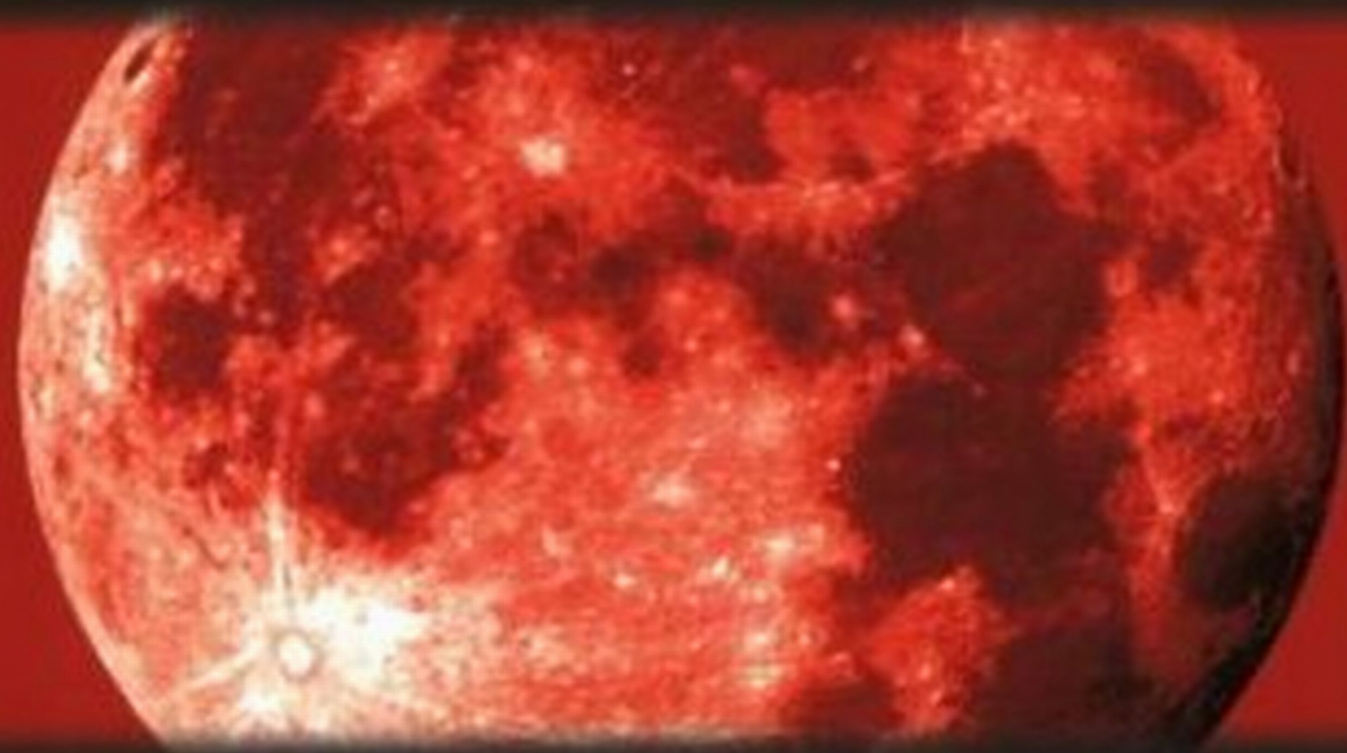


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Foreword by Charles H. Roberts

♦ END TIME ♦ DELUSIONS



*The Rapture,
the Antichrist, Israel,
and the End of the World*

Steve Wohlberg

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Steve Wohlberg

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Above all, to Jesus Christ, my Messiah and Savior, because Your agonizing death and victorious resurrection have made even this life possible, with all its blessings—and eternal life. May Your name be praised forever!

Praise for End Time Delusions

"I am impressed with the real scholarship and accuracy displayed in Steve Wohlberg's new book, *End Time Delusions*."

Dave MacPherson, researcher, journalist,
Author, *The Rapture Plot* and *The Incredible Cover-up*

"*End Time Delusions* should prove to be a popular counter to the plethora of preteristic unpredictions as well as pre-tribulationistic prognostications which plague the beginning of our new millennium."

Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, Th.D., Ph.D.
Professor-Emeritus, Queensland Presbyterian Theological College

"*End Time Delusions* does a fantastic job of expressing what I have believed for years!"

Pastor Ed Nichols
Newberg Church of the Nazarene
Newberg, Oregon

"While most Baptists today believe in the secret rapture of the saints followed by the visible return of our Lord, during the Protestant Reformation we held to the historicist interpretation. *End Time Delusions* presents a valid academic and theological challenge to the *Left Behind* novels."

H.L. Champion, Evangelist
Administrator, www.Baptist.org
Nashville, Tennessee

"Steve Wohlberg is one of the most dynamic and impressive spokesmen for the traditional Protestant interpretation of prophecy known as historicism. I wholeheartedly endorse this latest work."

Val W. Finnell, M.D.,
Founder, Historicism Research Foundation, Inc.

"*End Time Delusions* counteracts the 'wild speculation' of 'left behind' theology that exists today."

Herb Frizzell, Sr.
Cedar Hill, Texas

"Steve Wohlberg has done his homework. Although I am not convinced of every detail he presents, he challenges us all to study the Bible for ourselves and not to fall for every glib and easy answer that comes down the road."

Edward William Fudge
Author, Director of Edward Fudge Ministries

"*End Time Delusions* is a much-needed addition to the library of works on eschatology. Read it, read it again, and share it with a friend!"

Pastor Bill Wilton
Sunrise Church
McMinnville, Oregon
The Christian Reformed Church in North America

"I've studied end time theories for over 20 years and thought I had heard it all, yet *End Time Delusions* masterfully ties mysterious Bible passages together in a fresh, eye-opening way. This book is suited for both the long-time prophecy buff, and people just now developing an interest in Bible prophecy."

Don Schaefer
Euless, Texas

"*End Time Delusions* is a concise, refreshing survey of a vitally important aspect of Christian teaching. As a Reformed Minister, I warmly recommend it as worthy of careful study."

Stefan Slucki, B. Th., D. Min.
Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia,
Seacliff South Australia.

"Steve Wohlberg's book is a well-written jolt of common sense. There's a change coming. *End Time Delusions* is a part of it."

Bill Kalivas
Webmaster, www.historicist.com

"Steve Wohlberg's passion matches that of the great reformers. Whether one agrees or not it is vital reading to expand the dialog beyond the fictional novel and movie-hyped, end times scenario that has conditioned the theology of millions of Christians."

Steve McNelley, Ph.D.
San Juan Capistrano, California

"*End Time Delusions* avoids the two ditches of putting the Jewish people on a divine pedestal or condemning us as Christ-killers and forsaken by God. Steve Wohlberg's balanced view will cause us to work together for sharing the good news with everyone, Jewish or non-Jewish."

Jeff Zaremsky
Messianic Rabbi of the Beth-El Shalom Congregation
St. Petersburg, Florida

Table of Contents

Preface	
Foreword	
Introduction	
Delusions (Noun)	

Section 1 Rapture Delusions

Chapter 1	Now You See Them, Now You Don't	21
Chapter 2	The Parousia and Twinkling Eyes	27
Chapter 3	Will God's Church Escape Tribulation?	33

Section 2 Seven-Year Tribulation Delusions

Chapter 4	The Seven-Year Tribulation Theory	39
Chapter 5	Dropping the Bomb	43
Chapter 6	David Van Biema's Secret	49

Section 3 Antichrist Delusions

Chapter 7	Antichrist: Facts vs. Fiction	55
Chapter 8	Paul's Point: Antichrist Comes <i>First</i>	59
Chapter 9	Falling Away From the Truth	63
Chapter 10	Judas: A Type of Antichrist	67
Chapter 11	One Future Mr. Diabolical?	71
Chapter 12	Titanic Truths About the Temple	73
Chapter 13	The Restrainer: Myths and Memories	77
Chapter 14	Putting the Pieces Together	83
Chapter 15	Echoes of Forgotten Voices	87
Chapter 16	1260 Years: The Time Factor	95
Chapter 17	The Return of the Wounded Beast	101
Chapter 18	The I.D. of Antichrist	105
Chapter 19	Battle of the Isms	111

Chapter 20	The Path of the Virus	125
Chapter 21	Faith of our Fathers	133

Section 4 Israel Delusions

Chapter 22	All Eyes on Israel	141
Chapter 23	Wrestling With an Angel	145
Chapter 24	A New Look at Jesus Christ	149
Chapter 25	Clarity Through Double Vision	153
Chapter 26	Choice and the Chosen Nation	159
Chapter 27	Calvary and the Divine Divorce	163
Chapter 28	When the Wall Tumbled Down	167
Chapter 29	1948: An Unsinkable Doctrine?	173
Chapter 30	When the Euphrates Runs Dry	181
Chapter 31	Frogs, Fables, and Armageddon	191
Chapter 32	Thunder From Heaven's Temple	197
Chapter 33	144,000 Israelites Indeed	203

Endnotes

Preface

Growing up just over the hill from Hollywood, California, I had absolutely no interest in biblical prophecy for the first 20 years of my life, mainly because I had never heard of such a thing. “Rapture? What’s that?” I would have said with a mystified look if you had asked me about it. My Jewish family was warm and friendly, but not spiritual. My brother Michael had his bar-mitzvah at age 13, but I didn’t, for it was only casually presented as a take-it-or-leave-it option. As far as I remember, we never read the Scriptures, or prayed even one time.

As a teenager surrounded by the head-pounding music of Mick Jagger, The Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, and the drug culture of the 60’s and 70’s, my life took a sharp turn in the wrong direction. Some of my friends are dead. It’s a miracle I’m not where they are.

During the summer of 1979, while inhabiting discothèques nightly, I worked as an “extra” in the film business. One day I was providentially assigned to work on a TV mini-series called *From Here to Eternity* on a sandy stretch of Oxnard Beach. There I met a fellow extra who “witnessed” to me about Jesus Christ and the approaching end of the world. With curiosity mingling with interest—and a nagging sense of need for something beyond glamorous illusions—I decided the very next day to visit a Christian bookstore near our home and to scan the prophecy section. Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth* was the first Christian book I ever touched. I bought it, and two of his other books, *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth* and *Terminal Generation*. Although my marijuana-clouded brain hardly understood what I read, God used those books and started working inside my mind. A few days later I found a Bible and began to read. Dimly at first, I slowly started comprehending the message and grace of Jesus Christ. The turning point came when I read about the intense pressure Christ endured in the Garden of

Gethsemane, the blood that dripped from His forehead, the appearance of a heavenly angel to strengthen Him (see Luke 22:39-44), and His unfathomable love for a perishing world. After wrestling with the cup, Jesus made that critical decision—the choice to save lost sinners no matter what it cost Him personally, even if it meant separation from His Father. Finally I read—using the title of Mel Gibson’s controversial film—about *The Passion of the Christ*, and His suffering on the cross for my sins. That did it. Shortly thereafter, in a dormitory room at California State University of Northridge, I slipped to my knees and invited my Messiah into my heart. My darkness turned to light! Jesus freely forgave my sins, removed my guilt, and changed my life! No more drugs. I was clean.

After discovering that my Messiah came once as the Babe of Bethlehem, my interest was strongly perked in the subject of His second coming and the events predicted to occur during Earth’s last days. I craved understanding, and longed to be ready for the return of the One who was crucified for me, should it occur in my lifetime. This explains my enthusiasm and passion for prophecy.

That was over 24 years ago. I’ve learned a lot since I first read Hal Lindsey’s books while working as an extra in Hollywood. One thing that has impressed me for years as I have pondered Christ’s first coming, is the reality that one reason why many religious leaders in Jesus’ day rejected their own Messiah was because they misunderstood the Old Testament prophecies predicting His first arrival. Think about it. Because it happened once, couldn’t it happen again? Could religious leaders *today* be making a similar mistake by misunderstanding the prophecies of *His second coming*? Yes they could, and yes, many are making such a mistake. That’s why I wrote *End Time Delusions*, which not only proves that massive distortions have entered Christianity, but also clarifies what the Scriptures teach about the end of the world.

In *End Time Delusions*, I have combined years of research, countless hours of study, and only God knows how many earnest prayers for “the Spirit of truth” to guide me into “all truth” (John 16:13). I hope the discoveries you are about to make will thrill your heart as they did mine when I first learned them.

Get ready for an amazing journey, controversial for sure, yet exciting and rewarding as well. When Jesus Christ does return, may we all “be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14) through His perfect righteousness.

Steve Wohlberg

Foreword

British essayist G.K. Chesterton once famously remarked that some men would rather deny the truth than be behind the times. Steve Wohlberg, the author of the book you now hold, is not such a man. Wohlberg calls the reader away from the prophecy malaise of modern times to a truth long forgotten by most Christians. That truth was mined from the depths of the Word of God by the great Protestant Reformers of the 16th and 17th centuries, but for reasons you will soon discover by reading this book, that truth was bitterly attacked and eventually subverted in the very churches that claim the lineage of the Reformation.

Perhaps no other area of Christianity has been the subject of more misguided interpretation and false teaching than that of biblical prophecy, and the “end times” statements in the Books of Daniel and Revelation. Many readers of *End Time Delusions* may be surprised to learn that the prevailing view in most American evangelical churches, that of dispensationalism, is a novelty in the long history of the Christian church. In light of that, the obvious question the reader will want to ask is: “What was the prevailing view, and how did the current view, as expressed in the *Left Behind* books and films, gain such prominence?” Steve Wohlberg answers these and many other questions in this book.

In some Christian circles another view of end-times prophecy has been gaining prominence, that of the “preterist” perspective. Although it takes the opposite approach to the dispensational view, Wohlberg demonstrates that both views have common roots, and that the genesis of both was meant to obscure, rather than clarify, what the Word of God really teaches about the antichrist.

As a pastor and student of Scripture, I appreciate both Steve Wohlberg’s mastery of the Bible and his commitment to it as the infallible Word of God.

The reader will find this book both a joy to read, rich with illustrations and examples, and a Christ-centered challenge to prevailing—yet erroneous—prophetic theories.

Additionally, in much of today's popular prophecy writing there is a strong emphasis on sensational events while neglecting to focus the attention on the risen, reigning Christ. Wohlberg avoids this pitfall and gives glory to Messiah Jesus, which should be the goal of any worthy book about the end times. To those accustomed to reading "prophecy books" from other perspectives, this may seem unusual at first, yet it will become refreshing and will be seen as biblically based. Finally, let the reader understand: What you are about to read is no novelty. It is a call to let the Bible speak for itself on the subject of the past, present, and future of our world.

Charles H. Roberts, Th.M., D.Min.
Pastor, Ballston Center Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
Ballston Spa, New York

Introduction

It was 4:09 p.m., eastern standard time, on Thursday, August 14, 2003. It started with a blip. Lights flickered and then went out, and in a few hours it was dark from New York to Cleveland to Detroit, even into Canada. The late-August front cover of *Newsweek* labeled the event, BLACKOUT OF 2003. Thankfully, the 50 million North Americans affected took it quite well. Looting was minimal and no one died.

End Time Delusions is about another blackout—a spiritual one—now occurring within Christianity concerning the true meaning of God’s “sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19 KJV). Millions of prophecy-minded Christians, including me, sense we are nearing the return of Jesus Christ. Yet when it comes to what the majority *thinks* is going to happen during Earth’s last days, and what the Bible *actually says* will occur, the difference is seismic.

It’s no secret that the following five teachings have become immensely popular:

1. All true Christians will soon vanish in the rapture.
2. Seven years of apocalyptic terror will overtake those left behind.
3. One sinister man—the antichrist—will take over the world.
4. The antichrist will enter a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, claiming to be God.
5. The nations of earth will attack Israel at Armageddon.

These five concepts are being taught on radio, television, at prophecy conferences, in countless books and magazines, in end time movies, in

seminaries, and on the Net. This five-point belief system is also tightly connected—with one event supposedly leading to the next—just like New York City’s electrical power grid is intertwined. On August 15, 2003 at 4:00 p.m., our nation’s generators, electrical cables, transmission lines, and systems operators were all working efficiently together. Everything was fine. Until 4:09. Then a single, high-voltage current forced America into “the largest power outage in our history.”¹

When it comes to popular prophetic theories, is it possible a large portion of Christianity is now in the midst of another outage—a *truth outage*? The Bible clearly predicts, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Has that time come?

The purpose of *End Time Delusions* is to closely examine the above set of tightly-meshed theories about the rapture, a future seven-year tribulation, the antichrist, and the modern Jewish state. As we do, you will discover irrefutable, high-voltage, New Testament proof of another system failure.

Please read this book prayerfully.

With God’s help, I hope to turn some lights on.

Delusion (noun):

1. A misleading of the mind.
2. False belief; a fixed misconception.
3. Something which one accepts as true or real but which is actually false or unreal.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary
G. & C. Merriam Co. (1953)

Three things cannot long be hidden:
The sun, the moon, and the truth.

— *Confucius* (551-479 B.C.)

“He opened their understanding, that they might
comprehend the Scriptures.”

Luke 24:45

◆ SECTION 1 ◆

RAPTURE DELUSIONS



Chapter 1

Now You See Them, Now You Don't

If in the last few years you haven't discarded a major opinion or acquired a new one, check your pulse, you may be dead.

— Frank Gelett Burgess (1866-1951)

Although the exact word, “rapture,” isn't in the Bible, millions of prophecy-minded Christians have nevertheless been taught that soon God's Church will disappear from Planet Earth without a trace. Headlines are predicted to read: “Multitudes Missing, Chaos Sweeps Globe!” “All Children Have Disappeared!” “Massive Traffic Snarls Due to Evaporated Drivers!” “Planes Crash, Trains Wreck, as Pilots and Engineers Vanish!” Perhaps you've seen bumper stickers reading: “In case of Rapture, this vehicle will be unmanned.”

In the last few years, the number-one promoter of the rapture idea has been the *New York Times* bestselling *Left Behind* series, coauthored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. A high-speed, 12-book sequence of novels about the end times, *Left Behind* teaches that the return of Jesus Christ takes place in two distinct phases. First, Jesus comes *invisibly* to remove His Church before a seven-year tribulation during which the rest of humanity must face the antichrist. This is the rapture. At the end of those seven years, Jesus will again return *visibly* to deliver those who became Christians during the tribulation—after being given a “second chance” to be saved—and to pulverize the invading enemies of Israel at Armageddon. This is the second coming. Thus it's rapture first, then seven years with the antichrist, then the visible second coming of Jesus Christ.

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

These popular concepts—rapture, seven years of horror, future antichrist—have also been taught in many apocalyptic Christian films, such as *A Thief in the Night*, *Image of the Beast*, *Tribulation Force*, *The Omega Code*, *Left Behind: The Movie*, and *Megiddo*. Because the rapture teaching has been promoted so heavily in our society, even among those outside the Church, a rumor has circulated that some higher-ups at American Airlines want at least one non-Christian pilot aboard each flight—just in case!

The real question is: Although “rapture” isn’t a biblical word, is the doctrine there? If not, could it be an *end time delusion*? Let’s find out.

First of all, the Bible certainly does teach the exciting truth that Jesus Christ will return for His people. Our Lord Himself said, “I will come again and receive you to Myself” (John 14:3). All Christians should believe Christ’s promise and long to meet Him on that great day.

But will He come invisibly? Will the Church disappear? Does the Bible really teach vanishing Christians? Without a doubt, the most quoted passage used to support the rapture concept is 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Lots of Christians know this verse by heart, and it is cited in *Left Behind: The Movie*. There Paul wrote that true believers will someday be “caught up... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). But does “caught up” mean disappear? Is Paul describing a silent return of Jesus Christ before an apocalyptic seven-year tribulation? We don’t need to guess. The answer is in the context, and you don’t need to have a four-year degree to grasp the truth.

Have you ever driven down a highway without realizing how fast you were going, and then, when you finally looked down at your speedometer, you thought to yourself, *I’m going too fast and must slow down!*? This is what we need to do with 1 Thessalonians 4. We must slow down and take a full look.

Here is what Paul actually wrote:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Rapture teachers interpret this event as silent and secret, yet doesn’t it seem rather loud and visible? There is a shout, a voice, a trumpet. Have you ever heard of a silent trumpet? The truth is, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is one of the noisiest verses in the Bible! Look carefully: Jesus Christ comes down from Heaven shouting and blowing a trumpet. The dead rise. Then true believers

Now You See Them, Now You Don't

are “caught up.” Honestly, do you see anything here about vanishing Christians prior to the tribulation? Rapture promoters interpret “caught up” to mean *disappear* because this view fits their tightly-meshed prophetic system, yet it must be admitted that the text doesn't say this.

Two thousand years ago, at the end of His earthly life, Jesus Christ was also “taken up,” (Acts 1:9). This doesn't mean He disappeared, leaving His clothes on earth. Instead, in full view of His wondering disciples, “*while they watched*, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9, emphasis added). This event was highly visible. Luke said Jesus Christ was “taken up,” and then clouds are mentioned, just like Paul wrote about believers being “caught up...in the clouds.”

Notice carefully the full context of Acts 1:9:

*Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven**”* (Acts 1:9-11, emphasis added).

Here we have holy angels—in the form of men in white robes—explaining the simple truth about Jesus Christ's return. They told the disciples that just as Jesus was literally and visibly “taken up” into the clouds, even so would He “come in like manner as [they had seen] Him go into heaven.” Although these angels never attended a seminary, there's no doubt they had their theology straight. They taught no secret coming or vanishing Christians. Everything will be highly visible, just like the ascension of Jesus Christ.

Let's return to 1 Thessalonians and take a look at the thief-in-the-night idea:

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as **a thief in the night**. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–5:3, emphasis added).

Here Paul compares the coming of Jesus Christ to the arrival of a midnight thief. Rapture promoters interpret this to mean Jesus will come like a *silent* thief to snatch believers off this earth before seven years of chaos—then driverless cars will crash, pilotless planes will collide, and babies will be found missing from their cribs. The Christian film, *A Thief in the Night*, which is similar to *Left Behind: The Movie*, portrays this dramatically. Yet is this really what Paul is saying?

Again, let's slow down and take a closer look at our biblical speedometers. First of all, the day when Jesus comes as a thief is clearly *the very same day* in which He descends with a shout and a trumpet blast. Secondly, it comes as "a thief in the night" only upon the unprepared. When it hits, "sudden destruction comes upon them [the lost], as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."

Do you see what Paul is really saying? Jesus' coming as a "thief in the night" does not mean He will come quietly and invisibly to steal believers out of this world, as is taught in rapture movies and *New York Times* bestselling books. Rather, it means He will come unexpectedly, bringing "sudden destruction" upon the unsaved. *Thus it is not a secret coming, but only a sudden one.* Will the unprepared get a "second chance" to be saved during a subsequent seven-year tribulation? Paul answered this question when he wrote, "*They shall not escape*" (verse 3).

Here's a simple summary of what 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:3 really says:

- Jesus Christ will literally descend from Heaven with a shout and a trumpet blast.
- The dead in Christ will rise first and true believers will be "caught up," just like Jesus Christ Himself was visibly "taken up" into the sky almost 2,000 years ago.
- This cataclysmic "day of the Lord" will burst upon the unprepared like the unexpected arrival of a midnight thief.
- "Sudden destruction" will overwhelm the lost, "and they shall not escape."

When taken literally, these words describe the visible second coming of Jesus Christ, not a secret rapture.

Immediately after his solemn prediction of Christ's return as a midnight thief, Paul wrote to true believers: "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5).

Now You See Them, Now You Don't

Remember the Blackout of 2003? It left 50 million North Americans in darkness because a massive system failure short-circuited our electrical power grid. At least when it comes to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:3, we have just witnessed another system failure. The popular doctrine of a silent, secret return of Jesus Christ and vanishing Christians *is just not there*.

Again, Paul wrote, "You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

God wants us to avoid truth outages.

He wants the lights on.

Chapter 2

The Parousia and Twinkling Eyes

Beware lest you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow.

—Aesop (620-560 B.C.)

Jesus Christ predicted, “Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:40-42).

This is probably the second most quoted Scripture in the Bible used to support the doctrine of an invisible return of Jesus Christ and vanishing Christians. Supposedly, “one will be taken and the other left” means believers will disappear in an unperceived flash, while the rest of the world suddenly wakes up in mystified ignorance wondering, *Which way did they go?*

Again, the key is in the context. Matthew 24 begins with our Savior quietly sitting upon the Mount of Olives. His “disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ ” (Matthew 24:3) Obviously, the disciples were thinking about Jesus’ return and the end of the world. Because of mental gaps and some loose ends, they asked the Master to clarify the truth.

Before we look at Christ’s response, notice the little word, “coming,” in verse 3. The original Greek word there is, “Parousia”—you can check it in any good concordance. While you don’t need to be a Greek scholar to understand the Bible, that small word is of large importance. As we shall soon see, the “Parousia Principle” will soon provide vital insights into the rapture question.

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

In response to His disciples' please-clarify-the-end inquiry, Christ's very first words were, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:4). The forcefulness of this response should hit us like a hurricane! Why? Because it clearly implies that when it comes to this exact topic of His "coming" or "Parousia," Jesus knew there was going to be a great deal of deception whirling around. And what is even more dramatic is that Christ raised His "Don't Be Deceived" warning flag *four times* in this single sermon (see Matthew 24: 4-5,11,24). One gets the idea that *end time delusions* will someday sweep over Planet Earth like a massive tidal wave. The only way to avoid being swept away in this swirling sea of falsehood is to pay close attention to the exact words of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord continued, "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24). Here Jesus said satan's delusions will eventually become so subtle and powerful that only "the elect" will come through unscathed. Who are "the elect"? Based on the context, they must be a group of people who know the Truth Teller and the Bible so well that even the devil can't mislead them. Verse 31 also tells us that "the elect" are people who are ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

Immediately after warning about tricky false prophets and deception, Jesus said, "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the *secret* chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:26-27 KJV, emphasis added). Here Jesus draws a razor-sharp contrast between false views of His return and the truth.

Concerning false views, don't miss that little word, "secret" (verse 26). Jesus plainly warned that some will mistakenly promote a "secret" coming. Based on the context, we discover that this will be one of those powerful delusions which only God's faithful elect will avoid. How should we respond to the idea of a secret return? Christ's answer is stunning. "*Believe it not*"! Why? Because "as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (verse 27).

Far from being a secret event, Jesus Himself compares His return to the brilliant flashing of electrically-charged bolts of lightning hurtling across the sky. Now here's an important point. Guess what exact Greek word Matthew used for "coming" in verse 27? The same one he used in verse 3—"Parousia." This is clear evidence that the Parousia definitely applies to the highly visible second coming of Jesus Christ. In Hollywood action movies, hidden files are sometimes labeled, "Top Secret." When it comes to the Parousia, Jesus clarified it would be *anything but secret*.

The Parousia and Twinkling Eyes

Christ's bewildered disciples had inquired, "...what will be the sign of Your coming [the Parousia], and of the end of the age?" After warning about secretive delusions, Jesus finally answered their exact question by lifting the curtain of history and fully unveiling what His cataclysmic return would be like:

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 24:30-31 KJV).

This description of Jesus Christ's return contains more punch than the highly speculative, evolutionary, Big Bang theory. There's no question about it. His "coming," or "Parousia," will be unmistakably *visible* to "all the tribes of the earth." The dazed masses of humanity will literally "see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Certainly no one will miss it, and no one will wake up the next day wondering, *Which way did the Christians go?* On that awesome day, the unsaved will "mourn." Why? Because their loved ones have vanished? No! But because Jesus Christ has *suddenly come* and their last chance for preparation is behind them. Now it's too late. They're lost forever.

This entire passage also parallels Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Just like in Paul's description of what will happen when true believers are "caught up," Jesus Christ also said His coming would be a very noisy event that will include loud reverberations from "a great sound of a trumpet" throughout the sky. When that booming blast is heard, multitudes of shining angels will descend into Earth's polluted atmosphere, circle the globe, and "*gather together* His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Thus true believers will be "caught up" into the air. Now don't miss it. These are the very same elements Paul wrote about in 1 Thessalonians 4:17!

In *both* Matthew 24:30-31, and in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, we read about clouds, noise, a loud trumpet, a gathering together, and true believers being transported into the sky. When we place these sections side by side—without prejudice or preconceived ideas—the message is unavoidable, inescapable, and irrefutable. Both passages refer to the loud, climactic, highly visible, and glorious second coming of Jesus Christ!

Back to Matthew 24; the Truth-teller continued:

*But of **that day** and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in*

marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (Matthew 24:36–44, emphasis added).

Here Jesus Christ compared His return to the sudden descent of billions of tons of water upon lost sinners in Noah's day. Those ancient people thought Noah was a crazy old man, until "the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:39, emphasis added). Guess what Greek word is used here again for "coming"? Don't take my word for it; look in your own concordance. It's "*Parousia*" which, as we have already proven, unmistakably applies to the highly visible second coming of Jesus Christ.

Now notice, *immediately* after Jesus described His "*Parousia*" in verse 39, He continued without skipping a beat: "THEN two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left" (verse 40, emphasis added). Remember, this is the second most widely quoted verse used to buttress the secret rapture doctrine. Supposedly, when verse 40 is fulfilled, those who are "taken" will vanish without a trace, leaving only their clothes, shoes, false teeth, and wedding rings, while those who are "left" will have to endure a horrific seven-year tribulation and face the antichrist. But is this really what Jesus Christ is saying?

We don't need to depend on scholars to find the answer. In fact, it is never safe to lean completely on any man, no matter how smart or educated they may be. Christians should never be taught to rely solely on Tim LaHaye, John Walvoord, Thomas Ice, Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, Grant Jeffrey, Chuck Smith, John Hagee, or any other popular teacher, including Steve Wohlberg. We all should open our own Bibles, pick up our own concordances, and find out for ourselves what truth is. If you are willing to do it, here is what you will surely find: Believers will be "taken" (verse 40) at the "coming," or "*Parousia*" (verse 39), which the Bible clearly applies to the loud, visible, and glorious appearance of Jesus Christ at the very end of the world (see Matthew 24:3,27,30-31,39).

Jesus basically said, "It will be just like Noah's day" (see verses 37–39). Now think about it. Did Noah and his family vanish before the flood? No, they walked visibly into the ark. And what about those who were *left behind*

after the door of the ark was shut? Did they have a second chance? No again. How were they left? *They were left dead; they did not escape*. After saying, “the flood came, and took them all away,” Jesus made His power-packed point, “so also will the coming [Parousia] of the Son of Man be” (verse 39). And then, without a break, Christ said, “*Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left*” (verse 40, emphasis added). Upon careful analysis, these words leave no room for *Left Behind*’s ongoing saga about “tribulation believers” resisting the antichrist during a post-rapture seven-year period. Why not? Because those who are “taken” are transported up at the “coming,” or “Parousia,” which applies to the *final* second coming of Jesus Christ!

Immediately after saying, “One will be taken and the other left,” the King of kings then compared His second coming to the sudden arrival of a midnight thief, just like Paul did in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3. Jesus Christ said, “But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:43-44). To “watch” doesn’t mean spending endless hours in front of the television set, nor does it mean watching popular movies about the end times which take detours away from the straight truth. Rather, it means to *watch out for satanic temptations and end time delusions*.

Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 fit together just as perfectly as Adam and Eve before they sinned. Both describe a noisy, highly visible, trumpet-blasting, and glorious return of Jesus Christ in the clouds. Both describe believers being transported into the air.

Both declare this day will come with thief-like suddenness upon all sleeping sinners. In Noah’s day, when billions of tons of water came crashing down, there were no second chances for those who refused to enter the ark. Similarly, Paul said the lost “shall not escape.” And both Paul and Matthew use the same Greek word to describe this great and awesomely powerful “day of the Lord.” Look in your own concordance. It’s “Parousia,” which clearly refers to Christ’s second coming. True believers are urged to watch, be ready, and to avoid all subtle, secretive, devilish tricks.

Before we close this chapter, let’s look at one more passage describing an event predicted to occur “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52). This is probably the third most quoted pro-rapture verse used to support the idea of vanishing Christians prior to a nightmarish seven-year tribulation. We have previously slowed down to look at our biblical speedometers, yet this time we must come to a screeching halt. Context, context, context—that’s the safety zone. Notice carefully what Paul really wrote:

*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the***

last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, emphasis added).

Is Paul saying believers will some day vanish while their loved ones blink? Not at all! He is simply saying that the dead will be raised and our sinful bodies will be changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” *When* will this “moment” take place? Paul’s answer is clear. It will occur “at the *last* trumpet,” when “the trumpet will sound,” that is, at the very end of the world. This is the very same “great sound of a trumpet” Jesus Christ said would be heard when He finally commissions His shiny angelic friends to gather His people at His second coming (see Matthew 24:31).

In summary, the Parousia Principle (supported by the context of Matthew 24) proves the “one will be taken” event occurs at the final second coming of Jesus Christ. And based on the full context of 1 Corinthians 15:52, “the twinkling of an eye” moment similarly occurs at the end of the age.

Around April 15, even Christians sometimes need to file tax return extensions with the Internal Revenue Service. I’ve done this myself. Such extensions are allowed and usually approved. But to add a seven-year extension to Jesus Christ’s words in Matthew 24:40, or to Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is, quite frankly, an *end time delusion*.

A certain minister acquired a reputation for telling his church members, “It could be worse,” during times of great trial. One day a troubled soul told the pastor, “Last night I dreamed Jesus came on the clouds with shiny angels. The most horrible thing was—I was lost!” Expecting encouragement, the minister shockingly replied, “It could be worse.” *What!* thought the man in disbelief. *What could be worse?* Solemnly his pastor whispered, “It would be worse if it wasn’t a dream.”

How true! Thankfully, the loving arms of Jesus Christ are still open to lost sinners. Let’s respond to God’s goodness and the pleading voice of the Crucified One before His visible return *is not a dream*.

Chapter 3

Will God's Church Escape Tribulation?

The brightest crowns that are worn in heaven have been tried, and smelted, and polished and glorified through the furnaces of tribulation.

— Edwin Hubbel Chapin (1814-1880)

These two concepts come with the rapture package:

1. The Church of Jesus Christ will escape the “tribulation.”
2. Those who miss the rapture will have a second chance to be saved.

Apart from what the Bible actually teaches about number 1, if you think about it, number 2 *can* be dangerous. Some might rationalize, “If the rapture takes place, then I’ll know God is real. Even though it may be tough, I can still become a Christian during the tribulation and resist that antichrist guy!” In this way, by adopting a lazy “let’s wait and see” attitude, lost sinners may *put off their decision* to repent and follow Jesus Christ right now.

Die-hard, pre-tribulation supporters sometimes say, “God wouldn’t allow His people to go through the tribulation. He loves us too much!” But think about it. Does He love us any more than He would love after-the-rapture new believers during the tribulation? No. Then why would He allow them to go through such a horrific period, but not us? Could it be that the idea of *escaping tribulation* is really only catering to our lukewarm American tendencies? We like comfort, hate to go through trials, and can hardly bear it when our TV-dinner lifestyle is threatened. Yet historically, God’s people have gone through intense suffering. All the disciples of Jesus, except John, were brutally murdered. Thousands of early Christians

were torn to shreds by wild dogs inside the Coliseum. Millions of others were horribly tortured by the Inquisition and burnt to ashes during the Dark Ages (more on this later). Believers in Russia and China have suffered terribly under communism, and yet American Christians say, “God wouldn’t allow *us* to go through the tribulation!”

When it comes to “tribulation,” once again concordances come in handy. If you look up “tribulation” in a *Strong’s* or *Young’s Concordance*, you may be shocked to discover that almost every reference describes what believers suffer *through*. Jesus told His followers, “In the world *you* will have *tribulation*” (John 16:33, emphasis added). Paul told his early Christian converts, “...we must through many *tribulations* enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22, emphasis added). Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, “...we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and *tribulations that you endure*” (2 Thessalonians 1:4, emphasis added). On the lonely isle of Patmos, John was our “companion in *tribulation*” (Revelation 1:9, emphasis added). Jesus told His church in Smyrna, “I know your works [and] *tribulation...*” (Revelation 2:9, emphasis added). In the light of these Scriptures, the idea of Christians escaping tribulation seems like fantasy and illusion.

Some might respond by saying, “Yes, but those verses are talking about ‘tribulation,’ not ‘*the* tribulation.’” Again, just think about it. If the majority of the Bible’s “tribulation texts” refer to what believers go *through*, why would God’s Word suddenly shift gears by teaching that “*the* tribulation” is something believers will *not* go through? Even in *Left Behind*, there are after-the-rapture Christians who go through “*the* Tribulation.” Jerry B. Jenkins calls them “the Tribulation Force.” Therefore the thought of Christians going through this period is not so strange.

Many pro-rapture advocates also argue, “If the Church is going through the tribulation, then why isn’t the Church mentioned after Revelation 4?” Let’s take a closer look. In Revelation 4:1, John was told to “come up here.” People conclude this represents the rapture and they think the Church isn’t mentioned anymore. First of all, John did not actually go to Heaven in Revelation 4:1; he was simply taken up *in a vision*, while his toes remained on Patmos. Secondly, the Church *is* on Earth after Revelation 4. How do we know this? Because Revelation says the beast will make “war with *the saints*” (13:7), then we read about “*the faith of the saints*” (13:10), and finally, during the mark of the beast crisis, the apocalypse refers to “*the saints*” who keep “*the faith of Jesus*” (14:12).

Some may respond by saying, “Those are the tribulation saints after the rapture, not the Church.” But consider this. Paul wrote his New Testament letters to the “churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33). What does this tell us? Wherever there are saints, *there is the Church!* Even

Will God's Church Escape Tribulation?

if the saints mentioned in Revelation 13 and 14 are only the tribulation saints after the rapture, wouldn't they, as sincere believers in Jesus Christ, *still be the Church*?

Rapture teachers contend the Church won't be here for Armageddon. Is this true? The word "Armageddon" is used only once in the entire Bible, in Revelation 16:16, which is the great chapter about the falling of the seven last plagues. Right before verse 16, *during* the time of the plagues, Jesus Christ thunders, "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon" (Revelation 16:15-16).

