

God's Plan

Seen

Among The Nations

by

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A consideration of scripture to see how God is working out His plan and purpose for mankind from man's fall in the very beginning, God reconciling us to Himself and bringing us to His ultimate restoration on a new earth under a new heaven; to the city of God.

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INTRODUCTION

As we consider what is unfolding in our day, in and among the nations of the world, it is possible to view this purely through political eyes. We might imagine that man is the sole author of his own fate not realising that God is working out His plan and purpose in and through current world events, His plan that goes back before the very foundation of the world.

We might think that the circumstances of our lives are completely random and in our control, but the reality is very different.

A wonderful and awesome story slowly unfolds as we read the bible, first describing the fall of mankind, his subsequent progress, the creation of nations, and how God is bringing forth His plan to bring eternal salvation to mankind in His love, "desiring all men to be saved," (1 Timothy 2:4) and bringing those who will respond to His love, to everlasting life.

We are presently living in "the times of the Gentiles," (Luke 21:24) which can be rendered as "the times of the nations." (In Greek, 'ethnos', is used in the plural of nations other than Israel and occasionally of Gentile converts in distinction from Jews) Before the cross we see the focus of God's plan was worked out in and through Israel but now the plan is being worked out amongst all nations. This age, however, is drawing to a close and Jesus will come back to the earth with His saints, will save all Israel, and will rule all the nations with a rod of iron. An even more distant goal is in sight, however - the city of God - the final destination to where we are heading.

Although God is working out His plan and purpose this is largely ignored by the many, either because of ignorance or unbelief, yet it is there for all to see if one reads the biblical account with understanding; understanding that the Holy Spirit can impart if we ask Him.

So, to help us grasp the wonder of God's intent, let us go back to the time before there were any nations, and from there trace the progress of the nations to our modern day and beyond.

This study will, for brevity, skip over many times and many events, but will hopefully give an overview that is helpful in us walking in God's will, and understanding His ways.

As we look to the future, the detail can appear complicated. Understanding of scripture can only be clearly seen as the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to its true and correct meaning. The prayer with this booklet is that the Holy Spirit will reveal what is truth to the reader.

In this booklet I will share what I believe is right and from the Lord, but this understanding needs weighing in the Spirit. So let us consider these things together, with Him who is our Teacher.

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CHAPTER ONE

Before There Were Nations

The story of mankind begins in the garden of Eden. Thought of as just a story by many, it tells how God created the heavens and the earth and “formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7) He then “fashioned woman” from a rib taken from man. (Genesis 2:22) “God created man in His own image” and “God blessed them”, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” (Genesis 1:27-28)

In the very beginning all that God had made was good, but we soon see that the angel, Lucifer, the ‘Shining One’, had fallen from his high position. **Trying to oppose what God had desired for His creation, in his rebellion, Satan would keep trying to deceive mankind.**

Isaiah prophesied of Satan, and of his demise, “How you have fallen from heaven, O ‘Lucifer, light of the morning’, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, **You who have weakened the nations!** But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.” (Isaiah 14:12-15)

In the beginning God put the man and woman in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. But the “Lord God commanded the man saying, “From any tree in the garden you may eat but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **from the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**” (Genesis 2:16-17)

Within the garden, however, **the serpent was found** and he was more crafty than any beast in the field that God had made, and he tempted the woman to eat of the tree, telling her that she would not die, but would be 'as God', knowing good and evil. So the woman was tempted by the serpent and ate of the fruit, and gave the fruit to her husband and he ate! So it was that Eve was deceived, but Adam sinned by disobeying God's command to him.

That day they died, just as God had said they would, dying spiritually, not ceasing to exist, but losing their ability to fellowship with God as they previously could. Spiritual death brought spiritual separation from God. Thus man lost his innocence.

"The Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil.'" And now, in case he stretch out his hand to eat of the tree of life and live forever, God drove them out of the garden of Eden, declaring over the woman and the man, how their lives would now be cursed. God restricted the serpent's abilities, declaring that there would be enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between his seed and her seed, saying to the serpent regarding her 'seed'; "**He shall crush you on the head and you shall bruise Him on the heel.**" (see Genesis 3:1-24)

We see, in this statement, a foretelling of the enmity between Satan and Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, as well as with all mankind.

We see Satan tricking Adam by deceit to seek to be as God, just like he desired to be himself, and we see the beginning of the spiritual battle that would ensue between mankind and Satan from that day forward.

Man's Walk Without God

After the creation, and Adam's fall from grace, as men began to multiply upon the earth "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great... and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5) Soon the earth was corrupt in the sight of God and filled with violence. All flesh had corrupted their way and "The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth and He was grieved in His heart." (Genesis 6:6)

Such was the degeneration that had occurred in men's hearts, that God felt like blotting out all mankind, the animals, the creeping things, and the birds that He had created. But there was a glimmer of hope. He found favour in Noah. So it was that God instructed Noah to build an ark before He flooded the earth to kill the rest of mankind.

The book of Genesis describes this amazing, miraculous story of how Noah and his family were saved, along with the animals and living creatures who entered the ark with them.

After the flood God made a covenant with Noah and all mankind, stating that He would never again flood the earth, setting a rainbow in the sky as a sign of this covenant promise. (Genesis 9:11-13) Thus man has had no need to fear such a judgment again every time it begins to rain. But a change had taken place. Prior to the flood man only ate green plants but now God declared to Noah that "every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you." (Genesis 9:3) God then told man to populate the earth, to be fruitful and multiply in it. (see Genesis 9:7)

So it was that mankind began to populate the earth once more. The scriptures tell us that the whole of mankind used the same language and that mankind began to spread towards the east.

This is the account of the beginning of mankind's journey that we read of in the book of Genesis - the book of 'Beginnings' - but the nature of man was such that he would continue to err until he found a Saviour to restore his relationship and fellowship with God, the need that lies within every man or woman born since that day.

The Beginning of Nations - Created By God

“Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.’ And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves **a city**, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’ The Lord came down to see **the city** and the tower which the sons of men had built. The Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and **they stopped building the city**. Therefore its name was called Babel (or Babylon), because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:1-9)

Just as mankind had gone his own wicked way before the flood, we see once more the evil intent of his heart was still the same!

Once more God would need to restrict mankind for his own good. So it was that God scattered mankind throughout the earth, confusing their language, and **creating nations** for the first time.

Paul described this reality to the Athenians, **“From one blood He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history, and the boundaries of their lands.”** (Acts 17:26)

We see that it was God Himself who spread mankind throughout the earth, giving them different languages and creating the different nations. Paul then states God’s purpose - **“that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.”** (Acts 17:27)

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CHAPTER TWO

The Foundation Of The Nation Of Israel

The story of mankind now focuses on the emerging nation of Israel. In choosing Israel through which to bring salvation to all mankind, Satan has therefore opposed Israel with great hatred. The root of anti-semitism lies in the spiritual battle that has continued between God and Satan, because of God's choosing Israel through whom to bring about His plan and purpose for all mankind.

We will see that the nation of Israel came forth through the Covenant promises made to Abraham, and confirmed to his son Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob.

