Ishmael seems to have been denounced as family and dismissed by Abraham with no more than a skin of water and some bread.

"*But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."*

"The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."

"*Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.*" - Genesis 21:9-14

Ishmael never shared in the inheritance of Abraham, nor was he numbered among those of the great nation that arose from the loins of Abraham, for Ishmael became the father of his own nation.

Galatians 4:21-24, and 28-31 affirm that the line of Ishmael was "cut off" from the line of Abraham.

"*Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.*

"These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar…

"Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

"Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman."

Two brothers, the first begotten of all men. One hated the other and murdered him. The one was marked, cursed by God, and sent away.

Two half-brothers with Abraham as their father. One mocked the other. The one was sent away and forfeited his inheritance.

Two brothers with Isaac as their father. One hated the other and despised all that he represented. The one lost everything and gained the wrath of God.

Four nations related by blood. Three of them did evil to the fourth, and the three are preserved for judgment.

It is the sin of family betrayal; when the ones closest to an individual are also the ones attacking him - sometimes openly, sometimes secretly behind his back.

The family is a God-instituted organization, created for the purpose of teaching, providing, loving, nurturing, and supporting. It was created to perpetuate the love of God and to return that love back to Him. It was never intended to be used as a weapon.

The Lord modeled His Church after this relationship: God the loving Husband, and we his beautiful Wife.

When Satan attacks the family, he strikes at the very heart of God.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against the words of the Lord, God made a personal appearance to pronounce judgment.

When Cain murdered his brother Abel, God became personally involved.

When Ishmael mocked Isaac, God spoke to Abraham and sided with Sarah. Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. God got involved.

When Esau despised his brother and it grew into a murderous anger, God issued a curse, which He will bring to fulfillment at the end of the age in the nation of Jordan.

"*Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated!*"

Jordan will indeed exist as a nation of refuge, but only from the Antichrist.

Your safety lies not in a city called Bozrah, but in the Name of God and in His mercy and grace.

If you are not one of the Lord's chosen ones who are taken out of this world at the rapture, then a city called Bozrah is only a short three and-a-half year reprieve. Do not place your trust in cities or nations, but instead make sure that you are ready to meet the Lord at his return.

A final point:

"*But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*" - Revelation 21:8

The cowardly will have their place in Hell. The cowardly are those afraid to stand for the Truth and for the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The cowardly are those who run to Jordan in order to refrain from making a decision between their Lord or their life.

Jordan may well be a nation of refuge, but it also appears to be off-limits to true believers. After all, the purpose of the preservation of Jordan is not to keep it from harm, but to save it for special execution.

History records that during the seventh persecution of Christians throughout Rome in A.D. 249 – 251, the Governor of Asia Minor, Optimus, had a weak-willed Christian by the name of Nichomachus brought before him and ordered him to offer sacrifices to the pagan idols. Nichomachus replied, "I cannot pay the respect to devils that is due only to the Almighty," upon which he was immediately placed upon the rack. After enduring his torments for only a short time, he recanted his faith in Christ. Immediately after becoming free of the rack, he was seized with great agony and fell lifelessly to the ground.

Observing what appeared to be the terrible judgment of God, a sixteen-year old girl named Denisa exclaimed, "Oh unhappy wretch! Why would you buy a moment's ease at the expense of a miserable eternity?"

When Optimus heard her, he ordered her to be brought before him, and when Denisa confessed that she was a Christian, he had her beheaded.

"*The cowardly…their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.*"

Nichomachus was a coward. He ran to a place of safety when the persecution came, attempting to preserve his life in a figurative Jordan.

" *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.*" - Matthew 16:25

Nichomachus tried to save his life, an attitude which the scriptures reveal will result in eternal death. Those who lose their lives for His sake, however, such as the faithful Denisa, will find eternal life in Heaven.

Christians are called to stand up for Christ and pay whatever price is exacted from them, just as Jesus measured the cost with his life. Christians are not called to flee from persecution and cower in a realm of peace and safety.