Did you catch that? Who is Jesus talking to? To the Church! At the time of verse 15, *while* the seven plagues are falling, which is definitely *during* the tribulation, and *right before* the battle of Armageddon, Jesus Christ has not yet come as a thief! Therefore He must come like a thief *at* Armageddon, *after* the tribulation, and this must be the time when He comes to gather His Church.

Like a good commanding officer, Paul urged the soldiers of the cross, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13). We are to stand in "the evil day." How can we, if we have previously disappeared? Jesus Christ also said, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). How long must we endure? *To the end*.

What about the "second chance" idea? First of all, God has given every one of us more than "a second chance." When we sin and resist His love, He gives us countless chances to make a full surrender to His grace. The message of the gospel is continually sounding to sinners, "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3); "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31); "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). But eventually, God's patience will wear out and the Angel of Mercy will take his final flight. Humanity will have passed "the hidden boundary between God's patience and His wrath."

Paul wrote that all who are not fully on the Lord's side when true believers are "caught up...shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:3). For them, their second, third, tenth, and ten-thousandth chances are over. Jesus also said, "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37). After the door of the ark closed, all desperate attempts to get inside were useless. It was too late. Paul also wrote, "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2, emphasis added). Friend, this is it. Don't put off your decision to follow Jesus Christ. If you are not "caught up" when the Lord descends from Heaven with a shout, you will have blown it, big time, forever.

Here's one more key thought before we close this chapter. If the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine is false, this obviously means we ourselves—if we are alive at that time—must not only pass through Earth's final tribulation, but must also face the antichrist and his deadly mark (see Revelation 14:9-10). Here's the biggest problem. Many Christians are deeply afraid of this. Thus it seems that *fear*—a fear of the beast—often underlies many desperate efforts to maintain the shaky pre-tribulation rapture position.

This reminds me of the tragic deaths of 118 crewmen inside the giant Russian nuclear submarine, *Kursk*. On Saturday, August 12, 2000, way out in the icy waters of the Barents Sea, east-northeast of Moscow, something went terribly wrong. An explosion took place, followed by another. The “catastrophe developed at lightning speed,” and the doomed sub quickly sank to the bottom of the ocean. *Newsweek* ran a story on this called, “A Cry from the Deep.” Twenty-three Russians survived the initial blasts and flooding. A letter was later found by deep-sea divers inside a pocket of one of the corpses. “There are 23 people here...None of us can get to the surface.”³ Because help didn't come quickly enough, they all died. As I have thought about this horrible tragedy, I can imagine *the feeling of fear* in the hearts of those hopelessly trapped Russian sailors deep down below the calm surface of the water.

From what I've seen, fear also often lurks below the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine. Deep down underneath the surface of many arguments lies the hidden scary thought of having to endure the time of trouble and face the beast. This fear may be unconscious, yet often it is there, and it seems to prevent people from being open-minded enough to even consider another viewpoint. Emotions fly high and many refuse to reasonably examine the clear scriptural evidence in favor of a post-tribulation gathering of the Church to Jesus Christ.

Sadly, the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine has become the great evangelical escape clause for the avoidance of the end times. And for those who *must* have it this way, no amount of evidence will convince them otherwise. Like a triple-bolted door in downtown New York, they are simply closed to the facts. The result? *Truth is left behind.*

Christians should learn a lesson from popular bumper stickers and trendy T-shirts which say, “No Fear.” The truth is, we don't need to be afraid, for Jesus Christ has promised, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Afraid of the dark, a little girl once asked her father if she could sleep in his bedroom. “Of course, honey,” he replied. Lying next to him with the lights out, she was still afraid. “Daddy, is your face turned toward me?” “Yes dear, now go to sleep.”

◆ SECTION 2 ◆

SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION DELUSIONS



Chapter 4

The Seven-Year Tribulation Theory

A man who has committed a mistake and doesn't correct it is committing another mistake.

— Confucius (551-479 B.C.)

If the *Rapture Delusions* section in this book is true, then what about “the seven years”? The concept of a seven-year period of tribulation is actually *the underlying foundation* of the entire *Left Behind* scenario (and all other pro-rapture books and movies). Again, the theory is: rapture *first*, then seven years of horror.

Book Two of the *Left Behind* novels declares, “The disappearances have ushered in the seven year period of Tribulation” (*The Tribulation Force*, inside cover). Book Three reveals, “...the seven-year Tribulation is nearing the end of its first quarter...” (*Nicolae*, inside cover). Book Six tells us, “It’s the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation” (*The Indwelling*, inside cover). Book Eight begins with, “...the dawn of the second half of the seven-year Tribulation” (*The Mark*, inside cover). Book Eleven opens “six years into the Tribulation, two and one-half years into the Great Tribulation” (*Armageddon*, p. vii). Thus this *New York Times*, *USA-Today*, and *Wall Street Journal* bestselling series of end times prophecy books, endorsed by well-respected church leaders worldwide, is built entirely around this seven-year framework.

Where does this “seven-year” concept come from anyway? It may shock you, but if you look for “seven years of tribulation” in any concordance, you won’t find it. The truth is, from Genesis to Revelation, there is no exact passage that specifically mentions a seven-year period of tribulation at all. Amazingly, the entire theory is really based on a rather

speculative interpretation of two little words in one single verse. The text is Daniel 9:27; and the two words are, “one week.” Let me explain.

The Book of Daniel was written while the Jews were in Babylon—in exile because of their sins. Daniel 9:24-27 contains a prophecy from the angel Gabriel to encourage the Jewish people that they would be given a “second chance” to return to Jerusalem, rebuild their temple, and ultimately, receive their Messiah (Jesus Christ).

This highly controversial prophecy literally reads:

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [62 weeks]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate (Daniel 9:24-27 KJV).

Thus we have a prophecy about “seventy weeks.” Gabriel then subdivides the period into three smaller periods of seven weeks (verse 25), sixty-two weeks (verse 25), and one week (verse 27). $7+62+1=70$.

Seventy weeks = 490 days. A day in prophecy represents a year (see Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6). Thus 490 days are really 490 years. Without going into all the chronological details here (I will get more specific in a later chapter), the prophecy starts with a direct “commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” (verse 25) after the Babylonian captivity and reaches down to the first coming of Jesus Christ. After 69 weeks (after 483 years), “shall Messiah be cut off” (verse 26). All Christian scholars apply this to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. After our Lord’s agonizing death, “the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (verse 26). While there are differences of opinion as to who “the people of the prince” refers to, the

The Seven-Year Tribulation Theory

majority of scholars nevertheless apply the destruction of “the city and the sanctuary” to the second destruction of Jerusalem and its rebuilt sanctuary by Roman armies under Prince Titus in 70 A.D.

So far, we have seen 69 weeks fulfilled. That leaves “one week” left, otherwise known as the famous “70th week of Daniel.” Again, that highly controversial text literally says:

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... (Daniel 9:27 KJV).

Based on the day-year principle (which is valid), the “one week” remaining in this prophecy must refer to *a period of seven years*. Pro-rapture promoters claim this is the seven-year period of tribulation. Their idea is that while the first 69 weeks (or 483 years) did reach to the first coming of Jesus Christ, the prophetic clock has stopped because the Jewish people largely rejected Him. Then they slide the 70th week (the last seven years) all the way down to the end times, call it the tribulation, and say it applies to the Jewish people after we’re gone.

Rapture teachers interpret Daniel 9:27 as follows:

1. “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.” “He” is the antichrist who will make a covenant (or peace treaty) with the Jews during the seven years of tribulation.
2. “In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...” In the middle of the seven-year tribulation, the antichrist will break his covenant, turn against Israel, and stop their animal sacrifices.
3. The phrase, “he shall cause the sacrifice...to cease” is viewed as irrefutable proof that a Jewish temple (which includes sacrifices) *must* be rebuilt on the Temple Mount inside Jerusalem.

Bestselling author Hal Lindsey in his *The Late Great Planet Earth* reflects this current view when he writes about “God’s last seven years of dealing with the Jewish people before the long awaited setting up of the kingdom of God (Daniel 9:27).”⁴ According to Mr. Lindsey, during those seven years “‘the Antichrist,’ breaks his covenant with the Jewish people and causes the Jewish temple worship, according to the Law of Moses, to cease (Daniel 9:27)...We must conclude that a third Temple will be rebuilt upon its ancient site in old Jerusalem.”⁵

Therefore, according to countless modern interpreters, Daniel 9:27 is applied to a future antichrist, a future peace treaty made with Israel, a

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

future seven-year tribulation, and a future rebuilt Jewish temple inside Jerusalem. And all of this will supposedly start with the rapture. Honestly, that's a lot to interpret from that single verse, *especially when Daniel 9:27 says absolutely nothing about any seven-year tribulation, antichrist, or rebuilt Jewish temple!*

Could there be something wrong with this picture?

You'll find out in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Dropping the Bomb

A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes.

— *Mark Twain* (1835-1910)

Prophecy-minded Christians all over Planet Earth sometimes engage in a fierce debate about whether Jesus Christ will return for His Church before the seven years of tribulation (the “pre-trib” view), in the middle of the seven years (the “mid-trib” view), or at the end of the seven years (the “post-trib” view). Yet by far the most explosive question too few seem to be asking is: “Is an end-time ‘seven-year period of tribulation’ really the correct interpretation of Daniel 9:27 in the first place?”

In 1945, after months of agonizing deliberation, U.S. President Harry Truman finally issued orders to drop two atomic bombs upon Japan in an attempt to end World War II. On August 6, the “Little Boy” fell on Hiroshima. Three days later, the “Fat Man” was released over Nagasaki. Approximately 130,000 people were instantly vaporized. Many heated discussions have occurred as to whether or not it was the right thing to drop those bombs. One thing’s for sure, in the minds of those who made that fearful decision, they believed it was for the ultimate good of America.

Dear friend, it is for the benefit of Christians everywhere that God’s bomb of truth should now be released over what I have come to call, “The 70th week of Daniel Delusion.”

As we have already seen, Daniel 9:27 literally says:

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

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... (Daniel 9:27 KJV).

This may shock you, but historically, the vast majority of well-respected Bible scholars have not applied Daniel 9:27 to a seven-year period of tribulation at all. Neither have they interpreted the “he” as referring to a future Mr. Deadly. Instead, *they applied it to Jesus Christ.*

Notice what the world-famous Bible commentary written by Matthew Henry says about Daniel 9:27: “By offering himself a sacrifice once and for all he [Jesus] shall put an end to all the Levitical sacrifices.”⁶ Thus Matthew Henry applied Daniel 9:27 to *Christ*, not antichrist. Another famous commentary written by British Methodist Adam Clarke says that during Daniel 9:27’s “term of seven years,” Jesus Himself would “confirm or ratify the new covenant with mankind.”⁷ Another dusty Bible commentary reveals: “He shall confirm the covenant—Christ. The confirmation of the covenant is assigned to Him.”⁸

Here’s one more statement from a book called, *Christ and Antichrist*, published in 1846 by the Presbyterian Board of Publication in Philadelphia. On page 2, under Recommendations, are endorsements from many Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist ministers, including an official representative of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁹ Commenting on the final week of Daniel 9:27, that ancient volume states:

...sometime during the remaining seven, he [the Messiah] was to die as a sacrifice for sin, and thus bring in “everlasting righteousness.” Here are allusions to events so palpable, that one would think, the people among whom they occurred, could not possibly have misapplied the prophecy.¹⁰

Okay, here we go. The following ten points provide logical and convincing evidence that Daniel’s famous 70th week has no application to any future seven-year tribulation at all. Rather, this great prophetic period was definitely fulfilled nearly two thousand years ago.

1. The entire prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 covers a period of “seventy weeks.” Logic requires that “seventy weeks” refers to one consecutive block of time, in other words, to seventy *straight sequential weeks*. The truth is, there is no example in Scripture (or anywhere else!) of a stated time period starting, stopping, and then starting again. *All* biblical references to time are consecutive: 40 days and 40 nights (see Genesis 7:4), 400 years in Egypt (see Genesis

Dropping the Bomb

15:13), 70 years of captivity (see Daniel 9:2), etc. In Daniel's prophecy, the "seventy weeks" were to begin during the reign of Persia and continue to the time of the Messiah.

2. Logic also requires that the 70th week follow immediately after the 69th week. If it doesn't, then it cannot properly be called the 70th week!
3. It is illogical to insert a 2,000-year gap between the 69th and 70th week. No hint of a gap is found in the prophecy itself. There is no gap between the first seven weeks and the following sixty-two weeks, so why insert one between the 69th and 70th week?

Note: If you told your child to be in bed in 70 minutes, you obviously would mean 70 *consecutive* minutes. What if five hours later your fully awake son said, "But dad, I know 69 minutes have passed, but the 70th minute hasn't started yet!"? After receiving an appropriate punishment, he would be swiftly sent to bed.

4. Daniel 9:27 says nothing about a seven-year period of "tribulation," a "rebuilt" Jewish temple, or any "antichrist."
5. The stated focus of this prophecy is the Messiah, not the antichrist. After the Messiah is "cut off" (referring to Christ's death), the text says, "And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." In the past, this has been consistently applied to the destruction of Jerusalem and the second temple by Roman armies led by Prince Titus in A.D. 70.¹¹
6. "He shall confirm the covenant." Paul said "the covenant" was "confirmed before by God in Christ" (Galatians 3:17). Jesus Christ came "to *confirm* the promises made to the fathers" (Romans 15:8, emphasis added). In the King James Version, Daniel 9:27 doesn't say "a covenant" or peace treaty, but "*the* covenant," which applies to the New Covenant. Nowhere in the Bible does the antichrist make, confirm, or break a covenant with anyone. The word "covenant" is Messianic, and *always* applies to the Messiah, not the antichrist.
7. "He shall confirm the *covenant* with *many*." Jesus Christ said, "This is My blood of the new *covenant*, which is shed

for *many...*" (Matthew 26:28). Behold a perfect fit! Jesus was quoting Daniel 9:27 specifically.

8. "In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." After exactly three and a half years of holy ministry, Jesus Christ died on the cross, "in the midst of the week [in the middle of the seven years]." At the exact moment of His death, "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom..." (Matthew 27:51). This act of God signified that all animal sacrifices at that moment ceased to be of value. Why? Because the Perfect Sacrifice had been offered!
9. "For the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." "The abomination of desolation" (see Matthew 24:15) is not a simple subject, yet we know that Jesus clearly applied this event to the time when His followers were to flee from Jerusalem before the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70. In a parallel text to Matthew 24:15, Jesus told His disciples, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies [Roman armies led by Prince Titus], *then know that its desolation is near*" (Luke 21:20, emphasis added). The disciples did "see" those very events. Because of the "abominations" of the Pharisees, Jesus told them, "See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38). Thus Gabriel's statement in Daniel 9:27 about Jerusalem becoming "desolate" was perfectly fulfilled in A.D. 70.
10. Gabriel said that the 70-week prophecy specifically applied to the Jewish people (see Daniel 9:24). During the period of Christ's public ministry of $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, the Master's focus was largely upon "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6). After His resurrection and then for another $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, His disciples preached mostly to Jews (see Acts 1-6). After that second $3\frac{1}{2}$ -year period, in 34 A.D., the bold Stephen was stoned by the Jewish Sanhedrin (see Acts 7). This infamous deed marked the then-ruling Jewish leaders' final, official rejection of the gospel of our Savior. *Then* the gospel went to the Gentiles. In Acts 9, Saul became Paul, the "apostle to the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13). In Acts 10, God gave Peter a vision revealing it was *now time* to preach to the Gentiles (see Acts 10:1-28). Read also Acts 13:46. Thus approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ years after the crucifixion—and at the end of the 70-week prophecy given

Dropping the Bomb

for the Jewish people—the gospel shifted to the Gentiles *exactly as predicted in Bible prophecy*.

The explosive evidence is overwhelming! Point by point the events of Daniel's 70th week have been fulfilled in the past. These eight words found in Daniel 9:27: "confirm...covenant...many...midst...sacrifice...cease...abominations...desolate" all find perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ and early Christian history.

In the words of that 1846 Presbyterian publication,

The *seventy weeks* of Daniel therefore, have certainly *ended* many centuries ago. We are not to look to the *future* for the fulfillment of these predictions. We must look to *the past*. And if to the past; where is there one who can have any adequate claims to being the subject of these prophecies, but *Jesus*? He, and he *only* can claim them; and to him they most certainly refer.¹²

...one would think, the people [the Jews] among whom [these events] occurred, could not possibly have misapplied the prophecy.¹³

But they did. In fact, one major reason why the Jewish nation as a whole failed to receive its Messiah was because its scholars misinterpreted Daniel 9:27. They failed to see Jesus Christ as the predicted One who would die in the midst of the 70th week! Amazingly, the exact same thing is happening today. Sincere Christian scholars are now misapplying the very same prophecy.

The entire "seven-year period of tribulation" theory is an *end time delusion*, a massive mega-myth. It may even go down in history as the "greatest evangelical misinterpretation of all time." The whole concept is like a gigantic bubble. Once Daniel 9:27 is correctly understood and the sharply-pointed pin of truth is inserted, "Pop goes the seven years!" It's a fact: There is no text in the Bible which teaches a "seven-year tribulation." If you hunt for it, you'll end up like Ponce de Leon searching for the mystical Fountain of Youth, but never finding it.

The current debate and tremendous confusion over pre-trib, mid-trib, or post-trib is really a smoke screen of the enemy to hide the real issue. What is the real issue? We'll find out when we study what the Book of Revelation truly teaches about Israel, Babylon the Great, and Armageddon.

Chapter 6

David Van Biema's Secret

In an age of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.

— George Orwell (1902-1950)

There it sat, inside an airport newsstand in Atlanta. I didn't have much time to catch my connection to Canada, but the magazine cover grabbed my attention immediately. *Time* magazine, July 1, 2002. Flames surrounded a large cross with these words emblazoned: "THE BIBLE & THE APOCALYPSE, Why more Americans are reading and talking about THE END OF THE WORLD."

I paid the \$3.95.

On the plane I read the cover story titled, "APOCALYPSE NOW," highlighting the surge of American interest in deciphering biblical prophecies after the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City. Raptureready.com was featured, an incredibly popular website whose webmaster has invented the "Rapture Index," calling it a "Dow Jones Industrial Average of End Time activity."¹⁴ On September 24, 2001, 13 days after 9-11, the site's "bandwidth nearly melted under the weight of 8 million visitors."

The article's center spread showed full-color pictures of every *Left Behind* book, with the words "COPIES SOLD" written under each book: "*Left Behind*, 7,000,000...*Tribulation Force*, 4,100,000...*Desecration*, 3,100,000," etc. Below was a box labeled, "GLOSSARY OF TERMS," defining apocalyptic phraseology for the average Joe. I was especially interested to see how

“THE TRIBULATION” was defined: “A period of seven years of disaster that will end with Christ’s defeat of evil at Armageddon.”¹⁵

“MEET THE PROPHET” was the title of another four-page story a few pages in. Dead center was a large photograph of Tim LaHaye preaching, with “Taking his message to the masses,” as the subheading. The next page showed Jerry B. Jenkins standing next to a sidebar picturing “LEFT BEHIND Wares,” including comic books, a kids series, and a Monopoly-style *Left Behind* board game. All of the *Time* articles described a heightened interest in prophecy—especially among evangelical Christians—and spelled out the popular views being critiqued in this book: rapture first, seven-year tribulation next, during which Mr. Wicked appears and attacks the Jews.

Except for one article. Page 46. Its intriguing title was, “The End: How It Got That Way,” by David Van Biema. My heart started pounding...*Could it be?*...Below the headline was a little picture (maybe 1 by 1.5 inches, smaller than those of LaHaye, Jenkins, and each *Left Behind* book) of a curious-looking man named John Nelson Darby who lived in England during the 1800’s. An obvious student of history, Van Biema referred to Mr. Darby as “The man with the plan” to introduce into 19th-century British and American Christianity “a radical new eschatology” which included believing in “a seven-year, hell-like Tribulation.” I could scarce believe my eyes!

Tucked within that article appeared this shocking paragraph from Van Biema’s insightful pen:

His [Darby] most striking innovation was the timing of a concept called the Rapture, drawn from the Apostle Paul’s prediction that believers would fly up to meet Christ in heaven. Most theologians understood it as part of the Resurrection at time’s very end, Darby repositioned it at the Apocalypse’s very beginning, a small shift with large implications. It spared true believers the Tribulation, leaving the horror to nonbelievers and the doctrinally misled...Darby’s scheme became a pillar of the new Fundamentalism.¹⁶

Do you realize what you just read? Based on solid historical research, David reported to millions of *Time* readers that John Nelson Darby’s “most striking innovation” was to take Paul’s “caught up” phrase in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and “reposition it” at the beginning of the “Tribulation”—“a small shift with large implications.” In the early 1800’s, “most theologians” didn’t see it that way; yet slowly over time, “Darby’s scheme became a pillar of the new Fundamentalism.”

David Van Biema's Secret

This “pillar” now supports the entire *Left Behind* infrastructure. Unknown to modern fans, the pillar is *not Scripture* but Darbyism, even though Bible texts are used to support and proof-text the doctrine.

In God's Word, it's not rapture-tribulation-end at all. Daniel's 70th week is history and true believers will be “caught up” at the loud, visible, second coming of Jesus Christ. As David Van Biema correctly reported in *Time*, this is what “most theologians” have taught for centuries! But times have changed; and now, sadly, *Left Behind* is all “caught up” with the innovations of J.N. Darby.

Now you know more about “The End: How It Got That Way.”

◆ SECTION 3 ◆

ANTICHRIST DELUSIONS



Chapter 7

Antichrist: Facts vs. Fiction

Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened.

— Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

Having been raised in Los Angeles, I always understood the possibility that the “Big One”—an earthquake above 7.5—might devastate our city if the San Andreas Fault suddenly gave way and shifted forcefully. When it comes to biblical prophecy, the “Big One” is definitely the topic of the antichrist. Let me warn you in advance. Get ready for some shocks.

“‘He’s probably a good looking man,’ says Kelly Sellers, who runs a decorative-stone business in Minneapolis, Minn. ‘I’m sure he’s in politics right now and probably in the public eye even a little bit.’ Sellers has read every *Left Behind* book and is waiting for the next one—‘anxiously.’”¹⁷ This was in the *Time* issue referenced in the last chapter. Seller’s view agrees with the “GLOSSARY OF TERMS” which defines “ANTICHRIST” as “An evil figure who will plague the world and eventually be defeated by Christ in the battle of Armageddon.”¹⁸

Like most prophecy-minded Christians today, Kelly Sellers thinks the antichrist will be one super Bad Guy who will publicly appear after the rapture. In the *Left Behind* series, storyteller Jerry B. Jenkins gives this antichrist a name, Nicolae Carpathia. In another sequence of end time thriller movies—*Apocalypse*, *Revelation*, *Tribulation*, and *Judgment*—the name of the antichrist is Franco Macalouso. With a creative twist going beyond other films, *Megiddo: Omega Code 2*, portrays the antichrist (his name is Stone Alexander) from boyhood on up, and even has him falling in love and getting

married. Unfortunately for Mr. Alexander's beautiful bride, she eventually discovers her dashing lover to be the devilish incarnation of lucifer himself.

What does the Bible *really teach* about this mysterious subject? The word "antichrist," or "antichrists," is found only five times in Scripture, and all of these references are in two small books right before the Book of Revelation. The two little books are 1st and 2nd John. The exact verses are 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; and 2 John 7. That's it. When we read these verses (and others near them), we certainly don't read about any Mr. Sly falling in love and getting married. On the contrary, we find:

1 John 2:18—The early Christians had heard that antichrist was coming.

1 John 2:18—Even now there are many antichrists.

1 John 2:18—This is evidence that the last time has come.

1 John 2:19—These many antichrists "went out from us."

1 John 2:22—Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is antichrist.

1 John 2:26—These antichrists are trying to seduce us away from Jesus Christ.

1 John 4:3—There is a spirit of antichrist.

1 John 4:3—The spirit of antichrist denies Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

1 John 4:3—The spirit of antichrist is already in the world.

1 John 4:4—True Christians must overcome every form of antichrist.

1 John 4:6—The spirit of antichrist is the spirit of error.

2 John 7—There are many deceivers and antichrists in the world.

2 John 9—To overcome these antichrists, Christians must abide in the doctrine of Christ.

After an objective look, what have we discovered? Do any of these verses describe a solitary Mr. Sin who only shows up after we're gone? Definitely not! The Word of God describes not just one, *but many antichrists*. And according to 1 John 2:19, these many antichrists "went out from us," which means *out from inside of the Christian church!* They are subtle, deceptive, and

at war with true Christians. They may profess a certain faith in Jesus, yet their faith is superficial. They actually deny the Father and the Son (see 1 John 2:22,26). There is also a spirit of antichrist, called “the spirit of error,” which is now in the world (see 1 John 4:3). According to the Bible, the goal of these many antichrists and of the spirit of antichrist is to deceive Christians away from God’s love, from the gospel, and from the true doctrine of Jesus Christ (see 2 John 7,9). Just like America is now at war with terrorists, even so must genuine Christians do battle with these spiritual enemies of truth; and in the strength of Christ, overcome them (see 1 John 4:4).

This is everything God’s Word actually says about “antichrist,” “antichrists,” and “the spirit of antichrist.” Now don’t miss this point. None of these insightful passages point toward one Mr. Malignant—like Nicolae Carpathia, Stone Alexander, or Franco Macalouso—who appears as a cunning politician only after we’re gone. The truth is quite different. In reality, they all refer to seductive and deceiving elements which are *here now* and which true Christians must face and overcome.

It’s true, God’s Book reveals other prophecies about the emergence of an evil “little horn” (Daniel 7:8), a dreadful “beast” (Revelation 13:1), and “the man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). It is primarily these prophecies that are now being used to support the idea of a future Mr. Abominable—one who will rise up *outside* of Christianity after the rapture. Yet consider this. The definite trend of the Bible’s literal “antichrist” passages clearly points to things that are here now and which true Christians must face and overcome. So why would its other antichrist prophecies about the “little horn,” “the man of sin,” and “the beast,” suddenly reverse this trend and apply to things which Christians will *not* face because they will first vanish in the rapture?

A few years ago I held a prophecy seminar in Corinth, Mississippi. En route by plane, I landed in Memphis, Tennessee. After picking up my Thrifty rental car, I asked for directions to Corinth. “Take this map,” the attendant said calmly. “Get on I-55 and head south. You’ll get there by and by.” I had no reason to doubt. Trustingly, I was soon rolling down Highway 55. But after 20 minutes or so a still small voice started impressing my conscience to check the map for myself. At first, I ignored the voice. Finally, I reached over and took a look. To my amazement, I discovered that I-55 was heading straight south to Jackson, Mississippi, while Corinth was dead east! I turned around, went back to Memphis, got on the right road, and finally made it to my seminar.

I learned this lesson: No matter how much I trust someone who gives me directions, I must check the map for myself. The same thing applies to the subject of the antichrist. We may trust that today’s much-respected

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

prophecy teachers know their stuff and won't lead us astray, but in the final analysis, we must look to God's Map (the Bible) for ourselves. So far, as we have done this, we've seen that all of the Word's clear "antichrist" statements apply to *deceptive elements inside of Christianity*—elements we must face and overcome. But most bestselling prophecy books don't tell us this. As you continue down the *end time delusions* highway, checking God's Map closely and listening for His voice, you will discover many other things you won't learn at the movies.

Chapter 8

Paul's Point: Antichrist Comes First

For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe,
the horse was lost; for want of a horse, the rider was lost; for
want of the rider, the battle was lost.

—Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

What the majority think is often wrong. People thought the *Titanic* was unsinkable, yet she sank like lead. Many believed the infamous Y2K computer glitch would spark a global economic meltdown as the world's clocks ticked over to 2000 A.D., yet January 1 arrived with hardly a hiccup. Starstruck lovers race to the marriage altar fully expecting a lifetime of bliss, yet after a few short days reality often hits like a boxer's glove to the nose. It's obvious, isn't it? What we humans think will happen often fails to occur.

When it comes to the arena of Bible prophecy, how many mistakes are being made? As we have already seen, at this very moment, millions of Christians fully expect to vanish in the rapture before the antichrist arrives. Again, the idea is: first the rapture, *then* the antichrist. This sequence is being taught around the world in books, magazines, seminars, on radio, television, in pulpits, and on the Internet.

As we saw earlier, the most quoted verse about the rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:17. There Paul wrote that true believers will someday be “caught up.” In Paul's second letter written to the same group, he referred to the same event as, “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (2 Thessalonians 2:1). In his second letter, immediately after describing “our gathering” to the Lord, Paul wrote about something or someone that is clearly antichrist (verse 3). The question is: What did Paul teach about the sequence of events? Did he say the Church would be gath-

ered to Jesus Christ *before* the antichrist comes, or will antichrist come *first*, before we are gathered to the Savior? Amazingly, Paul gives us a straight answer, and his answer is not what the majority of prophecy-minded Christians think!

Look closely. Paul wrote:

*Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes **first**, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, emphasis added).*

Do you realize what you just read? Paul's words are quite penetrating when it comes to the issue of which comes first, "our gathering" or the appearance of antichrist.

Here is a more detailed analysis of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3:

Verse 1: Paul wrote about "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him." This is obviously the same event as the descent of Jesus Christ from Heaven and our being "caught up together" to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). It's important to realize that the Greek word for "coming" in verse 1 is none other than our old friend "Parousia," which we have seen clearly applies to the visible second coming of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 24:27). The exact same word is used in verse 8 describing "the brightness of His coming [Parousia]."

Verse 2: Here Paul addressed a distortion about the timing of the coming of the Lord that was confusing the early Church. He urged the Thessalonians not to be "soon shaken," or "troubled," by false influences which were teaching, either by "word," or "spirit," or "letter," that "the day of Christ had [already] come," or, as the King James Version puts it, was "at hand" in the first century. Because of this false teaching that "the day of Christ" was just around the corner in their own day, some of the Thessalonian Christians had quit their jobs, stopped providing for their families, and were just hanging around in idle expectancy waiting for Christ's imminent appearance (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

Paul's Point: Antichrist Comes First

Verse 3: Paul clarified the truth with this warning, “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [when Jesus comes to gather us—verse 1] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”

Did you catch that? Verse 3 is pointed and clear. Paul wrote that before Jesus Christ comes to “gather” His people to Himself, “the falling away” and the rise of “the son of perdition” (the antichrist) *must come first*. Thus to those early Thessalonian believers, Paul’s message was that “the day of Christ” was not just around the corner. Something big must happen first. And to us who live in the 21st century, Paul’s message is equally clear: Before Jesus Christ comes to “gather” us, “the falling away comes first” and the antichrist must be revealed. Paul directly, specifically, and earnestly warned the Church *not to be deceived* about this very thing! Evidently he knew satan would work hard to dupe the saints in this exact area.

When we put these pieces together, it becomes super clear that before “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (verse 1), “the falling away comes first” and the antichrist must be revealed. Therefore, contrary to current popular opinion, it’s antichrist *first, and then* the Church is “caught up,” not the other way around.

Paul’s voice echoes down through the corridors of many centuries: “Let no one deceive you by any means” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

I know, many don’t agree with this. But remember, people also thought the *Titanic* was unsinkable.

Chapter 9

Falling Away From the Truth

The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.

— Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)

Millions of Christians are now being taught that the antichrist will be some evil person who will rise into power outside of Christianity after the rapture. But think with me for a moment. What if this idea is a horrible mistake? What if the antichrist rises up *inside* of Christianity *before* the Church is caught up to Christ? Because few would be looking for an antichrist within, can you imagine what kind of harm he could do? Hold onto your seats, for you are about to discover Paul taught this very thing.

Paul wrote, “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [when Jesus comes to gather us—verse 1] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Almost everyone agrees these words predict the rise of the antichrist. What many have missed is that Paul is describing an antichrist that rises in the wake of “the falling away.” What does this mean? Once again, a little knowledge of Greek comes in handy. The original word Paul used for “the falling away,” is *apostasia*, which literally means an apostasy or departure from Jesus Christ *inside* the Christian Church. In fact, many versions of the New King James Bible place the heading, “The Great Apostasy,” right above 2 Thessalonians 2. To illustrate the connection between “the falling away,” and the rising up of the antichrist, imagine a boy who climbs a tree, stands on a branch, loses his footing, and then “falls away.” After banging his head on the ground, a large bump starts growing on his forehead. Surely you can see the connection between the boy “falling away” from the

limb and the rising of the bump. It's the same with "the falling away" and the rising of the antichrist. As we are about to see, this "falling away" unquestionably takes place *inside* the church.

In the first century, the Christian church remained relatively pure from heresy, false doctrine, and open sin. But with His cosmic perspective, God saw a change would come, and He revealed this sober reality to the writers of the New Testament. A brief survey of the following Bible passages shows plainly that an apostasy, departure, or "falling away" from Jesus Christ was predicted to occur inside of Christianity. I call this, "The Big Detour."

1. Acts 20: Paul told "the elders of the church" of Ephesus (vs. 17) that soon many false Christian leaders would rise up from among themselves to "draw away the disciples" after them (vs. 30). He was so burdened about this coming apostasy that he warned the church "night and day with tears" (vs. 31).
2. 1 Timothy 4: The Holy Spirit clearly warned that "some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (vs. 1). Here again is a predicted departure from the faith *inside* the church.
3. 2 Timothy 4: Paul predicted a time would come when many in the church would no longer "endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (verses 3-4). Friend, there is no doubt about it. These words point toward an apostasy in the church that will lead professed Christians to turn from Bible truth to fictitious fables.
4. 2 Peter 2: Peter told the early believers that soon "there will be false teachers among you" (vs. 1). "Among you" means inside the church.
5. Jude: After urging believers to contend earnestly for the original faith, Jude warned that "certain men" had already "crept in unnoticed" among them (vs. 4).
6. Revelation 2: Jesus Christ Himself sadly told His followers in the church of Ephesus, "Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works..." (verses 4 and 5). These words are so clear! Many Christians in the early church of Ephesus were

Falling Away From the Truth

falling away from their initial love for Jesus Christ, who died for them.

Thus we see Paul, Peter, Jude, and Jesus Christ all passionately concerned about a “falling away,” which means an apostasy, occurring inside the Christian Church. We might compare this apostasy to a disease entering a portion of a human body. As a result, a malignant cancer finally develops. The shocking reality is that God’s Word has predicted a similar disease-like condition would eventually overtake a large portion of Christianity. According to 2 Thessalonians 2, as a direct result of this unhappy condition, a diabolical spiritual cancer would rise up.

Paul called this cancer, “the mystery of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). We call him antichrist.

Chapter 10

Judas: A Type of Antichrist

Knowledge is power.

— Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Paul warned, “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [the day when Jesus Christ returns to gather us] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Here Paul called the antichrist, “the son of perdition.”

Believe it or not, this phrase, “the son of perdition,” is actually like a secret password to hidden knowledge. Our society is now making a full use of passwords, passphrases, or passcodes. When you phone your bank to inquire about your account, the receptionist usually asks, “What’s your mother’s maiden name?” or, “What’s your social security number?” or simply, “What’s your password?” The same thing happens on the Net when a person attempts to access their Wells Fargo bank account, their AT&T information, or Charles Schwab brokerage account. After typing in the correct phrase on the keyboard, he or she can “Enter” and view the details.

The biblical phrase, “the son of perdition,” also has certain password-like qualities. In essence, those four words are like a special code. Once we understand their meaning, we are enabled to “crack the antichrist code” and “Enter” into an understanding of *the true nature of the ultimate deceiver*.

This exact phrase, “the son of perdition,” occurs only twice in the entire New Testament. One of these is in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 about the antichrist. What about the other one, who did it apply to, and what spiritual lesson can we learn from this? The only other time it is used is in John 17:12 when Jesus

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

Christ applied it to one of His own disciples. You should be able to guess which one. That's right. Judas Iscariot, His betrayer.

Judas was one of the twelve disciples. After being chosen by the Lord, he became part of Christ's inner circle (see Luke 6:13-16). Amazingly, Judas even received the power of God (see Matthew 10:1-4). But in spite of his tremendous privileges, Mr. Iscariot finally fell away from His Savior (see Acts 1:25).

"Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve" (Luke 22:3). What a scary verse! Try to imagine it. Here's a disciple of Jesus Christ who held an honored position among the twelve. He even carried the moneybag. But as Judas opened his heart to the dark one, satan slipped in and took over. He was still a professed follower of Christ, but now he had a devil inside! Could this be what antichrist will be like?

On the last night before His final agony, our Lord met with his little band of followers in an upper room somewhere inside Jerusalem. This was an intimate gathering, private, for only His closest friends. As they met for the Passover meal, Judas quietly took his seat with the other eleven disciples (see Luke 22:14). After Jesus passed out the bread and the juice, Judas silently sipped his cup (see Luke 22:19-20). When the supper was over, Jesus sadly whispered to his friends, "Behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table" (Luke 22:21). Moments later, Judas slipped out into the night to finalize his infamous deal with the rulers of Israel. An ancient word was fulfilled, "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). How terrible to be betrayed by a *friend*!

A few hours later, Judas led a mob of Temple guards, chief priests, and Roman soldiers to Christ's secret place of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Approaching the Savior, the traitor whispered, "Hail, Master; and kissed Him" (Matthew 26:49 KJV). Oh, what a kiss was this! A sign of true affection? No. It was a kiss of death. What's really happening here? I'll tell you. Lucifer himself was working through the kiss of a professed Christian in a satanically orchestrated plot against the Son of God. If you think about it, *this is antichrist* in its most sinister form!

To all appearances, Judas Iscariot was a faithful apostle of Jesus Christ. With his lips he even called Christ his Master, but his foul breath was full of satanic venom. By this time, Judas was fully "a devil" (John 6:70). Now don't miss this point: He was a *Christian devil*, a channel for satan who was hiding behind a *Christian mask*. Behold the ultimate deception! What could be worse than satan working through a highly honored professed Christian, through words of loyalty, through an affectionate kiss? And what highly significant

Judas: A Type of Antichrist

phrase did Jesus use to describe this unusual Christian-kissing-satanic combination? Our Lord called Judas, “*the son of perdition*” (John 17:12).