Our story about Israel begins when God told Abram, "Go forth from your country and from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land which I will tell you, and **I will make you a great nation**, and I will bless you." (Genesis 12:1-2)

God's intent was clear as He made a promise to Abram that in him "**all the families of the earth will be blessed.**" (Genesis 12:3) In sending Abram to the land of Canaan we see this was part of the Lord's plan for all mankind and Israel was to play a pivotal part.

God's plan was to provide the means of salvation to restore mankind to Himself, for mankind required a spiritual solution having been cut off from God when Adam sinned and fell from grace. It is the 'nature of sin', spiritual death, that separates man from God, that causes man to commit 'sins'. The solution to mankind's complaint comes only by a change in his nature, so he might have the ability not to sin.

As we consider how Israel became a nation we see this is not just the story about Israel but the outworking of God's plan of salvation for the whole world.

Despite all Abram's natural weaknesses, God must have seen in Abram a man who would believe Him, a man who was willing to obey His voice. God not only made a promise to make Abram a great nation, but He also promised him the land to which He had sent him. The land of Israel was to play a key part in God's plan and still does do. Thus the land is a matter of dispute to this day!

God said, "**All the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.** I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered." (Genesis 13:15-16)

In days to come, the land God promised to Abram and his seed, will become the centre of Jesus' rule on earth, and not only a home for all Israel but also for the saints, all those who will believe in His Name from all the nations of the earth, when they return with Jesus to rule upon the earth with a rod of iron.

Almighty God declared His promise through Abram but, just as in the garden, we see Satan desiring to thwart the purpose of God that He had predestined. We also see the spiritual battle that was in progress. Satan now battled against Abram, using men whose hearts were in rebellion against God, and we see the spiritual battle reflected in the outworking of events upon the earth, just as it still does in our present day.

God's Covenant Promises To Abraham

To reinforce God's promise to Abram, to make it certain, God was to make a **covenant** with Abram and said to him, "I am God

Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly... As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be **the father of a multitude of nations**.

“No longer shall your name be called Abram, (meaning ‘Exalted father’) but your name shall be Abraham, (‘Father of a multitude’) for I have made you **the father of a multitude of nations**. I will make you exceedingly fruitful and **I will make nations of you**, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and your descendants after you throughout their generations **for an everlasting covenant**; to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

“I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, **for an everlasting possession**; and I will be their God.

“Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.” (Genesis 17:1-10)

Abraham had believed God and his faith had been reckoned to him as righteousness, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. Abraham’s faith “was credited to him as righteousness,” Paul explained in his letter to the Romans, saying, “The words ‘it was credited to him’, were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness,” for those “who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” (Romans 4:21-25)

We see in the plan of God being worked out through Abraham, that God’s plan is still being worked out through our own lives today, for we who believe are all part of the same plan, being Abraham’s descendants after the promise.

Not by Works of the Flesh but by Faith

Despite Abraham's unregenerate human nature, by God's grace He was still able to use Abraham and work through him.

In their natural way of thinking we now see Abraham and Sarai trying to bring about God's plan by their own efforts. **This is the root of all counterfeits of true moves of God; man trying to bring about God's will by their own effort, by works of the flesh.**

Abraham's wife, Sarai, being well past child bearing age, gave Hagar her maid to Abraham to bring forth the promise God had made to him and his seed. Sarai did not understand how God's plan would otherwise be achieved, and had yet to learn the necessity that it must come by faith.

The resultant son born to Hagar was called Ishmael. Despite Ishmael being born as a result of the flesh, and not by the Spirit, the angel of the Lord spoke to Hagar explaining, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they are too many to count. Behold, you are with child and you shall bear a son, and you will call his name 'Ishmael', (God hears) because the Lord has given heed to your affliction, and he will be a wild donkey of a man. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him, and he will live to the east of all his brothers." (Genesis 16:10-12)

This prophetic word continues to be worked out today through the descendants of Ishmael. Ishmael had twelve sons and these became twelve tribes that would become the Arab nations from where so much opposition against Israel would come.

Paul also explains that the son born of the bondswoman was an allegory of the 'Law' which produced "children for slavery", whilst

the son to be born of the free woman, through the promise, would be free. And that **“the one born of the flesh would persecute the one born of the Spirit.”** (see Galatians 4:21-31)

The Law, which requires the works of man, does not produce the enduring will of God. Works of the flesh oppose the walk of faith which is by the Spirit. Nevertheless we see in this story of Sarai and Abraham, that even when men act in a way contrary to that which God has ordained, God will use this in His design and purpose. **For God is Sovereign and His plan will not be stopped.** Although Sarai was past child bearing age, God was to miraculously fulfil his promise to Abraham, for Sarai was yet to miraculously bear a son!

God’s covenant promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled through the ‘child of promise’, to Isaac, who would be born to Sarai. So God changed Sarai’s name to Sarah (meaning ‘Princess’) and God told Abraham, “I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and **she will be a mother of nations**; kings of peoples shall come from her.” (Genesis 17:16) God declared to Abraham, **“through Isaac your descendants shall be named.”** (Genesis 21:12)

We see that it is through the son born according to the flesh that Satan endeavours to frustrate God’s purpose, just as we see today, and as Paul saw in his day, “the son born according to the flesh persecuting him who is born according to the Spirit.” (see Galatians 4:29)

In his letter to the churches in Galatia Paul explains that the son of the bondwoman, born according to the flesh, corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. Being under the Law, which consists of commandments that man has to fulfil in his own strength, he is always doomed to fail until his nature is changed. When Israel were called to live under the

Law, God had to also provide the means for their failures and sins to be covered by sacrifices and offerings. But the 'promise of God' comes by the Spirit, and not by the works of the flesh, and Paul likens the free woman to Jerusalem above, the mother of the true church who are her children. Jesus was yet to come, to not only deal with sin but provide the means to walk in the ordinances of God by the Spirit, by the resurrection life He came to impart.

Abraham's Test Pointing to God's Solution

God tells Abraham to go to the land of Moriah, to a mountain He was to show him, to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering! Mount Moriah is where the 'Temple Mount' is located today, in Jerusalem, and it is the focus of great opposition by Satan, for he knows this will be from where Jesus will reign upon the earth.

What Abraham was prepared to do may seem inhuman to us but the writer to the Hebrews explains that Abraham, to whom God had said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called", by faith considered that "God *was* able to raise *him* from the dead; from which he had already received *Isaac* back as a type." (Hebrews 11:19)

God said to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." (Genesis 22:2)

Isaac asked his father where the lamb was, when he saw the fire and the wood prepared for the sacrifice, and Abraham replied to Isaac, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." (Genesis 22:8)

This scene foreshadowed that God was going to give Jesus, His only begotten Son, to die upon the cross, and we see that the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was acted out in faith on Mount Moriah that day by Abraham.