"*While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*" - 1st Thessalonians 5:3

Fleeing to Jordan may well be an act of purchasing a moment's ease at the expense of a fiery eternity.

In summation, there is truth to the idea that Bozrah will be a protected city during the Great Tribulation, but not because its inhabitants have found favor in the sight of God. Rather, He is preserving it for His own judgment, and any who flee there seeking peace and safety may be sharing in that same judgment and destruction.

The solution is to retain lamps that are filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit and to remain alert for the Lord's return in order to be numbered among those who will be caught up to meet Him in the sky shortly after the commencement of the Great Tribulation.

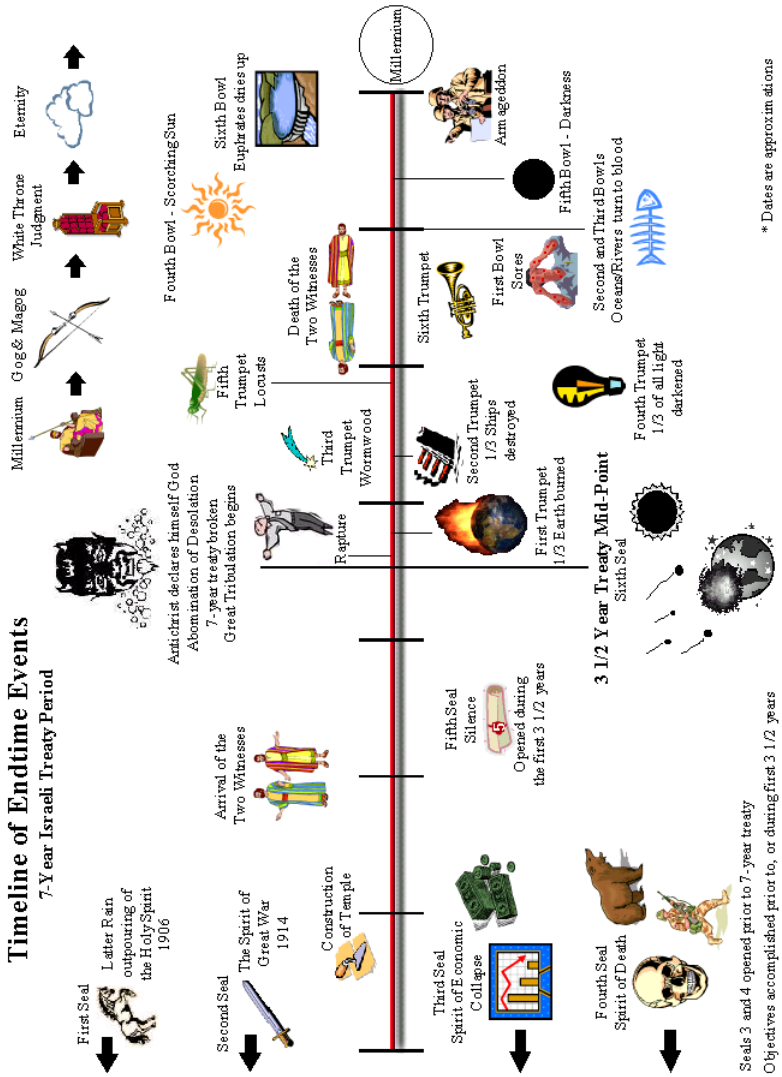
Until then, stand firm in the Faith and boldly confess the Lord Jesus to the world so that He will confess you before his Father in Heaven.

"*Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in Heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in Heaven.*" - Matthew 10:32, 33 (Jesus will disown the cowardly)

When facing persecutions, keep in mind that the early Christians believed that when persecutions come upon a person, God will either lessen the pain to a bearable degree, or He will provide the strength to endure it's full intensity.

Do not be cowardly. Bozrah is not a place for Christians. It is a place for the damned.

Timeline of Endtime Events



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