Which is what Paul called the *antichrist* (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3). In so doing, he was revealing secret, vital, inside information. As we approach our biblical monitors and type in this passphrase, “THE SON OF PERDITION,” the words are “Accepted” and we are enabled to “Enter” and “crack the antichrist code” about the true nature of satan’s trickster. Instead of being an openly anti-Christian person who rises *outside* the Church, the real antichrist will be Judas-like. In other words, he will come from the inner circle. On the surface, he will look like a true follower of Jesus Christ, a “familiar friend” (Psalm 41:9). He will even profess love and loyalty to the Savior. Yet the devil will be there in secret, working with ingenious subtlety, to betray the Son of God with a kiss.

Chapter 11

One Future Mr. Diabolical?

Appearances are often deceiving.

— Aesop (620-560 B.C.)

Paul called antichrist, “the man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). It is primarily because of this phrase that millions have concluded that the word, “antichrist,” must ultimately apply to only one Mr. Wicked. Kids who read the popular *Left Behind* books sometimes call him, the Evil Dude. Apocalyptic Christian films like *The Omega Code*, *A Thief in the Night*, *Tribulation*, *Judgment*, and *Megiddo*, all reflect the same idea. Is it true? Will there be only one Mr. Scary who becomes the antichrist, an Osama bin Laden-number 2? Is this what Paul really meant?

In chapter 8 of *End Time Delusions*, we discovered John wrote about “many antichrists” (1 John 2:18), and “that spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:3 KJV). He also revealed that anyone who denies “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9) is “a deceiver and *an antichrist*” (2 John 7, emphasis added). Therefore the idea of only *one* Mr. Sinister as *the* antichrist fails the biblical test. Truth can afford to be fair. It has nothing to hide and is willing to examine every iota of evidence. So what did Paul mean when he referred to “the man of sin”? Doesn’t this mean a single person?

First of all, Paul used other phrases in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 to describe this same antichrist, such as “the son of perdition,” (vs. 3), “the mystery of lawlessness” (vs. 7), and “that Wicked” (vs. 8 KJV). In Daniel’s parallel prophecy, this same abominable horror is also called a little “horn” (Daniel 7:8); and in the Book of Revelation it is labeled “the beast” (Revelation 13:2). Almost everyone agrees these words and phrases apply to the same thing. The big question is: Do they all apply to only one “Evil

Dude,” as is commonly taught, or do they point to something wider and deeper—to something most prophecy teachers aren’t telling us about?

Notice carefully, Daniel did not say the little horn would *be* a man, but rather it would have “eyes *like* the eyes of a man” (Daniel 7:8, emphasis added). Eyes of intelligence. In the Book of Revelation, the same horn is called “the beast.” Here’s a key question: How does Daniel 7 *define* a beast? There is no need to guess or to pull an interpretation out of a hat. An angelic interpreter explained to Daniel, “...the fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth” (vs. 23). Presto! What is a beast? A man? A giant computer? No. A beast is a *kingdom*! That’s what the angel said. And once again, just like the angels in Acts 1 who watched Jesus ascend to Heaven, this angel had his theology straight.

Let’s go back to Paul’s prophecy. A careful study of 2 Thessalonians 2 actually reveals the utter impossibility of “the man of sin” applying to only one Mr. Diabolical. First of all, Paul said that in his own day this very same “mystery of lawlessness [was] already at work” (vs. 7). Thus this predicted antichrist was already becoming active in the first century. Paul was also very emphatic that this “mystery” would continue all the way down to the second coming of Jesus Christ (vs. 8). Put the pieces together. How could this refer to only one human being? He would have to be 2,000 years old!

Did Paul ever use this expression, “the man,” in any of his other writings in such a way that it does not refer to one individual? Yes indeed. Paul wrote:

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that **the man** of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17, emphasis added).

Look carefully. Does the phrase, “the man of God,” in 2 Timothy 3:17 refer to only one holy human who might have a name like Joe, Bill, or Frank? No. Instead, it refers to a succession of godly men throughout history who become “complete” or “perfect” (KJV) through obeying the Word of God.

In Romans 13:4 (KJV), Paul also used the phrase, “*the minister* of God,” to refer to *all* civil officers throughout history whom God uses to restrain evil. Therefore, if we let Paul’s own writings interpret themselves, his unique phrase, “the man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), need not apply to one supremely wicked personage. What might it apply to? In the illuminating light of 2 Timothy 3:17 and Romans 13:4, “the man of sin,” can properly apply to a historical succession of other men who follow tradition above the Word of Truth.

Chapter 12

Titanic Truths About the Temple

The most dangerous thing is illusion.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

Left Behind swirls completely around the topic of the antichrist. Book Nine of these fast-selling, fictitious novels is called *Desecration—Antichrist Takes the Throne*. Released on October 30, 2001 with an initial print run of 3 million copies, the official *Left Behind* website then declared, “In *Desecration*, Antichrist Nicolae Carpathia enters the temple in Jerusalem and declares himself God, leading the world to the brink of Armageddon.” Thus the eye of the storm is Jerusalem and the apex of the drama centers on Nicolae’s abominable entrance into a rebuilt Jewish temple.

The cornerstone Bible passage underlying the theology of *Desecration* and of countless other prophecy books which teach similar things is 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Describing the antichrist, Paul wrote: “[he] opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (vs. 4). Thus antichrist will sit “in the temple of God.” *Desecration* applies this to someone like Nicolae Carpathia who will enter a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem after the rapture. The implication of this common interpretation is that Paul’s antichrist-in-the-temple prediction has nothing to do with Christians today, nor has it had any real relevance to the Church for almost 2,000 years. Is this popular interpretation *really* what Paul had in mind? Let’s take a closer look.

It’s time for another Greek lesson. The original Greek word Paul used in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 for “temple” is *naos*. Here’s a safe principle of interpretation: Let’s allow Paul to interpret Paul. Did Paul use this same word anywhere else in his writings? Yes. In his letter to the early Corinthians, Paul

wrote to “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Corinthians 1:2). Then he inquired, “Do you not know that you are the temple [naos] of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16) Here Paul clearly applied the word *naos* to the Christian Church—not a physical temple in Jerusalem. He did the same thing in his letter to the Ephesians. Writing to “the saints who are in Ephesus,” Paul said they were all growing “into a holy temple [naos] in the Lord” (Ephesians 1:1; 2:21). In fact, in all of his writings, every time Paul used the word *naos*, he *always applied* it to the Christian Church and never to a rebuilt Israeli temple!

Consider this: When Jesus Christ died on Calvary, His death put an end to all bloody animal sacrifices. When He cried out, “It is finished!” (John 19:30), that was it. From God’s cosmic perspective, all earthly sacrifices were over because His Son was the final Sacrifice (see Hebrews 10:12). Think about it. If the Jewish people ever do rebuild a temple in Jerusalem and restart bloody sacrifices, this would be a complete denial of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice—a slap in God’s face. Could such a rebuilt Jewish temple ever properly be called by Paul, “the temple of God”? Not in a million light-years! Such a temple would not be *God’s temple*, for it would be an open denial of His Son. The correct interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:4, based on Paul’s own use of *naos*, is that “the temple of God” is *the Church*. The lesson for prophecy students is this: Antichrist, subtle and deceptive, *will slither into Christianity*.

Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness, D.D., F.R.A.S. (1835-1910) has often been called “England’s Greatest Teacher of Prophecy.” Founder of the East London Institute for Home and Foreign Missions (1872), Dr. Guinness was considered to be one of the three greatest preachers of his day, right along with Dwight L. Moody and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. (Guinness was sometimes called “The Northern Spurgeon.”) A deep student of prophecy, and especially of the antichrist topic, he commented over 100 years ago:

Observe the *place* occupied by the man of sin—the “temple” or house of God. This is not, and cannot be, any Jewish temple. Paul, who uses this expression in his prophetic portrait...employs it both in Corinthians and Ephesians with reference to the Christian Church...To Paul emphatically the temple of God was the Church of Christ. *This* is the temple in which his prophetic eye saw the man of sin seated. It is no question of his bodily location in any structure of wood and stone, but of something far higher. The temple of God is that “spiritual house” in which He dwells. It is built up of “living stones,” of true believers. It is here that the man of sin was to usurp the place of God. This is the “mystery,” the dread danger, the deadly evil, predicted by the Apostle.¹⁹

Titanic Truths About the Temple

Edward Bishop Elliott's (1793-1875) classic, four-volume *Horae Apocalypticæ—A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, was considered by Spurgeon, in his *Comments on the Commentaries*, to be "The standard work on the subject" of prophetic interpretation. In his comments on 2 Thessalonians 2:4, E.B. Elliott agreed with Guinness:

The *impiety* and *pride* of this Man of Sin were thus predicted;—that he would be pre-eminently an opposer to Christ and his Church;—that he would exalt himself above all that was called God, or an object of worship, i.e. above the gods many and lords many in the gentile heaven and earth, including the potentates and kings of this world;—that he would sit in God's temple, (a phrase here meaning the Church) and actually there exhibit himself as God.²⁰

Thus Guinness and Elliott (I will quote them several times in this book) both understood Paul's use of *naos* to mean the professed Church of Jesus Christ.

Paul said antichrist will "sit" in God's temple. This doesn't mean he will literally sit down on a four-legged chair. After Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven, He "sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). Has He been sitting down for almost 2,000 years? No. When our Lord returns, He will come "sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). Will He be sitting on a fast-moving heavenly chair? No again. To "sit" can mean to assume *a position of authority*. When George W. Bush was inaugurated as President of the United States on January 20, 2001, newspapers around the world referred to him as being officially "seated" in office. When Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, this means He was officially seated in office as King of kings and Lord of lords, the Supreme Mediator in behalf of the human family. He now has all authority in Heaven and on earth (see Matthew 28:18).

Then what is the meaning of the antichrist sitting in the temple of God? A little reflection should make this clear. The shocking reality is that prophecy predicts that the antichrist will usurp the legitimate authority of Jesus Christ by assuming an unauthorized position of power *inside the Christian Church*. And thus, contrary to the *New York Times* bestselling book *Desecration* and countless other similar works, Paul's prediction about an evil antichrist entering the temple of God has great relevance for Christians today.

Chapter 13

The Restrainer: Myths and Memories

Zeal without knowledge is fire without light.

— *Dr. Thomas Fuller* (1608-1661)

In the 1800's there supposedly lived a man named Sherlock Holmes. His name has become famous as one of the greatest detectives of all time. According to mystery writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Mr. Holmes lived in a small apartment on Baker Street, in London, England. A museum exists there today to the delight of his fans. The living room, dining room, and bedroom have been preserved, providing excellent footage for many Sherlock Holmes films. As the story goes, Sherlock often sat in his study with his good friend Mr. Watson, smoking his pipe, as they carefully pieced together bits of information to solve crimes.

In this chapter we will play the role of Sherlock Holmes by attempting to solve a most puzzling Bible mystery. The difficult question is: What is the restrainer of antichrist? In 2 Thessalonians 2:5-8, Paul revealed the intriguing idea that in his own day something was restraining this horrendous development of evil. Once the restraint was removed, antichrist would be revealed. Millions of Christians today have been taught that this restrainer is the Holy Spirit inside the Christian Church. According to this theory, once the Church is whisked out of this world in the rapture—along with the Holy Spirit who dwells inside the Church—then Mr. Delusion will appear. This interpretation once again confirms the concept in many minds that antichrist can only come after the Church vanishes.

Sherlock Holmes is purported to have said, "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data." So, let's examine the datum. Paul told the early Thessalonians, "Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told

you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed..." (2 Thessalonians 2:5-8).

To begin with, it must be admitted that Paul did not explicitly specify what was restraining antichrist. Nevertheless, the following three clues are clear:

1. Paul previously "told" the Thessalonians what the restrainer was (vs. 5).
2. The Thessalonians knew what it was (vs. 6).
3. For some important reason, Paul did not identify the restrainer in writing.

Sherlock Holmes is also believed to have said, "Detection is, or should be, an exact science." As we ponder the evidence above, a significant detail surfaces. Because Paul plainly said he "told" the Thessalonians what the restrainer was, this knowledge had obviously been given to the early Church. So, as good detectives, what should we do next? It seems logical that we should first go back into the dusty records of ancient history in an attempt to discover what the early Church might have reported on this subject. Can't you just hear Mr. Holmes repeating his classic line to Watson, "It's elementary, my dear Watson, elementary!" Yes, it is. So let's go back and find out.

Did the early Christians reveal what they knew about this subject? Did they identify the restrainer? The answer, surprisingly, is yes. Such early writers as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine all wrote about this topic. What did they say? They all said the restrainer was *the civil power of the Roman Empire ruled by the Caesars*. Notice carefully the following quotations:

Tertullian: "...he who now hinders must hinder until he be taken out of the way. What obstacle is there but the Roman state; the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce antichrist..."²¹

John Chrysostom: "...he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way,' that is, *when the Roman Empire is taken out of the way, then he [antichrist] shall come*; and naturally, for as long as the fear of *this empire* lasts, no one will readily exalt himself; but when that is dissolved, he will attack the anarchy, and endeavor to seize upon the government both of men and of God."²²

Augustine: "...it is not absurd to believe that these words of the apostle, 'Only he who now holdeth, let him hold until he be taken out of the way,' refer to the Roman empire...."²³

It's obvious. The early Church believed the Roman Empire was the restrainer of the antichrist. Many have recognized this fact. Elliott wrote, "We have the consenting testimony of the early Fathers, from Irenaeus, the disciple of St. John, down to Chrysostom and Jerome, to the effect that it [the restrainer] was understood to be the imperial power ruling and residing at Rome."²⁴ Dr. George Eldon Ladd, a much-respected Baptist professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in the 1950's, also confirmed, "The traditional view has been that the restraining principle is the Roman Empire and the restrainer the Emperor. This view, or a modification of it, best fits into the Pauline theology."²⁵

Guinness also summarized:

The early Church, through the writings of the Fathers, tells us what it knew upon the subject, and with remarkable unanimity affirms that this "let," or hindrance, was the Roman empire as governed by the Caesars; that while the Caesars held imperial power, it was impossible for the predicted antichrist to arise, and that on the fall of the Caesars he would arise...The early Church tells us what it did know upon the subject, and no one in these days can be in a position to contradict its testimony as to what Paul had, by word of mouth, told the Thessalonians. It is a point on which ancient tradition alone can have any authority. Modern speculation is positively impertinent on such a subject.²⁶

When modern interpreters identify the restrainer as the Holy Spirit inside the Christian Church, they are simply expressing a newly developed fancy unsupported by historical evidence. Mr. Holmes said, "Detection is, or should be, an exact science." It's simply not historically scientific to identify the restrainer as the Holy Ghost within the Church. Unfortunately, this new theory has now become one of the supporting pillars beneath the idea that the rapture must come before antichrist shows up. But we have already proven from 2 Thessalonians 2 that it's really the other way around. Paul emphatically said antichrist *must come first* (vs. 3) before the Church is gathered to Jesus Christ (vs. 1).

In addition to being directly "told" by Paul that the restrainer of the antichrist was the Roman Empire, another reason why the early Church believed this may be found in the parallel prophecy of Daniel 7. Daniel's prophecy predicted the rise of four great beasts representing four successive world empires (see Daniel 7:23). The vast majority of commentators

throughout church history—including Guinness and Elliott—have identified these four empires as the successive kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Martin Luther commented:

This prophecy of Daniel [7] is by all teachers uniformly explained to represent the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the kingdom of Alexander the Great, and the fourth, the Roman empire, which is the largest, the most cruel, and the most powerful....²⁷

In Daniel 7, the fourth beast, or Roman Empire, is described as having “ten horns” (vs. 7). Most scholars apply these ten horns to ten kingdoms to arise in Western Europe after the demise of the Roman Empire. Daniel’s prophecy distinctly says that “after” the ten horns are in place, and then rising up “among them,” would come “another little horn” with “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things” (vs. 8 KJV). The vast majority of scholars, even today, regardless of how they apply the symbolism, correctly associate the little horn with the antichrist. The lesson is clear: After the fourth beast, that is, *after the fall of Rome*, the antichrist would rise up among ten nations in Europe.

The Thessalonians lived under the rule of Rome. Through understanding the prophecies, they knew that after Rome fell, the antichrist would come. This helps explain why the early Christians (according to Tertullian) made it a habit to pray for the continuation of that very empire, even though it was cruelly persecuting them (see 2 Thessalonians 1:4) for their trust in Jesus Christ. Wait a minute! Here’s another important piece of data! The reality of this fierce Roman persecution against the early Christians provides a logical explanation as to why Paul only “told” the Thessalonians what the restrainer was, rather than writing it down. What if his letter fell into the hands of unfriendly Roman officials? What if Roman leaders found out that these Christians expected the mighty Roman Empire to someday crash, being “taken out of the way”? The answer is obvious. They would have seen this as high treason against Caesar and would have increased their persecution against the infant Church. This explains why, instead of writing it down, Paul merely “told” the truth to the Thessalonians. Can’t you see Sherlock’s piercing eyes as he gathers information while smoking his pipe? “This is key data,” he would surely whisper to Watson.

Paul wrote: “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only he who now restrains will do so, until he is taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Thus the antichrist was “already” starting to work in Paul’s time, yet it was restrained by the mighty power of the Roman Empire. Once this restraint was removed by the collapse of the Roman government,

this monstrous evil would fully rise in Europe. In other words, once the Caesars went down, antichrist would fully raise its satanic head.

Here's a simple summary of the biblical data found in 2 Thessalonians 2:

1. The antichrist was already starting to work in Paul's day (vs. 7).
2. Something was restraining this horrible development of evil (verses 5-7).
3. As soon as the restraint was removed, antichrist would be revealed (verses 7-8).
4. This antichrist will continue until the visible return of Jesus Christ (vs. 8).
5. Then Christ will destroy the antichrist and gather His Church (verses 1,8).

Daniel wrote that after the fourth beast fell, the little horn would come (see Daniel 7:7-8). Paul said that after the restrainer was taken out of the way, the antichrist would be revealed (see 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). History records that the Roman Empire collapsed in 476 A.D. Did the predicted antichrist soon appear? Read on.

Sherlock Holmes would say, "It's elementary, Mr. Watson, elementary."

Chapter 14

Putting the Pieces Together

What we see depends mainly on what we look for.

— *Sir John Lubbock* (1834-1913)

When I was a boy, I loved super-complicated jigsaw puzzles. For hours I would sit, ponder, and carefully fit the pieces into the spaces. As you can imagine, it was always exciting for me to see the last few puzzle pieces snap into place. “Mom, I did it again!” I would happily shout as the full image of a house, car, or mountain lake took shape. She would smile approvingly.

The Bible’s prophecies about the antichrist are similar to a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. While it’s important to carefully examine the individual pieces, it’s really best to put them all together and look at the whole thing. When we do, just like a developing photograph in a darkroom, the emerging picture becomes clearer and clearer. This is what we find.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER FROM DANIEL 7

1. Daniel dreamed of four great beasts representing four successive ancient world kingdoms (verses 4-7,23).
2. These kingdoms were the nations of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.
3. The fourth beast, the Roman Empire, had ten horns (vs. 7), representing the division of the Western Roman Empire into ten smaller nations after 476 A.D. (the classical date for the fall of Rome).

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

4. Growing up “among” the ten horns (vs. 8), and rising up immediately “after” them (vs. 24), would be a little horn (vs. 8) *which represents the antichrist*.
5. This little horn would have “eyes like the eyes of a man” (vs. 8), “a mouth speaking pompous words” (vs. 8), and would make “war against the saints” (vs. 21) in Christian history. This horn would continue until the end of time (verses 21-22).

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER FROM 2 THESSALONIANS 2

1. The antichrist would rise as a result of a tremendous falling away (vs. 3) in the Church before Jesus Christ returns to gather the faithful (vs. 1).
2. Paul called this antichrist, “the man of sin” (vs. 3), “the son of perdition” (vs. 3), “the mystery of lawlessness” (vs. 7), and “that Wicked” (vs. 8 KJV).
3. This “mystery of lawlessness” was already working in Paul’s day (vs. 7), yet it was being restrained (verses 5-7) by the Caesars of the Roman Empire.
4. After this restraint was removed (Rome fell in 476 A.D.), the antichrist would be revealed (verses 7-8).
5. This antichrist would take his seat inside “the temple of God” (vs. 4), which is the Church (see 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21).
6. He will operate until the bright, visible, glorious return of our Lord (vs. 8).
7. When Jesus Christ comes, He will destroy the antichrist and gather His faithful people who have not “fallen away” from the truth of His Word (verses 1,3,8,10-12).

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER FROM REVELATION 13

1. The antichrist is also called “the beast” (vs. 2).
2. This “beast” is the same thing as the “little horn” in Daniel 7.
3. Just like the little horn, this beast would have “a mouth speaking great things” (vs. 5) and would “make war with the saints” (vs. 7).
4. A beast in prophecy represents a powerful “kingdom on earth” (see Daniel 7:23).

Putting the Pieces Together

5. This beast will eventually have worldwide influence and control (vs. 8).
6. This beast will continue until the end of time (see Revelation 19:20).

The Bible reveals a few more pieces to this antichrist jigsaw puzzle, but this is enough for now. So what are we looking for when it comes to the *real* antichrist of prophecy?

In a nutshell, we are looking for an antichrist that was starting to work in the time of Paul, but was being restrained by the Roman Empire. It would grow in strength in the wake of a massive “falling away” from Jesus inside the Christian Church and would be “revealed” unrestrained after the Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D. It would be centered somewhere in Western Europe, would become self-exalting, and would even usurp the authority of God inside His temple—that is, within Christianity. An actual “kingdom,” it would nevertheless have “eyes like the eyes of a man” (being man-led and man-centered), make large claims for itself, have “a mouth speaking great things,” become persecuting and deadly, making “war against the saints.” It would continue throughout Christian history and achieve global influence in the end times, yet finally be destroyed by the sin-consuming brightness of our Lord Jesus Christ when He returns.

Those are the facts *from Scripture*. Is such an antichrist here now? You are about to discover irrefutable proof that for over four hundred years the unanimous testimony of well-respected Protestant scholars, historians, and burnt-to-ashes martyrs has been, “Most definitely!”

Chapter 15

Echoes of Forgotten Voices

Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.

— *Martin Luther* (1483-1546)

Speech at the Diet of Worms, April 18, 1521

The New Testament Church possessed an all-consuming desire to exalt Jesus Christ and His incomprehensible once-and-for-all Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (see Hebrews 10:12; 1 John 2:2). The Book of Acts reports, CNN-style, how the message of Christ's perfect righteousness and grace spread like an uncontrollable brushfire throughout the Roman Empire (see Acts 2:36-41; 5:14; 8:4). As the apostles lifted up the Risen One before the multitudes, sinners realized they were loved by God in spite of their faults, and the Lord's power moved them to repent, be baptized, and stop serving satan (see Acts 2:38; 26:18). As people trusted the merits of Jesus Christ for salvation (see Acts 16:31), rather than their own "works" (see Ephesians 2:9), He forgave their sins (see Acts 13:38), purified their hearts (see Acts 15:8-9), and set their feet on the path to Paradise.

As a result of Spirit-filled preaching, strong churches were raised up in the midst of an idol-worshiping, pleasure-crazy, Caesar-devoted world. The new Christian converts were taught to obey the Bible above the traditions of men (see Colossians 2:8) and to cherish "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). They had discovered the only way to the Father, Jesus Christ Himself (see John 14:6); and were taught to trust Him implicitly (see Ephesians 1:12) as the only Mediator between Almighty God and the human family (see 1 Timothy 2:5). They were also taught the importance of "*obeying the truth*" (1 Peter 1:22, emphasis added), even if it meant opposition, ridicule, or death. They were willing to walk the narrow road

“which leads to life” (Matthew 7:14) because Jesus was precious to them, just as they were to Him.

But as the Christian train rolled down history’s track, monumental changes took place. Just as Paul predicted, there came a tremendous “falling away” (2 Thessalonians 2:3) from the simplicity and purity of the gospel. Almost imperceptibly, false theories, man-made traditions, and unbiblical practices slipped into the very heart of Christianity. Little by little people lost sight of the beauty and loveliness of Jesus. In the fourth century, during the time of Constantine, a large portion of the church compromised key Bible truths and decided to line up with the Roman State. Rejecting the humility of the meek and lowly One (see Matthew 11:29), church leaders sought pomp and worldly glory. Leaving the heavenly “power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13), they relied on the earthly power of politics and government. As even more traditions came in, Europe eventually became engulfed in the Dark Ages. In the twelfth century, a monstrous tribunal was established called the “Holy Office of the Inquisition” which was purposefully “created to persecute and exterminate ‘heresy’ by violence and not by persuasion.”²⁸ Its 600-year history is filled with “gloomy portals,” “dark passages,” “locked doors,” “dungeons,” “bloodstained records,” and “extreme, merciless, unmitigated tortures.”²⁹ Incredibly, so-called Christians murdered other Christians in “the name of Jesus Christ.”³⁰

By the time the 1500’s came along, the original simplicity of the early Christian faith was virtually nonexistent. All over Europe sinners were taught to confess their sins to priests, to pray to the Virgin Mary, to buy “forgiveness notes” called indulgences, and to kiss statues of the saints, none of which is taught in the New Testament. Monks even beat themselves with whips in a misguided effort to earn the favor of God. It’s true, there were sincere and godly people in what had become the Roman Catholic Church, but overall, Christianity was a mess! In pity Jesus Christ must have looked down from His throne and told His angels, “It’s time for the Protestant Reformation!”

21st century Christians should realize it was *sincere Catholics* wanting a change that originally spearheaded the Reformation. Initially, they had no thought of leaving the Mother Church but simply wanted to redirect their Catholic countrymen away from the traditions of men and to lead them back to the pure truths of the Word. Their main goal was to lead other sinners like themselves to stop trusting their own works for salvation and to have simple faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

Salvation is a wonderful *gift* from Jesus (see Romans 6:23). When we repent of our sins and receive this gift, trusting alone in Christ, the Father Himself forgives us, transforms our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and gives us power to obey His Word (see Luke 13:3; 1 John 1:9; 1 Peter 1:22; John 17:17). This simple message of free salvation through what Jesus Christ *has already done* for the entire world on the cross, and of “the power of His resurrection” (Philippians 3:10), is called the good news of the gospel. Paul defined the good news as: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). We must believe this good news wholeheartedly, for it alone can save our souls (see 1 Peter 1:3,9).

The word *antichrist* literally means “opposed to” or “in the place of” Christ,³¹ and in its most subtle and diabolical manifestation it concerns something which *claims loyalty to Jesus* while really leading away from Him. Now let’s take a closer look at what truly happened during the time of the Protestant Reformation.

In the 1500’s, as a result of the invention of the printing press, countless European and English Catholics read the Bible for the first time in their lives. As a result, they uncovered the good news of salvation through trusting in Christ. At the same time, to their shock and amazement, they also realized that many Romish doctrines—including praying to dead saints and confessing to priests—actually led away from a simple faith in the merits of the Lamb. Compelled by the Spirit, these sincere Catholics tried to reform the church they loved from within. They preached the gospel and even appealed to the Pope. The result was fury, intense opposition, threats of flames, and the ugly cry, “You’re now a candidate for the Inquisition!” As the conflict deepened, those who saw the Bible as their final authority began to have serious doubts about the basic authority of a church that utilized torture chambers. In other words, they began to question whether the Holy Apostolic Roman Catholic Church, as an institution centered in popes and the Vatican, was really the Bride of Jesus Christ in the first place.

One by one the reformers turned to the prophecies. In amazement they discovered what Paul actually wrote about “the falling away,” “the son of perdition,” and a “mystery of lawlessness” that would proudly set itself up inside “the temple of God,” which is the church (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4,7; 1 Corinthians 3:16). They were stunned to read Daniel’s prophecy about a “little horn” with “eyes like the eyes of a man,” “a mouth speaking great things,” that would be centered in Western Europe and would make bloody “war against the saints” (Daniel 7:7-8,21). They shuddered as they realized this same power was called “the beast” in God’s last book, and that it would finally exert worldwide influence and control (see Revelation 13:2,7-8). They were especially jolted when they read about a harlot named “Mystery

Babylon” who was “drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6). As death sentence after death sentence was hurled against them for pointing sinners to the holy Lamb of God, and as the smoke of burning martyrs blackened Europe’s fair skies, these reformers eventually came to a frightening, unanimous, and terribly solemn conclusion. They had discovered Jesus Christ *and* antichrist.

Let me clarify something right here. Even though, in the pages that follow, I will apply the Bible’s prophecies about the “little horn” and “the beast” to the papal system in general (because of its doctrines and practices), this does not reflect a judgment on individual Catholics. Personally, I have nothing against any member of the Roman Church. Because God is merciful and judges men fairly based on the light they have (see James 4:17), I know I will meet many sincere Catholics in Christ’s Kingdom.

Nor does my position reflect an exclusive view of the word *antichrist* itself. I realize “the spirit of antichrist” is now working inside various organizations and non-Christian religions, including many churches that call themselves Protestant. Nothing written here is designed to promote hostility toward any human being. Jesus said “God so loved the world” (John 3:16) which includes the Pope; and His clear command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39) applies to Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, and everyone else. Yet this book is about *the prophetic truths of God’s Word*, truths which must not be ignored by any God-fearing, Bible-believing Christian.

The following quotations may seem a bit strong for our politically correct modern ears, but they reveal the facts of history. The reader is encouraged to consider them squarely and honestly, in the blazing light of Bible prophecy.

MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546) (LUTHERAN):

Newsweek reported, “Martin Luther was the first to identify the papacy as such with the Antichrist. At first he discounted the value of John’s Apocalypse. But then he saw in it a revelation of the Church of Rome as the deceiving Antichrist...a view that was to become dogma for all Protestant Churches.”³²

“Luther...proved, by the revelations of Daniel and St. John, by the epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude, that the reign of Antichrist, predicted and described in the Bible, was the Papacy.”³³

On August 20, 1520, Luther declared, “We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist.”³⁴

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564) (PRESBYTERIAN):

“Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman pontiff Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak and whose language we adopt...I shall briefly show that (Paul’s words in II Thess. 2) are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the Papacy.”³⁵

JOHN KNOX (1505-1572) (SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN):

John Knox wrote about “that tyranny which the pope himself has for so many ages exercised over the church.” Along with Martin Luther and John Calvin, Knox finally concluded that the Papacy was “the very antichrist, and son of perdition, of whom Paul speaks.”³⁶

THOMAS CRANMER (1489-1556) (ANGLICAN):

“Whereof it followeth Rome to be the seat of antichrist, and the pope to be very antichrist himself. I could prove the same by many other scriptures, old writers, and strong reasons.”³⁷

FOX’S BOOK OF MARTYRS (1563):

Written by Englishman John Fox (1517–1587), this much-respected volume helped “mold the national character” of 17th-century America. Fox reported: “Disregarding the maxims and the spirit of the Gospel, the papal Church, arming herself with the power of the sword, vexed the Church of God and wasted it for centuries, a period most appropriately termed in history, the ‘dark ages.’ The kings of the earth, gave their power to the Beast.”³⁸

**ROGER WILLIAMS (1603-1683)
(CONSIDERED THE FIRST BAPTIST PASTOR IN AMERICA):**

Roger Williams spoke of the Pope as “the pretended Vicar of Christ on earth, who sits as God over the Temple of God, exalting himself not only above all that is called God, but over the souls and consciences of all his vassals,

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

yea over the Spirit of Christ, over the Holy Spirit, yea, and God himself...speaking against the God of heaven, thinking to change times and laws; but he is the son of perdition (II Thess. 2).”³⁹

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH (1647):

“There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God.”⁴⁰

COTTON MATHER (1663-1728) (CONGREGATIONAL):

“The oracles of God foretold the rising of an Antichrist in the Christian Church: and in the Pope of Rome all the characteristics of that Antichrist are so marvelously answered that if any who read the Scriptures do not see it, there is a marvelous blindness upon them.”⁴¹

JOHN WESLEY (1703-1791) (METHODIST):

Speaking of the papacy, John Wesley wrote, “He is in an emphatic sense, the Man of Sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly styled the Son of Perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers...He it is...that exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped...claiming the highest power, and highest honor...claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone.”⁴²

DAVID BENEDICT'S GENERAL HISTORY OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION (1813):

“...in the eleventh century, the Man of Sin appeared to have attained the summit of arrogance and blasphemy in the person of Gregory VII...He assumed not only the appellation of Universal Bishop, but also those of Sovereign Pontiff, Christ's Vicar, Prince of the Apostles, God on earth, Lord God the Pope, His Holiness, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Prince over all nations and kingdoms, The Most Holy and Most Blessed, Master of the Universal World, Father of Kings, Light of the World, Most High and Sovereign Bishop, etc. etc.”⁴³

A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES :

“Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Cranmer; in the seventeenth century, Bunyan, the translators of the King James Bible and the men who published the Westminster and Baptist confessions of Faith; Sir Isaac Newton, Wesley, Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards; and more recently Spurgeon, Bishop J.C. Ryle and Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones; these men among countless others, all saw the office of the Papacy as the antichrist.”⁴⁴

These quotes come from some of the most respected and influential Christians who have ever lived. They were intensely earnest, honest men who based their conclusions on the prophecies of the Bible. I realize times have changed. It’s true, we’re not in the Dark Ages anymore; and yes, this is the 21st century. But there is something we must consider: Daniel’s prophecy about “a little horn” that would make “war against the saints” (Daniel 7:8,21), Paul’s predictions about a “falling away” and an antichrist “man of sin” or “mystery of lawlessness” that would sit in God’s temple (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), John’s prophecy about “a beast” with global influence (Revelation 13:2,7), and finally, Revelation’s strikingly graphic portrayal of a woman named “Mystery Babylon” who would become drunk with “the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6)—these prophecies are *still* in the Bible. And there is something else we should remember. Nations rise and fall, history rushes on, technology advances, and a new millennium has arrived—but God’s Word has not changed!

Either those dead Protestants were dead wrong, or history’s forgotten voices still speak.

Chapter 16

1260 Years: The Time Factor

All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.

— Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)

“What time is it?” How many times have we heard that? The clock relentlessly governs this high-tech world of ours. Cell phones, computers, palm pilots, fax machines, and nightstand radios all have clocks in them. Clocks tell us when to get out of bed, when to leave for work, when it’s time for lunch, and when to say, “Good night.” In other words, we live our lives and make decisions based on *time*. This may surprise you, but even the Creator of the universe is concerned about time. His Book says, “When the fullness of *the time* had come, God sent forth His Son” (Galatians 4:4, emphasis added). In fact, the entire life of Jesus Christ was based on time. He knew when “His hour had come” (John 13:1) and when it was time for His holy heart to experience the horror of sin upon the cross. Just as Christ’s life and death was based on time, the same is true of antichrist. Paul predicted that antichrist would “be revealed in *his own time*” (2 Thessalonians 2:6, emphasis added). What is the time of the antichrist?

Daniel described the antichrist as a little horn “making war against the saints, and prevailing against them” (Daniel 7:8,21). A few sentences later he wrote, “the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time” (vs. 25). *This is the time of the antichrist*. This special time period is actually referred to seven times in God’s Word, being spoken of as 3 1/2 times (see Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 12:14), 42 months (see Revelation 11:2; 13:5), and 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3; 12:6). Most scholars recognize that a “time” represents a year (the Hebrew 360-day year), and thus 3 1/2 times is 3 1/2 years, or 42 months (based on a 30-day month), or 1,260 days. It’s simple mathematics.

Is this a literal time period, or a symbolic one? Consider this. Just as Daniel 7 reveals the time of the antichrist (see Daniel 7:25), even so does Daniel 9 reveal the time of Jesus Christ (see Daniel 9:24-26). That latter prophecy pinpoints “seventy weeks,” or 490 days. As Chapter 4 of this book pointed out, almost all Bible scholars interpret this 490-day period according to the day-for-a-year principle found in Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34. Thus the 490 days are 490 literal years. We know the prophecy in Daniel 9 is a day-for-a-year because it begins with a command to rebuild Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity (see Daniel 9:25) and reaches all the way down to the first coming of Jesus Christ (see Daniel 9:26). Because 490 literal days would not reach far enough to the time of Jesus since that would only be about 1 year and 4.3 months, the prophecy *must* be a day-for-a-year. That’s proof positive. Few question this.

Prophecy teachers in our generation definitely apply the day-for-a-year principle to the famous 70th week of Daniel 9:27, which says, “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice...to cease” (Daniel 9:27, KJV). Based on the day-year truth, this “one week” is really seven years. Almost everyone agrees with this. Yet as we have already seen, many prophecy scholars today—following the lead of J.N. Darby—have decided to sever this 70th week from the first 69 weeks (creating an almost 2,000 year gap or parenthesis), slide it down to the end times, and call it “the seven years of tribulation.” We have already analyzed the problems with this view and have proven it was really Jesus Christ who brought an end to the Jewish sacrificial system through His death on the cross. Net conclusion: no seven-year tribulation.

Here’s a startling mega-point. Protestant scholars from the 1500’s to the 1800’s not only applied the day-for-a-year principle to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 (the time of Jesus Christ), but also to the 3 1/2 years of Daniel 7:25, *to the time of antichrist*. And they applied it to *papal Rome*. They interpreted the 3 1/2 years, 42 months, or 1,260 days as *1,260 literal years of papal rule*.

This is easy to prove, as a little study in church history will quickly demonstrate. Dr. H. Grattan Guinness reported:

The seventy weeks of Daniel, or 490 days to the Messiah, were fulfilled as 490 years; that is, they were fulfilled on the year-day scale. On this scale the forty-two months, or 1,260 days, are 1,260 years. We ask then, Has the Papacy endured this period? An examination of the facts of history will show that it has.⁴⁵

In 1701, Robert Fleming published his book, *The Rise and fall of Papal Rome*.