As Abraham “stretched out his hand, and took his knife to slay the lad,” God spoke to Abraham saying, “Abraham, Abraham, do not stretch out your hand against the lad and do nothing to him, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” At that moment Abraham saw a ram behind him, caught in a thicket, and offered up this ram that God had provided for a burnt offering in place of his own son. (see Genesis 22:8-13)

God then declares to Abraham through His angel, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. **In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,** because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:16-18)

This dramatic moment clearly points to the cross, and brings the subsequent blessing Abraham received. This blessing speaks of his descendants, his natural descendants, the nation of Israel that would arise through Isaac’s son Jacob, but also his descendants brought forth by faith, his descendants according to the Spirit.

So it is, Abraham is the father to all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ - the true church - and through him the blessing came upon all nations, a blessing that remains to this day.

Many Nations Arising From Isaac

So Isaac grew, and in due course a bride was sought for Isaac, not from among the Canaanites, but from Abraham's relatives in his old country. It was Rebekah, the beautiful daughter of Abraham's brother, Laban, who was given to be Isaac's wife with the blessing from her father, "**May you our sister, become thousands of ten thousands, and may your seed possess the gate of those who hate them.**" (Genesis 24:60)

The gates to a city represented a point of power, a place to exercise control over that city. God was promising the power to overcome.

The blessing of Abraham we now see passing down to his son Isaac, just as God had declared.

Rebekah became Isaac's wife and in due course she conceived twin boys who struggled together within her, causing her to enquire of the Lord why this was. The Lord explained, "**Two nations** are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated from your body, and one people will be stronger than the other, and **the older shall serve the younger.**" (Genesis 25:22-23) Esau was born first, with Jacob born holding on to his heel!

God's Election - His Choice

In the story of Jacob and Esau we see it is God's choice that prevails, despite the opposition that seems to arise. God's plan and purpose for mankind was to be fulfilled by means of His choice, an election that is just and righteous, for God knows the hearts of all mankind.

We see this working out as we read that Esau despised his birthright, selling it to Jacob just to get some stew to satisfy his

hunger, when he came in from the field feeling very hungry. (see Genesis 25:29) The intent of Esau's heart was exposed.

God's Promises Confirmed To Isaac

Isaac's sons grew up and famine necessitated that Isaac move to Gerar, to the land of Abimelech, king of the Philistines. Despite how events appeared to Isaac this was all in God's plan, for it was while Isaac was in the land that the Philistines occupied, that God was to speak to Isaac about this very land He'd promised.

God spoke to Isaac, "Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants **I will give all these lands** and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. **I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.**" (Genesis 26:3-4)

In taking Isaac into the land of Abimelech we see God's intent was to confirm to him the promise He'd made to his father.

Despite God's assurance, Isaac was nevertheless afraid whilst living in the land of the Philistines, but God had His hand on him. Eventually, seeing God's favour upon Isaac, Abimelech told him, "Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us." (Genesis 26:16) We see that despite his fear Isaac walked in God's blessing because of the covenant promise God had made to Abraham.

Isaac's Blessing of Jacob - by God's Choice

When Isaac was old, and his eyes grew dim, knowing that he would soon die, he decided to bless his eldest son, Esau. Hearing of Isaac's intent, Rebekah dressed Jacob in animal skins

to fool Isaac, as Esau's hands were hairy. Jacob served animal stew that Isaac had asked Esau for, and so it was that Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau saying, "Now may God give you the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and wine. **May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. Be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you and blessed be those who bless you.**" (Genesis 27:28-29)

To us, we may consider Esau's blessing was stolen, but Esau had already forfeited his birthright voluntarily, and so God ensured the spiritual blessing would be given to Jacob whom He had chosen.

A Wife For Jacob

Just as Abraham had sent his servant to his relatives to find Isaac a wife, so Isaac now sent Jacob to find a wife from the daughters of Laban also, sending him with the blessing, "**May God give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.**" (Genesis 28:4)

God's Promises Confirmed To Jacob

On his way, Jacob had a dream and God appeared to him and said, "**I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.** Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you

go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (Genesis 28:13-15)

This promise of the land still stands to this very day and awaits the day when the whole house of Israel will return to the land God promised them.

The blessing through Jacob to his descendants has also come to all the families of the earth, those blessed through the salvation that has come through Jesus being of Jacob’s seed.

Jacob’s Wife Leah - By God’s Choice

Jacob was to make *his* choice of a bride. He chose Rachel but once more we see that it would be God’s choice that would come to pass, this time through the trickery of Rachel’s father, Laban. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying both Rachel and her sister Leah. We might think this was not right but it would be through Leah that eventually Jesus, God’s Son, would be born!

Jacob therefore married both Leah and Rachel and the sons of Jacob became the twelve tribes of Israel. (see Genesis 29:21-30)

Jacob is given a new name - Israel

Returning to the land of Canaan, and settling where he had previously set up a pillar and named the place ‘Bethel’ - ‘God’s House’ - God spoke again to Jacob, “You shall no longer be called Jacob but **Israel shall be your name.**” So God called him Israel and said to him, “**I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.**” (Genesis 35:10-12)

Through Jacob, now called 'Israel', the nation of Israel would be birthed.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Nation of Israel is Birthed

So it was, that through Jacob's sons the nation of Israel came into being despite Satan still trying to prevent God's plan, which we see in the following events.

Jacob's sons were jealous of Jacob's love of Rachel's son Joseph, and were angered by Joseph sharing a dream that God had given him, suggesting they would bow down to him. Motivated by their jealousy, these older brothers caused Joseph to be taken into slavery into Egypt, an act that in due course would lead to the whole family going into Egypt in a time of famine, and the nation of Israel being birthed in slavery in Egypt.

God's Certain Promise To Abram

Many years before, God had said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed **four hundred years**. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." (Genesis 15:13-16)

On the day God made this promise to Abram He said, "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the Kadmonite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite," all those who occupied the land of promise.

Enslaved in Egypt For 400 Years

Because of God's favour, Joseph was to rise to be next in authority to Pharaoh himself. God was working out His preordained purpose.

In a time of drought Jacob's sons sought food in Egypt and this search for food did indeed lead them to bow down before Joseph, just as God had foretold in the dream He'd given him.

Escaping the drought, Jacob whole family moved to Egypt and as the years passed by the subsequent twelve tribes of Israel that came through Jacob's sons became slaves in Egypt for 400 years, just as God had told Abraham.

The last Chapters of Genesis tell of this amazing story. (Genesis 37-50)

The Land of Promise Not Forgotten

Although Jacob died in the land of Egypt, as Jacob came to the end of his life he charged his sons to bury him back in the land of Canaan. So, they carried his body and buried him there in the cave that Abraham had bought as his resting place. (see Genesis 50:12-13)

Later, when Joseph knew that he had reached the end of his life, he said to his brethren, "I am about to die but **God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land He promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.**"

So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten, and "after they had embalmed him he was placed in a coffin in Egypt." (Genesis 50:24-26)

Years later Joseph's bones would be taken from Egypt when the Israelites were led back to the promised land.

The Exodus From Egypt

God chose Moses, the most humble man on the face of the earth, (see Numbers 12:3) to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt. It was time to conquer and occupy the land of Canaan that God had promised to Abraham; this story being told in the Book of Exodus.

Delivering them miraculously from the pursuing Egyptian Army, Israel was to wander in the wilderness for forty years because of their unbelief. But in the wilderness Israel were to be given the Law through Moses, together with detailed commandments of God in a covenant He made with His fleeing people. Through Moses God gave the Law and the exact design for the Tabernacle in which the Israelites would need to make necessary sacrifices to cover their sins.

Man's fault could still only be covered as they awaited God's answer to man's condition that would come through Jesus Christ.

God led Israel miraculously, providing food and water, preventing sickness and even preventing their shoes from wearing out, but a whole generation died in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

With moments of rebellion, grumbling and doubt, Israel eventually were led to the border of the promised land forty years later!

The Promised Land

It was Joshua who God chose to lead the next generation of Israel into the 'Promised Land', following God declaring more

commandments to them, with blessings promised for obedience, and cursings for their disobedience. (see Deuteronomy 27 and Deuteronomy 28) God made a covenant with Israel in Moab and promised their eventual restoration; a restoration that is still to take place. (see Deuteronomy 29-30)

We see God's foreknowledge in this, for He said, "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind **among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you**, and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and **gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you.**" (Deuteronomy 30:1-3)

We see that even before they entered the land, God knew they would go astray! He spoke of a day that is still in the future when they will be returned to the land for the final time. This future fulfilment of the promise includes new life, new life that would come through Jesus Christ: "**The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.**" (Deuteronomy 30:6)

God set before them that day in Moab, "life and prosperity" or "death and adversity".

So Israel entered the land but failed to remove all the inhabitants they found in the land as God had instructed them to do, an act of disobedience which still has its repercussions to this day, as the descendants of those very peoples still contest Israel's right to this land of promise! The promise of the land is theirs, yet it still

needs to be fully realised, waiting for the coming of Jesus as their King, before God's covenant promise is finally fulfilled.

Israel, however, settled in the land of Canaan despite their failure to remove all the sinful people they found there.

Israel Demands A King

God appointed judges over Israel, judges who stood between them and God, but Israel wanted a king like other nations. In this desire they were rejecting God as being King over them, but God still gave them what they wanted. (see 1 Samuel 8:7) God said to Samuel who had been their judge, **“Like all the deeds which they *have* done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day, in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods, so they are doing to you also.”** (1 Samuel 8:8)

Of the subsequent kings that reigned over Israel, some were good and some were not. In the years that followed Israel would therefore be troubled by wars within, from those who had not been removed from the land. and from the surrounding nations.

A House In Which God Might Dwell

God was to choose David to be king and he desired to build a temple for God, a permanent place for God to dwell. But it was his son, Solomon, that God allowed to build a temple that would replace the tabernacle that God had instructed Israel to make when they were in the wilderness.

The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel tell of how the temple came to be built and how it then came to be destroyed! (see 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles)

Israel, though they were God's chosen people, would go on straying in the way of their heart. Although God disciplined them and struck them, they continued to be disobedient for their inner nature was still not changed. Just as God had foretold before they entered the land, they would be taken captive into all the nations of the world, because they disobeyed God's commandments.

The twelve tribes of Israel in due course became two kingdoms, the ten northern tribes, bearing the name of 'Israel', and the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin being called 'Judah'.

The ten tribes of Israel were deported from the land when they were attacked by the Assyrians in 772BC. The tribes of Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Manasseh and Ephraim were taken into captivity and have not returned to this day. The day still awaits when God will restore the whole house of Israel and they will then all return. (see Ezekiel 39:25)

The southern tribes, bearing the name of 'Judah', were to be taken captive into Babylon in 586BC and that is where our story takes us next.

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CHAPTER FOUR

God's Plan Revealed - In Babylon

Because of their rebellion and sin, the southern kingdom of Judah were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and the temple was destroyed. Once more it seemed that God's plan had been spoilt, but we will see that He was still working His greater purpose out in and through the nation of Israel, and it was in Babylon God chose to reveal His plan.

It was in their captivity in Babylon that the prophet, Daniel, rose to prominence when he was able to describe and explain to Nebuchadnezzar a dream that he had had, and give its interpretation.

As Daniel sought God for the interpretation of the king's dream he declared this truth, "**It is God who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.**" (Daniel 2:21)

God gave Daniel the interpretation of the dream and Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar that the statue he had seen, represented his kingdom and the coming kingdoms of the world that would arise after his, and how eventually all would be replaced by the Kingdom of God.

It is a dream that pertains to us for it's fulfilment is still being worked out.

Whilst in captivity in Babylon we will see God giving more and more detail of what would transpire from that time to the coming Kingdom of God being set up on earth for which we still await.

Nebuchadnezzar Humbled

Nebuchadnezzar was to learn the truth of God's sovereignty in a most awesome way, that indeed it is God who establishes kings, when he had another dream. Once more it was Daniel who was called for, and who was able to tell the king what he had seen in the visions of his mind, and also interpret them for him.

Nebuchadnezzar saw a tree that grew so large as to fill the earth but which was chopped down, leaving only a stump in the ground. The tree, Daniel explained, represented Nebuchadnezzar himself. In the vision he saw his mind being changed into that of an animal, **"in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows on it whom He wishes, and sets over it the lowliest of men."** (Daniel 4:17)

We need to understand and know this reality still applies to all the nations of the world in our day, all the nations we see around us only being there by the permissive will of God. Many in our modern day consider man can be the master of his own fate or fear that life on earth is doomed. Neither consideration is correct. **"The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind!"**

One year later, Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind as he was contemplating how great he and his kingdom were! "He was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until the hair of his head had grown like eagles feathers, and his nails like bird's claws." (Daniel 4:33)

At the end of the period God had set, Nebuchadnezzar "raised his eyes towards heaven," and his reason returned, and he "blessed the Most High and praised and honoured Him who lives forever," declaring, **"For His dominion is an everlasting**

dominion, and His Kingdom endures from generation to generation, and all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and no man can strike against His hand or say to Him, ‘What hast Thou done?’” (Daniel 4:34-35)

Who believes this in our day, we might ask? Do the present day kings and peoples of the earth?

Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom was then restored to him and he was able to declare, “I Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honour the King of Heaven for all His works are true and **His ways are just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.**” (Daniel 4:37)

The Reign Of King Belshazzar

After Nebuchadnezzar’s died, the Kingdom of Babylon passed from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar. It was during his reign that Daniel himself had visions foretelling more about the future kingdoms of the world.

Daniel’s First Vision - Four Great Empires

It was in the first year of Belshazzar that Daniel himself saw in a dream and visions, whilst he lay on his bed, **four great beasts**, each different from the other, with **the last one having ten horns with a little horn coming up among them**. This little horn spoke boastful words until it was slain. The other three beasts were granted an appointed period of time. Daniel then saw “One like the Son of Man” coming “with the clouds of heaven”, who established His Kingdom “that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him.” (see Daniel 7:3-14)

Daniel sought to understand the exact meaning of his vision and was told that it spoke of “four kings who arise from the earth but the saints of the Highest One will receive the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom forever, for all ages to come.” (Daniel 7:17-18)

God was declaring the end from the beginning.

Regarding the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, it was, “exceedingly dreadful with its teeth of iron and it’s claws of bronze, which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet.”