Fleming showed, as others had done for many centuries, that the 1,260 days of prophecy represent 1,260 years.⁴⁶

E.B. Elliott, in his 1862 classic, *Horae Apocalypticae*, often referred to:

...the great prophetic period of the 1260 years.⁴⁷

David Benedict's *A General History of the Baptist Denomination* also commented on:

...the rise of Antichrist...his reign...[for] 1260 years.⁴⁸

Such quotations could be multiplied, but this is enough to prove that Protestant commentators of the past did not apply the 1,260-day period to a supposedly future 7-year tribulation like modern pre-trib rapture teachers often do. Instead, they applied it to real history—to the long period of papal supremacy spanning the Dark Ages.

When did the 1,260 years begin? In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul gave a clear clue. In verse 6, he made a definite connection between the removal of the restrainer and the beginning of the time of the antichrist. Notice carefully. Paul told the early Thessalonians, "And now you know what is *restraining*, that he [antichrist] may be revealed in *his own time*" (2 Thessalonians 2:6, emphasis added). As we have previously proven, this restrainer was the fourth beast of Daniel 7, which was the Roman Empire. In 476 A.D., when Rome fell, the Caesar restrainer was "taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Thus we should expect the 1260-year period to begin *shortly after 476 A.D.*

H. Grattan Guinness places the beginning of the 1,260-year period shortly after 476 A.D. He states that it began with "the notable decree of the emperor Justinian [525-565 A.D.] constituting the Bishop of Rome as the head of all Churches [in Western Europe]."⁴⁹ When the Roman Empire collapsed in 476 A.D., there were still rulers in the East. One of them, named Justinian, believed the key to peace in Europe was the uniting of all religions under the leadership of the Roman Church. So he issued his famous decree which made the Pope the legal "Head of all the Holy Churches." This decree fully established the papacy's political power over all of Christianity in Western Europe. Justinian's decree went into effect in 538 A.D.,⁵⁰ which was shortly after 476 A.D.! That key date—538 A.D.—marks the beginning of *the time* of the antichrist.

Daniel predicted that during the 1,260-year period the little horn would "persecute the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:25)—a prophecy that was fulfilled to the letter by papal Rome during the Dark Ages. By the end of this period, enough was enough, and Europe was ready for a change. If we start at 538 A.D. and count down 1,260 years, this takes us to 1798 A.D., the time of the French Revolution. In the midst of a bloody reaction against the Roman

Church and its monstrous torture chambers, Napoleon finally decided to abolish the papal government entirely. Can you guess what year this feat was accomplished? 1798! That's why Guinness marks the conclusion of the 1,260 years at the time of "the tremendous Papal overthrow in the French Revolution."⁵¹

In 1798, a general of Napoleon named Berthier entered Rome with a French army. He swiftly abolished the papacy, dismissed the Vatican's Swiss guards, and proclaimed Rome to be a republic for France. "Berthier entered Rome on the 10th of February, 1798, and proclaimed a republic."⁵² "One day the Pope was sitting on his throne in a chapel of the Vatican, surrounded by his cardinals... Very soon a band of soldiers burst into the hall, who tore away from his finger his pontifical ring, and hurried him off, a prisoner."⁵³ Pope Pius VI was taken to France where he died in exile. "Napoleon gave orders that in the event of his death no successor should be elected to his office, and that the Papacy should be discontinued."⁵⁴

The Papacy was extinct: not a vestige of existence remained; and among all the Roman Catholic powers not a finger was stirred in its defense. The Eternal City had no longer prince or pontiff; its bishop was dying captive in foreign lands; and the decree was already announced that no successor would be allowed in his place.⁵⁵

This happened in the exact year 1798, marking the end of the predicted 1,260-year reign of the persecuting "little horn." In that very year Protestant scholars all over Europe and America recognized the fulfillment of the prophecy.

In the downfall of the papal government...many saw in these events the accomplishment of prophecies, and the exhibition of signs promised in the most mystical parts of the Holy Scriptures.⁵⁶

Is not the *Papal power*, at Rome, which was once so terrible, and so domineering, at an end? But let us pause a little. Was not *this* End, in other parts of the Holy Prophecies, foretold to be, *at the END of 1260 years?*—And was it not foretold by Daniel, to be at the END of *a time, times, and half a time?* Which computation amounts to the same period. And now let us see; hear; and understand. THIS IS THE YEAR 1798.⁵⁷

Is it not extremely remarkable, and a powerful confirmation of the truth of *Scripture prophecy*, that just 1260 years ago from the present 1798, in the very beginning of the year 538, Belisarius put an end to the empire of the *Goths* at Rome, leaving no power therein but the *Bishop* of the *Metropolis*? Read these things in the *prophetic Scriptures*; compare them coolly

with the present state of Europe, and then, I say again, deny the truth of *Divine Revelation*, if you can. Open your eyes, and behold these things accomplishing in the face of the whole world. *This thing is not done in a corner.*⁵⁸

Thus many scholars of the past have applied the 3½-year, 42-month, 1,260-day prediction found in Daniel and Revelation to a 1,260-year period starting in 538 A.D. and ending in 1798. These well-respected theologians saw those dates—538 and 1798—as prophetic milestones, and they appealed to the whole world to take note that God’s “sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19 KJV) had not been fulfilled in a corner.

Here is a quick summary of biblical and historical facts surrounding “the time” of the antichrist:

1. Paul clearly wrote that after the restrainer was removed, the antichrist would be “revealed in his own time” (2 Thessalonians 2:6).
2. Daniel predicted that after the fourth beast fell, the “little horn” (the antichrist) would rule for 1,260 years, “making war against the saints” (Daniel 7:7-8,21,25).
3. Shortly after the Western Roman Empire collapsed in 476 A.D., the Eastern Emperor Justinian issued his famous decree giving the Roman Church special power in Europe.
4. Justinian’s decree went into effect in 538 A.D., marking the beginning of 1,260 years of European papal supremacy.
5. During the 1,260 years, the Roman Church did indeed “make war against the saints” by papal crusades against heretics and through the nightmarish barbarism of inhuman inquisitors who set up their deadly tribunals in Europe, England, India, South America, and even Mexico. Literally millions of “saints” lost their lives.
6. In 1798 A.D, exactly 1,260 years from 538 A.D, Napoleon’s general (Berthier) abolished the papacy’s political power, thus ending that long and painful period of papal rule.

So what time is it? If you check your watch, computer, or cell phone you can discover the exact minute in the Pacific, Mountain, Central or Eastern Time zones.

But only the Bible reveals the precise time of Jesus Christ (490 years) and antichrist (1,260 years).

Chapter 17

The Return of the Wounded Beast

The truly educated man is that rare individual who can separate reality from illusion.

— Author Unknown

The Bible warns about the beast, "...his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast" (Revelation 13:3 KJV).

Near the end of *The Indwelling—The Beast Takes Possession*, Book Seven of the *Left Behind* novels, Antichrist Nicolae Carpathia is assassinated in Jerusalem. His corpse is jetted to New Babylon and a funeral service takes place before millions of viewers with full media coverage. As the world's TV cameras are fixed on the coffin, the unbelievable occurs. Carpathia's left index finger moves; his chest starts to swell; his eyes open. Nicolae finally stands up and triumphantly declares before an awestruck world, "Peace be unto you!"⁵⁹ In *Left Behind's* next book, *The Mark—The Beast Rules The World*, "His Excellency Global Community Potentate Nicolae Carpathia is back, this time as Satan. Resurrected and indwelt by the devil himself, it's no more Mr. Nice Guy as the beast tightens his grip as ruler of the world."⁶⁰

This is how many Christians imagine Revelation 13:3 might be fulfilled.

This literal view of a murdered and resurrected Mr. Sin has been depicted in scores of prophecy books and was graphically illustrated in the multi-million-dollar Christian film, *The Omega Code*. Although details vary, most modern portrayals involve the antichrist being shot with a gun and then miraculously being raised to life. When Ronald Reagan survived a gunshot

wound during his presidency, some speculated that he might be the antichrist whose deadly wound was healed!

As always, there's a big difference between fact and fiction. The wounding of the beast is referred to four times in Revelation (13:3,10,12,14). Yet notice, the beast "was wounded by *the sword* and lived" (13:14, emphasis added). Thus his wound comes from "the sword," not a pistol, rifle, or sub-machine gun. Revelation 13:10 also reveals the additional insight that the wounding of the beast involves his going "into captivity."

Paul declared "the sword of the Spirit" to be the Word of God itself (Ephesians 6:17). During Reformation times, it was *this* that "wounded" the papacy. As John Wycliffe, John Huss, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, John Calvin, John Wesley, and countless other Spirit-filled reformers wielded the Bible's message about Jesus Christ *and* antichrist, papal Rome received a nearly fatal slash. Hundreds of thousands left the Roman Church and Europe was shaken as with a mighty earthquake. The final blow against the weakened Roman system came in 1798 when the army of Napoleon invaded the Vatican and took the Pope into exile.

God's prophetic clock had set the year 1798 as the end of the papal supremacy, and when the hour struck, the mighty ruler on the Tiber, before whose anathemas the kings and emperors of Europe had so long trembled, went "into captivity" (Revelation 13:10), and his government in the Papal States was abolished.⁶¹

You've heard the expression, "You've come a long way, baby." This is especially true when it comes to prophetic interpretation. Bestselling books and blockbuster Christian movies now apply Revelation's prophecy about a beast that receives a deadly wound to some fictitious Mr. Deception like Nicolae Carpathia who is assassinated after a secret rap-ture. This is all like a house of illusion at an amusement park. The truth is, the Bible says the beast, which represents a "kingdom" (Daniel 7:23), would be "wounded by *the sword*" (Revelation 13:14, emphasis added) and go "into captivity" (Revelation 13:10). The Reformation *did* wound the papal power with Heaven's razor-sharp "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) and finally, Rome's leader went "into captivity" into France. This papal downfall took place on February 10, 1798, exactly at the end of 1,260 years predicted in Scripture!

As Paul Harvey so often says, we need to hear "the rest of the story." The prophecies about "the little horn" and "the beast" do not stop with the 1,260-year period, the deadly "wound by the sword," or the beast's "captivity." There's more. In words of deep significance, Scripture predicts, "...his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast" (Revelation

13:3 KJV). Is this happening now? There is no question about it! The former deadly wound inflicted upon papal Rome now hardly needs a bandaid. With over a billion members, the Vatican is now the headquarters of the most powerful religious organization on Planet Earth. In spite of horrendous sex scandals which have embarrassed the Roman Church, when the Pope addresses America or the United Nations, the global community listens.

In 1990, 16-book bestselling author Malachi Martin published his fascinating work, *The Keys of this Blood: The Struggle for World Dominion Between Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the Capitalist West*. Before his death in 1999, Martin was not only a highly esteemed former professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute of the Vatican, but also a nationally sought-after radio and TV guest on Vatican affairs. *The Washington Post* even referred to his “uncanny accuracy” and insights.

In his 1990 *The Keys of this Blood*, Martin suggested that in his time there were only three powers capable of ruling the world—Russia, America, and the Vatican. Of those three, Martin predicted that the Roman Church would win in the struggle over “who will hold and wield the dual power of authority and control over each of us as individuals and over all of us together as a community; over the entire six billion people expected by demographers to inhabit the earth by early in the third millennium.”⁶² Along with the Pope himself, Martin upheld “the papacy as the ultimate arbiter for problems and dilemmas affecting nations all over the globe”⁶³ because it alone is the “Mother of all men’s souls.”⁶⁴

At the beginning of *The Keys*, Martin glanced back “fifteen hundred years and more” when “Rome kept as strong a hand as possible in each local community around the wide world.” Then he significantly referred to “two hundred years of inactivity” which had “been imposed on the papacy by the major secular powers of the world.”⁶⁵ Do you realize the significance of this? Counting back two hundred years from 1990 takes us to 1790, only eight years away from the inflicting of the wound! True to history, Martin looks back to the “the nineteenth century” when “Pius VI and Pius VII left Rome, but only because they were kidnapped by French governments and imprisoned on French soil.”⁶⁶ Precisely.

Unconscious of the prophetic connection, Martin continued by saying that after “some two hundred years of official nonexistence...the distinguishing mark of John Paul’s career as Pontiff” has been to “throw off the straight jacket of papal activity in major world affairs.”⁶⁷ Malachi boasted of the “Slavic Pope” who has “a new eye toward a purpose that is as old as the papacy itself...an eye that was not merely international, but truly global.”⁶⁸ The basic message of *The Keys of this Blood* is, “Papal Rome is back, the wound is healing, and the Vatican’s goal is world dominion.” Whether the

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

papacy ever achieves this or not, *Bible prophecy does predict Rome's return to power and resurrected global influence.*

It's a fact: In our 21st century, there is no president, statesman, or even rock-and-roll singer, including Mick Jagger, Michael Jackson, Madonna, or Britney Spears, who can gather a larger crowd than the Pope. In 1995, the front cover of *Time* magazine labeled Pope John Paul II its "Man of the Year." "When he talks, it is not only to his flock of nearly a billion; he expects the world to listen. And the flock and the world listen."⁶⁹

No doubt you have heard of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. They were magnificent structures, colossal monuments. One was the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Another The Great Pyramid of Giza. In our modern times, people stand amazed at the developments of technology—computers, the Internet, satellite communications, fiber optics, and stem cell research. Yet there is another "wonder" predicted in Revelation which also applies to our 21st century world. It's the wonder of a wounded beast now healing.

The Holy Bible says:

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast (Revelation 13:3 KJV).

Have Protestants lost their swords? Why don't they discern the fulfillment of prophecy?

Because they are waiting for Nicolae.

Chapter 18

The I.D. of Antichrist

If it looks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, we have at least to consider the possibility that we have a small aquatic bird of the family anatidae on our hands.

— Douglas Noel Adams (1952-)

Each time I travel overseas, I always carry my passport so I can identify myself before local or government officials. After comparing my face with my photo, they know it's me. In America, my driver license serves the same purpose. It lists my name, birth date, height, hair color, and current address. These details are not so much for information, but for identification. That's the issue.

In addition to the other puzzle pieces we've found so far, the Bible gives us another highly practical clue to help us identify that which is truly antichrist.

Notice carefully:

...Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world (1 John 4:2-3).

Again John wrote:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (2 John 7).

Thus the Bible plainly says twice that a denial that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” is a definite mark of antichrist. To continue my analogy, if you ever wonder whether something or someone might be antichrist, just look closely at the information on their passport or driver license. If you see the words, “Does Not Confess Jesus Christ Has Come in the Flesh,” you have your answer.

Every Christian should “confess” Jesus has come in the flesh. But this confession must be more than a lips-only statement that Jesus Christ was a real person who was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, and died on a cross for our sins. Amazingly, a person may confess all this and yet still be a “deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7). According to the Bible, our confession must be more specific. We must confess Jesus Christ has come in *the flesh*. And this confession must be genuine, from the heart, prompted by the Spirit of God (see 1 John 4:2). What does it really mean that “Jesus Christ is come in *the flesh*”? Let’s delve deeper and find out.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). “The Word” was Jesus Christ before His nativity in Bethlehem. “The Word became flesh” simply means the infinite Son of God became Man. Here’s a key question: What *kind of flesh* did Jesus become when He fused with humanity? Paul answered with the utmost clarity: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of *the same*” (Hebrews 2:14 KJV, emphasis added). Don’t miss it. Paul said Jesus took “the same” flesh as “the children” have. “The children” doesn’t apply to Adam and Eve, for they were never babies but were created directly by God in the Garden of Eden. Rather, “the children” applies to their descendants after sin entered the world, that is, to *fallen humanity*.

“As the *children* are partakers of *flesh* and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of *the same*” (Hebrews 2:14, emphasis added). Thus the Bible plainly says Jesus Christ Himself “took part” of the *same flesh* we have. You might ask, “So what? What does this have to do with antichrist?”

First, we must understand what “the flesh” is. “The flesh” is a biblical expression which describes our basic human nature as it has been affected by sin. Paul said, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells...” (Romans 7:18). In other words, the flesh itself is bad. It’s our enemy. It’s like a nasty cesspool that often stinks and seeks to drag us down. “The flesh” is the channel through which satan works to tempt us and lead us into actual sin.

One of the most impenetrable mysteries found in the Bible is the truth that God sent “His own Son in the likeness of *sinful flesh*” (Romans 8:3, emphasis added). It may be hard to fathom, but Jesus Christ “took” upon Himself the very *same flesh* we have. Why did He do it? So He could relate

to us, understand our struggles, experience our temptations, and reach us where we are. In other words, God didn't simply send us a rope. He entered our world's slime and mud to get us out of it!

Yet in all of this, there is one monumental truth we must never forget, or we will drift into heresy. Even though Jesus "took" our sinful flesh and shared our humanity, *He never committed one sin*. He was "in all points tempted as we are, yet *without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15, emphasis added). In spite of His real connection with human flesh, Jesus Himself—in His thoughts, feelings and character—remained "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). This is exactly what the Bible says. By taking our flesh but not participating in its evil, Jesus literally "condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3), which means He met and conquered the very temptations that give us so much trouble.

Not only did Jesus defeat our flesh in our behalf, but He also died for *all* of our sins wherein we have yielded to temptation (see 1 Corinthians 15:3). Thus He is a perfect and complete Savior! After His total victory over satan, Jesus ascended to Heaven to become our High Priest. Notice the following connection between Christ's being tempted in the flesh *down here* and His present ability *up there* as our High Priest to help us in our struggles.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession [or confession]. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16 KJV).

Fantastic! Jesus Christ is now our High Priest in glory. Because He took our fallen flesh down here and conquered it, we can come directly to Him by faith up there for mercy, grace, and spiritual power. It's true. Today, at this very moment, we have immediate access to His throne. Christ earnestly solicits our approach. We can "come boldly"!

Michael Dell has made Dell Computer Corporation one of the fastest growing and most successful companies in the world. How did he do it? By his business model—Be Direct. Dell computers are not found at Best Buy, Circuit City, or Comp-USA. The only way to get one is to go directly to Dell and order one. The genius of the Dell model is that it bypasses the middleman, makes more money, and saves us money. That's their secret. It's the same with Jesus Christ. Because He took our flesh, becoming one of us, we can "be direct." Today, as our High Priest, Jesus lovingly, tenderly and earnestly invites us to bypass all middlemen and come straight to His throne.

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

Hebrews 2:17-18 also firmly connects Jesus Christ's coming in the flesh with His High Priestly ministry and with His present ability to save us from sin.

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God...For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:17-18).

Again the truth is established. Because Jesus Christ was *made like us* in the flesh and was tempted like we are, He is now fully able as our High Priest to help us when we're tempted. His arms are open wide. Even though we are unworthy and foolish sinners, we can still "come boldly to the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). We need no other mediator. We can "be direct." *This is all part of our confession.*

It's time to tie this in with antichrist. As we have already seen, it was the teaching of the major Protestant Reformers that the "little horn" (Daniel 7:8), the "beast" (Revelation 13:1), and "the man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) all apply to papal Rome. So here's the all-important question. Does the Roman Church genuinely confess "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh"? On the surface it claims to do so, but let's take a closer look.

One of the official doctrines, or "confessions," of the Church of Rome is a dogma called The Immaculate Conception. Contrary to what many think, this does not refer to the birth of Jesus as a sinless baby, but rather to the conception of Mary herself inside her own mother's womb. The dogma teaches that when Mary was conceived, she was miraculously preserved from all original sin. Thus her nature was "immaculate," or sinless, and therefore fundamentally *different* from ours. In other words, according to papal teaching, Jesus' mother did not have exactly the same flesh and nature that we have. Now don't miss this. What is the implication of this teaching? According to papal Rome's official statements, when Jesus Christ was born, He took *Mary's supposedly sinless nature, not ours*. If you think about it, this is really a denial that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:3)!

Here's the proof from official, Vatican-approved sources:

This is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses [this is their own word], as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.⁷⁰

As a consequence, according to the Roman Church, when Jesus Christ was born, He took *Mary's perfect nature, not our fallen one*. The famous Cardinal Gibbons said it this way:

In other words we affirm that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity...by being born of the Virgin, [took] to Himself, from her maternal womb, a human nature of *the same substance with hers...*a true human nature of the same substance with *her own*.⁷¹

This doctrine of The Immaculate Conception with its idea of the entrance of Jesus into Mary's sinless nature, not ours, really removes Christ "one gigantic step away from mankind." As a result of this dogma and others, Rome doesn't teach sinners to "be direct" by going straight to our heavenly Father through His Son Jesus Christ for free forgiveness. Instead, the Vatican encourages poor sinners to come to Jesus *through* Mary, popes, priests, and saints—that is, through the mediation of the Roman Church itself. Even more than this, Rome declares that by virtue of Mary's Immaculate Conception and supposedly sinless life, she now has a "saving office" in addition to her Son. Through Mary's "manifold intercession," she is now our "Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix" who can "bring us the gifts of eternal salvation" and "deliver our souls from death."⁷²

Thus, in her official teachings, in spite of appearances, the Roman Church really denies "Jesus Christ has come in *the flesh*" (1 John 4:3, emphasis added), that is, in "*the same*" (Hebrews 2:14, emphasis added) fallen flesh the rest of us have. No matter what she may deceptively claim, Rome's declaration that Mary is now our "Advocate" and "Mediatrix" swerves sinners away from childlike trust in Jesus Christ *alone*, and thus really "denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). God's Word says, "Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in *the flesh* is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world" (1 John 4:3, emphasis added).

According to the Bible, "the spirit of the Antichrist" was "already" working in John's own day (church history records a group called Gnostics who denied Jesus Christ's coming in the flesh in the first century). As history progressed, the same spirit later reared its head through the Immaculate Conception idea. Today, "the spirit of the Antichrist" continues its subtle efforts through various individuals and organizations around the world to entice humanity away from direct faith in the Friend of sinners.

Personally, I think "the spirit of the Antichrist" can also work through popular TV shows, flesh-flaunting models, and hip-hop musicians. The same chapter that talks about the spirit of the Antichrist also says, "They are of *the world*. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We

are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:5-6, emphasis added). Ultimately, *any* spiritual influence that leads away from Jesus Christ comes from the greatest anti-Christ being of all, lucifer himself.

Now let me ask you personally, is your *own flesh* dragging you down? Are you struggling with tobacco, alcohol, pornography, appetite, bitterness, an evil temper, or pride? If so (and who isn’t struggling with at least one sin?), I have good news for you. Not only did God’s Son pay the full price on the cross for all our sins (see 1 Corinthians 15:3) thus enabling Him to forgive us totally, but “Jesus Christ has come in *the flesh*” (1 John 4:2, emphasis added). Yes, He “took” *our flesh* and conquered it! And now, as our High Priest, “He is also able to save to the uttermost [the ‘guttermost,’ as William Booth of the Salvation Army used to say] those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Because Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, He *alone* is our Savior, Intercessor, and Mediator. He is our High Priest—we need no other. “There is one God and *one Mediator* between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5, emphasis added). Our almighty Savior has enough God-power to deliver us from the flesh’s deadly grip, no matter how tightly it holds us. He loves us all, and He now invites Jews, Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Democrats, Republicans, alcoholics, prostitutes, drug addicts, and everyone else to *be direct* and come boldly to His “throne of grace” for undeserved mercy, free forgiveness, and spiritual power to overcome evil.

Even if you feel like Mr. Weakness himself, Jesus Christ is Mr. Strong. His encouraging word is, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Do you trust Him today?

Chapter 19

Battle of the Isms

That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach.

— *Aldous Leonard Huxley* (1894-1963)

As we have already seen, the major Protestant Reformers had one primary passion: To inspire sinners to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31) and to obey God’s Word above the traditions of men (see Mark 7:13). But as they tried to lead their English and European countrymen to the Bible alone, to Christ alone, to His grace alone, and to faith alone, they encountered fierce opposition from the Roman Church hierarchy. As persecution increased, it drove them deeper into their Bibles.

Eventually, they turned to the prophecies. By candlelight they pondered Paul’s prediction about “the falling away,” and a mysterious antichrist who would take his seat in “the temple of God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). With trembling they read about “the beast” (Revelation 13:1) and that “little horn” with “eyes like the eyes of a man,” “a mouth speaking great things,” who would make bloody “war against the saints” (Daniel 7:8,21). Finally, through the Holy Spirit’s illumination, they put the pieces of the puzzle together and came to this solemn conclusion: They had discovered both Jesus Christ *and* antichrist.

“There are two great truths that stand out in the preaching that brought about the Protestant Reformation,” American Bible Commentator, Ralph Woodrow, reminds us, “The just shall live by faith, not by the works of Romanism

and the Papacy is the Antichrist of Scripture.” It was a message for Christ and against Antichrist. The entire Reformation rests upon this twofold testimony.⁷³

John Wycliffe in England, Martin Luther in Germany, John Calvin in France, John Knox in Scotland, Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, and countless others, all preached that the humble Nazarene was *the Christ* and that the proud Roman papacy was *the antichrist* of Scripture. As a result of this high-impact, double-edged message—for Christ and *against* antichrist—the river of history literally changed its course. Hundreds of thousands of people in Europe and England forsook the Roman Church.

H. Grattan Guinness provides this stirring testimony, not only of the effects of the Reformation, but also of one of the mightiest instruments in its accomplishment—the preaching of God’s holy prophecies about the antichrist:

The sixteenth century presents the spectacle of a stormy sunrise after a dismal night. Europe awoke from long sleep of superstition. The dead arose. The witnesses to truth who had been silenced and slain stood up once more and renewed their testimony. The martyred confessors reappeared in the Reformers. There was a cleansing of the spiritual sanctuary. Civil and religious liberty were inaugurated. The discovery of printing and revival of learning accelerated the movement. There was progress everywhere. Columbus struck across the ocean and opened a new hemisphere to view. Rome was shaken on her seven hills, and lost one-half of her dominions. Protestant nations were created. The modern world was called into existence....⁷⁴

From the first, and throughout, that movement was energized and guided by the prophetic word. *Luther* never felt strong and free to war against the papal apostasy till he recognized the pope as antichrist. It was then that he burned the Papal bull. *Knox’s* first sermon, the sermon which launched him on his mission as a reformer, was on the prophecies concerning the Papacy. The reformers embodied their interpretations of prophecy in their confessions of faith, and Calvin in his “Institutes.” All the reformers were *unanimous* in the matter; even the mild and cautious Melancthon was as assured of the antipapal meaning of these prophecies as was Luther himself. And their interpretation of these prophecies determined their reforming action. It led them to protest against Rome with

extraordinary strength and undaunted courage. It nerved them to resist the claims of that apostate Church to the uttermost. It made them martyrs; it sustained them at the stake. And the views of the reformers were shared by thousands, by hundreds of thousands. They were adopted by princes and peoples. Under their influence nations abjured their allegiance to the false priest of Rome. In the reaction which followed, all the powers of hell seemed to be let loose upon the adherents of the Reformation. War followed war; tortures, burnings, and massacres were multiplied. Yet the Reformation stood undefeated and unconquerable. God's word upheld it, and the energies of His almighty Spirit. It was the work of Christ as truly as the founding of the Church eighteen centuries ago; and the revelation of the future which He gave from heaven—that prophetic book with which the Scripture closes—was one of the mightiest instruments employed in its accomplishment.⁷⁵

As you can imagine, papal Rome rose to its own defense in what became known as the Counter Reformation. In 1545, she convened a special council destined to become the heart of her central intelligence operation against Martin Luther and the Protestants. This famous council took place in northern Italy in the city of Trent, and is now known as the Council of Trent. During its many sessions (which continued until 1563), the leaders of the Vatican developed a highly sophisticated “game plan” to counteract the reformers. Up to this point, Rome's main method of attack had been largely frontal—the open burning of Bibles and of heretics. Yet this type of warfare only *confirmed* Protestant convictions that papal Rome was indeed the very beast which would “make war with the saints” (Revelation 13:7). A new tactic was needed, something less obvious. *This is where the Jesuits came in.*

On August 15, 1534, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) founded the Society of Jesus, otherwise known as the Jesuits. “From the very outset of the Reformation, the Jesuit Order hung upon its heels as closely as its shadow.”⁷⁶ This highly secretive and militant Catholic order has a dark history of intrigue and sedition; that's why its members were expelled from Portugal (1759), France (1764), Spain (1767), Naples (1767), and Russia (1820). “Jesuit priests have been known throughout history as the most wicked political arm of the Roman Catholic Church. Edmond Paris, in his scholarly work, *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, reveals and documents much of this information.”⁷⁷

The conflict between Romanism and Protestantism was basic and irreconcilable. The Romanist believed in the authority of the Church; the Protestant, in that of the Bible.

The one yielded his conscience to the priest; the other, to God alone. The Romanist believed in the pope as the visible representative of Christ on earth; the Protestant looked, instead, upon the pope as Antichrist.⁷⁸

At the Council of Trent, papal leaders and Jesuits brainstormed about how to counteract Protestantism and bring defectors back to the mother church. Behind closed doors, they decided this was to be done, not only through the Inquisition and torture, but also through *theology*. What kind of theology? Here's the answer: By reinterpreting the prophecies about "the man of sin," "the little horn," and "the beast"!

Two very intelligent Spanish Jesuits rose to the challenge, Luis de Alcasar (1554-1613) of Seville and Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) of Salamanca. Their strategy was, in a nutshell, one of reapplication and diversion, yet they went in opposite directions. After reading the Bible by candlelight like Martin Luther did, Alcasar decided to apply the Bible's antichrist prophecies to the *ancient past* while Ribera applied them to the *distant future*. "Smart move!" was the response from Rome. By reapplying these prophecies to the past and to the future instead of to the *present*, these two tricky Jesuit scholars sought to divert the prophetic finger light-years away from the Vatican. Their views quickly became official positions within the Roman Church—even though these two views contradicted each other!

Notice these significant quotations:

Accordingly, towards the close of the century of the Reformation, two of her [Rome's] most learned doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavoring by different means to accomplish the same end, namely, that of diverting men's minds from perceiving the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the Papal system. The Jesuit Alcasar devoted himself to bring into prominence the *Preterist* method of interpretation to show the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the Popes ever ruled at Rome, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy. On the other hand the Jesuit Ribera tried to set aside the application of the prophecies to Papal Power by bringing out the *Futurist* system, which asserts that these prophecies refer properly not to the career of the Papacy, but to that of some future supernatural individual, who is yet to appear, and to continue in power for three and a half years.⁷⁹

In 1590, Ribera published a commentary on the Revelation as a counter-interpretation to the prevailing view among Protestants which identified the Papacy with the

Battle of the Isms

Antichrist. Ribera applied all of Revelation but the earliest chapters to the end time rather than to the history of the Church. Antichrist would be a single evil person who would be received by the Jews and would rebuild Jerusalem.⁸⁰

Even the Catholic writer, G.S. Hitchcock, confirmed the origin of these anti-Protestant counter-theories:

The Futurist School, founded by the Jesuit Ribera in 1591, looks for Antichrist, Babylon, and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, at the end of the Christian Dispensation.

The Praeterist School, founded by the Jesuit Alcasar in 1614, explains Revelation by the Fall of Jerusalem or by the fall of Pagan Rome in 410 A.D.⁸¹

It's time to clarify three important isms—preterism, futurism, and historicism—which reflect three competing schools of prophetic interpretation. Such clarification will help you grasp the core issues. I will explain each term broadly, and even mention some names, with this disclaimer: Just because a person is listed in the preterist, futurist, or historicist camp in their interpretation of prophecy doesn't necessarily mean that *every doctrine* they teach is right or wrong. Neither does it mean that *they are necessarily saved or lost*. That's up to Jesus Christ. Persons in each school (both past and present) may teach truth in one area, yet error in another. Also, some may teach wrong things, give them up, and then teach right things. Life is rarely simple. I'm thankful God Himself is the all-knowing Judge of hearts, motives, characters, and destinies, not man. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25) Yes. In the Judgment Day, He'll sort it all out.

PRETERISM

Preterism is what Luis de Alcasar taught. Its prefix, "pre," points back to the past. Preterism sees the majority (or all) of the prophecies found in Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation as having already been fulfilled in either the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. or in the fall of Rome. For preterists, "the end of the world" usually means "the end of the Jewish world." Full-preterists believe even the second coming of Jesus Christ somehow mystically occurred in 70 A.D., whereas partial-preterists still believe in a future, literal return of the Savior. Concerning the core issue—who is the antichrist?—preterists usually see the Roman Emperor Nero as the number-one candidate.⁸² Compared with futurism and historicism, preterism has always been a minority viewpoint within the church, yet it is now making increased inroads

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

into 21st century Christianity.⁸³ Developed in the 1600's by the Jesuit Alcasar into a full anti-Protestant system, preterism strategically removes the "little horn!" stigma away from the Vatican. Jesuit objective achieved.

FUTURISM

Futurism is what Francisco Ribera taught. In contrast to preterism, futurism usually sees the majority of Revelation's prophecies (from chapter 4 onward) as yet on the horizon. Concerning the antichrist, instead of preterism's application to Nero in the past, futurism generally applies the prophecies of "the little horn," "the man of sin," and "the beast" to a single, yet-future Mr. Serpent who will slither into history during time's last sliver (now usually seen as a "seven-year" sliver). Compared to preterism and historicism, futurism has by far the most adherents in the 21st century as the majority report. As with preterism, futurism's net result is that it also significantly wipes away "the beast!" stain from the papacy. Jesuit objective achieved again.

HISTORICISM

In staunch opposition to both preterism and futurism is historicism, which is what the vast majority of Protestants used to teach. In essence, historicism teaches straight-forward, chronological progression by saying that the major prophecies of Daniel and Revelation find fulfillment *throughout Christian history while pointing toward the climactic, visible second coming of our Savior*. Historicism also places special emphasis on the ongoing struggle between Jesus Christ and satan *inside* the Christian church. It takes note of Paul's predictions about "the falling away" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), a subsequent departure from the original faith (see 1 Timothy 4:1), and also discerns prophetic fulfillment in the rise of the Roman church which, although a professedly Christian institution (with real Christians inside it), nevertheless teaches doctrines which divert the mind from simple trust in the all-sufficient merits of the sin-pierced Sufferer. While not wanting to attack honest individuals, historicism still points the prophetic finger at the Vatican by calling it "the little horn," "the man of sin," "the beast," and "Mystery Babylon." Jesuit objective *not* achieved.

Describing historicism as the truest and most reasonable method of interpretation, E.B. Elliott comments on the entire Book of Revelation:

Battle of the Isms

Its subject matter I assume to be *the continuous fortunes of the church and of the world, (that is of the Roman world and Christian church settled therein,) from the time of the revelation being given, or time of St. John's banishment, to the end of all things.*⁸⁴

In another description of the "historic Protestant view of the Apocalypse," Elliott wrote:

[T]hat view regards the prophecy as a pre-figuration of the great events that were to happen in the Church, and the world connected with it, from St. John's time to the consummation; including specially the establishment of Popedom, and the reign of Papal Rome, as in some way or the other the fulfillment of the types of the Apocalyptic Beast and Babylon.⁸⁵

Historicist teachers of the past (and present), far from being aberrant theologians, include some of Christianity's most illustrious scholars: John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Ulrich Zwingli, Robert Barnes, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, Joseph Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, James Aitken Wylie, Merle D'Aubigne, John Foxe, Matthew Henry, Albert Barnes, John Bunyan, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Henry Grattan Guinness, Richard Baxter, Edward Bishop Elliott, Bishop J.C. Ryle, Baron Porcelli, Alan Campbell, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, Richard Bennett, Michael de Semlyen, Timothy Kauffman, Jim Dodson, Reg Barrow, Richard Bacon, Robert J. Nicholson, Dr. Bill Jackson, Rob Mays, Dr. John Robbins, Bill Kalivas, Dr. Val Finnell, Dwight Nelson, Dr. Charles Roberts, Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, Doug Batchelor, Robert Caringola,, Mark Finley, Dr. Ian Paisley, etc. These may not see eye to eye on every doctrinal detail; but they've all discerned the fulfillment of prophecy in church history and especially in the *anti-Christ* nature of the papacy as a colossal institution whose doctrines deny the New Testament message of free salvation by grace through simple faith in the Crucified and Risen One, apart from works.

In the minds of true historicists, sincere preterists and futurists have had at least one of their eyes poked out concerning this unquestionable historical reality. Futurism, which is by far the most popular school today, possesses the incredible ability to sweep 1,500 years of living prophetic history under the proverbial rug by inserting its infamous GAP into the visions of Daniel and Revelation. In a nutshell, the GAP or parenthesis theory teaches that when Jerusalem or Rome fell, prophecy stopped, only to continue again near the time of the rapture. As we have already seen, futurism also stops the clock between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel 9:24-27. Thus Daniel's 70th

week, the ten horns in Daniel 7, the “little horn,” “the beast” and “the man of sin” all have *nothing* to do with Christians today. “It is this GAP theory that permeates Futurism’s interpretation of all apocalyptic prophecy.”⁸⁶ According to most Futurists (and Preterists), how many prophecies were fulfilled during the Dark Ages when literally millions of God’s people were burnt to ashes in wars against the saints? None. Zilch. Zero. Historicists see something terribly wrong with this picture!

At its best, historicism also recognizes that there were indeed prophecies fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem (thus preterists aren’t all wrong), yet it also stands for the reality of future events such as the mark of the beast (see Revelation 14:9-12), the seven last plagues (see Revelation 16), the battle of Armageddon (see Revelation 16:16), the return of Jesus Christ (see Revelation 14:14-16), a 1000-year period (see Revelation 20), the final judgment (see Revelation 20:11-13), the lake of fire (see Revelation 20:15) and the new earth (see Revelation 21:1). Thus futurists have some truth also. Yet again, the hallmark of historicism as a prophetic system is its ability to discern prophecy fulfilled in history—the rise of the papacy, the Christ-centered preaching of the Reformation onward, a final crisis, and the glorious return of our Lord and Savior, with NO GAPS!

While this book cannot attempt a detailed analysis of all of Revelation’s prophecies, let it suffice to say that historicists such as Elliott, Guinness and countless others have interpreted the seals of Revelation 6,⁸⁷ the trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9,⁸⁸ the prophesying of the two witnesses in Revelation 11,⁸⁹ the woman fleeing into the wilderness in Revelation 12,⁹⁰ and “the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6) as referring to real events in church history.

BRIEF HISTORICIST SPOTLIGHT ON REVELATION 9

In the wake of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, Americans are now acutely aware of the frightening power of militant Islam and its Al Qaeda terrorist network. Considering the global influence of “the House of Mohammed” and the increasing likelihood that it will play a major role in end time events (along with the papacy and other anti-Christ entities), this vital question should be asked: Have Protestant historicists discerned the rise of Islamic militancy within the pages of Revelation? While it is outside the scope of this book (which presents simply Historicism 101) to discuss in detail the teachings of Mohammed and of his Qur’an, the facts reveal that historicists *have seen* Islam predicted in various Scriptures—most notably in the 5th and 6th trumpets of Revelation 9!

Revelation 9 portrays “smoke” rising out of “the bottomless pit” (verse 2) and an awful swarm of “locusts” spreading havoc across the earth (verses 3-12). *Apollyon*, Book Five of the futuristic *Left Behind* series,

interprets these locusts literally, as “flying creatures—hideous, ugly, brown and black and yellow flying monsters”⁹¹; “...an amalgam of metal, spiny protrusions, and insect slime.”⁹²

Not so with historicists. While you must do your own careful research, you should be aware that historicists of the past—based on a detailed comparison of biblical imagery with history—have consistently applied the locust-prophecy of Revelation 9 to Muslim armies swarming out of the Arabian Desert.⁹³ Martin Luther wrote: “The second woe is the sixth angel, the shameful Mohammed, with his companions the Saracens, who inflicted a great plague on the Church—with their doctrines and with the sword.”⁹⁴ John Wesley observed, “All this agrees with the slaughter which the Saracens made for a long time after Mahomet’s [Mohammed’s] death.”⁹⁵ Elliott reported that “...most other Protestant interpreters” saw “the 5th and 6th trumpets” as applying to the “Saracens and Turks [Muslim hordes].”⁹⁶ This view was also shared by “Downham, Brightman, Mede, Parker, Durham, Goodwin, Increase Mather, Sherwin, Jurieu, Flemming, Cotton Mather, Daubuz, Sir Isaac Newton, Jonathan Edwards, Bishop Thomas Newton, John Gill, John Brown of Haddington, Winthrop, Thomas Scott, Fuller, James Angell Brown, Alexander Keith, Bickersteth, Louis Gaussen, Albert Barnes”⁹⁷ and countless others.

To His warning about “false prophets” (Matthew 24:24) Jesus added, “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in *the desert!*’ do not go out...” (Matthew 24:26, emphasis added). Along with Luther, many Protestants have seen here a prediction about Mohammed, the false desert prophet, whose Qur’an clearly rejects the full divinity of Jesus Christ and the all-sufficiency of His saving gospel. As we have already seen, John wrote, “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). Mohammed did deny that God is a “Father” who has a “Son.” The Qur’an itself states, “...the Messiah, Isa [Jesus] son of Marium [Mary] is *only an apostle of Allah*...Allah is only one God: far be it from His glory *that He should have a son*.”⁹⁸ Thus Mohammed himself—according to the New Testament—may legitimately be called a “false prophet,” “a deceiver and *an antichrist*” (2 John 7, emphasis added). The same can be said of many other ancient and modern religious teachers who have given birth to supposedly enlightened movements. Historicists, along with many other evangelical Christians today, see Islam as another *end time delusion*.

HISTORICISTS AND REVELATION 12

Unlike preterists or futurists, historicists see “the woman” who “fled into the wilderness” for “1,260 days” (Revelation 12:6,13-14) as applying to “Christ’s Church in the wilderness” which was persecuted during the “1260

years” by “the Romish Church...the harlot-usurper.”⁹⁹ Thus the true Church was smitten by the harlot church described as “drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6). This is Protestantism—true historicism.

Think about it. Preterists say most (if not all) of God’s great prophecies came to a screeching halt almost two thousand years ago. Does this make sense? Why would God inspire such a wonderful Book as “Revelation” and then stop its application around 70 A.D. (or with the fall of Rome), when He knew time would continue much longer? In essence, preterism’s view is: From Nero until now there’s nothing! How about futurism? Is it any more reasonable? Why would God leave His Church “prophecyless” from John’s day until the end times? To futurists, there’s hardly anything from the resurrection to the rapture to be prophetically fulfilled. Futurism leaps over Rome’s demise, the great apostasy, Islamic origins, papal power, the Dark Ages, the Inquisition, and the Reformation almost entirely. Historicism responds, “Wait a minute! This makes no sense.” With Holy Ghost perception, historicists not only see mighty prophecies fulfilled throughout church history—in papal and Islamic scourges—but they label both preterism and futurism in their origins as rooted in the counter-Reformation and in Jesuit ingenuity—the activity of antichrist.

As to *the* prophetic antichrist itself—*the* Beast of prophecy—historicism’s reason for pinpointing papal Rome and exposing its organization has nothing to do with malice or “hate crimes” against human beings, but simply because (quoting Elliott) the antichrist of prophecy “in one way or other, supersedes Christ himself, in his character of fallen man’s only prophet, priest, mediator, atonement, and righteousness: thereby teaching apostasy from the Head, and destroying the very essence of the gospel.”¹⁰⁰ Paul asked some of his early converts who were being subtly led astray from Jesus, “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16) Sometimes truth cuts like a physician’s knife—but its goal is healing, salvation, and peace through the soothing grace of Jesus Christ.

To enter the world of historicism and to read various articles about the seals, trumpets, Islam, and the papal power, visit www.historicist.com, www.historicism.net, or the author’s own web site, www.endtimeinsights.com. To see a list of books in all three categories—preterist, futurist, and historicist—check out www.armageddonbooks.com. At this point it must be obvious where this writer stands. After years of research (and what I believe to be the gracious guidance of God), I am fully persuaded that historicism most accurately discerns Heaven’s “sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19 KJV) in the events of the past, throughout history, and in the approaching climax. In addition, I am also convinced that the historicist perspective is invaluable

to correctly understand and prepare for the future. As Winston Churchill once said, "The farther backward we look the farther forward we can see."

I will conclude this chapter with Guinness and Elliott's classic summaries of the "Battle of the Isms" that still rages in our 21st-century world of email, Medicare, high-tech laser surgery, space shuttles, *Left Behind* novels, and *end time delusions*:

[The] futurist system of interpreting the prophecies is now held, strange to say, by many Protestants, but it was first invented by the Jesuit Ribera, at the end of the sixteenth century, to relieve the papacy from the terrible stigma cast upon it by the Protestant interpretation. This interpretation was so evidently the true and intended one that the adherents of the Papacy felt its edge must, at any cost, be turned or blunted. If the Papacy were the predicted antichrist, as Protestants asserted, then there was an end to the question, and separation from it was an imperative duty.

There were only two alternatives. If the antichrist were not a present power, he must either be a past or a future one. Some writers asserted that the predictions pointed back to Nero. This did not take into account the obvious fact that the antichristian power predicted was to succeed the fall of the Caesars, and develop among the Gothic nations. The other alternative became therefore the popular one with the Papists. *Antichrist was future*, so Ribera and Bossuet and others taught. An individual man was intended, not a dynasty; the duration of his power would not be for twelve and a half centuries, but only three and a half years; he would be an open foe of Christ, not a false friend; he would...sit in the Jewish temple. Speculation about the future took place of study of the past and present, and careful comparison of the facts of history with the predictions of prophecy. This related, so it was asserted, not to the main course of the history of the Church, but only to the few closing years of her history. The Papal head of the Church of Rome was not the power delineated by Daniel and St. John. Accurately as it answered to the description, it was not the criminal indicated. It must be allowed to go free, and the detective must look out for another man, who was sure to turn up by and by...

It is held by many that the *historic* school of interpretation is represented only by *a small modern section of the Church*. We shall show that *it has existed from the beginning*,

and includes the *larger part* of the greatest and best teachers of the church for 1800 years. We shall show that the *Fathers* of the Church belonged to it, that the *confessors*, *reformers*, and *martyrs* belonged to it, and that it included a vast multitude of erudite expositors of later times. We shall show that all these have held to the *central truth* that prophecy *faithfully mirrors the Church's history as a whole, and not merely a commencing or closing fragment of that history...*

We shall show that the *futurist school of interpretation, on the contrary, is chiefly represented by teachers belonging to the Church of Rome; that the Popes, cardinals, bishops, and priests of that apostate Church are all futurists, and that the futurist interpretation is one of the chief pillars of Romanism...*

Is this the position you adopt? Is this the conclusion you defend? Are these the views you advocate? You, a Protestant, and this after all that has been written upon the subject, and all the blaze of light which history and experience have poured upon it? If it is, *look that you be not found fighting against the truth*, warring against the Word of God, resisting the testimony of the prophetic Spirit; hindering the work of the Reformation, promoting the progress of the apostasy, opposing Christ, and helping antichrist.¹⁰¹

Now the words of Elliott:

In conclusion, the readers of this Historic Sketch will see that there are but *three grand Schemes of Apocalyptic Interpretation* that can be considered as standing up face to face against each other...The 1st is that of the *Praeterists*; respecting the subject of prophecy, except in its two or three last chapters [of Revelation], to the catastrophes of the Jewish nation and old Roman Empire...which Scheme, originally propounded, as we saw, by the Jesuit Alcasar, and then adopted by Grotius...by Professor Moses Stuart in the United States of America, and by disciples in the German School in England...

The 2nd is the *Futurist Scheme*; making the whole of the Apocalyptic Prophecy, (excepting perhaps the primary Vision and the Letters to the Seven Churches,) to relate to things now future, viz. the things concerning Christ's second Advent: a Scheme first set forth, [as] we saw, by the Jesuit Ribera, at the end of the 16th century; and which in its main

principle has been urged alike by Dr. S.R. Maitland, Mr. Burgh, the Oxford Tractator on Antichrist [John Henry Newman], and others, in our own times and era, not without considerable success...

The 3rd is what we may call emphatically the *Protestant continuous Historic Scheme of Interpretation*; that which regards the Apocalypse as a pre-figuration in detail of the chief events affecting the Church and Christendom, whether secular or ecclesiastical, from St. John's time to the consummation:—a Scheme which, in regard of its particular application of the symbols of Babylon and the Beast to Papal Rome and Popedom, was early embraced, as we saw, by the Waldenses, Wickliffites, and Hussites; then adopted with fuller light by the chief reformers, German, Swiss, French and English, of the 16th century; and transmitted downwards uninterruptedly, even to the present time.

It is the last of which [historicism] I embrace for my own part with a full and ever strengthening conviction of its truth.¹⁰²

In the language of Rush Limbaugh listeners who often call his radio program to agree with his pronouncements, I emphatically say, "Ditto."

Chapter 20

The Path of the Virus

Oh, how powerfully the magnet of illusion attracts.

— *Karl Gutzkow* (1811-1878)

Code Red, Melissa, Sircam, Nimba, Loveletter, Klez, Mydoom—what do they all have in common? They're computer viruses that can turn one's beloved laptop or PC into a terribly malfunctioning machine that becomes good for nothing. Just as Osama bin Laden became public enemy number one to the United States of America after September 11, 2001, even so has the computer virus become public enemy number one to all who sit before a monitor.

Computer viruses are very sophisticated and destructive software programs designed by evil people who take pleasure in causing chaos and hurting others. Tiny technical terrorists, they can slip unnoticed into your computer and ruin everything. The most common way for a virus to get inside is via an attachment connected to an apparently friendly email. "Enjoy my family photos!" the subject line might say. As soon as you click on the attachment to view the pictures, many times it's too late. Once the virus is inside your computer it quickly multiplies itself like a malicious cancer cell. Data can be removed, files deleted, and everything can get messed up. Eventually your computer can totally crash; and if that happens, you may lose everything permanently. It might be time for a new computer.

This chapter is about prophecy, not computers, nevertheless we can learn many spiritual lessons from the virus. As we have plainly seen, the Protestant reformers held two core beliefs: 1) Salvation is through the all-sufficient merits of Jesus Christ alone; and 2) Papal Rome is the antichrist of Scripture. Their prophetic perspective was called historicism. In the lan-

guage of computers, we might say that historicism was their basic prophetic operating system, much like Windows 2000 and Windows XP are now the main operating systems for most Microsoft-based computers. Even though computer programs and systems become quickly outdated because of upgrades to better versions, it is an amazing fact that historicism remained intact as the primary operating system of most Protestant churches for almost 400 years. Have you heard the expression, “I’d rather fight than switch”? That’s how most Protestants felt about historicism from the 1500’s all the way down to the early 20th century.

But in our 21st century, historicism has faded and futurism is in as the majority report. What happened? How did the seismic shift take place? The story is both fascinating and tragic. Here are the highlights. We have already seen that at the Council of Trent the Roman Church reacted against the Reformation by commissioning members of the Jesuit Order to counteract historicism. In a short time, Alcasar and Ribera put forth their anti-Protestant counter-theories. In this chapter, the inroads of Ribera’s influence into Protestantism will be traced because, although Alcasar’s preterism is now making renewed progress into churches, Ribera’s teaching is overwhelmingly dominant.

Shortly after the Council of Trent, with the blessing of the Pope, Francisco Ribera master-minded a virus, the virus of futurism. For the next 300 years his Jesuit cohorts did their best to insert this virus into Protestant churches, especially through educational processes connected with the universities of Europe, but they failed. Protestants were too smart and they consistently blocked futurism’s entrance. In addition to effective Holy Ghost “fire wall” and virus protection, they basically said, “Sorry. We don’t open foreign attachments!”

But in the 1800’s they dropped their guard.

The Futurism of Ribera never posed a positive threat to the Protestants for three centuries. It was virtually confined to the Roman Church. But early in the nineteenth century it sprang forth with vehemence and latched on to Protestants of the Established Church of England.¹⁰³

Dr. Samuel Roffey Maitland (1792-1866), a British lawyer and Bible scholar, became a librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth. It is likely that one day he discovered Ribera’s commentary in the library. In any event, in 1826 he published a widely read book attacking the Reformation and supporting the Jesuit idea of a future Mr. Antichrist person. For the next ten years, in tract after tract, he continued his anti-Reformation rhetoric. In the language of computers, inside Mr. Maitland’s “Readme file,” the virus lurked.

The Path of the Virus

After Dr. Maitland came James H. Todd, professor of Hebrew at the University of Dublin. Giving credit to Maitland, Todd published his own futuristic pamphlets and books. Commenting on the views of Maitland and another so-called Protestant (Mr. Burgh), E.B. Elliott reported how these “two Protestant writers excus[ed] the Papacy from any concern with the predicted antichristian apostasy.”¹⁰⁴

Next player: John Henry Newman (1801-1890), a member of the Church of England and a leader of the famous Oxford movement (1833-1845). In 1850, Newman wrote his “Letter on Anglican Difficulties” blatantly revealing that one of the goals of the movement was to lead “the various English denominations and parties” back to Rome. The “Oxford Tracts” gave fresh weight to “anti-Protestant opinions,” gave “assistance [to] the laborers of the futurist school,” worked to “unprotestantize the Church of England” and “set aside all application to the Roman Papacy of the fearful prophecies respecting Antichrist.”¹⁰⁵ After publishing his own pamphlet about a future Mr. Sinister, Newman himself became a Catholic, and later a highly honored cardinal. Through the combined influences of Maitland, Todd, Burgh, Newman, and others, a definite “Romeward movement [had arisen] destined to sweep away the old Protestant landmarks, as with a flood.”¹⁰⁶ *The virus was sneaking in.*

Then came the Scottish Presbyterian minister Edward Irving (1792-1834) who pastored the large Chalcedonian Chapel in London with over 1,000 members. Cofounder of The Society for the Investigation of Prophecy, Irving eventually accepted the one-man antichrist idea of Newman, Burgh, Todd, Maitland, Bellarmine, and Ribera, yet he went a step further. Somewhere around 1830, Edward Irving began to teach the novel idea of a two-phase return of Christ, the first phase being *a secret rapture before the rise of antichrist*.¹⁰⁷ Where he got this concept is a matter of hot dispute. Christian journalist Dave MacPherson has researched this matter for many years. In his investigative books—*The Rapture Plot* and *The Incredible Cover-Up*—Mr. MacPherson suggests Irving snatched it from a young Scottish girl named Margaret MacDonald who first “saw” it during an ecstatic “revelation.”¹⁰⁸ Regardless of where Irving got it, the fact is, he taught it!

In the midst of this growing anti-Protestant climate in England came the man we talked about in Chapter 6 of this book, John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). A brilliant lawyer, pastor, and theologian, Darby wrote more than 53 books on Bible subjects. On the positive side, he staunchly defended the infallibility of the Scriptures against British liberalism, and soon became one of the leaders of an English group called the Plymouth Brethren. Darby’s contribution to the development of evangelical theology has been so great he has been called, The Father of Modern Dispensationalism. Yet John Nelson Darby, like Edward Irving, not only

became a champion for the pre-tribulation rapture idea (some say he grabbed it from Irving, others say he found it on his own), but also of a future antichrist who appears only after we disappear. Both teachings—a secret rapture and a future Mr. Ghastly—are now dispensational pillars.

Reporting on Irving and Darby's rapture-then-antichrist views, MacPherson wrote:

Into this [futurist] system both Darby and Irving had injected a further refinement, based upon a declared attempt to reconcile the different parts of the New Testament which they considered to be relevant. In their view, the Second Advent would take place in two stages: first, there would be a quiet appearance—the “presence”—of Christ, when all true Christians, the true Church, would be removed from the earth. This was the “rapture of the saints.” Only then, when the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit in His own people had been removed from the world scene, would Antichrist arise. His rule would be brought to an end by the second stage of the Advent—the public “appearing” of Christ in glory.¹⁰⁹

Concerning the highly probable link to Margaret MacDonald, MacPherson testified:

Since Margaret MacDonald was the first person to teach a coming of Christ that would precede the days of Antichrist, it necessarily follows that Darby—back to whom pre-tribism can easily be traced—was at least the second or third or even farther down the line. To date no solid evidence has been found that proves that anyone other than this young Scottish lassie was the first person to teach a future coming of Christ before the days of Antichrist. Before 1830 Christians had always believed in a single future coming, that the catching up of 1 Thess. 4 will take place after the Great Tribulation of Matthew 24 at the glorious coming of the Son of man when He shall send His angels to gather together all of His elect.

Whether she realized it or not, Margaret did her part to pave the way for the doctrine that would demand separate waiting rooms at the end of this age—one for the church and another one for Israel!

Finally, to charge that Darby could never have been influenced by Margaret's pre-Antichrist rapture, with the

knowledge of her revelation and his whereabouts in 1830 now out in the open, is practically the same as saying that a man found with a smoking revolver in hand and standing over a freshly killed victim in the middle of a lonely desert could not possibly be suspect!¹¹⁰

In light of MacPherson's careful research, it seems Margaret MacDonald's pre-Antichrist "rapture revelation" is the real smoking gun behind Darby's theology. Regardless, the essential pre-tribulationism of Margaret's doctrine soon became a weapon of mass deception in the hands of Darby and his dispensationalist followers.

Dispensationalism is the theory that God deals with mankind in distinct periods or ages. According to Darby, we're now in the "Church Age" which will conclude with the rapture. Then Daniel's 70th week will supposedly kick in during which the antichrist will attack unfortunate Jews. Thus, in spite of the positive features of his ministry, Darby followed Irving (and probably Margaret), Newman, Todd, Burgh, Maitland, and Ribera *by inserting the virus of futurism into his theology, now a pre-tribulation rapture theology*. This created a link between John Nelson Darby, the father of modern dispensationalism, and Francisco Ribera, the ancient Jesuit father of futurism. Darby visited America six times from 1859 to 1874, preaching in all its major cities. As American Protestants clicked "open" and received his sermons, they had no idea the virus was sneaking in, but that's what happened. Tragically, the historicism their forefathers were burnt for was being systematically dragged toward the "recycle bin," a computer term for the trash can.

One of the most important figures in this whole drama is Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921), a Kansas lawyer who was greatly influenced by the writings of Darby. In 1909, Scofield published the first edition of his famous Scofield Reference Bible. In the early 1900's, this Bible became so popular in American Protestant Bible schools that literally millions of copies were printed. What made Scofield's Bible so energizing was not so much the Scripture itself, but his footnotes. *Yet those footnotes contained the virus*. Anti-Reformation interpretations were inserted that pointed the finger away from papal Rome and toward a future antichrist. As 20th-century American Protestants "downloaded" Scofield's notes into their unsuspecting brains, the virus attacked file after file linked to historicism, clicking "delete."

The Moody Bible Institute and the Dallas Theological Seminary have strongly supported the teachings of John Nelson Darby. Thus these firmly Christian institutions, in spite of the good they have done and continue to do, have unknowingly enabled the virus to do what viruses do best, "multiply rapidly."

Then in the 1970's, Pastor Hal Lindsey, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, released his blockbuster book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. This 177-page, easy-to-read volume brought futurism to the masses of American Christianity, and beyond. *The New York Times* labeled it, "The number one best-seller of the decade." Over 30 million copies have been sold, and it has been translated into over 30 languages. Through *The Late Great Planet Earth*, the Jesuit virus of futurism made incredible progress in its ancient intelligence strategy to replace historicism as the prophetic operating system of the Protestant world.

Enter *Left Behind*. In the 1990's, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins took the future Mr. Evil idea of Hal Lindsey, Scofield, Darby, Irving, Newman, Todd, Maitland, and the Jesuit Ribera, and turned it into "The most successful Christian-fiction series ever" (*Publishers Weekly*). Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, was largely theological, while *Left Behind* is a fast-moving sequence of highly imaginative novels "overflowing with suspense, action, and adventure," a "Christian thriller," with a "label its creators could never have predicted: blockbuster success" (*Entertainment Weekly*). The novels have reached the bestseller lists of *New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and have even resulted in an interview of LaHaye and Jenkins on *Larry King Live*. *Left Behind* books are now available at Wal-Mart, Costco, Target, airports, and inside countless stores. The central figure of this blockbuster series is Nicolae Carpathia, representing Mr. Nightmare himself, the after-the-rapture antichrist. The result? Through *Left Behind*, the virus of futurism has multiplied exponentially and practically taken over the prophecy-minded Christian world. Most Christians expect a future antichrist, which means Protestantism's original operating system has crashed!

The proper eschatological term for the view most taught today is Futurism which fuels the confusion of Dispensationalism. The futuristic school of Bible prophecy came from the Roman Catholic Church, specifically her Jesuit theologians. However the alternative has been believed for centuries. It is known as Historicism.¹¹¹

Futurism has crept into the Protestant Church....¹¹²

It is a matter for deep regret that those who hold and advocate the Futurist system at the present day, Protestants as they are for the most part, are thus really playing into the hands of Rome, and helping to screen the Papacy from detection as the Antichrist.¹¹³

The Path of the Virus

I will emphasize a fundamental truth once more; the Futurist school of Bible prophecy was created for one reason, and one reason only; *to counter the Protestant Reformation!*¹¹⁴

Tragically, historicism has been knocked down by a powerful punch, but let me clarify something—it's not entirely out of the boxing ring. Mark Twain once said, "Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." Though not as popular as it once was, historicism lives. God's truth never dies.

Have no fear. Jesus Christ burst forth from a clammy grave, and so will solidly biblical, historical, Protestant truth before Earth's final harvest (read carefully Revelation 14:6-14; 18:1). Nothing takes God by surprise. In "the time of the end...knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4). Truth will conquer all alien forces—at least inside the minds of those who are willing to see it.

Before closing this chapter, I want to share one more lesson about the virus. Only this time we will shift gears—the lesson is not about a bad virus, but a good one. I don't watch many movies, but there's one that has become an amazing parable to me. *Independence Day*, released near the 4th of July in 1996. It was a PG-13, sci-fi thriller about a massive fleet of nasty aliens who came to Earth with a plot to take over the world on the very day of America's freedom celebration. While the alien mother ship floated high above Earth's atmosphere, deadly daughter ships caused havoc across the globe. The President of the United States, his team of intelligence officers, and the combined efforts of the army, navy, and air force were powerless to stop the carnage. With hope fading fast, humanity's future looked bleak.

Until the Virus Plan. Two U.S. citizens, one an armed forces pilot (Will Smith), the other a Jewish computer expert (Jeff Goldblum), teamed up to carry out an almost impossible mission to save the world. The hi-tech guru believed that if a certain computer virus could somehow be uploaded from his laptop into the alien mother ship's master control center, this could disable its previously impenetrable protective shield. Then "Pow!" the U.S. could obliterate it with a nuclear missile.

The Americans had previously taken over one alien spacecraft, which the pilot said he could fly. Hoping against hope, the two patriots took off, approached the mother ship, and then tricked it into momentarily letting down its defense shield which allowed the duo to slip into its inner recesses. Upon reaching the alien core, they uploaded the virus. It worked. With only a few seconds left to launch their own missile (timed to explode shortly) and maneuver their craft out, the heroes just barely managed to escape before the mother ship exploded. The daughter ships then lost their shields, and were each soon blown to bits by other missiles launched from around the world. It all happened on the 4th of July, which became America's second

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

Independence Day. But this time it was freedom from deadly aliens, thanks to two brave heroes, *and the good virus*.

From what I know about preterism and futurism I can't help thinking of them as alien forces seeking to control the prophecy-minded Christian world. That's what they are: aliens to the true meaning of Scripture. As in *Independence Day*, these aliens are powerful, and their protective shields seem impenetrable. *Left Behind* seems like the mother ship.

In the light of history, the Protestant Reformation, and a correct understanding of the Bible's antichrist prophecies, in this sense only, *historicism is the good virus*. Who is bold enough to upload the truth? Dear friend, an essential component of this good virus—the biblical truth about the antichrist—when rightly understood, will blow both preterism and futurism into a million pieces. It may be painful, but it needs to happen for the sake of Christians everywhere. We need another Independence Day.

Truth may be in the minority, but don't forget, its power is limitless. In the 1500's, it started with individuals like Martin Luther. He studied the Word of God and then inserted its high-voltage force into European Christianity. Through the Holy Spirit's power, Luther and his associates helped dissipate the Dark Ages. The Reformation shook the world.

In the 21st century, God again wants to shake the world (see Revelation 18:1).

He's looking for heroes to upload His good virus.

Chapter 21

Faith of our Fathers

Protestants there are, but Protestantism is no more.

—Alexander Vinet (1797-1847)

“The gloves are off, and the battle is launched between the forces of good and evil for the very souls of men and women around the globe,” so says *Left Behind’s* eighth book, *The Mark—The Beast Rules The World* (inside cover). Unfortunately, *Left Behind’s* entire drama places the rise of the beast itself, the enforcement of its deadly mark, and the final end time “battle between the forces of good and evil” only after the rapture. It’s no secret that this is also the teaching of these much-respected prophecy teachers: Dr. John Walvoord, Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, John Hagee, Arno Froese, Peter Lalonde, Chuck Smith and Grant Jeffrey. With the utmost fairness, and without judging anyone’s heart or destiny, it is proper to place these men in the “futurist” camp. On the “preterist” side today (either “partial” or “full”) we have such influential leaders as Gary DeMar, Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., David Chilton, R.C. Sproul, Max King, James Stuart Russell, Samuel M. Frost, and John Noe. To these scholars (generally speaking), the beast is not on the horizon, *he’s dead*. When Nero breathed his last foul breath and gave up the ghost—so much for antichrist. It is the conviction of this writer that both preterists and futurists have unknowingly *left behind* some of the Bible’s most solemn truths.

Through their acceptance of futurist and preterist viewpoints about antichrist—in contrast to the teachings of John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, Calvin’s Institutes, the original Westminster confessions, the translators of the King James Bible, Sir Isaac Newton, J.A. Wylie, Merle D’Aubigne, H. Grattan Guinness, John Wesley, Matthew Henry, Albert

Barnes, John Bunyan, Charles H. Spurgeon, E.B. Elliott, Jonathan Edwards, Bishop J.C. Ryle, Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones, Dr. Ian Paisley, Doug Batchelor, Alan Campbell, Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, Mrs. M. McKinstry, Deroy L. Hanson, Dr. Val Finnell, Mark Finley, Robert Caringola, and countless other historic Protestants—*these preterists and futurists don't know who the real beast is*. Yet our eyes have been opened. We know the truth. It won't be easy, but with the Bible in our hands and God's love in our hearts we must stand up for "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1) and solid prophetic truth, no matter what the cost. It is my hope and prayer that God will impress the minds of many well-known TV evangelists, radio hosts, seminary professors, best-selling authors, and ministry leaders (futurist, preterist, Protestant, and Catholic) to reconsider their positions. Hopefully, like noble ships with a new command from their captain, they will yet change their course.

As we near the end of this *Antichrist Delusions* section, I want to focus on a lesson of faith and courage—of standing up for Jesus and His prophetic truth. Turning away from futurist fiction with its imaginary Nicolae, and also the preterist persuasion of a long-buried antichrist, we are about to look at the real account of a man who battled the beast in history. This conflict took place in the 1400's, during the time of the famous Roman Catholic Council of Constance, in Constance, Germany. The council met November 1, 1414 and continued until April 22, 1418.

"The total number of the clergy alone present at the council, though perhaps not all of them all the time, was four patriarchs, twenty-nine cardinals, thirty-three archbishops, one hundred and fifty bishops, one hundred and thirty-four abbots, two hundred and fifty doctors, and lesser clergy, amounting to eighteen thousand. With the emperor and his train, kings, dukes, lords, and other nobles, the members were ordinarily fifty thousand. At certain periods of the conference there were as many as one hundred thousand present. Thirty thousand horses were fed, and thirty thousand beds were provided by the city."¹⁵

In our modern terminology we would have said, "This is a big event. Parking is limited."

The Council of Constance condemned the writings of John Wycliffe of England, who lived in the 1300's. Wycliffe taught at Oxford University and has been called, "The Morning Star of the Reformation." The movie, *John Wycliffe—The Morning Star*, was awarded the title of Best Film from the Christian Film Distributor's Association. Before Martin Luther, John Wycliffe protested against Rome, was the first to translate the Bible from Latin into English, taught salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone, placed the

Word of God above popes and kings, and openly declared *papal Rome to be the great antichrist of prophecy*. The Council of Constance—more than forty years after Wycliffe's death—decreed that his decaying bones should be dug out of his grave and publicly burned. His ashes were triumphantly thrown into a nearby brook. "This brook," says an old writer, "hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblems of his doctrine, which now is dispersed the world over."¹¹⁶

John Huss of Bohemia read the writings of John Wycliffe and continued many of his reforms. After denouncing Wycliffe, the Council of Constance summoned John Huss also, condemning him to the flames. Jerome of Prague was a good friend of Huss, and in April of 1415, before the martyrdom of Huss, Jerome arrived at Constance, hoping to help his friend. Unfortunately, he was seized by his enemies, cruelly dragged through the streets in chains, and promptly thrown into a dark, miserable, rat-infested dungeon. For almost a year, he was transferred from cell to cell. At last he was brought before the council. *Fox's Book of Martyrs* declares that before that vast assembly these false charges were read against him: "1. He was a derider of the papal dignity. 2. An opposer of the pope. 3. An enemy to the cardinals. 4. A persecutor of the prelates. 5. A hater of the Christian religion."¹¹⁷ Jerome was commanded to accept Romanism or be consumed at the stake.

Weakened by almost a year of horrible treatment, Jerome's faith wavered, and he agreed in some measure to submit to Rome. But after he was returned to his rat-infested cell, he saw more clearly what he had done. He thought about his friend John Huss, who perished in the flames. He thought about Jesus Christ, his Savior, whom he had pledged to serve and who, out of love for Jerome's lost soul, had endured the full justice of God's holy wrath against sin and the incomprehensible pain of separation from His Father. Before his cowardly decision to compromise, Jerome had found comfort amid his sufferings in the assurance of Heaven's favor; but now remorse and doubts tortured his soul. He knew other compromises must be made before he would be released, which could only end in his complete apostasy from God's truth. As he looked into the whiskered faces of rats and felt cockroaches crawling around his toes, Jerome made his decision. He would no longer deny his Lord.

Jerome was brought again before the council, but this time he was determined to boldly confess his faith and to follow his friend John Huss to the flames. He publicly renounced his former denial and demanded, as a dying man, an opportunity to make his defense. "You have held me shut up three hundred and forty days in a frightful prison," he protested, "in the midst of filth, noisomeness, stench, and the utmost want of everything; you then bring me out before you, and lending an ear to my mortal enemies, you refuse to hear me...If you be really wise men and the lights of the world, take care

not to sin against justice. As for me, I am only a feeble mortal; my life is but of little importance.”¹¹⁸ His request was finally granted. In the presence of Europe’s judges, priests, and nobles, Jerome knelt down and prayed for the Holy Ghost to take control.

Jerome then gave an uncompromising defense in behalf of truth. Referring to John Huss, he firmly declared, “I knew him from his childhood. He was a most excellent man, just and holy; he was condemned, notwithstanding his innocence...I also am ready to die. I will not recoil before the torments that are prepared for me by my enemies and false witnesses, who will one day have to render an account of their impostures before the great God, whom nothing can deceive...Of all the sins that I have committed since my youth, none weigh so heavily on my mind, and cause me such remorse, as that which I committed in this fatal place, when I approved of the iniquitous sentence rendered against Wycliffe, and against the holy martyr, John Huss, my master and my friend. Yes! I confess it from my heart, and declare with horror that I disgracefully quailed when, through a dread of death, I condemned their doctrines. I therefore supplicate...Almighty God to pardon me my sins, and this one in particular, the most heinous of all.” Raising a bony finger toward his judges, he declared, “You condemned Wycliffe and John Huss...The things which they affirmed, and which are irrefutable, I also think and declare, like them.”¹¹⁹

His hearers were stunned! “Shut him up!” screamed his enemies. “What need have we of further proof? We behold with our own eyes the most obstinate of heretics!” Yet Jerome stood unmoved, like a mighty rock amidst a hurricane. He thundered back, “What! Do you suppose I fear to die? You have held me in a frightful dungeon, more horrible than death itself. You have treated me more cruelly than a Turk, Jew, or pagan, and my flesh has literally rotted off my bones alive, and yet I make no complaint, for lamentation ill becomes a man of heart and spirit; but I cannot but express my astonishment at such great barbarity toward a Christian.”¹²⁰ He was seized by his guards and hurried back to the rats, beetles, and vermin.

Jerome was again visited in his dingy cell and given one last chance to repent. “Prove to me from the Holy Writings that I am in error!” he responded. “The Holy Writings!” said one of his tempters. “Is everything to be judged by them? Who can understand them until the church has interpreted them?” Jerome replied, “Are the traditions of men more worthy of faith than the gospel of our Savior?” “Heretic!” spat back his accuser, “I repent having pleaded so long with you. I see you are urged on by the devil.”¹²¹ Thus Jerome, even though he was accused of being inspired by satan, refused to bow down to the traditions of mere mortals. “The Bible and the Bible only,” was his motto. This lesson is for us. We also may be accused of being lucifer-led when we turn from preterist persuasions, futur-

Faith of Our Fathers

ist fables, and bestselling ideas. Nevertheless, with love in our hearts we should stick to “the Holy Writings,” no matter what the cost.

Sentence was passed, and Jerome was led out to the very same spot where John Huss had yielded up his life. He went singing on his way, his face lighted up with joy and peace. His gaze was fixed upon Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life, so why should he fear Dr. Death? Arriving at the place of execution, Jerome once more knelt down to say a heartfelt prayer. He was tied to a stake as branches of wood were piled around his feet. When the executioner stepped up to light the fire, this holy martyr exclaimed, “Come here, and kindle it before my eyes; for if I had been afraid of it, I had not come to this place.”¹²² As the flames began to rise, Jerome prayed again. His last words were, “Lord, Almighty Father...have pity on me, and pardon my sins; for Thou knowest I have always loved *Thy truth*.”¹²³

Do we love truth above tradition? Are we willing to stand up for Jesus Christ, the Author of Truth, and for the Holy Bible, no matter what the price may be? Dear reader, Jesus loves you personally. He has a special place in His heart for you and your family. He gave Jerome strength to stand up for what he knew to be right, and He will do the same for us. There is forgiveness only through the blood of the Lamb. Satan and mixed-up men may kill the body, but they can’t harm the soul (see Matthew 10:28). Though the beast makes “war with the saints and overcomes them” on Earth (Revelation 13:7), in Heaven’s eyes “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, [as] they did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11).

In our modern world of Delta flights, plasma screen TVs, and heavily-traded mutual funds, may our hopes still echo the words of the classic 19th-century hymn, “Faith of Our Fathers”:

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
Were still in heart and conscience free;
How sweet would be their children’s fate,
If they like them, could die for thee!
Faith of our fathers! Holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Frederick W. Faber, 1849 (1814-1863)

◆ SECTION 4 ◆

ISRAEL DELUSIONS



Chapter 22

All Eyes on Israel

All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

— Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

After much hype, when the world's clocks finally ticked over to 12:01 a.m. and the dreaded year 2000 A.D., it became obvious that Y2K doomsday prophecies had failed. Earnest predictions about massive computer chaos, power disruptions, bank failures, stock markets crashing, nuclear missiles launching, and the resulting global terror, all proved to be false prophecies.

Is it possible that certain popular end time predictions about Israel will also fail?

On that same New Year's Eve in 1999, Israeli police assembled in record numbers inside Jerusalem. They were determined to keep the peace in the midst of growing concerns about terrorism and the possible explosive actions of religious fanatics. Thousands of pilgrims and worshippers were crowding toward the Temple Mount and the Wailing Wall as news reporters from around the globe swarmed throughout the City of David. With the approach of the long expected new millennium, apocalyptic interest was at its height. Countless Christians were thinking, *If the arrival of the year 2000 has anything to do with prophecy and the end of the world, then surely Jerusalem is the place to watch!*

Yet nothing happened.

Why are the eyes of so many people fixed upon Jerusalem? There are many reasons, yet one big one is clear. The fact is, literally millions of Christians who study prophecy firmly believe Planet Earth's final events will

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

one day swirl around the Middle East, Jerusalem, and the Jews. According to what is commonly understood, what happens to the modern nation of Israel is definitely connected with an upcoming bloody battle of Armageddon, the return of Jesus Christ, and the end of the age.