Daniel was told, “The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. **As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise**; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. (Three and a half years) But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. **Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His Kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.**” (Daniel 7:23-27)

Daniel was to have further visions and be given more revelations of what was to come, each subsequent understanding giving more detail from the one that preceded it.

Daniel's Second Vision - of the Time of the End

In the third year of King Belshazzar Daniel was to have a second vision. He saw “a ram with two horns” butting westward, northward and southward, and while he was observing this he saw a male goat with one conspicuous horn coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground. (see Daniel 8:1-5) The male goat broke the two horns from the ram and trampled the ram underfoot. After this the goat magnified himself, but the large horn was then broken “and in its place came four conspicuous horns.” (see Daniel 8:6-8)

Out of the four horns came a small horn, magnifying itself, even to be equal to the “Commander of the host,” removing the regular sacrifice from Him and throwing down His sanctuary, and flinging truth to the ground. (see Daniel 8:9-14)

Daniel was given the interpretation of his vision by the angel, Gabriel. Daniel was told that the vision pertained to “**the time of the end,**” and was told, “I am going to tell you what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed **time of the end.**” (see Daniel 8:17-19)

We need to take note this vision concerns the time we are now living in.

Gabriel explained that the ram with the two horns represented the kings of Media and Persia, and that the shaggy goat represented the kingdom of Javan. (rendered in most bible translations incorrectly as ‘Greece’. Javan represents more accurately Western Turkey today as most bible maps will show)

The broken horn, and the four horns that came in its place, represent four kingdoms which will arise from his kingdom, and in the latter period of their rule a king will arise, magnifying himself

in his heart and opposing the Prince of princes, and will be broken without human hand. (see Daniel 8:20-26)

So it is we see that Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and Daniel's dreams and visions, give increasingly more information about the kingdoms that would emerge from the time of Judah's captivity in Babylon to the very end of the age, and the subsequent Kingdom of God that will be set up upon the earth, when Jesus comes to reign as King upon the earth together with His saints, those who are members of the body of Christ. God was yet going to give even more understanding which we need to consider.

These dreams, we should note, are pertinent to us now as we are still living in the time of their fulfilment.

The Writing On The Wall

Whilst Judah were still in captivity, in the time of King Belshazzar, not realising his reign was to come to an end, King Belshazzar held a feast for a thousand people. During the feast he ordered the golden and silver vessels which his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem to be brought, in order that he and his nobles, his wives and his concubines, might drink wine from them! "They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone." (see Daniel 5:1-4)

Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace! The king's face grew pale, his hip joints went slack and his knees began to knock together! He called aloud for someone to be brought who might interpret the writing on the wall.

Daniel was called and he began to remind Belshazzar how God had humbled his father, and challenging him saying, "Yet you have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven." He told

the king, “The God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.” (Daniel 5:22-23)

Daniel then interpreted what was written on the wall - “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”

‘MENE’ - God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it, ‘TEKEL’ - you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting, ‘PERES’ - your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.” (Daniel 5:25-28)

That very night Belshazzar was slain and Darius the Mede received the kingdom!

Just as Nebuchadnezzar’s dream had foretold, the kingdom of Babylon was replaced. and we see that it was replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire.

Israel’s Seventy Weeks

In the first year of Darius the Mede who was made king over Babylon, Daniel was interceding for Israel, beseeching the Lord for compassion and forgiveness after reading the prophecy of Jeremiah in the bible foretelling that Judah’s captivity would only last 70 years.

Gabriel, who Daniel had seen previously, appeared to him again and told him that he had come to give him insight and understanding.

Gabriel explained that **“seventy weeks had been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.”** (Daniel 9:24)

Gabriel explained, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be **seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks**: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: **and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city** and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and **unto the end there will be war**, desolations are determined. And he (the prince who is to come) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the middle of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and on the wing of of abominations one shall come to make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that decreed, shall be poured out upon the one who makes desolate.' (Daniel 9:25-27)

Daniel, we see, was given more detail of God's plan and His timing, of what was to take place upon the earth until the coming of Jesus to rule and reign as King upon the earth; some events having yet to unfold.

This revelation that Gabriel spoke to Daniel about has been the subject of much debate and speculation. Interpretations have been given by many bible scholars. As we approach the end of this age let us realise it must be time for its truth to be revealed. We need not think it must still remain a mystery.

Daniel Shown the End of Israel's Indignation

It was in the third year of **Cyrus, king of Persia**, when Daniel had been mourning and fasting for three weeks, that Daniel had another visitation from heaven. Israel's captivity continued as the 70 years that Jeremiah had prophesied for their captivity had yet to reach its conclusion.

Daniel saw a great vision, a vision of “a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.” (Daniel 10:5-6)

Daniel was then given great detail of what was to unfold in the history of Israel, from the time of Judah’s captivity in Babylon through to the very end of the age.

We can read this detail in the bible, (see Daniel 11:2 to 12:13) that tell of events in the foreknowledge of God, much of which we are yet to see unfold.

King Cyrus - God’s Anointed

Such is the foreknowledge of God that King Cyrus, the Persian king, was spoken of by Isaiah by way of prophecy centuries before he was even born! God referred to king Cyrus by prophecy calling him, “**His anointed**”.

God spoke of Cyrus through Isaiah saying, “**He is My shepherd, and he shall fulfil all My purpose, saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundations shall be laid.’**” Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand, to subdue nations before him and to loose the loins of kings; to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name for the sake of Jacob My servant and Israel My chosen one. I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honour though you have not known Me. I am the

LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. **I am the LORD, and there is no other.**" (Isaiah 45:1-6)

Amazingly we might think, King Cyrus of Persia did indeed decree the rebuilding of the temple, the decree that would begin the 70 weeks destined for Israel that Gabriel had told Daniel of.

King Cyrus said, "The Lord, the God of Heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and **He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah.**" (2 Chronicles 36:23)

So it was that Cyrus decreed what was in fact the predetermined plan of God. God said, "It is I who says to Cyrus, He is My shepherd and He will perform all My desire, and he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built.'" (Isaiah 45:28)

Now, as the prophet Jeremiah had foretold, Judah's captivity lasting 70 years was coming to an end (see Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:11) and the 'seventy weeks decreed for the people of Israel was about to start.

Daniel's Intercession

Realising the time of Jerusalem's desolations lasting seventy years was coming to an end, Daniel gave his attention again to seeking the Lord with prayer, fasting and supplication.

Daniel reminded God of Israel's covenant promises, acknowledging the sin of Israel in turning away from God and not giving attention to His commandments.

Knowing God's will, Daniel prayed, "Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake **cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate.** O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, **for Your city and Your people are called by Your Name.**" (Daniel 9:17-19)

Looking Back To King Solomon's Temple

The temple that Solomon had built had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar seventy years earlier. King David, Solomon's father had desired to build a house for God to dwell in, but God would not allow him to. David was told, "You have shed much blood, and have waged great wars: you shall not build a house in My Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth before Me." (1 Chronicles 22:8)

So God said to David, "I will appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them as formerly... when your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. **Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.**" (see 2 Samuel 7:10-16)

So King David charged his son, Solomon, with the task of building a temple, charging him “to build a house for the Lord God of Israel.” (1 Chronicles 22:6)

King Solomon built a most magnificent temple in Jerusalem yet this would not fulfil the prophecy that God had spoken. That temple would be built by Jesus, also the Son of David! King Solomon’s temple would only be a shadow of what was to come, for it would be destroyed!