Here's just a few examples illustrating this current Israel-and-the-end connection:

1. The Christian movie, *The Omega Code* (1999), which grossed \$2.4 million in its opening weekend, firmly connects the Bible's end time prophecies with a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.
2. *Left Behind: The Movie* (2001) also connects Jerusalem with end-of-the-world events. It opens with a surprise Russian attack on Israel.
3. The September 1, 1999 issue of *Newsweek*, focusing on millennial issues and Bible prophecy, reported, "...the predominant issue in Christian prophecy is the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple."¹²⁴ "... for true believers, ground zero for apocalyptic zealotry remains the city of Jerusalem."¹²⁵
4. *Time* magazine, July 1, 2002, commenting on apocalyptic theories reported: "Israel [is]...the land where events must unfold in a specific way for Jesus to return."¹²⁶
5. *Newsweek*, June 2, 2003: "Many...evangelicals believe that Jesus won't return until the Jewish state is fully re-established, including Jerusalem."¹²⁷

The list is endless...

It may sound like blasphemy to some, but the purpose of this highly explosive section of *End Time Delusions* is to reexamine the accuracy of these current teachings, especially in the light of Jesus Christ, of the New Testament, and the Book of Revelation.

In our journey, we will answer these core questions: What did the Master mean when He said of Nathaniel, "Behold, an *Israelite indeed*, in whom is no deceit!" (John 1:47, emphasis added)? What did Paul have in mind when he wrote, "They are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Romans 9:6)? Why does the New Testament refer to *two Israels*—an "Israel after the flesh" (1 Corinthians 10:18) and "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:14-16) in Jesus Christ? Finally, what is the true meaning of Revelation's mysterious prophecies about 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel, Mystery Babylon, the

Euphrates River running dry, and Armageddon, “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 7:4; 16:13-16; 17:5)?

Before we go any further, I want to remind you what I revealed in the Preface of this book. *I’m Jewish*, and I love Jewish people. Many of my relatives are Jewish, but sadly, most do not believe the good news of Jesus Christ. They don’t realize Jesus Himself lived a perfect Jewish life and that His death fulfilled ancient Hebrew prophecies about the birth, sinless life, suffering, death, and resurrection of a Jewish Messiah (see Micah 5:2 and Isaiah 53). Like Paul, “my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (Romans 10:1).

But here’s the key. In the midst of my love for Jewish people and Israel, I am also a student of prophecy, and in my research, I have come to a frightening conclusion. In the midst of popular prophetic theories about the modern Israeli nation, the war-torn city of Jerusalem and Armageddon, I’m convinced there are some gigantic errors—*Israel Delusions*—being taught worldwide which are not in harmony with the exact words of Jesus Christ or the true meaning of the Book of Revelation. To His Jewish disciples, our Lord warned, “Take heed that no one deceives you” (Matthew 24:4). As a Jewish believer, I have taken this warning seriously.

Y2K prophecies failed. No terrorist explosions took place in Jerusalem on the eve of the new millennium.

You are about to discover solid New Testament proof that many 21st century Christian predictions about modern Israel will also fail. Yet God’s Word will be fulfilled.

This label is appropriate here, “Warning: Handle with Prayer!”

Chapter 23

Wrestling With an Angel

Humility, that low, sweet root, from which all heavenly virtues shoot.

— *Thomas Moore* (1779-1852)

Have you ever heard of a wrestling match between a human being and an angel? As far as we know, it happened only once in history. The details of this ancient story will soon take on explosive significance in our study of Israel and Bible prophecy.

Abraham lived about 4,000 years ago. He had a son named Isaac who had a son named Jacob. It was Jacob who wrestled with the angel, and as a result, the angel changed Jacob's name to "Israel." In order to understand this strange encounter and its deep meaning for us today, we must study some history about Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob as recorded in Genesis 27.

"When Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see," he decided to bless Esau, his firstborn son, before he died (Genesis 27:1-4). But first he sent Esau out to the field to hunt for his favorite meal. Isaac's wife, Rebekah, had other plans. Realizing the importance of her husband's blessing upon the firstborn, she coveted that blessing for her younger son, Jacob, who was more spiritual than Esau. While Esau was out hunting in the field, Rebekah quickly prepared a meal and convinced Jacob to take the food to Isaac while pretending to be Esau (see Genesis 27:5-17).

When Jacob brought the dish to his father, he lied, saying, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me" (verse 19). When Isaac inquired how he had killed an animal so quickly, Jacob lied again, saying, "Because

the Lord your God brought it to me” (verse 20). Suspiciously, Isaac asked, “Are you really my son Esau?” Jacob lied a third time, saying, “I am” (verse 24). Isaac finally believed Jacob’s deception and gave him the blessing (see verses 25-29).

Soon afterward Esau returned from the hunt and Isaac realized he’d been tricked. “Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing” (verse 35), the father said to his older son. Then “Esau hated Jacob” and said in his heart, “I will kill my brother Jacob” (verse 41). Rebekah discovered Esau’s plot and sent Jacob away to her relatives in a far country, where he remained for 20 years (see Genesis 27:43; 31:41). Jacob never saw his mother’s face again.

Twenty years later Jacob headed home. Surrounded by a large caravan of family and servants, he sent messengers ahead of the group to tell Esau he was coming. But the men returned with the news that Esau and 400 soldiers were on their way to meet him. Fear gripped Jacob’s heart. He felt a deep sense of guilt over his past sin of deception and was terrified for the safety of his family. So Jacob “arose that night” and “was left alone” to plead with God for forgiveness and deliverance (Genesis 32:22,24).

Then “a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day” (verse 24). This Man was really “the Angel” (Hosea 12:4). Unaware of this, and assuming this must be his still-angry brother Esau, Jacob struggled all night for his life. At the crack of dawn, this powerful Stranger revealed Himself, not as a foe, but as a heavenly Friend. He touched Jacob’s hip, “and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him” (verse 25).

Jacob suddenly realized this powerful Being was now his only hope. Broken and helpless, he clung to the Messenger, saying, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!”

The Angel then asked, “What is your name?”

“And he said, ‘Jacob.’ ”

“And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, *but Israel*; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed’ ” (verses 26-28, emphasis added).

This is the *first time* the word “Israel” is used in the Bible, and the context reveals its deep spiritual significance. In the beginning, “Israel” was a special name given to only one man, to Jacob, by the Angel of God. In the Bible, people’s names mean more than they do today. Back then, names were often descriptions of people’s characters.

Jacob literally meant, “deceiver,” or “crook.” When Esau discovered Jacob’s sin of deception, he said to Isaac, “Is he not rightly named Jacob?”

(Genesis 27:36) Thus the name, “Jacob,” was a description of his character and of his sin. When the Angel said, “What is your name?” He knew the answer. But He wanted Jacob to say his own name, which represented a humble confession and turning away from his sin. Jacob passed the test, repented, and placed his entire dependence upon God’s love and mercy.

The response, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel,” revealed that God had given him a new character. According to the margin of the New King James Bible, the word “Israel” literally means, “Prince with God.” Thus the name “Israel” itself was a spiritual name, symbolizing Jacob’s spiritual victory over his past sin of deception. In other words, the man “Jacob” was now a spiritual “Israel.” As we shall see, this truth about a spiritual Israel will take on explosive significance in our study of Israel and Bible prophecy.

Israel had 12 sons “who came to Egypt” (Exodus 1:1-5). One son, named Joseph, had dreams (see Genesis 37). Remember this, for we will come back to it. The children of Israel multiplied in Egypt and were forced into slavery until the time of Moses. Then God told Moses, “Say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Israel is My son, My firstborn....Let My son go” ’ ” (Exodus 4:22-23). Here’s an important development in biblical thought. The name “Israel” is now being expanded. It no longer refers only to Jacob, but also to his descendants. The nation is now “Israel.” Thus, “Israel” first applied to a victorious man, then a people. It was God’s desire that this new nation of Israel should also be victorious, as was Jacob, through faith in Him. God called this new nation “My son, My firstborn.” Remember this also. It will become important shortly.

The next paragraph below contains little phrases about Israel which may seem dry at first, but amazing things can happen when you water a dry seed. Those little phrases will soon sprout into trees of towering significance when we turn to the New Testament. Take special note of them.

Israel was “a vine” God brought “out of Egypt” (Psalm 80:8). God said, “But thou, Israel, art My servant...the seed of Abraham” (Isaiah 41:8 KJV). God also spoke of “Israel My elect” (Isaiah 45:4). Again, God said through Isaiah, “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth” (Isaiah 42:1-3). All of these words originally applied to the physical nation of Israel. Don’t forget this.

In about 800 B.C., the Lord said through the prophet Hosea, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son”

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

(Hosea 11:1). Yet by this time, Israel had failed to live up to the meaning of her own name. She had not lived victoriously, as a “Prince with God.” The Lord sadly declared, “They sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images” (Hosea 11:2). Yet God had a special plan. That small, solitary sentence, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son,” is actually like a tiny bomb that will soon explode with tremendous importance as we turn to the New Testament.

Chapter 24

A New Look at Jesus Christ

The voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.

— Marcel Proust (1871-1922)

Approximately 800 years had passed since the time of Hosea the prophet. Finally, Heaven's prophetic clock struck twelve. "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king" (Matthew 2:1). Because King Herod felt threatened by this newly born potential rival to his throne, he sent soldiers who cruelly "put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem" (Matthew 2:16). Yet God warned Joseph in advance of the slaughter. "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word' (verse 13). So the family arose and "departed for Egypt" (verse 14).

The next sentence after Matthew 2:14 is almost unbelievable in its prophetic implications. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew wrote that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus remained in Egypt "until the death of Herod: that it might be *fulfilled* which was spoken of *the Lord* by the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son' " (verse 15, KJV, emphasis added).

Do you realize what you just read? Matthew is quoting Hosea 11:1 which, in its historical context, referred to the nation of Israel being called out of Egypt in the time of Moses. Yet here the very first Gospel writer picks up this text and declares it "fulfilled" in Jesus Christ! Here Matthew is beginning to reveal a principle he develops throughout his book. Paul also taught the same principle, as we shall see.

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

Remember, the first time the name “Israel” is used in the Bible, it was a spiritual name given to one man, to Jacob (see Genesis 32:28). That name had to do with Jacob’s spiritual victory. It meant, “Prince with God.” Even so in the beginning of the New Testament that same name is beginning to be applied to one Man, to the Victorious One, to Jesus Christ, *the Prince of God*.

There are amazing parallels between the history of Israel and the history of Jesus Christ. In Hebrew history, a young man named Joseph had dreams and went to Egypt (see Genesis 37,39). In the New Testament we find another Joseph who had dreams and went to Egypt (see Matthew 2). In Hebrew history, when God called Israel out of Egypt, He called that new nation “My son” (Exodus 4:22). When Jesus came out of Egypt, God said, “Out of Egypt I called My Son” (Matthew 2:15). When Israel left Egypt, the people went through the Red Sea. They were “baptized...in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:2). In the third chapter of Matthew, we read that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan “to fulfill all righteousness” (verse 15). Then God called Jesus, His “beloved Son” (verse 17).

After the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, they spent 40 years in the wilderness. Immediately after Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, He was “led up by the Spirit into the wilderness” for 40 days (Matthew 4:1-2). At the end of those 40 days, Jesus resisted the devil’s tricky temptations by quoting three key Scriptures. All were from Deuteronomy, the very book God gave Israel during her 40-year sojourn in the wilderness! What does this mean? It means that in Matthew’s book, Jesus was repeating the history of Israel, point by point, and was overcoming where they had failed. In other words, Christ was showing Himself to be *the primary Israel, the Prince of God; the Victorious One who overcomes all sin*.

After healing large numbers of people, Jesus “warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘Behold! My Servant, whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory’ ” (Matthew 12:16-20).

Here Matthew is doing the same thing he did with Hosea 11:1. He is quoting Isaiah 42:1-3, which, in its original context, referred to God’s “servant,” which was “Israel...My Servant” (Isaiah 41:8). Once again, under inspiration from the Holy Spirit, the first writer in the New Testament said that Isaiah 42:1-3 was being “fulfilled” by God’s “servant,” Jesus Christ.

What about those other seemingly dry little phrases about the nation of Israel? It's time to water them, too. They must now grow into trees that reach Heaven. In Psalm 80:8, Israel was called a "vine." Yet Jesus Christ declared, "I am the true vine" (John 15:1). God referred to the nation of Israel as "My son, My firstborn" (Exodus 4:22). Yet Paul later called our Messiah "the first-born over all creation" (Colossians 1:15). The prophet Isaiah clearly called Israel, "the seed of Abraham" (Isaiah 41:8 KJV). Yet Paul wrote, "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

That last text is the clearest and most explosive of them all! In the Old Testament, God definitely called "Israel...the seed of Abraham" (Isaiah 41:8 KJV). In Galatians 3:16, Paul plainly wrote that Abraham's seed does not refer to "many," but to "one...who is Christ." What does this mean? It means that when Paul looked back—just like Matthew did—at Old Testament statements about "Israel" he saw them as inherently foreshadowing the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. To Paul, the Messiah is the "Seed." Jesus Christ is the perfect Israel!

Yet there's more. In Genesis and Exodus, the name "Israel" not only referred to one victorious man, to Jacob, but also to his descendants, who became Israel. The same principle is revealed in the New Testament. Right after calling Jesus the "Seed," Paul told his Gentile converts, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed" (Galatians 3:29). Thus in the New Testament, the name Israel not only applies to the one Victorious Man, the true Seed, Jesus Christ, but also to those who belong to Christ. Believers in Jesus are infused into the "Seed." In other words, true Christians are part of God's spiritual Israel.

These fundamental New Testament facts will soon take on explosive significance when we examine what the Book of Revelation *really teaches* about Israel, Babylon the Great, and Armageddon.

May I suggest you put your seatbelts on?

Chapter 25

Clarity Through Double Vision

Beware of the half truth. You may have gotten hold of the wrong half.

— *Author Unknown*

Have you ever been hit so hard on the head you started seeing double? From what I have studied, the Christian world needs a compassionate bonk on the head with the truth of the New Testament. Then more Christians would start seeing double about the subject of Israel. According to Paul, there are two Israels. The proof? The Jewish apostle wrote, “They are not all Israel who are of Israel” (Romans 9:6). In this chapter, we will discover that there is an “Israel after the flesh” (1 Corinthians 10:18) and an “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16), composed of both Jews and Gentiles who have personal faith in Jesus Christ, God’s true Messiah.

Paul wrote, “Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:6-7). Paul’s argument is that because Abraham was a man of faith, only those who have faith are his spiritual children. We might call this the concept of “faith lineage.” This truth is like a key that can open a lock in our heads. Once the lock is open we can understand the shocking principle of two Israels.

John the Baptist understood and boldly preached “faith lineage.” When a group of tricky Pharisees and Sadducees came to question John’s right to baptize, the wilderness prophet astonished them by shouting, “And do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even

now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 3:9-10).

Those Pharisees and Sadducees didn’t have real faith like Abraham did, yet they claimed to be his children. John the Baptist exposed this delusion. “Don’t think that!” he thundered. John then laid the “ax” to the root of the trees by saying that if they didn’t bear “good fruit” through faith in God like Abraham did, they would be “cut down and thrown into the fire” (verse 10). Clearly natural lineage alone is not enough. Without faith and a spiritual connection with the Almighty, those Jews were doomed.

Jesus Christ taught the same truth. A certain group of Jewish people once said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus responded, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham” (John 8:39). They also claimed to be Abraham’s children, but they lacked true faith. By saying, “If you were Abraham’s children,” Jesus denied their claim. Christ continued, “But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father” (John 8:40-41).

“We have one Father—God,” they countered. “Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me...You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it’ ” (John 8:41-42,44).

What an atomic text! Jesus was talking to some Jewish people who claimed to be Israelites, the children of Abraham, yet they were only following God outwardly, not in heart. Jesus said they weren’t really Abraham’s children at all because they lacked true faith and were following lies. Their lineage actually went back to satan, the first liar. Soon we will separate God’s truth from satan’s lies when we look at what Revelation *really teaches* about Israel, the 144,000, Mystery Babylon, and Armageddon.

Jesus Christ also taught “faith lineage” in John chapter 1. A spiritually-minded Jew named Nathanael was wondering whether Jesus of Nazareth was really his Messiah. Retiring to a favorite spot under a fig tree, he prayed about the matter. Soon a friend introduced him to the Savior. When Jesus saw Nathanael, He joyfully declared, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” (John 1:47)

Nathanael had a natural lineage that went back to Abraham. Yet he had more. In his spiritual life, he had gained victories over guile, which means deception. When Jesus discerned Nathanael’s spiritual lineage to Abraham and Jacob, He called him “an Israelite indeed.” Just as Jacob

himself had become a spiritual Israel, even so had Nathanael become “an Israelite indeed.” He was part of God’s true spiritual Israel.

Just as there are two Israels, even so are there two kinds of Jews. There are Jewish people in the flesh and Jewish people in the Spirit. In words of warning to certain Jews who were breaking the Ten Commandments, Paul wrote, “Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God....For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man [a Gentile] keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?...For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:17,25-26,28-29).

Did you catch that? Someone who is “called a Jew” because he is a physical descendant of Abraham, and yet who lives as a lawbreaker, is “not a Jew.” His “circumcision has become uncircumcision.” To God, he is a Gentile. And the believing Gentile, who through faith keeps “the righteous requirements of the law,” his uncircumcision is “counted as circumcision.” To God, he is a Jew. Thus John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and Paul all agree—natural lineage is not enough. Whether or not someone is “an Israelite indeed” depends upon one’s faith and spiritual character. Paul summarized, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3). Anyone today can become one of these “Jews,” no matter who their earthly parents are.

These concepts of “faith lineage,” Jews being counted as Gentiles, and visa versa, lead us to one of the biggest issues facing the prophecy-minded Christian world. This issue is at the core of prophetic interpretation. In it, we are faced with two options. One is the truth, the other a lie. One leads to Heaven and the other, possibly, to hell.

The big question is, “What about the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament?” If we conclude those promises must be fulfilled to “Israel after the flesh” (1 Corinthians 10:18) then we must conclude that Jerusalem and the modern Jewish nation will eventually become the epicenter of the final battle of Armageddon. But if we conclude that those promises can legitimately be fulfilled to God’s Israel in the Spirit, then we must restudy the Book of Revelation to discover how its end time prophecies apply to true Christians—Jewish or Gentile—who love Jesus the Messiah with all their hearts.

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

Paul deals with this explosive issue in Romans 9:2-8. His words require careful thought. Sorrowfully, Paul wrote about his Jewish “countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises” (verses 2-4). God did make promises to Israel in the Old Testament. Yet what if some Jews do not have true faith in Him? Can God fulfill His promises to an unbelieving Israel after the flesh? If not, has His Word failed?

Paul’s answer to these important questions is vital: “Not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel” (verse 6). Notice that the truth of *two Israels* is Paul’s assurance that God’s Word will not fail. Look carefully: “They are not all Israel [the Israel of God] who are of Israel [of the Jewish nation].” Thus a Jew can be of the Jewish nation, and yet not be part of the Israel of God. Now here’s the explosive question: To *which Israel* will God fulfill His promises?

Paul continues, “Nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called’ ” (verse 7). Since not all physical descendants of Abraham are automatically God’s true children, therefore His promises are for those “in Isaac.” Abraham had two sons. The first was Ishmael, who was born after the flesh. The second was Isaac, who was born when Abraham had faith in God’s promise (see Genesis 16:1-3,15; 21:1-3; Romans 4:18-21). In Galatians 4:22-31, Paul shockingly reveals that Ishmael *represents* unbelieving Jews, while Isaac *represents* Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Christ! “Now we, brethren [as believers in Christ], as Isaac was, are children of promise” (Galatians 4:28). The “children of promise” are those who “receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14). Therefore, the Israel that is “in Isaac” is the Israel of God in the Holy Spirit. Paul concludes, “That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are *counted as the seed*” (Romans 9:8, emphasis added). “Counted as the seed” means that, although some may be Gentiles, they’re in.

Here is an eight-point summary of Paul’s rather detailed reasoning:

1. God made promises to Abraham and his seed (Galatians 3:16).
2. Abraham’s seed would continue “in Isaac” (Romans 9:7).
3. Isaac was born when Abraham had faith in God’s promise (Romans 4:19-21).
4. Isaac *represents* everyone who believes in Jesus and who receives the promise of the Holy Spirit by faith (Galatians 3:14; 4:22-28)

5. All who have faith in Jesus Christ—Jews or Gentiles—“are counted as the seed” (Galatians 3:14; Romans 9:8; 10:12).
6. This seed is “the Israel of God” in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16,29; 6:14-16).
7. God will fulfill His promises to *this Israel* (Galatians 3:29; 4:28; 6:14-16).
8. Thus God’s promises to Israel have not been made of “no effect,” even though some Jewish people don’t believe in their own Messiah (Romans 9:6-8).

Here we have the answer to the issue that means so much in prophetic interpretation. The Bible is clear. God will fulfill His Old Testament promises to those “in Isaac,” that is, to *any human being* who follows Abraham’s example and who becomes part of His Israel in the Spirit through faith in the Messiah. Thus the issue is not race, bloodline, genealogy, or ethnicity, but personal faith—a faith available to all (see Romans 10:12). Those who are only “the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed” (Romans 9:8). We should not expect God to fulfill His promises to unbelieving Israelites of the flesh (or to lips-only Christians of the flesh for that matter), unless, of course, they individually become true believers in the Messiah.

Let’s look at one more controversial section before we close this chapter. What about Paul’s question, “Has God cast away His people?” (Romans 11:1). These words are being quoted around the world to prove that God has not cast away any Israelites of the flesh. How can we explain this? First of all, the same chapter does describe “the casting away” of some Jewish people who don’t believe (verse 15). Second, notice Paul’s answer to his own question: “Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham.” Thus Paul uses himself as an example to prove that God has not “cast away His people.” Who are “His people”?

In the next three verses, Paul refers to Israel’s apostasy in the days of Elijah. God told His prophet, “I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal” (verse 4). In Elijah’s time there were also two Israels. One followed Baal, the other followed God. Then Paul made this pointed application. “Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (verse 5). Just as in Elijah’s time there was a faithful remnant of Israel, even so in Paul’s time there was also a faithful remnant of believing Jews, who, like himself, had been saved by grace. Based on the context of Romans 11:1-5, it

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

is this faithful remnant of Israel, made up of Jews like Paul, which God has certainly not “cast away.”

Soon we will see this exact issue in the Book of Revelation. As in the days of Elijah, we are now in the midst of a terrible apostasy. Yet today God has His “seven thousand” who have not “bowed the knee to Baal.” They are His faithful remnant, His Israel in the Holy Spirit, who rely on God’s power instead of their flesh. Like Elijah, they will be on the side of Jesus Christ and His truth at Armageddon.

Chapter 26

Choice and the Chosen Nation

Man has no choice but to choose.

— *Jean Paul Sartre* (1905-1980)

From the summit of Mount Sinai, God Almighty thundered to Moses: “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, *if* you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, *then* you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ ” (Exodus 19:3-6, emphasis added).

Notice the words “if” and “then.” God said “if” Israel obeyed, “then” they would be His special treasure. That tiny word “if” involves a big issue. It concerns conditions. God loved Israel, and chose her apart from any obedience on her part. He brought the people out of Egypt, bore them on eagles’ wings, and brought them to Himself. Yet, contrary to popular opinion, God’s use of “if” made it clear that the *continuation* of His favor to the Israelites was conditional upon their response to His goodness, upon their choices to obey (see also 1 Samuel 2:30; Jeremiah 18:7-10). In other words, those of the chosen nation must themselves choose correctly, or the consequences would be disastrous.

Forty years later, Israel entered the promised land and remained there for about 800 years. During this period, many responded to God’s love by obeying His voice. But the majority strayed from the path of righteousness. Again and again, God manifested His mercy by sending prophets and pleading with Israel to return to His covenant. Yet apostasy continued and deepened. Finally, after hundreds of years of warning, disaster struck. In 722 B.C., the northern tribes

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

were carried away by the cruel Assyrians. In 586 B.C., Judah was taken to Babylon. Such was the result of wrong choices.

In 586 B.C., the armies of Babylon demolished Jerusalem and burned its temple with fire. The Jews were removed from their land and carried into captivity. Yet, in the mercy of God, this exile was not to be permanent. The prophet Jeremiah predicted that God “would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:2). After 70 years the Jews would leave Babylon, return to their land, and rebuild their temple and their city. God was giving His chosen nation another chance to respond to His love. In simple terms, the Lord was saying: “You blew it. Let’s try again!”

This new opportunity is revealed in the prophecy of the “seventy weeks,” which we examined earlier in this book. Previously, we studied this highly controversial day-for-a-year (see Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6) period in the context of the “seven-year tribulation” theory. Now it’s time to approach this period again, but in a different light. We will view it in relation to the ongoing favor of God toward Israel as a nation.

Near the end of the Babylonian captivity, Gabriel told Daniel, “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy” (Daniel 9:24). This 70-week period (490 years) was “determined” for Daniel’s people, the Jews. During that period, the chosen nation would have another chance “to finish the transgression” and “to make an end of sins.” Near the end of that period, something big would happen. The Messiah would come “to bring in everlasting righteousness.” As we shall soon see, Israel’s status as a special nation under divine favor would then be determined by her choice to receive or reject that Messiah.

Gabriel told Daniel when the seventy weeks would begin, “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and to build Jerusalem until the Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” (Daniel 9:25).

Persia conquered Babylon in 538 B.C. Then King Cyrus issued a decree for the Jews to return to their land and to rebuild their temple (see Ezra 1:1-3). Later, King Darius issued another decree that led to the completion of the temple (see Ezra 6:1,8). Still later, King Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission to rebuild the wall around the city (see Nehemiah 1:3; 2:1-9). Yet the predicted “command to restore and to build Jerusalem” did not occur until King Artaxerxes issued a lengthy decree giving Ezra official authority to “set magistrates and judges” over Jerusalem and to “execute judgment” upon all who refused to follow the laws of God and the king (Ezra 7:21,25-26). Of the four options to consider as a starting point for the 70-week prophecy, this was

the only decree which fully restored civil authority to Jerusalem and the Jewish state.

That commandment occurred “in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes” (Ezra 7:7), which was 457 B.C. This date—457 B.C.—is listed in the margin of Ezra 7 in many modern Bibles and has also been confirmed by the widely acclaimed *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Zondervan, 1982) as the starting point of the 70-week prophecy.¹²⁸ Gabriel said, “From the going forth of the command to restore and to build Jerusalem until the Messiah the Prince there shall be seven weeks [49 years] and sixty-two weeks [434 years]” (Daniel 9:25).

7 weeks (49 years) + 62 weeks (434 years) = 69 weeks (483 years).

Going forward 483 years from 457 B.C. comes to A.D. 27, the time of “the Messiah the Prince” (Daniel 9:25). The word “Messiah” means “Anointed One.” In A.D. 27—the exact year specified in Daniel’s prophecy¹²⁹—Jesus Christ was “anointed” by the Holy Spirit at His baptism (see Matthew 3:16-17; Acts 10:38) which officially marked the beginning of His public ministry. Right after His baptism Jesus declared, “*The time is fulfilled*, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15, emphasis added). Christ’s words, “The time is fulfilled,” can apply to *no other time prophecy except Daniel 9!* Jesus knew He was fulfilling that ancient prediction.

7 weeks (49 years) + 62 weeks (434 years) + 1 week (7 years) = 70 weeks (490 years).

We have previously seen that during the final 70th week (from 27 to 34 A.D.), Jesus Himself “confirm[ed] the [new] covenant” (Daniel 9:27, KJV). He did this personally during the first 3 1/2 years, and then during the second 3 1/2 years He “confirmed” His word through His disciples as they preached mainly to Jews (see Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). In the “midst” of the last seven years (in 31 A.D.), when “His hour had come” (John 13:1), the ultimate confirmation came when Jesus caused “the sacrifice... to cease” (Daniel 9:27, KJV) through His painful death on the cross.

Here’s the big question: What was the true significance of these events to Israel’s status as God’s chosen nation? The answer can only come through a careful study of the closing scenes of our Messiah’s life before His feet were spiked to a tree.

Chapter 27

Calvary and the Divine Divorce

He saw the city and wept over it.

— *Luke 19:41*

“Then came Peter to Him, and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven’ ” (Matthew 18:21-22). Christ’s response to Peter’s question is quite interesting. While He obviously was not saying that human forgiveness toward offenders should have a limit, “seventy times seven” equals 490, which just might have been a subtle reference to the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9!

As we have seen, the 70-week period represented another opportunity for the chosen nation to demonstrate faithfulness to God. Israel’s first temple had been destroyed and her children carried to Babylon because she had rejected God’s warnings through His prophets. Yet through divine love and mercy, another opportunity was granted her “to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins” (Daniel 9:24). Israel returned to her land and built a second temple.

Though Israel had sinned more than “seven times,” God’s forgiveness toward the nation was extended to “seventy times seven.” Near the close of this period, One greater than the prophets would come. Then Israel’s destiny as a nation would be determined by her response to God’s Son.

Near the end of our Messiah’s earthly life, He beheld Jerusalem “and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment

around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation' ” (Luke 19:41-44).

When Jesus spoke to Peter about forgiveness being extended “until seventy times seven,” He knew the 70-week prophecy was soon to end. He also knew its awful significance to Israel as a nation, to Jerusalem, and to its second temple. Chapters 21–23 of Matthew reveal the sad, final, and explosive encounters between Jesus Christ and the leaders of His chosen people. It's now time to see the true meaning of those encounters.

During the week before His crucifixion, Jesus “went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a “den of thieves” ’ ” (Matthew 21:12-13). At this point, Jesus still called the second temple, “My house.” But a change would come.

“In the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, ‘Let no fruit grow on you ever again.’ Immediately the fig tree withered away” (verses 18-19). Here the fig tree was a symbol of the Jewish nation. The “seventy times seven” countdown was nearing its close.

“When He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching” (verse 23). Their plan was to expose the humble Nazarene as a false Messiah and have Him put to death. Jesus then told those leaders a parable that outlined the entire history of Israel in one panoramic sweep, culminating with their murderous designs.

*There was a certain landowner [God] who planted a vineyard [Israel] and set a hedge around it [God's love], dug a winepress in it and built a tower [the temple]. And he leased it to vinedressers [Israel's leaders] and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants [the prophets] to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first [continued mercy], and they did likewise to them. Then **last of all** [notice the word, “last”] he sent his son to them [near the close of “seventy times seven”], saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ So they took*

him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him [their final sin]" (Matthew 21:33-39, emphasis added).

Jesus asked those leaders, "Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" They said to Him, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vine-dressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons' " (verses 40-41). Did they realize what they were saying? Hardly! They had pronounced their own doom.

Looking His antagonists squarely in the eye, Jesus declared in words of burning truth, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (verse 43). The Master Himself said it. The kingdom of God would be "taken" away from unbelieving Israel in the flesh and given to another "nation." Why? Because of their horrific sin of crucifying "the Son" (see verses 38-39).

In His next parable, Jesus outlined the same historical sequence but added details of the destruction of Jerusalem and the call of the Gentiles.

The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king, who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited. 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.' But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city (Matthew 22:2-7).

This literally took place in 70 A.D. Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled: "The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" (Daniel 9:26). Continuing the parable, Jesus said, "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding' " (Matthew 22:8-9). Thus Christ represented the call of the Gentiles at the end of the "seventy weeks."

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). Matthew 23 contains the Savior's final words of agony over Israel, His chosen nation. Eight times during His last public exchange with Israel's leaders, our Messiah cried out, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Finally, with a broken heart, the Son of the Infinite God declared: "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:37-38). This time God was not saying: “You blew it. Let’s try again.” Israel’s decision to crucify Christ would have permanent consequences. The result would be a searing separation—a painful, divine divorce. As a Jewish Christian myself, I want to stress that the pain was on God’s side. It was unbelieving Israel that *divorced herself* from Christ, her Faithful Lover, not vice versa.

Then “Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down’ ” (Matthew 24:1-2). In A.D. 70, the second temple was destroyed by Romans and more than one million Jews perished. Such was the terrible results of that divine divorce.

Based on Daniel 9 and the teaching of our Messiah, we discover that the prophecy of “seventy times seven” represented the limits of national forgiveness for the Jewish nation—as a nation (this does not apply to individuals). When Stephen was stoned by the Sanhedrin in 34 A.D., that moment was fraught with awful significance. It was so weighty that Stephen, “being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” “Look!” the holy martyr cried, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:55-56)

Jesus didn’t “stand up” without reason. A seismic shift was occurring. A new day was dawning. What would happen next? It was time for the wall to come tumbling down.

Chapter 28

When the Wall Tumbled Down

An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea
whose time has come.

— Victor Hugo (1802-1885)

In 1989, the Berlin Wall came down. Today there's nothing left of it. No longer is there a physical separation between East and West Germany. The two are one. According to the Bible, this is exactly what Jesus Christ—the Wall Breaker—accomplished for Jews and Gentiles. As it is written, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation” (Ephesians 2:14).

Solid New Testament truth is often quite different from what is taught in seminaries and churches, or popularized in bestselling novels. One of the biggest areas of confusion concerns Jews and Gentiles. Many have been taught that God has two separate plans—one for Jewish people, another for non-Jews. His plan for Gentiles is often applied to “The Church Age.” This doctrine is a pillar of dispensationalism. Notable dispensationalist Charles C. Ryrie clarified, “The Church/Israel distinction is the best way to determine whether or not someone is a dispensationalist—the most important criterion.”¹³⁰ “Dispensationalism has its roots in [J.N.] Darby’s distinction between Israel and the Church”¹³¹ Yet we must inquire, “Does the New Testament really uphold dispensationalism’s ‘Two-Plan Distinction’?”

First, let’s back up a little. The ending of the “seventy times seven,” Christ’s woes on the Pharisees, the transfer of the kingdom, the divine divorce, and the destruction of the second temple—none of this meant that *all Israel* had rejected its Messiah. Nor is it fair to categorically say, “The Jews killed Christ.” No! This idea has horribly, unjustly, and cruelly fueled

anti-Semitism for almost 2,000 years. It was not primarily “the Jews” who killed Christ, although there was a group of Jewish leaders who instigated His death. On a deeper level, it was really proud human nature resisting the humble One. It was your nature and mine. Jesus Christ died for “the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2 KJV).

Many Jewish people welcomed their Messiah. All 12 disciples were Jewish. The Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost fell only on Jews. It was 3,000 Jews who were then baptized (see Acts 2:5,22,36,41,46). The early Church in Jerusalem was Jewish. Soon “a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Apart from Luke, the entire New Testament was written by Jews. The question must be asked, “Should we call this group of Jewish believers in Jerusalem ‘Israel’ or ‘the Church’?” It’s obvious they were both! Consider this: When Spirit-filled Stephen looked back into history, what did he call Israel in Moses’ time? He called Israel, “the *church* in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38, KJV, emphasis added). Thus, according to Stephen—whose backward glance was enlightened by Holy Ghost perception—Old Testament Israel was God’s Church!

As the early Jewish Church expanded into the Roman world, this question was finally raised: “Is our Messiah only for us? What about the Gentiles?” Then, unexpectedly, God’s Spirit fell on non-Jews (see Acts 10:44-45). Slowly, narrowness and prejudice broke down. A Jewish council of believers convened in Jerusalem to discuss “the Jew-Gentile issue” (see Acts 15). Finally, the Spirit of the Lord broke through the fog and revealed what had been accomplished by the Messiah. A new day had dawned. The wall had come down. In the language of Mel Gibson’s film, it was demolished by *The Passion of the Christ*, and by His cross.

Years later, Paul wrote to believing Gentiles: “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation...to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross” (Ephesians 2:11-16). Here Paul is quite clear. Believing non-Jews were “once Gentiles...aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” But “now in Christ Jesus,” Jews and Gentiles have become “one.” *It’s the truth.* So let’s come out of the fog! The Wall Breaker has smashed “the middle wall of separation” to pieces.

Paul was enraptured by this theme and wrote a lot about it. "By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body" (Ephesians 3:4-6). Here Paul called this uniting of Jews and Gentiles into "the same body" the "mystery of Christ," which is "now" being revealed "by the Spirit." This mystery is more important than any mystery movie you might watch on TV. Again, Paul wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Pastors often say during marriage ceremonies, "What God has joined together, let no man separate!" This now applies to Jews and Gentiles in Jesus Christ.

According to the New Testament, believing Jews and believing Gentiles are now one. The two combined are "Abraham's seed" (Galatians 3:29). This is "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:15-16). This "mystery" has been accomplished by our Messiah's painful passion. He did it. When He died, He demolished the wall. Now think about it. Should Christians gather theological bricks and rebuild the wall Jesus Christ died to abolish? Wouldn't this be an "anti-Christ" thing to do?

What about Paul's controversial statement that "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26)? Many apply this to a mass conversion of Israelis at Armageddon. The context reveals otherwise. When Paul wrote that "all Israel will be saved," he didn't mean that at some point every Jewish person would find salvation, for in the same chapter he wrote, "If by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save *some* of them" (verse 14, emphasis added). Again, in the same chapter, Paul declared, "And they [individual Jewish people] also, *if* they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in" (verse 23, emphasis added). There's that tiny word "if" again.

"All Israel *will* be saved," but as we studied earlier, the big question is, "Which Israel?" Remember, "They are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). There is an "Israel after the flesh" (1 Corinthians 10:18) and an "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16) made up of Jewish people and Gentiles who believe in the Messiah. To apply the "all Israel" which "will be saved" to a group of Jews or Israelis who are *separate from God's Church* is to deny the Wall Breaker's specific and staggering accomplishment on the cross!

Who is the "all Israel" in Romans 11:26? The answer is in the context. Paul wrote, "I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save *some* of them" (verses 13-14). Paul hoped that as the Gentiles responded to his preaching about the Messiah, that this

would “provoke...some” of his Jewish friends to reexamine the claims of Christ. Hopefully, this would lead “some” to believe in Jesus. Then this combined group of believing Jews and believing Gentiles would form the “all Israel” which “will be saved.”

Now for the entire context: “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinions; that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins’ ” (verses 25-27). Notice: when “the fullness of the Gentiles” has “come in” (verse 25, emphasis added), *then* “all Israel will be saved” (verse 26). Into *what* do they “come in”? Into “the good olive tree” (verse 24 KJV) which is Israel! Thus “all Israel” in verse 26 is a united group of believing Jews and Gentiles who have responded to the good news and “come in.” To believe otherwise is to deny the context, reject “the mystery of Christ,” and rebuild the wall Jesus Himself shattered on Calvary.

God thundered on Mount Sinai that “if” the Israelites obeyed His voice, “then” they would be “a special treasure...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6). In a letter to believers, Peter quoted the same words and applied them to God’s Church. “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people...who once were not a people but are now the people of God” (1 Peter 2:9-10). In Old Testament days, God spoke about “Israel My elect” (Isaiah 45:4). In New Testament times, Paul also called true believers in the Messiah—both Jews and Gentiles—“the elect of God” (Colossians 3:11-12).

Thus Peter and Paul agreed. They both quoted the exact words God spoke about Israel and applied them to believers in Christ. They both taught that believing Jews and non-Jews, together, are “the people of God,” “the elect of God,” and “the Israel of God” (1 Peter 2:9-10; Colossians 3:11-12; Galatians 6:16). The “two” are “one,” and are “of the same body” (Ephesians 2:14-16; 3:6). Through His cross, the Messiah Himself has performed this mysterious wedding ceremony. What God has joined together, let no man separate!

For those familiar with the term, this is not “replacement theology,” which teaches that “the Church” has categorically “replaced” Israel. Neither is it “separation theology” (dispensationalism’s opposite error), which teaches the unbiblical notion that God’s Israel and God’s Church are two distinct entities—and never the twain shall meet. Rather, the truth is an “Israel of God” theology (Galatians 6:14-16), which sees God having one faithful Israel throughout history composed of true Israelites and true Gentiles who

When the Wall Tumbled Down

believe in the Messiah (either looking forward to His cross in Old Testament days or looking back to His all-sufficient atonement). Biblically speaking, we should never exalt Jewish people (lest we build damnable pride in their hearts) or put them down (exhibiting deadly pride ourselves). Read Romans 11:17-23. Instead, we should realize we all are equal at the nail-pierced feet of the Crucified One. All of our sins put Him there—He loves us all.

Heavy fog on a highway can be dangerous. It often results in fatal car wrecks. As we shall soon see, if we don't come out of the fog of falsehood about Jews and Gentiles, we may crash at Armageddon.

Chapter 29

1948: An Unsinkable Doctrine?

Truth is not determined by majority vote.

— *Doug Gwyn*

When the horrors of World War II were finally over and Hitler's Third Reich had come to an end, the world awoke to the nightmare of the German dictator's "final solution." Approximately six million innocent Jews had been brutally murdered—many in gas chambers inside of death camps. Public opinion then favored the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland.

The British controlled Palestine until May of 1948. On May 14, empowered by a resolution of the United Nations, the Zionist Movement proclaimed the rebirth of the State of Israel. For almost 2,000 years the Jewish people had been "wanderers among the nations." Now they were home. Yet their struggles had just begun.

An Arab League composed of Egyptians, Iraqis, Syrians, and Jordanians quickly invaded Palestine in an attempt to crush out the new nation. The fighting was heavy. Yet by 1949 the Arabs were defeated, and Israel was still in the land. In May of 1967, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria prepared for another attack. The Israelis struck first, and the war was over in six days. In 1973, at the beginning of the Jewish season of Yom Kippur, the Egyptians and Syrians attacked again. The battles were fierce and bloody. Yet by 1974, Israel was again on top and still in the land.

For more than 50 years these astonishing events have gripped the attention of much of the Christian world. A conclusion has been reached by millions: This must be the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. This conviction is now

being expressed on TV, radio, in books and magazines, at prophecy conferences, in Christian seminaries, and on the worldwide web. The rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 is now considered by countless Christians to be the most significant prophetic event of the 20th century.

An example of this belief may be found in the popular book, *The Next 7 Great Events of the Future*, by Randal Ross. The author declares: "I call the establishment of the State of Israel 'the ultimate prophecy time bomb,' because when Israel became a legitimate state in the eyes of the world in May 1948, that single, seemingly isolated incident started the prophetic time clock ticking down toward the 'zero hour' and the end of time."¹³⁷ Hal Lindsey dittoed, "Since the restoration of Israel as a nation in 1948, we have lived in the most significant period of prophetic history."¹³³ Today, the majority of Christian beliefs about the end times rest firmly upon this 1948 platform.

On April 10, 1912, the *Titanic* set sail from England for America. The largest ship in the world at that time, she was considered unsinkable. But after four days of smooth sailing, she hit the ice. Three hours later she was underneath freezing water, floating down to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. In many ways, the 1948 theory is like the *Titanic*. In the minds of countless believers, it is considered unsinkable. However, in a few moments, this popular theory is going to hit the ice of God's Word. If it begins to sink, we should abandon ship as soon as possible.

There are three main arguments now being used to support the theory that Bible prophecy was fulfilled in 1948. Let's examine them.

1. The "Fig Tree" Argument.

Hal Lindsey wrote: "Jesus predicts an extremely important time clue. He says, 'Now learn a parable of the fig tree' [Matthew 24:32, 33 quoted]...The most important sign in Matthew has to be the restoration of the Jews to the land in the rebirth of Israel...When the Jewish people...became a nation again on 14 May 1948 the 'fig tree' put forth its first leaves. Jesus said that this would indicate that He was 'at the door,' ready to return."¹³⁴

Is this really what "Jesus said"? In a parallel passage, Luke records: "Then He spoke to them a parable: Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 21:29-31).

Because Luke wrote, “and *all* the trees. When they are already budding,” we clearly see Jesus did not have in mind just one tree representing Israel in 1948. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus explained His parable of the fig tree. “So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!” (Matthew 24:33) When fig trees, and all trees, start blooming at the end of winter, we know summer is near. “So...also,” said Jesus, when we see “all these” various signs given in Matthew 24 occurring at the same time, then we may know His return is near. The fig tree is *not* the sign. It simply *represents* “all” the signs in Matthew 24, *none* of which is the specified rebirth of Israel in 1948. The ice of God’s Word has just ripped the first hole in the bottom of the 1948 ship.

2. The “Israeli Victories” Argument.

Many view the Israeli victories in 1949, 1967, and 1973 as strong evidence that God had regathered Israel and was now fighting for His chosen nation, even though the leadership of that nation still firmly rejects its own Messiah. Again, let’s examine the argument.

First of all, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). God says, “I am the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). With this principle in mind, let’s ask, “Was God able to fight for Israel in the Old Testament when they were in unbelief?”

After the Exodus, God promised to bring Israel into the land of Canaan (see Exodus 33:1-3). Twelve men were sent to spy out the territory. Yet after all the people heard the “bad report” about “the giants” in the land, they “complained against Moses,” saying, “Let us return to Egypt” (Numbers 13:32-33; 14:2,4). Then God pronounced this judgment: “But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years....and you shall know *My rejection* [breach of promise, KJV]” (Numbers 14:32,34, emphasis added). Thus, because of Israel’s unbelief, God was unable to fulfill His promise to that generation. This proves that God *can make a promise, but not fulfill it* to a certain group of people. See also 1 Samuel 2:30.

Those ancient Israelites were unwilling to accept that 40-year sentence. The people proposed to go up anyway “to the place which the Lord has promised” (Numbers 14:40). Moses said, “This will not succeed. Do not go up...for the Lord is not among you....the Lord will not be with you....But they presumed to go up....Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites...came down and attacked them” (Numbers 14:41-45). This passage is full of instruction. Because of Israel’s unbelief, God could not fight for her. Even though He promised, He wouldn’t fulfill it. Years later, when Israel again “forsook the Lord...they could no longer stand before their enemies” (Judges 2:13-14). This truth is repeated many times in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, etc.

Again, God does not change (see Malachi 3:6). All throughout sacred history, He could not fight for Israel while they were in unbelief. Thus He could not have been fighting for the Jewish nation in 1949, 1967, and 1973. Because a nation wins battles is not evidence in itself that God is fighting for that nation. Was God fighting for Hitler when he won so many battles? Was the Lord with the Nazis when they successfully incinerated so many Jews in crematoriums? Obviously not! Dear friend, the “Israeli victories” argument is not based on a thorough study of the Word of God. Ice has just ripped a second hole in the hull of this unsinkable theory.

3. The End Time Regathering Argument.

This is the big one. The idea is now being expressed all around the globe that ancient prophecies which predicted a regathering of Israel back to their land were fulfilled in 1948. The main prophecy quoted is found in Ezekiel chapters 36-38.

In Chapter 4 of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey gives the following three reasons why Ezekiel’s prophecy must point to a 1948 fulfillment:

- a. God told Israel: “I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land” (Ezekiel 36:24 KJV).

- b. The phrase, “out of all countries,” must apply to “world-wide dispersion,” and therefore cannot apply to the Babylonian captivity.
- c. Ezekiel’s prophecy will be fulfilled “in the latter days” (38:16) which supposedly is a “definite term” applying to “the time just preceding” the second coming of Jesus Christ.¹³⁵

These reasons are accepted as unsinkable evidence of a 1948 fulfillment.

At first glance, Hal’s arguments seem conclusive. But the following five responses not only cast doubt upon Lindsey’s three points, but also prove that prophecy could not have been fulfilled in 1948.

- a. God specifically told ancient Israel He would gather them “from all the nations” immediately “after seventy years are completed at Babylon” (Jeremiah 29:10,14,18). Thus an out-of-“all-nations” gathering need not apply to the end times.
- b. The time period right after the Babylonian captivity was also called “the latter days” (see Jeremiah 29:10-14; 30:24; 27:2-7; 48:47; 49:39; 50:1); thus this phrase is not always a “definite term” applying to “the time just preceding” Christ’s return, as Lindsey claims. Moses also told ancient Israel, “I know that after my death...evil will befall you in the latter days” (Deuteronomy 31:29).
- c. Three times in Ezekiel 38, the regathered Israelites are described as a people who “dwell safely... dwelling without walls” (verses 8,11,14). These words “safely” and “without walls [of protection]” do not apply to modern Israelis who now “dwell” amidst terrorists, experience regular attacks from Islamic Jihad, and witness friends being blown apart by suicide bombers.
- d. The reason Israel was scattered in Old Testament times was because she forsook God, broke His law, and disobeyed His word (see Jeremiah 16:10-13; 29:18-19). If you look carefully, according to the same Old Testament passages, Israel must *first* repent of her sins before such a regathering can be accomplished by God.

Here's the proof. God told Israel: "It shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse...and you shall call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, and you shall return to the Lord your God and obey His voice...*then* the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity...and gather you again from all the nations" (Deuteronomy 30:1-3, KJV emphasis added).

According to these inspired words, when God scatters Israel among "all the nations," if she returns and obeys His voice, *then* He will gather her. If she doesn't return and obey, then this prophecy *cannot* be fulfilled by God. Because the Messiah has come, this "return to the Lord" must include fully embracing Jesus Christ. The facts of history reveal that Jewish Zionism did not meet this spiritual condition in 1948.

Again, God told ancient Israel, "*If* you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but *if* you return to Me...*yet* I will gather them" (Nehemiah 1:8-9, emphasis added). "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations" (Jeremiah 29:13-14). These Scriptures are plain. Israel must first repent, *then* God will gather her. Once again, this condition was not met by the Zionist movement in 1948. The "unsinkable" theory is starting to go down. "Lower the lifeboats" is the cry from Heaven!

Even Ezekiel 36 contains conditional elements. Notice carefully, "Thus says the Lord God: 'On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt' (Ezekiel 36:33). Thus, "on the day" God cleanses Israel from "all" of her sins, on that day He would "also enable" her to dwell in her cities. This did not happen in 1948. Israel as a nation was not cleansed from "all" her iniquities at that time. Especially had it not forsaken its Heaven-confronting sin of rejecting God's Son (see Matthew 21:37-39).

Jonah predicted, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4) Yet forty days later, Nineveh

remained unscratched. Why? *Because the prophecy was conditional.* Nineveh repented, so God's judgment was deferred. The same conditional elements are also found in the regathering prophecies. Because Israel did not first repent and return to the Lord Jesus Christ, the promises of regathering could not have been fulfilled by God in 1948.

- e. Ezekiel declared: "Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog....In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people....You will ascend, coming like a storm....against a people gathered from the nations....And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,' says the Lord God, 'that My fury will show in My face....I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone....Then they shall know that I am the Lord' " (Ezekiel 38:1-2,8-9,12,18,22-23).

Chapter 5 of *The Late Great Planet Earth* is called, "Russia Is a Gog." There Hal Lindsey applied the Ezekiel 38 prophecy to 1948 and then to a final Middle East conflict between Russia and Israel. Yet the explosive truth is that the Book of Revelation actually applies Ezekiel's prophecy to a global event predicted to occur at the end of the millennium.

Earlier we discovered how Matthew took Hosea 11:1, which originally applied to Israel, and then declared it "fulfilled" in Jesus Christ (Matthew 2:15). We also saw how Paul made a similar Old Testament to New Testament application when he applied "the seed of Abraham," which was definitely "Israel," to "one...who is Christ" (Isaiah 41:8 KJV; Galatians 3:16). Amazingly, Revelation 20 does the same thing with Ezekiel 38.

Revelation 20:7-9 says:

Now when the thousand years have expired, satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

The major elements are the same. Both Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20 speak about Gog, Magog, a great army, a final gathering for battle against Jerusalem, and fire from Heaven. Yet Revelation 20 applies these things to the end of the millennium, to a global Gog and Magog, and to a final global battle against the saints and the beloved city, which is the New Jerusalem (see Revelation 3:12; 21:10; Hebrews 12:22). Thus Revelation 20 takes what originally applied to Israel and *applies it to a final global battle against the saints of Jesus Christ who are inside the New Jerusalem at the end of the millennium.*

Why does Revelation do this? For the same reason we discussed earlier: So that the “word of God” won’t be made of “no effect” in spite of the unbelief of many natural Jews (Romans 9:6). God did promise in Ezekiel 38 (and in Zechariah 14) that He would defend Israel and Jerusalem during a final battle. And He will. He will defend His Israel in the Spirit which will dwell inside the New Jerusalem at the end of the millennium. According to Revelation 20, this is how Ezekiel 38 will be fulfilled. The big question is: *Are we willing to accept the New Testament’s inspired application of Old Testament prophecies?* If not, we are not being faithful to “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27, emphasis added).

On April 15, 1912, at 2:20 a.m., the unsinkable Titanic was fully underwater. A third of her passengers sat shivering in lifeboats, yet the majority were corpses plunging lifelessly through dark waters toward the Atlantic Ocean’s murky bottom. How about us? Will we abandon the “1948 ship” before we get into serious trouble? Our Captain is pleading, “Get into the lifeboats!” If we refuse, we may sink far below the safety of God’s Word.

Chapter 30

When the Euphrates Runs Dry

If the *Apocalyptic* Israel were proved not to be the literal Israel, there is not a Futurist but would admit that their cause was lost.

— *Edward B. Elliott* (1793-1875)¹³⁶

We have reached the heart of Israel Delusions. It is finally time to study the Book of Revelation. As we open its sacred pages, we discover statements about “Mount Zion” (14:1), “the twelve tribes of Israel” (7:4-8), “Jerusalem” (21:10), “the temple” (11:19), “Sodom and Egypt” (11:8), “Babylon” (17:5), “Gog and Magog” (20:8), “the great river Euphrates” (16:12), and “Armageddon” (16:16). Thus, it is obvious that Revelation uses the terminology and geography of the Middle East in its prophecies. What is happening right now all over Planet Earth is that evangelical scholars are applying most of these terms literally—to those literal places, and to the Jewish nation in the Middle East. Here’s the explosive question: Does our Lord intend for these prophecies to be literally applied to “Israel after the flesh” (1 Corinthians 10:18), or should they be applied to “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16) in Jesus Christ?

To discover the answer, the beginning is the best place to start. The very first sentence of God’s last Book calls it, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1). Thus Jesus Himself is Revelation’s Source, Center, and true Interpreter. This will become highly significant soon. Beyond this, in chapter one, John was “in the Spirit” when he received his vision (verse 10). Thus the entire Book was originally seen by John through Spirit-illuminated eyes, not flesh-vision. A key lesson is: We also need our eyes brightened by the Holy Spirit in order to interpret Revelation’s message correctly.

John beheld the Risen One walking “in the midst of the seven lampstands” (verse 13). The idea of “seven lampstands” takes our minds back to the seven-branched candlestick inside the Jewish temple before it was destroyed in 70 A.D. by Roman armies. Yet in Revelation, the “seven lampstands” are not literal, but clearly symbolic. What do they represent? Explaining “the mystery,” the true Interpreter declared, “...the seven lampstands which you saw *are the seven churches*” (Revelation 1:20, emphasis added). Thus, in Revelation’s very first chapter, Jesus took something extremely Jewish and used it *symbolically to represent His Church*. As we shall see, this is one of the key interpretive principles to understanding the entire Book.

In Revelation 2, in a dictated letter to “the church in Thyatira” (verse 18), Jesus reproved His people for allowing “that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants...” (verse 20). Jezebel was a wicked woman in Old Testament times who entered Israel and caused problems. Was Jesus saying “Jezebel” had been reincarnated, or resurrected, and was literally teaching deception within Thyatira? Obviously not. A little reflection reveals He used the word, “Jezebel,” as a *symbol* of an evil movement that was affecting His Church. As with the seven golden candlesticks, God’s Messiah took something from Jewish history and applied it to His Church, “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

In Revelation 3, the Heavenly Interpreter dictated another letter to “the church in Philadelphia” (verse 7) in which He said a Christian could become “a pillar in the temple of My God,” and have a place in “the city of My God, the New Jerusalem” (verse 12). Don’t miss the significance of this. Not only did Jesus again use Jewish imagery—the temple—and apply it symbolically to His Church, but He also identified another city, “the New Jerusalem,” as God’s headquarters. And this city will not be a remodeled earthly Jerusalem with its bullet holes covered and the blood of suicide bombers scrubbed away. This one “comes down out of heaven” (verse 12).

What about Revelation’s prophecy of the river Euphrates drying up before Armageddon? The Word says, “The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” (Revelation 16:12). Does this apply to the literal river Euphrates flowing near Baghdad, which our American troops crossed in Operation Iraqi Freedom, or is something more intended?

The popular website, AboutBibleProphecy.com, in words which reflect usual Middle East literalism, reports:

In Revelation 16:12, the Bible says there will come a time when the Euphrates River becomes dry so that an army can cross it and march into Israel. When the book of

When the Euphrates Runs Dry

Revelation was written 1900 years ago, it would have taken a great natural disaster, or a great amount of labor to divert the flow of the Euphrates so that an army could cross it. (In 539 BC, Cyrus and his army diverted the flow so that his troops could march across the riverbed and conquer Babylon). But, today, there are a series of dams that would make it much easier to divert the flow of the powerful river.¹³⁷

Applying the same prophecy to “a vast Oriental army” and “a war in the Middle East,” Hal Lindsey wrote:

The Euphrates has presented a formidable problem for the corps of engineers of many ancient armies of the past. In this future invasion, however, God Himself will see to it that the river is dried up so that a trap is set for triggering the last great war of mankind.¹³⁸

Thus when AboutBibleProphecy.com, Hal Lindsey, and countless others read about the Euphrates drying up, they interpret this literally. The “kings of the east” are often assumed to be Chinese kings or warriors whose foot soldiers will someday cross a dry riverbed before attacking Israel at Armageddon. This is how Revelation 16:12 is expected to be fulfilled. Yet we cannot help but wonder: Why would an Asian country ever launch such an army against Jerusalem? And if one did attack Israel, why would its leaders first send their army *so far north* to cross the Euphrates? Why not plan a more direct attack, send planes, launch missiles, or drop bombs?

I am about to prove that such Middle East literalism fails miserably to discern the true meaning and genius of the Book of Revelation. It also misses the fact that Revelation is simply using Old Testament terms, history, and geography as symbols—just like Jesus did when He mentioned “Jezebel”—that are meant to be applied in a special, spiritual sense. On August 9, 1945, the United States government finally decided to drop an atomic bomb called the “Fat Man” upon Nagasaki. It is now time to drop our version of the “Fat Man” upon the popular Middle East method of interpreting Bible prophecy.

“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” (Revelation 16:12). In order to understand these words, we must first study some ancient Bible history about Israel and Babylon. In 605 B.C., Babylon conquered Jerusalem and took the Jews captive for 70 years (see Daniel 9:2). After 70 years, an amazing set of circumstances occurred. The Euphrates was dried up, Babylon was conquered from the east, and Israel was delivered. As we shall see, this forms the background for a true understanding of Revelation 16:12.

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

Ancient Babylon sat on the river Euphrates (see Jeremiah 51:63-64), and was surrounded by a massive wall of protection. The Euphrates flowed through Babylon, entering and exiting through two gates in the wall whose bars reached down to the riverbed. When those two gates, or “double doors” were completely shut and all other entrances were closed, Babylon was impregnable. Yet she was to fall suddenly and be destroyed (see Jeremiah 51:8). Then God would call Israel, saying, “My people, go out of the midst of her!” (Jeremiah 51:45) As we shall soon see, these exact words are repeated in Revelation to God’s spiritual Israel about the necessity of coming out of Mystery Babylon (see Revelation 17:4-5; 18:2-8).

In 538 B.C., on the night of ancient Babylon’s fall, her king and subjects were drunk with wine (see Daniel 5). So were the guards, and they forgot to fully close the double doors. Over 100 years earlier, God had predicted concerning Babylon and the Euphrates, “I will dry up your rivers” (Isaiah 44:27). The Lord also spoke about a man named “Cyrus,” who conquered Babylon, saying, “[I will] open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut” (Isaiah 45:1). Moreover God called Cyrus “My shepherd” and “His anointed” (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Thus Cyrus was a type of Jesus Christ. And he came “from the east” (Isaiah 46:11)!

Inside the British Museum in London lies the famous Cyrus Cylinder which describes how Cyrus conquered Babylon. According to history’s report, Cyrus and his army dug trenches upstream alongside of the river Euphrates, which diverted the water, causing the river to slowly go down as it ran through Babylon. No one noticed. One dark night, at the height of Belshazzar’s drunken feast, the water became low enough for Cyrus and his men to quietly sneak under the double doors, which had been left open. Quickly they overran the doomed city, slew the king (see Daniel 5:30), and conquered Babylon. Then Cyrus issued a decree to let Israel go (see Ezra 1).

Revelation uses the events, geography, and terminology of the Old Testament, and then brilliantly applies them universally to Jesus Christ, the Israel of God, and spiritual Babylon at the end of time. A failure to discern this principle has resulted in a massive misunderstanding of Revelation, a false Middle-East focus, and *end time delusions*.

In Revelation 17, a shiny angel said to John: “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters....So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy....having in her hand a golden cup....And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” (Revelation 17:1,3-5). Just like in Revelation chapter one, John was again “in the Spirit” when he

beheld this satanic seducer. Even so must we be “in the Spirit” in order to understand what this apocalyptic prostitute is really all about.

John saw the harlot sitting “on many waters,” just like ancient Babylon sat upon the Euphrates river. Yet in Revelation, these “many waters” do not refer to the literal river Euphrates which today flows near Saddam Hussein’s bombed-out Iraqi palaces. No! Revelation’s angel interpreter said, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15).

The genius of Revelation is that it uses the history of the Old Testament and then applies it spiritually to a Mystery Babylon which now sits upon the “many waters” of a spiritual river Euphrates. According to the angelic interpreter, this river of “many waters” actually *represents* “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” around the world that support the harlot and her global deceptions (see Revelation 17:15; 18:23). Echoing the ancient words of Jeremiah, yet applying them spiritually and globally, Revelation proclaims, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8).

The error of those who adopt the “literal Middle-East method” of interpretation stems from: (1) The belief that these prophecies must apply to Israel after the flesh, (2) A failure to study the Old Testament’s “root” history behind Revelation’s prophecies, (3) A failure to apply that history spiritually and universally to God’s Israel in the Holy Spirit, and (4) *A failure to center Revelation entirely in Jesus Christ and His global enemies*. Modern interpreters usually apply the words “Babylon,” “Euphrates,” and “kings of the east” to a literal city, a literal river, and literal armies in the Middle East. Yet Revelation speaks of that “which *spiritually* is called Sodom and Egypt,” about a “Mystery Babylon,” and about “many waters” that *represent* “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Revelation 11:8; 17:1,5,15).

In 1887, H. Grattan Guinness insightfully wrote:

Futurism is literalism, and literalism in the interpretation of symbols is a denial of their symbolic character. It is an abuse and degradation of the prophetic word, and a destruction of its influence. It substitutes the imaginary for the real, the grotesque and monstrous for the sober and reasonable.¹³⁹

This issue can be compared to the wearing of two different pairs of glasses. If we put on the “literal Middle-East glasses” we will “see” Revelation’s prophecies as applying only to literal places and Israel after the flesh. But if we put on the “Middle-East symbolism glasses” and read Revelation through the Spirit’s aid, we will “see” these prophecies applying to the Israel of God in the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote to Christians, “But you are not in the flesh but

in the Spirit” (Romans 8:9). If we put on the wrong glasses and interpret prophecy according to the flesh, we will end up blinder than a bat in daylight. But if we put on the right glasses and interpret prophecy through the enlightenment of the Spirit of truth (see John 16:13), then we will say, “I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25).

A woman in prophecy represents a church. The Church of Jesus Christ is called “His wife” who makes “herself ready” for the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-8). What about that other evil woman? Hold onto your seat. In a few moments I will prove—as Protestants have done for centuries—that the Babylonian whore represents a false form of Christianity that leads “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” away from the pure truth of Heaven’s Lamb. She is the net result of “the falling away” Paul predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. As Guinness perceptively revealed, “The contrast is between Church and Church; the faithful Church and the apostate Church.”¹⁴⁰

Specifically, Hell’s Harlot has these identifiable characteristics:

1. She is a “Mother” (Revelation 17:5).
2. She has harlot daughters (Revelation 17:5).
3. She sits on “seven mountains” (Revelation 17:9).
4. Her colors are “purple and scarlet” (Revelation 17:4).
5. She is extremely wealthy with lots of “gold” (Revelation 17:4).
6. She is “drunk with the blood of the saints” (Revelation 17:6).
7. She is a “great city” (Revelation 17:18).
8. She has ruled “over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18).
9. She intoxicates “all nations” with her “wine” (Revelation 14:8).
10. Many of God’s own people are still inside of her (Revelation 18:4).

Bestselling evangelical author Dave Hunt, whose 20-plus books have combined sales of over 3,000,000 copies, has tackled this topic head-on in his penetrating book, *A Woman Rides the Beast: The Roman Catholic Church and the Last Days*, published by Harvest House. Chapter titles include: “Mystery, Babylon,” “A City on Seven Hills,” “Blood of Martyrs,” “Dominion over Kings,” “What about Mary?” “Sacrifice of the Mass,” and “The Reformation

Betrayed.” Marshalling a vast amount of evidence from Scripture, church history, and the Protestant Reformation, Hunt easily concludes, “The leaders of the Reformation were certain that she [the woman of Revelation 17] represented the Roman Catholic Church....”¹⁴¹ Hunt agrees. With a pen dipped in concern for both Protestants (who have lost their knowledge of history) and sincere Roman Catholics, Mr. Hunt reveals that an apostate form of “Christianity will take over the world...not real Christianity but an Antichrist counterfeit thereof.”¹⁴²

During the first Persian Gulf war Saddam Hussein made a feeble attempt to begin rebuilding the ancient city of Babylon whose ruins now lie about 50 miles south of Baghdad. When he did, prophecy books came pouring off Christian presses declaring, “Look! Prophecy is being fulfilled. Babylon is rising!” At the same time, journalist John Elson’s article, *Apocalypse Now?* appeared on the last page of the February 11, 1991 issue of *Time* magazine. Elson insightfully commented, “The temptation to seek clues to the Second Coming on CNN is easy to understand, since Saddam Hussein has proclaimed himself a successor to Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who enslaved the Israelites of old. That makes it deceptively easy for prophecy mongers to identify Iraq with Babylon. Somewhat awkwardly, *it also undercuts a long standing Protestant tradition that this symbol of corruption refers to the Church of Rome.*”¹⁴³ Amazing!

End Time Delusions adheres to the historic Protestant view, not futuristic fables. Along with Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Spurgeon, Wylie, Hunt, and countless others, this book also recognizes *the woman riding the beast* symbolizes “the Church of Rome.” No other church fits every specification of the prophecy, nor does *any* other organization for that matter. Chillingly, the Roman Church even calls herself “Holy Mother Church,” “...the mother and teacher of all the churches.”¹⁴⁴ Yet prophecy gives her another title—“The Mother of Harlots” (Revelation 17:5).

H. Grattan Guinness offers this hard-to-refute summary:

Now, in conclusion, read this wonderful prophecy concerning “Babylon the Great” *in the clear and all-revealing light of history*. I ask those of you who have read the history of the last eighteen centuries, did not Rome Christian become a harlot? Did not Papal Rome ally itself with the kings of the earth? Did it not glory itself to be as a queen, and call itself the Mistress of the World? Did it not ride upon the body of the beast, or fourth empire, and govern its actions for centuries? Did not Papal Rome array itself with gold and precious stones and pearls? Is not this its attire still? We appeal to facts. Go to the churches and see. Look at the priests; look at the cardinals;

look at the popes; look at the purple robes they wear; look at the scarlet robes; look at the encrusted jewels; look at the luxurious palaces in which they live; look at the eleven thousand halls and chambers in the Vatican, and the unbounded wealth and glory gathered there; look at the glorious spectacles in St. Peter's at Rome, casting even the magnificence of royalty into the shade. Go and see these things, or read the testimony of those who have seen them. Shamelessly Rome wears the very raiment, the very hues and colors, portrayed on the pages of inspired prophecy. You may know the harlot by her attire, as certainly as by the name upon her brow.¹⁴⁵

Mystery Babylon is called, "The Mother of Harlots." But wait a minute! Think carefully. A "Mother" must have children. Prophecy says the Scarlet Woman is actually a Mother of "*Harlots*." That little "s" at the end of "Harlots" reveals that the Mother Church must have *harlot daughters*. If the "Mother" refers to a church, then a little reflection reveals that her daughters must also refer to churches and organizations that, while claiming separation from Rome, nevertheless teach fundamental doctrines that really originate with Mom. Solemn thought!

Further proof that the Mother and Daughters represent, as Dave Hunt states, "not real Christianity but an Antichrist counterfeit thereof," comes from the fact before King Jesus Christ returns in the clouds, God calls *His own people* to leave Babylon's infernal grip. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, 'Come out of her, My people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues' " (Revelation 18:4). In the Old Testament, when Cyrus dried up the literal Euphrates, this exact same call was given by God to literal Jews urging them to come out of literal Babylon. "My people," the Lord pleaded through Jeremiah, "go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the Lord" (Jeremiah 51:45). This exact same call is issued in Revelation to those within *spiritual* Babylon. Now don't miss this point. If Babylon in Revelation is a *spiritual* Babylon, then the Israel that God calls out must be a *spiritual* Israel. We must all come out lest we "share her sins" (Revelation 18:4).

"Come out of her, My people" (Revelation 18:4, emphasis added), says the Lord. Thus God considers many of His own people to be yet inside of Mystery Babylon. This must refer to large numbers—both Protestant and Catholic—of real Christians who are serving the Lord to the best of their ability. This must also apply to many who are even now teaching false prophecy. Yet God still calls them "My people." Because He knows their hearts, God mercifully still sees them as part of His spiritual Israel. But they are confused! In fact, *Babylon* means "confusion." Because of today's global religious confusion, especially about Bible prophecy, millions of the Lord's

When the Euphrates Runs Dry

people now believe *end time delusions* about Babylon and Israel. Yet according to Revelation 18:4, Jesus Christ is now calling us all to “come out” of spiritual confusion and into the pure light of His Word. We must leave Babylon before it’s too late. Why? Because soon the river will run dry.

“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up” (Revelation 16:12). “Babylon the Great” now sits on “the great river Euphrates.” According to the Angel, this river represents “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” around the world who support the false doctrines of Mystery Babylon. Right before the end, “the sixth angel” will pour out “his bowl upon the great river Euphrates.” This bowl is one of the seven “bowls of the wrath of God” (Revelation 16:1). Thus, it is the wrath of God—not Turkey—that will dry up the Euphrates. What does it mean? Brace yourself. It means that God’s wrath will eventually be poured upon *living people* around the world who continue supporting the deceptions of Mystery Babylon all the way until the end!

When “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues,” who have resisted the Holy Spirit’s truth-arrows and continued to support the Mistress of Temptation finally experience God’s burning wrath, the scales will be ripped from their eyes. They will realize they’ve been duped—big time. What loving conviction failed to accomplish, God’s justice finally will. Then they will turn on their teachers, preachers, and priests with madness and fury. What a frightening scene! They will “hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire” (Revelation 17:16). Then their support for the Mystery whore will vanish. This is how Babylon’s water will dry up, preparing the way for the “kings from the east” (Revelation 16:12).

Cyrus came from “the east” to conquer ancient Babylon (see Isaiah 44:26-28; 46:11). The word “east” literally means, “sun rising,” and the name “Cyrus” means “sun.” Cyrus was a type of Jesus Christ, “the Sun of Righteousness” (see Malachi 4:2). In Revelation, God’s holy angels come from the east (see Revelation 7:2). Jesus said, “As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27). Our Messiah is coming from the east with the armies of heaven as “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:14,16). Thus, the “kings of the east” are not Asian hordes or Chinese warriors, but King Jesus and His armies which will descend from the eastern skies to conquer Babylon and deliver Israel at Armageddon!

But which Israel will Jesus deliver? It will surely be an Israel in the Spirit which, having chosen to walk in the Spirit and to interpret prophecy according to the Spirit, has also chosen to “come out” of Mystery Babylon and to forsake its fleshy ways (see Galatians 5:16, 25; Revelation 18:4).

Let’s be part of *that* Israel.

Chapter 31

Frogs, Fables, and Armageddon

Truth is the only safe ground to stand on.

— Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902)

Most people don't like frogs, yet I enjoyed catching them as a kid. Did you know the Book of Revelation talks about frogs? Interestingly, it connects them with the battle of Armageddon.

John wrote, "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty....And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon" (Revelation 16:13-14,16). Based on the context, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet represent the three parts of Mystery Babylon (see verse 19). A careful reading of Revelation 16:13-16 reveals that Armageddon involves a final global battle between the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, the three froglike spirits, the kings of the whole world, and God Almighty.

Symbolism is involved here. The "dragon" is earlier said to have seven heads and ten horns (see Revelation 12:3), and so does "the beast" (see Revelation 13:1). The "false prophet"—the third member of this unholy trinity—is also referred to as "another beast" with "two horns like a lamb" but which speaks as a dragon (see Revelation 13:11). Three froglike spirits eventually speak to the entire world through the lips of these three seducers. Clearly this involves global *end time delusions*. The "dragon" is a symbol of satan himself (see Revelation 12:9) and "the beast" represents the papal power. What about the "false prophet"? Think about it. What comes from

false prophets anyway? *False prophecy*. Therefore—while this may not be the full message of the text—Revelation’s highly symbolic language about a frog-like spirit speaking through the lips of a “false prophet” could easily represent a massive system of “false prophecy” that is now deceiving millions about the beast itself, Babylon, Israel and Armageddon.

A plague of frogs was one of the ten plagues of Egypt. “Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt” (Exodus 8:6). This forms the background for Revelation 16:13. In the Old Testament, frogs came up from “the waters of Egypt.” In Revelation 16:12-13, three froglike spirits come from “the great river Euphrates,” whose waters represent the “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” that support the harlot (Revelation 17:15). Again, the third froglike spirit speaking globally through the lips of a “false prophet” suggests a gigantic system of false prophecy that even now “covers the land.” In contrast to the lies of the three frogs is Heaven’s counter-message of the three angels which tell the truth “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (see Revelation 14:6-12). Study carefully: It’s the three frogs against the three angels.

The third frog of false prophecy is now teaching a secret rapture, seven-year tribulation, future antichrist, literal drying up of a literal Euphrates, and a literal Middle-East Armageddon involving literal armies attacking literal Jews. Dear friend, *this is all false prophecy*. It is part of “the wine” of Babylon, which deceives all nations (Revelation 14:8; 18:23). In the New Testament, Jesus used the phrase “new wine” to represent His pure teaching while “old wine” symbolized the false doctrines of the Pharisees (see Luke 5:36-39). Wine confuses the mind. In Revelation, the “wine of Babylon” *represents* the tantalizing potion of *end time delusions* with which Mystery Babylon confuses and dupes the world. Much of this wine concerns Israel. That’s one reason why the harlot is called a counterfeit “Mystery.” She denies “the mystery of Christ” we read about earlier. She has rebuilt a wall between Jews and Gentiles—a wall Jesus Christ smashed into pieces at the cross (see Ephesians 2:14-17). Paul plainly predicted that the time would come when the majority would “turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The clock has struck twelve. We are now living in the time of frogs and fables.

Have you read the fairytale of a handsome prince who was turned into a frog? In this ancient story, the frog-prince still had the power of speech. One day the unfortunate frog happened to meet a beautiful princess. He opened his mouth, spoke, and convinced the maiden to give him a kiss. Presto! The frog became a prince again. What is the moral of this story for us today? The moral is that if we have come under the subtle influence of frogs and fables, it is high time to return to the Prince. We need the kiss of

royalty. The Bible says, “Kiss the Son” (Psalm 2:12). Through the words of truth that fall from the lips of the Truth Teller, we can be delivered from the third frog of false prophecy.