Despite the temple being built, Israel continued to stray from God’s ways. It was by way of God’s judgment that Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and took Judah captive, destroying the temple King Solomon had built!

The Book of Chronicles describes the scene. God “brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans,” Nebuchadnezzar, “who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave them all into his hand. All the articles of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his officers, he brought them all to Babylon. Then they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all its fortified buildings with fire and destroyed all its valuable articles. Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. **All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.**” (2 Chronicles 36:17-21)

The Temple To Be Rebuilt

Now the 70 years of captivity were complete and the time had come for the fulfilment of this prophetic word Jeremiah had spoken.

“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying; **‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.’**” (Ezra 1:1-3)

Despite King Cyrus agreeing for those who had been exiled into Babylon to return to Judea, many Jews preferred the comforts of civilised Babylon. Not all of those in exile returned to the land where a remnant had survived the captivity, a remnant who were now in great distress. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates had been burnt with fire. (see Nehemiah 1:3) Those who returned, however, numbering several thousand, built an altar to consecrate the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt despite much opposition.

Israel were once more back in the land God had promised them.

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CHAPTER FIVE

To the End of the Sixty Nine Weeks

We have seen that the kingdom of Babylon was replaced by the kingdom of Medo-Persia whilst Judah was in captivity. Now restored to their land, in due time Medo-Persia was to fall to the Kingdom of Greece. (As we have already noted, in scripture it does not actually say 'Greece', but 'Javan', which today is represented more nearly by Western Turkey.)

The Kingdom of Greece

It was some years after the Jews had returned to Judea and settled back into their land, that the kingdom of Greece arose under Alexander the Great to defeat Darius, king of the Persians and the Medes, and so his kingdom succeeded that of Darius, exactly in line with the visions and dreams that God had given.

Alexander's kingdom was divided, for Alexander was taken ill and died just twelve years into his reign at the age of 33 yrs. The kingdom of Greece was divided into four in line with the four heads that Daniel saw upon the third beast, (see Daniel 7:6) and from the officers who began to rule the kingdom of Greece in place of Alexander, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, meaning 'God Manifest', was to arise in the 137th year of the Greeks to establish the Seleucid Empire in Syria.

By then lawless men had come forth amongst the Israelites, men who sought to establish a peace treaty with the surrounding Gentile nations. Taking his opportunity, Antiochus Epiphanes went against Jerusalem after subduing Egypt. He "arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand, for the light, and all its utensils," (1 Maccabees 1:23) murdering many.

Once more the temple was under attack!

Antiochus Epiphanes sent a large force to Jerusalem and after deceitfully speaking words of peace he plundered the city, burned it with fire, pulled down its houses and took the women & children captive. He forbade offerings in the sanctuary and many adopted his religion, and altars and shrines were built to idols, and swine were sacrificed with other unclean animals, causing the many in Israel to forsake the Law.

Next a “desolating sacrilege” was erected on the altar of burnt offering, the books of the Law were burnt, and any women who had had their children circumcised were put to death and their infants hung from their mothers necks! (see 1 Maccabees 1:54-59)

“On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood” and the residents of Jerusalem fled, and “her sanctuary became desolate as a desert.” (see 1 Maccabees 1:36-40) “Every bridegroom took up the lament” and “she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning.” (1 Maccabees 1:26-27) (Compare this with a yet future time in Revelation 18:23 when Mystery Babylon is thrown down with violence)

Clearly seen in these events is a foreshadow of the coming abomination of desolation that Jesus said would be seen in the holy place before His return, when once again those in Judea will be forced to flee. (Matthew 24:15-16) We see that Antiochus Epiphanes clearly foreshadows the coming Antichrist.

Next, Antiochus Epiphanes sent “Forty thousand infantry and seven thousand cavalry” into the land of Judah “to cause their final destruction,” (see 3 Maccabees 38-42) but deliverance came after Jews sought God with fasting and prayer. The Jews,

led by Judas the Maccabean, put them to flight though greatly outnumbered. God was on their side displaying His strength.

The next year King Antiochus mustered an even greater army of sixty thousand infantrymen and ten thousand cavalry to subdue the Jews, but Judas met them again, with only ten thousand men! Judas Maccabeus, “When he saw the army was strong, he again turned to God in prayer saying, ‘Blessed are you, O Saviour of Israel, who did crush the attack of the mighty warrior (speaking of Goliath) by the hand of your servant David, and did give the camp of the Philistines into the hands of Jonathan... so do hem in this army by the hand of Thy people, Israel, and let them be ashamed of their troops and cavalry.’” (see 4 Maccabees 27-33)

Five thousand of the opposing army, led by Lysias, fell, and seeing the bravery of those inspired by Judas Maccabeus they departed to Antioch to raise an even larger army!

With this victory the Jews went up to the sanctuary to cleanse and rededicate the temple that had been desecrated three years earlier. **Three years to the very day**, after the sanctuary had been profaned by the Gentiles, **the temple was rededicated**.

From that day the temple in Jerusalem was restored and remained although more battles were to follow.

The Kingdom of Rome

After the battle of Corinth in 146BC the Grecian Empire fell to the Romans who were next to occupy the land of Israel, calling it by the name ‘Palestine’, which Israel’s opponents still do today. Though under Roman occupation and rule, King Herod the Great, the king of the Jews when Jesus was born, was allowed to reign and he restored the grandeur of the temple.

This was the temple where Jesus was dedicated as a baby, (see Luke 2:21-38) where Joseph and Mary found him when he was just twelve years of age, listening and talking with the teachers who were amazed at His understanding, (see Luke 2:41-49) and where Jesus overturned the tables of the money changes during his three and a half year ministry. (see John 2:15 and Matthew 21:12)

As we have seen Daniel was given understanding that from the time of “a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah (or ‘Anointed One’) the Prince,” there would be “**seven weeks** (heptads or periods of seven years) **and sixty two weeks**... then after (the) sixty two weeks the Messiah would be cut off and have nothing.” (Daniel 9:25-27) So it was that after sixty nine periods of seven years from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem Jesus was in fact crucified as the prophecy foretold and it was the Romans who were to crucify Jesus.

Gabriel, however, explained there were seventy weeks decreed for the people of Israel. **A further week of seven years therefore still remained to be fulfilled.**

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CHAPTER SIX

The Times of the Gentiles

In the last Chapter we considered the advance of mankind to the time of Christ, the conclusion of the period of sixty nine weeks that had been decreed for the nation of Israel, when the Messiah would be cut off, **the most significant event in all history.**

The Most Significant Event In History

Jesus dying on the cross for the sin of the world, is given little attention by secular historians. Jesus' resurrection, an event difficult to accept by unbelievers, by those with no faith, purposely ignored.