“And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16). This is the only time the exact word *Armageddon* is used in the Bible. The truth is, there is no literal place called “Armageddon” anywhere in the world. This mysterious term is a combination of two words: (1) *Ar*, which means “mountain,” and (2) *megiddon*, reminiscent of the ancient valley of Megiddo (see 2 Chronicles 35:22). In the Old Testament, Megiddo was a place of fierce battles and bloody slaughters. In fact, many scholars suggest the literal meaning of *Megiddo* is “slaughter” or “cut off.” Thus the mysterious word, *Armageddon*, could literally mean a “mountain” of “slaughter” upon which God’s enemies are “cut off.”

In Daniel 2, a “mountain” is used *symbolically* to refer to the global kingdom of God which will one day “fill the whole earth” (Daniel 2:35,44-45). In Revelation 16:14, we read about a global gathering of “the kings of the earth and of the whole world” to the final battle. These worldwide forces of satan compose his global kingdom which will entirely be gathered to “Armageddon,” to the mountain of slaughter. We conclude that “Armageddon” refers to a worldwide battle in which satan’s global kingdom will finally be slaughtered by the approaching Kingdom of God Almighty.

The actual slaughter of satan’s global kingdom is described immediately after “Armageddon” is mentioned. Read it for yourself: “And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon. Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Revelation 16:16-20). Contrary to the all-pervasive teaching of the third frog, these words clearly describe divine wrath upon *spiritual* Babylon and a *global* slaughter that reaches far beyond the Middle East.

Prior to Armageddon, the three froglike spirits “go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14). John wrote in a parallel passage, “I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, *gathered together* to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army” (Revelation 19:19, emphasis added). Who is the gathering at Armageddon

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

really against? Literal Jews? No! It is a gathering of the world forces of Mystery Babylon against the Warrior on the horse and against His army. The Warrior is King Jesus (see Revelation 19:11), but what about His army? Who will compose that holy battalion? It will be an army of “legions of angels” (Matthew 26:53) who return with King Jesus at His second coming (see Matthew 16:27; 24:31).

The following passage describes the actual battle of Armageddon, the victory of King Jesus, the doom of Hell’s Mistress, and the final slaughter of all the “nations” who have been duped by lucifer’s lying legionnaires. Read it reverently with a humble heart:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:11-16).

On the morning of September 11, Steve Miller was inside the fully intact South Tower of the World Trade Center just minutes after the North Tower burst into flames. As he and his associates descended from the 80th floor, he paused on the 55th floor to use the men’s room. It was shortly after 9:00 am. *Shall I phone my wife?* he pondered. Suddenly a voice echoed over the PA system—“Don’t panic. The building is safe. Return to your offices.” As Mr. Miller glanced sideways at the flaming building right next door and saw people jumping from windows a thousand feet above the ground, his innate distrust of official voices won out. He made a bolt for the stairs just as a second plane exploded into the South Tower a few floors above him. He ran outside, and as he hurried across the bridge toward Brooklyn, he looked back just in time to see his building vanish in a cloud of smoke. Upon his arrival at home his teary-eyed wife collapsed into his arms. “Oh, my God,” she cried, “I thought you were dead.”

As we approach “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14), my earnest appeal to you is: Don’t trust every official-sounding voice you hear, or you may end up dead. There are times when we must go against the grain, in the opposite direction of the crowd. Sincere

prophecy teachers who now advocate preterism or futurism (with its focus on literal Israel) may say, “Don’t panic. Our theories are safe. Stay in the building.” But the fact is, someday both towers of prophetic error will be totally vaporized.

In spite of Revelation’s description of a global slaughter, the bottom-line message of Armageddon is good news. Heaven’s encouragement is: The world forces of satan’s kingdom will one day come crashing down around the world. So take heart! The Rider on the white horse—whose name is Faithful and True—will win. “The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:11). God’s love shall endure forever, and some day “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful’ ” (Revelation 21:4-5).

In the midst of Armageddon’s ruins will lie the third frog of false prophecy. That frog will never become a prince. But we can! As Steve Miller’s wife fell into the arms of her husband, so should we fall right now into the loving arms of Jesus Christ and let His grace kiss new life into our souls.

Let’s forsake all frogs and fables as we follow the King.

Chapter 32

Thunder From Heaven s Temple

The Ten Commandments are the divinely revealed law.
It's time for Christians to take a stand.

— Roy Moore (1947-)
Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice

“And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon. Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake” (Revelation 16:16-18). Immediately after Armageddon is mentioned, the next verse shines the spotlight on “the temple of heaven.” There are noises, thunderings, lightnings, and a great earthquake. God is definitely trying to get our attention. His thunderous message is, “Look to the heavenly temple!”

The third frog wants us to gaze in the opposite direction, toward a third temple on earth. It's a strategy called *diversion*. In 1991, during Operation Desert Storm, the allies built up their forces just east of Iraq in the Persian Gulf. Saddam Hussein thought an attack was coming from the east, but the allies hit from the west. Their maneuver was successful because Saddam wasn't looking in that direction. Today, the third frog is doing the same thing. He wants us to look in the wrong direction toward a rebuilt third temple on earth. If we follow his croaking counsel, we will fail to discern life-saving truths coming from a different point of the compass.

Again John wrote, “The temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail” (Revelation 11:19). Here are the

same glorious manifestations of God's power we just read about in Revelation 16:18, yet now these fireworks are connected with the seeing of the heavenly "ark of His covenant." Millions have seen the movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, where Indiana Jones found the lost ark of the covenant. That movie is fantasy, while Revelation is reality. Because of the third frog's strategy of diversion, the knowledge of the heavenly ark has been lost. But prophecy says it will be regained and "seen" by those who search hard for this truth.

The same manifestations of God's power described in Revelation occurred when the Almighty descended on Mount Sinai to give the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 19:16-18; 20:1-17). The Ten Commandments are called "tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). After Moses received those rugged rocks, he "came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark" (Deuteronomy 10:5). Because those unique, God-authored tablets were placed inside the ark, that special, gold-covered box was called "the ark of the Testimony" (Exodus 40:20-21).

Revelation 11:19 says, "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple." Inside that ark are the original Ten Commandments. Here is a mighty truth God wants to be "seen," yet the devil is determined to blind us, and this is the reason for his diversion strategy. Through the third frog of false prophecy, the enemy seeks to divert our minds toward a rebuilt third temple on earth. Why? *Because there's no ark there!* If we follow his croaking counsel, we will look in the wrong direction, bypass Heaven's temple, and fail to discern the end time significance of the Ten Commandments.

Mystery Babylon has not only rebuilt a wall between Jews and Gentiles, but she often teaches that the Ten Commandments were given only for Israel, not the Church. But Jesus Christ, the Rock of the Church, boldly testified: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19). Did you catch that? Here the Master Teacher said we should "do" and "teach" the "commandments"—and not even "break one" of them!

A few verses later, Jesus specifically quoted the seventh commandment: "You shall not commit adultery" (Matthew 5:27). Then the Pure One commented, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (verse 28). Here Jesus

plummeted the spiritual depths of the seventh commandment, and He also applied it to “whoever,” meaning everyone. In a time of exploding Internet pornography, widespread proliferation of adult videos, sex scandals, flesh-flaunting TV programs, and marital unfaithfulness, shouldn’t God’s Church be emphasizing the seventh commandment?

Jesus also rebuked some tricky Pharisees for their subtle practice of skirting around God’s fifth commandment, which states, “Honor your father and your mother” (Matthew 15:4). Christ pointedly declared, “Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition” (Matthew 15:6). In this dark hour when children often rebel against mom and dad, and when one rock-and-roll group sings, “Kids, kill your parents,” shouldn’t God’s Church be proclaiming the fifth commandment also?

If you look carefully, Jesus Christ and the New Testament uphold every one of the Ten Commandments originally stated in Exodus 20. Pick up your Bible and read for yourself: Put God first (see Matthew 4:10); No idols (1 John 5:21; Revelation 22:15); Respect God’s name (Romans 2:24); Keep the Sabbath holy (Matthew 12:12; Luke 23:56); Honor your parents (Matthew 15:4; Ephesians 6:1-3); Do not murder (Matthew 19:18; 1 John 3:15); Do not commit adultery (Matthew 5:27-28; Galatians 5:19); Do not steal (Mark 7:22; Ephesians 4:28); Do not lie (Romans 13:9; Revelation 21:8); Do not covet (Luke 12:15; 1 Corinthians 6:12).

It’s a fact; Jesus Christ stood up for the Big Ten and rebuked others for breaking them. Yet today many professed Christians pit Christ against the Law, even though Jesus specifically said, “*Do not think* that I came to destroy the Law...” (Matthew 5:17, emphasis added). Are they referring to the Jesus of the New Testament? Well might we ask, “Will the real Jesus please stand up?” The Ten Commandments are unchangeable; that’s why God inscribed them with His Almighty finger on solid rock. Have you heard the expression, “We can change this or that, for it’s not written in stone”? This illustration stems from the Ten Commandments. In other words, what’s on stone can’t be altered.

James wrote to Christians, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law” (James 2:10-11). Look closely and think about it. How can a New Testament Christian “become a transgressor of the law” if it doesn’t exist anymore? Can a speeding driver receive a ticket for transgressing a speed law that doesn’t exist? Of course not! Speed laws do exist, and if we will but slow down to read carefully the words of Jesus Christ and of James, we’ll discover that the Ten Commandments still exist and apply to Christians.

Paul is clear that Christians are not saved by the Law, but by the grace of Jesus Christ. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Again, we are “justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). Yet Paul is equally clear that the Big Ten remain and have a purpose. What is this purpose? Paul declared: “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). “I had not known sin, but by the law” (Romans 7:7 KJV). “...that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful” (Romans 7:13). God’s Law makes our sin and inner darkness rise before our faces so that it becomes serious and “exceedingly sinful” to our astonished eyes. And the Law’s ability to do this is immeasurably strengthened when we realize God wrote Ten *Commandments*, not Ten Suggestions.

The Law is like a mirror. When people crawl out of bed in the morning and look at the glass they often hate what they see. Yet the mirror is important. We need to look at it. It’s the same with God’s Law. If we have the courage to look, we may not like what we see, but this painful and eye-opening revelation will cause us to feel our desperate need for Jesus Christ’s cleansing blood. In fact, without His blood, we’re condemned, damned, doomed, and under the penalty of Divine wrath (see Romans 2:5; 3:19; 4:15; 5:9). “Moreover the law entered, *that the offense might abound*. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20, emphasis added). “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24, KJV). The broken Law leads us to hide in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ alone (see Philippians 3:9).

The good news is, “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3). What are “our sins”? Heaven’s answer is, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4 KJV). When we look at God’s Law we see our sin and discern what slew our Savior. Almost two thousand years ago, on the crest of a hill called Calvary, the innocent Lamb of God became guilty. He experienced our sins of breaking the Ten Commandments. “Our sins” entered His mind and pierced His heart! He felt the sword of God’s wrath (see Zechariah 13:7)—the full execution of His justice against transgression. Moved by incomprehensible love, Jesus absorbed our death sentence. He paid the full price for breaking God’s Law. It’s true. Jesus Christ died on Mount Calvary because we broke the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai. The evangelical book, *Revival’s Golden Key*, by Ray Comfort with Kirk Cameron, supports this view fully, for it has as its entire theme the forgotten authority of God’s Ten Commandment Law and its inseparable connection to the grace of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁶

God gave another law on Mount Sinai that concerned His earthly temple and the dripping blood of animals. That law involved “sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin” (Hebrews 10:8; see also

Thunder From Heaven's Temple

Hebrews 10:1). Paul said it was this very “[sacrificial] law of commandments contained in ordinances” that formed “the middle wall of separation” between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14-16). When Jesus died, He caused “the sacrifice...to cease” (Daniel 9:27, KJV). He took that law of sacrifices, and “nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). But that law was not the Ten Commandments. The Big Ten are eternal, were written on solid rock, and are now inside the heavenly ark (see Revelation 11:19). Modern “Babylon,” which means “confusion,” has not only rebuilt a wall between Jews and Gentiles, but it has also mistakenly nailed the *wrong law* to the cross.

Read prayerfully these sobering words from Protestant John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church:

“There is, therefore, the closest connection that can be conceived, between the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to, the gospel; on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law...In the highest rank of the enemies of the gospel of Christ are they who openly and explicitly ‘judge the law’ itself, and ‘speak evil of the law;’ [see James 4:11], who teach men to break (to dissolve, to loose, to untie the obligation of) not one only, whether of the least or of the greatest, but all the commandments at a stroke....The most surprising of all the circumstances that attend this strong delusion, is that they are given up to it, really believing that they honor Christ by overthrowing His law, and that they are magnifying His office while they are destroying His doctrine! Yea, they honor Him just as Judas did when he said, ‘Hail, Master, and kissed Him.’ And He may as justly say to every one of them, ‘Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?’ It is no other than betraying Him with a kiss, to talk of His blood, and take away His crown; to set light by any part of His law, under pretense of advancing His gospel. Nor indeed can anyone escape this charge, who preaches faith in any such a manner as either directly or indirectly tends to set aside any branch of obedience: who preaches Christ so as to disannul, or weaken in any wise, the least of the commandments of God.”¹⁴⁷

“God is not the author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33). In order to overcome the tricks of Revelation’s temptress, we must accept the words of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 5:17-19), of Paul (see Romans 3:19-20; 7:7,12-13), of James (see James 2:10-12), and of John (see 1 John 3:4) regarding the continuing authority of the Ten Commandments. We must look square into the

Big Ten and realize we're doomed without the blood of Jesus. Losing all self-confidence, and motivated by Christ's love and sacrifice, we must yield to the Spirit's wooing, repent of our sins, and trust fully in the merits of our Savior. Then we have the promise of full forgiveness for all our sins. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The Lamb Himself will wash us from all filthiness "in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5) and clothe us with "white garments" (Revelation 3:18); the "white robes" of His own spotless righteousness (Revelation 7:9).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit—now that we have a fresh start—we are enabled to keep God's Law (see Romans 8:4). Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15)—a direct quote from the second commandment (compare with Exodus 20:6). In fact, Christ Himself is the One who—in His pre-Bethlehem state—originally led the Israelites from Egypt and who wrote the Big Ten on stone (compare 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; John 1:1-3; 8:58; Exodus 3:14). His Law reflects His character.

This brings us to the heart of the great divide that will ultimately separate God's Israel in the Holy Spirit from the flesh-ways of the Scarlet Harlot. It's a moral issue. The issue is: Love for Jesus Christ practically demonstrated by the Spirit-prompted keeping of the Ten Commandments now housed in Heaven's ark. In Revelation, this issue is symbolically represented as being shouted to the whole world by an angel, specifically, by one called "the third angel." "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice....Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:9,12 KJV). This exact issue is repeated in Revelation 12:17 and 22:14 (KJV). It will be understood by all who avoid the third frog's diversion strategy, who look to the right temple, and whose Spirit-enlightened eyes discern the heavenly ark (see Revelation 11:19).

The true "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16) forgiven by "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29) will focus on "the temple of God" (Revelation 11:19) and will keep "the commandments of God" (Revelation 14:12) by "the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:9,14) as it journeys toward what Jesus Christ called "the city of My God, the New Jerusalem" (Revelation 3:12).

Don't let the *third* frog lead you from the *third* angel to an imaginary *third* temple that has no ark.

Chapter 33

144,000 Israelites Indeed

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark.
The real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.

— *Plato* (427-347 B.C.)

“The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17 KJV). “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12 KJV). Just as a “remnant” of ancient Israel came out of literal Babylon and rebuilt a second temple (Haggai 1:12), even so will a final “remnant” of spiritual Israel come out of spiritual Babylon in order to keep the Ten Commandments now housed safely inside the ark in Heaven’s temple (see Revelation 11:19).

God’s final remnant is referred to in prophecy as the 144,000 (see Revelation 14:1-5). They are described as coming from “all the tribes of the children of Israel” (Revelation 7:4). Does this mean they are all literal Jews? Millions think so. Some popular teachers liken this group to “144,000 Jewish Billy Grahams” who will evangelize the world during the tribulation after the rapture. But is this right? We have previously seen that Paul wrote that Jews and Gentiles are now “one” and are part of “the same body” through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:14; 3:4-6). Does the last Book in the Bible contradict Paul’s writings? Does Revelation rebuild a wall between Jews and Gentiles that Jesus Christ abolished at the cross? Of course not!

Let’s put on our “New Testament Spirit-glasses” and take a closer look. The 144,000 are described as standing on “Mount Zion” with the Lamb (Revelation 14:1). Mount Zion is where Jerusalem sits. Yet in Revelation,

“Mount Zion” does not refer to any mountain in the Middle East. John wrote, “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:10). As John was “in the Spirit,” even so must we be “in the Spirit” in order to see the truth about Mount Zion and the 144,000. Paul told believers, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrews 12:22-23). Thus there is a heavenly Mount Zion on which the New Jerusalem sits. It is the home of the Church. *And this is where John saw the 144,000.*

In the New Testament, James wrote his letter “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). Who were these twelve tribes? In the next sentence James called them, “My brethren.” Then he wrote to them about “the testing of [their] faith” (James 1:3). Thus, these “twelve tribes,” which James wrote to as a unit, were believers in Christ. In the same letter, he counseled those from among these “twelve tribes” who were sick to “call for the elders of the church” for special prayer (James 5:14). Thus to James, the “twelve tribes” were definitely part of the Church.

The 144,000 “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Revelation 14:1,4). Therefore they are Christians who love Jesus. They are “not defiled with women, for they are virgins” (Revelation 14:4). This does not mean the 144,000 is composed of only literal, Jewish, unmarried, or celibate men. If so, this would be teaching mass celibacy, a dogma which Paul called a “doctrine of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1-3). In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul also used the word “virgin,” and he applied it to the Church. What about the 144,000 not being “defiled with women”? This is talking about the harlot ladies of Revelation 17.

The truth is that the 144,000 represent a final remnant of God’s Israel in the Spirit, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, who are not “defiled” by the deceptions and false prophecies of the mother and daughters of Mystery Babylon (see Revelation 17:5). The reason Revelation refers to them as coming from “all the tribes of the children of Israel” is because, in the process of exiting modern Babylon, all deception, and even their own personal sins, they have gone through a similar “wrestling experience” with the Lord as did Jacob when his name was changed to Israel (see Genesis 32:24-28).

At the beginning of this “Israel Delusions” section we learned that the name “Jacob” literally meant “crook” or “deceiver.” This name was an accurate description of Jacob’s character. He purposefully lied to Isaac three times (see Genesis 27:19-24) and then stole his father’s final blessing from his older brother Esau. As a result of his wicked deception, Jacob went into exile for

20 years. On his way back home, he discovered Esau was coming with 400 men to meet him (see Genesis 32:6). Filled with guilt, shame, and terror, Jacob feared his life would be snuffed out because of his sin.

Then came that lonely night of wrestling with the Angel of God. Finally, just before dawn, Jacob gave up on himself, repented of his sin, and firmly gripped the heavenly Messenger, saying, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” (Genesis 32:26) Then came this response from the Angel: “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed” (verse 28). Through repentance, humility, and faith, Jacob overcame his naturally deceptive nature. God gave him a new heart, a new name, a new character. He had gained the victory.

That very experience that transformed Jacob into a “spiritual Israel” is a type of the transforming experience that will produce the 144,000. This is a deep thought, yet it’s true. This insight is more significant than the rediscovery of the *Titanic*’s sunken hull. And it applies to us. By nature we all are like Jacob—sinful, crooked, and deceptive. Maybe, while reading this book, you have discovered that you yourself have unwittingly deceived others about Bible prophecy. The thought is terrifying! The Bible says, “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape” (Proverbs 19:5). Just as Esau was coming to meet Jacob, even so does Bible prophecy predict that God Almighty will eventually come to punish Mystery Babylon for her lies (see Revelation 18:8). Those who “love and practice a lie” will unexpectedly find themselves outside the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:15). “All liars” will be hurled into the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). Thus truth versus lies is a life-and-death matter.

Yet Jesus loves us! On a splintery cross His blood dripped down for all our sins, including our sins of deception. He rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven. And now, as our merciful High Priest ministering before the ark in Heaven’s temple, He has given us the Book of Revelation to teach us the truth. At this very moment, the Good Shepherd is pleading with us to leave the lies of Mystery Babylon before it’s too late. “Come out of her, My people,” is His final call from Heaven (Revelation 18:4,8). Soon modern Babylon will be “utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her” (Revelation 18:8). She’ll be pulverized.

This is our night for spiritual wrestling, yet soon the darkness will end. It was at the breaking of the day when the heavenly Messenger finally touched Jacob’s hip (see Genesis 32:24-25). It was then that Jacob’s self-confidence was finally broken as he clung to the Angel of God. So it may be with us. According to prophecy, we are even now at “the breaking of the day.” The Son of God is coming soon! Oh, may the Master touch us now

and break us! May the Holy Spirit explode every ounce of wicked pride that so often pulsates within our sin-clogged mental veins. Following the example of Jacob, let's cling to our Savior for our very lives and say, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

As with Jacob, if we humble ourselves, repent of our sins, and depend entirely upon God's mercy, the King of Israel will not forsake us. If in simple faith we lay hold of His perfect righteousness, Jesus will forgive us, change us, and give us a new name. By faith we can hear the Master say, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28). Jesus is the true Seed of Abraham, the Victorious One. Through faith in Him, God will cause "us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14). Through the Truth Teller, we can escape the deadly distortions of Mystery Babylon. Through God's boundless grace, we can each become, like Jacob, a spiritual Israel.

The Bible specifically says about the 144,000: "In their mouth was found no guile [deception]: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Revelation 14:5 KJV). Like Nathanael, they are "Israelite[s] indeed, in whom is no deceit!" (John 1:47) They overcome Hell's Harlot, her deceptions, and her false prophecies. The 144,000 are like Jacob. They prevail over their own deceptive natures through the grace of Heaven's Lamb.

The above passage in Revelation 14:5 about the 144,000 finds its root in the Old Testament. "The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth" (Zephaniah 3:13). Thus the final remnant of Israel will be made up of people who speak the truth. They must be one with Jesus Christ, who is "the Truth" (John 14:6). They must also be guided by "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13). Composed of Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Messiah, they will be God's final Israel in the Spirit. It is my personal opinion that the number "144,000" is symbolic. Yet whether literal or symbolic, I hope we will all "be in that number, when the saints go marching in."

End Time Delusions is like a heat-seeking missile whose purpose is to explode deception. As it flies on its mission, its intention is not to promote anti-Semitism against Jewish people, or to offend sincere Bible-believing Christians. Rather, its goal is to illuminate minds and save souls. At this very moment, the Christian Church is filled with gigantic misinterpretations of prophecy—about the rapture, Daniel's 70th week, the antichrist, and Israel—which are out of harmony with the true teaching of Jesus Christ and the New Testament. Massive changes must occur within churches, prophetic ministries, and seminaries. In order for this to happen, God's missile must hit some big targets!

If you have been led to believe all Christians will disappear with a “poof!” before the tribulation hits, this lie must be unmasked. If you have accepted the idea that a final Mr. Sinister will literally walk into a rebuilt Jewish temple during a seven-year showdown, take a seat, and say, “Listen up, I’m God!” this false theory must be blown up. If you have been taught that Revelation’s statements about Jerusalem, Mount Zion, the temple, Gog, Magog, Sodom, Egypt, Babylon, and the Euphrates River apply to those literal places in the Middle East, these errors must be shattered. If well-meaning people have convinced you that Armageddon’s major contestants are Russia, China, and the Jewish State, someone must lock this error into sight within an instrument panel and push a glowing red button reading, “Launch Missile Now.” It’s time to flee from all frogs and fables.

Every one of these supposedly unsinkable theories will hit the ice at Armageddon. They all will sink just like the *Titanic*. “Abandon ship!” is the cry from our Captain. “Come out of her, My people” pleads the Heavenly One (see Revelation 18:4). Instead of looking toward an earthly Jerusalem south of Haifa and east of Televiv, our focus should be “the holy city, New Jerusalem” which will someday “come down out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:2). Rather than dwelling on the Wailing Wall or Temple Mount, our vision should center on “the sanctuary” in Heaven, “the true tabernacle” (Hebrews 8:1-2) where our faithful High Priest now ministers His crimson blood in our behalf. Jesus is the “Seed of Abraham,” the true Israel (Isaiah 41:8 KJV; Galatians 3:16). “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). Never forget these words.

May God help us all to be among Revelation’s final remnant of Israel in the Spirit of whom it is written, “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). According to the Lord’s “sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19 KJV), such a commandment-keeping remnant will exist right before the return of Jesus Christ on a “white cloud” (Revelation 14:14-16). They will be ready for the descent of the Son of Man with His “sharp sickle” (verse 14) and will have an eternal home inside the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-27).

Charing Cross is the name of a subway station in London. I’m told there is a cross there, serving as a reference point for travelers. A small child once lost her way in the big city and sat down on a street corner, weeping. “What’s wrong, little girl?” asked a passing policeman. “I’m lost! I can’t find my way home,” the girl sobbed. Willing to take her home himself, the man asked for her address. She didn’t know. The name of her street? No idea. Her phone number? “I can’t remember!” the lost girl moaned through her tears. Frustrated, the policeman finally asked, “Little girl, what do you know?”

♦END TIME♦ DELUSIONS

After thinking for a moment, the child's face lit up. "Mister, I know how to get home from the cross. If you can just take me to the cross, I can find my home from there!"

Dear friend, it's the same for us. We must all come to the cross—Protestants, Catholics, Jewish people, Muslims, preterists, futurists, historicists, prostitutes, alcoholics, drug addicts, and everyone else. We can find our way home from there. As we journey towards the New Jerusalem, our Friend Jesus has made every provision that we shall arrive safely. He loves us, points out our dangers, reproves, convicts, and purifies (see Daniel 12:10). Thank the Lord, He has given us "the Spirit of truth" and His "sure word of prophecy" to guide us on the narrow road (John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:19 KJV; Matthew 7:14).

May Paul's words apply to us: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (Romans 8:9). Let's live in the Spirit *and interpret prophecy according to the Spirit*. Through God's grace and the tender love of Jesus Christ, may we each receive courage and strength to become "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit" (John 1:47).

In these closing days of darkness before the bursting forth of eternal day, it is my earnest prayer that God will use *End Time Delusions* to strike, penetrate—and illuminate—some very big targets.

Endnotes

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End Time Delusions Study Guide

SECTION 1: THE RAPTURE DELUSION

Many Christians have been taught that God's Church will disappear, be "caught up," or raptured, *seven years before the loud, visible return of Jesus Christ* (His second coming). According to this theory, it's a silent rapture *first, then* seven years of tribulation, *then* the second coming. Supposedly, those who miss the rapture will have a "second chance" to be saved during those future seven years. Does the Bible really teach this doctrine? Let's review the key Scriptures that are being used by rapture teachers to support their own views, and find out if the Scriptures truly support them, or actually challenge and contradict their theories.

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:16

List three noisy sounds connected with Jesus Christ's return:

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.

2. 1 Thessalonians 4:17

True believers will then be "_____."

Does "caught up" necessarily mean disappear without a trace?

Compare with Acts 1:9: "...while they watched, He was _____." Compare Acts 1:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, and Matthew 24:30-31. What can we learn from these Scriptures?

3. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

This same "day of the Lord" will come like a "_____". For when they [the unprepared] say, 'Peace and safety!' then _____ comes upon them...And they shall _____." Verse 3 shows the "thief" idea doesn't mean a silent coming, but a sudden one. Compare 4:17 with 5:3. The saved are "_____" while the unprepared shall "not _____." What can we learn from 5:4-5?

4. Matthew 24:3-5,11,24

Concerning His return, Jesus Christ warned us four times not to be
“_____.”

5. Matthew 24:26

What will false teachers say about Christ's coming?

6. Matthew 24:27

How will Jesus come?

7. Matthew 24:40-41

When Jesus comes, “Then two men will be in the field: one will be _____ and the other _____.” *Is this a secret “rapture” or the second coming?* Read verses 27,30-31,36-39 carefully to discover the answer. What can we learn from these verses?

8. 1 Corinthians 15:52

When Jesus comes, what two things will happen in “the twinkling of an eye”?

1. _____
2. _____

This occurs when “the _____ trumpet” sounds. Compare with 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Matthew 24:31.

Conclusion: Upon careful examination, 1 Thessalonians 4:16–5:3, Matthew 24:36-41, and 1 Corinthians 15:52 do not teach a silent return of Jesus Christ, a “secret rapture,” or disappearing Christians. Taken in context, they all teach that true believers will be “caught up” at the loud, noisy, visible, second coming of our Lord, when “the trumpet sounds,” at “the last trumpet.”

SECTION 2: THE TRIBULATION DELUSION

Countless Christians have debated whether Jesus Christ will return *before* the seven years of tribulation (the pre-trib position), in the *middle* of the seven years (the mid-trib position), or at the *end* of the seven years (a post-trib position). Those who adopt the pre-trib view contend that God will remove His people in the rapture so they won't have to endure the final "tribulation" at all. Study Guide #2 will attempt to prove that God's people have endured and will yet endure "tribulation" until the end of the world. More importantly, it will demonstrate that there is *no* future "seven-year tribulation" at all.

1. Seven Years of Tribulation?:

Search the Bible for this exact phrase. Can you find it? It isn't there. Amazingly, the entire theory is based on a highly speculative interpretation of one verse—Daniel 9:27.

2. Daniel 9:27 literally says:

"And _____ shall _____ the _____ with many for _____; and in the _____ of the week he shall cause the _____ and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it _____, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured out upon the desolate" (Daniel 9:27 KJV).

3. Daniel 9:27 as popularly interpreted:

"He" is the antichrist.

"The covenant" is a peace treaty the antichrist makes with the Jews after the rapture.

"One week" is the seven-year period of tribulation.

"In the midst of the week" means after three and one-half years.

"He shall cause the sacrifice...to cease" means the antichrist will stop the sacrifices of the a rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem during the tribulation.

4. Daniel 9:27 as anciently interpreted (see Matthew Henry's famous Bible commentary):

"He" is Jesus Christ.

"The covenant" is "the new covenant" which Jesus Christ "confirmed."

"One week" means "seven years" (see Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34).

"In the midst of the week" means after three and one-half years of holy ministry.

"He shall cause the sacrifice...to cease" occurred when Jesus Christ died. His death caused the Jewish sacrifices to "cease" to be of value in God's sight.

5. Daniel 9:27 *fulfilled* by Jesus Christ:

Daniel 9:25-26: Who is the primary subject of these verses? _____
Romans 15:8: Jesus came to “_____ the promises made to the fathers”
(KJV).

Matthew 26:28: “For this is My _____ of the _____
which is shed for _____ for the remission of sins.” Compare with Daniel 9:27.
How long was Jesus Christ’s public ministry? _____

Matthew 27:51: When Jesus died, what happened to the veil of the Jewish
temple? Why? _____

Hebrews 10:12: Jesus “offered _____
_____ forever.”

Matthew 23:38: Jesus said, “See! Your house is left to you _____.”

6. God always strengthens His people to endure tribulation.

Read John 16:33; Romans 5:3-5; Acts 14:22; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation
1:9; 2:9; 7:14; Matthew 24:13; 28:20; Psalm 91. Discuss these verses. What can
we learn from them? _____

Conclusion: The entire “seven-year tribulation theory” is a mega-myth. With
His own precious blood, Jesus Christ Himself “confirmed” the covenant mentioned
in Daniel 9:27. Throughout history, God has always strengthened His Church to
endure tribulation, and He promises to do this until the end.

SECTION 3: THE ANTICHRIST DELUSION

Popular rapture theories teach that “the antichrist” applies to only one future Mr. Diabolical who shows up after Christians vanish. According to this view, “the antichrist” isn’t here now, won’t confront the Church, and only attacks after-the-rapture, new believers.

- 1. Antichrist?** The word “antichrist” is found only five times in the Bible. Contrary to popular opinion, none of these verses points to a yet-future Mr. Sinister.

1 John 2:18: “...ye have heard that _____ shall come” (KJV).

1 John 2:18: “...even _____ are there _____ antichrists” (KJV).

1 John 2:19: “_____ went out from _____” (KJV). What does this mean?

1 John 2:22: “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is _____ who denies the Father and the Son.” Who might this apply to today? _____

1 John 2:26: In John’s day, who were these many “antichrists” trying to deceive? _____

1 John 4:3: Antichrist will not confess that “Jesus Christ has come in the _____.”

1 John 4:3: There is a “_____ of antichrist.”

1 John 4:3: This spirit is “_____ in the world.”

1 John 4:4: Who is to overcome antichrist? _____ How?

1 John 4:6: The spirit of antichrist is also “the spirit of _____.”

2 John 7: He who denies Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is “a deceiver and _____ antichrist.”

- 2. Daniel 7:** Although Daniel didn’t use the word, “antichrist,” many of his prophecies describe things that are antichrist in nature.

7:3-7: Daniel dreamed of four beasts. A _____, _____, _____, _____.

7:23: A beast represents _____.

7:7-8: The fourth beast had “_____ horns.” Then there came up among them “_____ horn” (KJV).

7:8: The little horn had “eyes _____ the eyes of _____, and a _____ speaking great things” (KJV).

7:21: The little horn “made _____ with the _____, and prevailed against them” (KJV).

3. 2 Thessalonians 2: Paul warned about an “antichrist” of prophecy.

2:1: Jesus Christ is coming to “_____ together” His people.

2:3: Before He comes, there will come “a _____ first.”

A “falling away” means an apostasy from truth. See 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; Revelation 2:4-5.

2:3: In the wake of this “falling away” will come “that _____ of sin... the _____ of perdition.”

Who did Jesus also call a “son of perdition” in John 17:12? What lesson can we learn from this? _____

2:4: Where will this antichrist sit? _____

According to 1 Corinthians 3:16, what is “the temple of God”? What lesson can we learn from this? _____

2:7: In Paul’s day, “the mystery of lawlessness” was “_____ at work.”

2:8: How long will this mystery of lawlessness work? _____

4. Revelation 13: The beast in Revelation 13:1 is the same as the “little horn” in Daniel 7:8.

13:2: The beast is a combination of what three beasts? _____, _____, _____.

13:2: Who gives the beast his power and seat? _____

13:5: The beast has “a _____ speaking great things” just like the little horn.

13:7: The beast makes “war with the _____” just like the little horn.

13:7: The beast has power over “every _____, _____, and _____.”

Conclusion: When all biblical verses about “antichrist” are examined, it is clear they do not apply to only one Mr. Deadly who shows up after the rapture. In John’s day, there were “many antichrists,” and there was also a “spirit of antichrist.” A careful analysis of Daniel’s “little horn,” Paul’s “mystery of lawlessness,” and John’s “beast” also point toward something much bigger than simply one evil person who shows up after we’re gone. Ultimately, “antichrist” is against Jesus Christ and His true gospel (see 1 John 2:2,18).

SECTION 4: THE ISRAEL DELUSION

Fundamental to rapture theology is the supposed distinction between Israel and the Church. Rapture promoters teach that after the Church is “caught up,” then God will focus on the Jews. This theory sees physical Israel, a rebuilt Jewish temple, and a Middle East Armageddon as the final focus of the Book of Revelation. Does the New Testament and Revelation itself support this doctrine?

1. The first time Israel is mentioned in the Bible:

Genesis 32:28: “Your name shall no longer be called _____, but _____.”

This is the first time the word “Israel” is found in Scripture.

Read Genesis 27 and 32:1-28. Why do you think the Angel changed Jacob’s name to Israel? _____

What spiritual lessons can we learn from this? _____

2. The shocking principle of two Israels: According to the New Testament, there is not just one Israel, but two! Here’s the proof.

1 Corinthians 10:18: “Behold _____ after the _____” (KJV).

Romans 9:3-4: “...my countrymen according to the _____, who are _____.”

Galatians 6:16: “...the Israel of _____”

Romans 9:6: “They are not all _____ [of God] who are of _____ [after the flesh].”

That is, not all who are literal Israelites are part of “the Israel of God.”

Compare Romans 9:1-3 to Galatians 6:14-16. What is the difference between the two Israels? _____

Romans 9:8: “...those who are the children of the flesh, these are _____ the _____.” Only those who are born again

are God’s spiritual children (see John 1:11-13).

Galatians 6:14 (KJV): What does “the Israel of God” glory in? _____

Galatians 6:15 (KJV): The issue is not circumcision or uncircumcision, but “a new _____.”

3. Jews and Gentiles are part of God’s Israel through Jesus Christ: Paul did not separate believing Gentiles from believing Jews. Both groups are now one in Jesus Christ, the true Messiah.

Galatians 3:16: God made promises to Abraham and _____

who is _____.

Galatians 3:29: Paul told Gentiles, "If you are _____, then you are _____."

Galatians 3:28: "There is neither _____ nor _____ ... you are all _____ in Christ Jesus."

Romans 11:17: Believing Gentiles are "grafted _____."

Ephesians 2:11-13: Believing Gentiles are now part of "the commonwealth of _____."

Ephesians 2:14-15: Jesus broke down "the middle _____ of _____."

Ephesians 4:4-6: Jews and Gentiles are now "of _____ body."

4. Israel in Revelation: The focus of the Book of Revelation is Jesus Christ, the Israel of God, Mystery Babylon, Christ's heavenly temple, and the New Jerusalem—not physical Israel in the Middle East.

Revelation 1:1: The Book is primarily "the revelation of _____."

Revelation 3:12: Jesus called the "_____ Jerusalem" the "city of _____."

Revelation 7:4: "...all the tribes of the children of _____."

Revelation 11:19: "The _____ of God was opened in _____" (see 13:6; 15:5; 16:1).

Revelation 17:5: "MYSTERY, _____ THE GREAT."

Revelation 16:16-19: After Armageddon (16), "the temple of _____" (17) is mentioned and "great _____" (19) collapses.

Conclusion: The New Testament's focus is Jesus Christ, the primary "seed" of Abraham (Galatians 3:16), "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16) composed of both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ (Galatians 3:28-29), "the temple of God in heaven" (Revelation 11:19), and the "New Jerusalem" (Revelation 3:12; 21:10)—not "Israel after the flesh" (1 Corinthians 10:18) or earthly Jerusalem (see Galatians 4:22-31).

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