Titus Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian born in 37AD, recorded Jewish history with a particular focus on the first century. Josephus states that Jesus the Messiah "was a wise teacher who was crucified by Pilate," and he refers to the stoning of "James, the brother of Jesus." Other than a brief mention of the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist by the order of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee and Perea, this pivotal moment in the story of mankind requires us to look at the biblical account so as to understand what was really taking place.

One more week remains to be fulfilled at the very end of the age, the seventieth and final week of seven years that Gabriel says are determined for the people of Israel.

We now find ourselves living at the end of the age that will soon see this 'week' begin, and it is important to realise that we are beginning to enter another most crucial time in history.

As we have seen, Gabriel explained to Daniel that “seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, **to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy *place*.**” (Daniel 9:24)

As we continue our consideration of the progress of the plan of God amongst the nations, we can now look at what prophecies remain to be fulfilled before Jesus returns to take His place as King upon the earth, when He will reign over all the earth from Jerusalem.

Peter wrote, “We have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that **no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation**, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

It is essential that we allow the Holy Spirit to confirm what is truth or we can find that our expectations are only assumptions, and most likely false. We need to ask the Holy Spirit Himself to give us the correct interpretation of scripture and teach us and tell us of what is to come, asking Him questions regarding what we do not understand and asking for spiritual understanding that only God can give us. In this process of understanding prophecy, scripture cannot be broken but it must be interpreted aright. In this way scripture is to be our guide, if it is rightly divided.

Who Are The People Of The Prince Who Is To Come? And Is it Rome?

The Roman Empire continued as the main empire in the world, with Rome still occupying the land of Israel, after Jesus' earthly ministry.

Gabriel had explained to Daniel that “the people of the **prince who is to come**,” would “destroy the city and the sanctuary” and that this **prince** would make “a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he would put an end to sacrifice and oblation, (grain offering) and **on the wing of abomination would come one who makes desolate, even to a complete destruction**, one that is decreed is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” (Daniel 9:27)

This scripture is one of those in the Book of Daniel that speaks of the ‘abomination of desolation’, that Jesus said would indicate the beginning of the great tribulation, and which would immediately precede His second coming.

This ‘prince who is to come’ is obviously the antichrist, who is referred to as ‘the beast’ in the Book of Revelation, as the ‘little horn’ in other of Daniel’s prophecies, and as the ‘man of sin’ by Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians. Whoever the people are from which this prince is to come, those who “destroy the city and the sanctuary,” tells us from where the antichrist will come at the end of the age.

Following a Jewish revolt after the time of Jesus, the Romans destroyed the temple in AD 70. Because it was the Romans who destroyed the temple at that time, many naturally assume that the ‘prince who is to come’, the one who will make a covenant with many for one week, will therefore come from a revived Roman Empire. But is this assumption correct?

The Destruction of the Temple By The Romans

The Romans occupied the land of Judea throughout Jesus' lifetime and it was Rome that would persecute the Christians for over 300 years after Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

Jesus had told His disciples as they looked on the splendour of the temple, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down." (Luke 21:6)

In Lukes account of the gospel Jesus said, "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. **Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.** For this is the time of punishment in fulfilment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. **They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**" (Luke 21:20-24)

This scripture clearly speaks of the destruction of the temple that took place in AD 70, when the Roman armies led by Titus sieged Jerusalem in their quest to subdue the Jewish uprising that was taking place at that time.

This led to the Jews being dispersed throughout the nations just as Moses had forewarned, when he set conditions before Israel as they prepared to enter the Promised Land; that if they did not walk in the commandments of God given that day "**the Lord would scatter *them* among the peoples**, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the Lord shall drive you." (Deuteronomy 4:27)

Is Rome The Fourth Empire That Daniel Saw?

Daniel had seen four kingdoms represented by four beasts (see Daniel 7:23-27) and we have considered the fall of the Babylonian Empire, the rise of Medo-Persia and the subsequent kingdom of Greece (Javan) that arose.

It may seem logical to assume that Rome must be the fourth beast that Daniel saw for it was Rome that conquered the Grecian kingdom. But Daniel was told that the fourth beast would also be the one that would subdue Persia, the ram **“at the time of the end”**, and this would be the empire from which the antichrist would arise. (see Daniel 8:6-19)

Many bible scholars conclude that it must be the Romans, who took Israel into captivity and caused their dispersal among the nations in AD 70, that must rise again at the end of the age.

But Jerusalem Will Be Desolated a Second Time

Luke spoke of the events of AD70 but Matthew records in His gospel, a future event of which Jesus foretold; “Therefore, when you see the **abomination of desolation** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then **those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains**. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. For **then there will be a great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There *He is*,

do not believe *him*. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, *or*, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe *them*. For **just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.**" (Matthew 24:15-27)

Matthew is clearly describing a different event to the one recorded in Luke's gospel, for Matthew's account refers to a future time when those in Judea must flee after the abomination of desolation is seen standing in the holy place. This did not happen in AD70.

Luke records Jesus speaking of the earlier destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, **after which the Jews were taken into exile throughout the nations**, (see Luke 21:20-24) whilst Matthew speaks of a future flight of those in Judea **after the abomination of desolation is seen**.

(Those who consider the account by Luke, of Jerusalem being destroyed as being the same as that recounted by Matthew, draw the conclusion that we have been in great tribulation for two thousand years. This interpretation, however, does not concur with the book of Revelation that speaks of future great tribulation and the subsequent wrath of God, which together make up all of Daniel's 70th week. This so called 'preterist' belief - that considers prophecies have already happened - is a belief that is held by some Christians.)

As we consider from where the antichrist will arise we need to ask whether it could be a people who will yet attack Israel rather than just assume it was Rome or will be a revived Roman Empire.

The Christianisation Of The Roman Empire

The Roman Empire was Christianised in the reign of the Emperor Constantine the Great, in the fourth century AD. What Satan could not achieve by force and persecution, in his attempts to destroy the early church, he now began to corrupt by deception, creating a Christian religion that was not true Christianity, albeit true saints could be found in its midst.

Just as Jesus foretold, Satan would sow tares amongst the wheat - the sons of the Kingdom. Jesus said that the tares and wheat would be mixed and grow together **until the end of the age** when they would be separated. (see Matthew 13: 27-30 and 37-43)

In the infancy of the church spirits of antichrist began to bring error into its midst. Just as Jesus forewarned, false prophets and false teachers arose. The Christianisation of the Roman Empire of the fourth century AD resulted in the creation of a 'Christian religion' that was not true Christianity. Built on a compromised mixture of truth and error this was to prevent the true church fully appropriating the victory Jesus won through His death and resurrection. This 'Christian religion' was based on a walk in the flesh as the true church was deceived into foregoing their walk by the Spirit.

From the Roman Empire the Roman Catholic Church subsequently emerged, resulting in the true church (the people) being hidden in its midst through what became known as the 'Dark Ages'.

It would take many centuries before we see the true church beginning to break free, as God moved by His Spirit, revealing truth that challenged the erroneous doctrines of man.

Historians gave the growing enlightenment and return to scripture that came upon Christianity, the title of the 'Reformation', without realising the true and full reformation is not about creating 'Protestantism', but bringing forth the true church in purity, a work of the Spirit that had begun even earlier than historians recognise.

As the true church began to emerge from the darkness of the Middle Ages, each move of God sadly resulted in each truth gained being organised again by man to create different denominations. Today we see many hundreds of divisions in what Jesus said is one church, the body of Christ.

Satan has opposed this corporate work of the Spirit every step of the way, truth being recovered at the cost of many lives of the true saints along with much persecution.

The mixture of tares and wheat has continued. Only in recent years can we say that the end-time separation of tares and wheat has begun but the wheat has yet to be completely separated from the tares.

A Holy Nation

Despite Satan sowing the sons of the evil one amongst the sons of the Kingdom, Jesus has nevertheless been building His church, bringing men into the Kingdom of God, those who are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a **holy nation**, God's own possession, that *they might* declare the praises of Him who called *them* out of darkness into His wonderful light." Those who were once "not a people, but now *they* are **the people of God.**" (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Despite Satan's bitter opposition for the last two thousand years, the **true church** will be brought to maturity, completing her journey from innocence to purity.

Despite Satan's bitter opposition, for brief moments, and sometimes amongst only the few, the true church has shone in the darkness that enveloped the early church.

Hidden at times, the body of Christ is nevertheless being brought to a maturity that will see them overcome in the final battle of the righteous at the end of the age. Jesus said that there will be a final harvest, a harvest that will see the many brought to righteousness. This is the end-time ministry of the true church.

The final battle of the righteous will not be with swords, but fought in love and truth, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the true church lay down their lives even unto death to bring forth the gospel of the Kingdom to this fallen world. This is a spiritual battle.

In the Revelation John saw the throwing down of Satan to the earth itself, after war in heaven with Michael and his angels. The accuser of the brethren, who deceives the whole world thrown down to the earth as a loud voice from heaven will declare, "**Now salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.**" (see Revelation 12:7-10)

The saints will overcome Satan spiritually for "**they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they will not love their lives even unto the death.** Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has

come down to you, **having great wrath**, because he knows his time is short.” (see Revelation 12:10-12)

At the end of the age it will be Satan himself who will give his authority and power to the coming antichrist.

So Who is the Fourth Beast?

Those who consider that Rome is the fourth beast that Daniel saw, look for the Roman Empire to reemerge. The emergence of the European Union had appeared to fulfil this possibility but as yet this ‘beast’ does not have ten horns!

When the new European Economic Community grew to embrace ten nations it caused much speculation that this was indeed the revival of the old Roman Empire. However, since that time the ‘European Union’ has transformed from being just a trading bloc to a union of nations seeking more and more political integration, and it now has more than twenty nations in its embrace!

If Rome is not the Fourth Beast, who is?

After the fall of the Roman Empire the next empire to emerge we see more closely fits the picture we are given in Daniel’s dream., an empire that still exists. This is the Islamic Empire which soon grew to occupy the lands previously occupied by the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, and the Grecian Empire. The Roman Empire did not actually fully occupy this same area as the first three beasts of Daniels vision, but Islam has done so.

The Rise of Islam

Islam rose up in the early 7th century, originating in Mecca, a new religion founded through Muhammad, purporting to be the ‘messenger of God’. It quickly spread in what is now part of Saudi

Arabia but from its very beginning it was troubled by factions. By the 8th century the Islamic Empire extended from Spain in the west to the Indus river in the east. The Islamic 'Golden Age' refers to the period traditionally dating from the 8th century to the 13th century when much of the Islamic world was flourishing scientifically, economically and culturally.

Because of the schism that followed the death of Muhammed most muslims are still found to belong to one of two sects, either Sunni or Shi'a Islam. The historic background of the Sunni - Shi'a split lies in the schism that occurred immediately after Muhammad died in the year AD 632, leading to a dispute over who would succeed Muhammad as the caliph of the Islamic community which was already spreading across various parts of the Middle East.

Between 1299 and 1453 the Turkish Ottoman Empire rose up from within Islam dominating the Middle East as it became the seat of the Islamic caliphate. The Turks crossed into Europe ending the Byzantine Empire that made up the Eastern Roman Empire, and in 1453, with the conquest of Constantinople that had been the centre of Roman rule from the time of Constantine the Great, the Ottoman Turks endeavoured to conquer more of Europe until it was met with great resistance. God would not allow Islam to annex Europe fully, but the Ottoman Empire continued to thrive until its defeat and the dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate. This Islamic caliphate was abolished on 3rd March 1924 when Turkey was declared to be a secular republic under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk .

During the First World War, in 1917, the British and Allied armies had liberated Jerusalem from Ottoman rule that had lasted several centuries.

But we are now seeing Turkey returning to its Islamic roots once more, and looking to restore the Islamic caliphate that it gave up after the Great War. We can therefore ask the question, **“Is this the fatal wound that is now being healed on the head of the end-time beast?”**

Modern-Day Islamic Conflicts

In recent years, since Israel’s partial return to the land, we have seen many conflicts in the Middle East along with the rise of Islamic extremism. Every day these conflicts form part of our modern-day newscasts.

In 1990 the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait resulted in a United States led coalition, under a United Nations mandate, liberating Kuwait in what came to be known as the ‘First Gulf War’.

The destruction of the ‘Twin Towers’ in New York in 2001 brought severe retribution that has destabilised the whole Middle East area, producing conflicts that have no solution.

As a result, in 2003 the ‘Second Gulf War’ saw the invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies to remove Saddam Hussein from power, under the pretext that Iraq held weapons of mass destruction.

But it was in 2010, that the so called ‘Arab Spring’ began in Tunisia that has seen a revolutionary wave of both violent and non-violent demonstrations, riots, coups, civil wars and foreign intervention across the Middle East that continues to this day.

Larger scale conflicts have resulted in civil wars in Libya and Iraq, and now Syria. Crises remain across the Middle East which have seen the Sunni-Shi’a division driving great conflicts and

wars, with wars still being fought by proxy between the major Sunni and Shi'a nations.

The Syrian Civil War that began in 2010 has seen more than 465,000 Syrians killed in the fighting with over a million injured, and over 12 million - half the country's pre-war population - displaced from their homes, leading to mass immigration into Turkey and into Europe by thousands of muslims.

What Satan had not been able to do with the power of the sword, in bringing Islam to Europe, he is presently doing by stealth. In the towns and cities of Europe many muslims now live as mass immigration has resulted from the refugees fleeing their destroyed homeland.

We are beginning to see prophecy unfold. Isaiah prophesied that Damascus would become a ruined heap. This is already partially fulfilled as it is already half destroyed! This prophecy declares that Damascus, one of the oldest cities in the world, will yet cease to be a city! (see Isaiah 17:1)

We are seeing Iran and Iraq, nations historically representing the Medo-Persian Empire, "butting westwards, northwards and southward", in line with the vision that appeared to Daniel, of a ram with two horns, a vision that he was told pertained "to the time of the end." (see Daniel 8)

Iran has been waging a war by proxy and effectively now has influence from their own border to the Mediterranean sea.

We are also seeing Turkey beginning to look like the goat with one prominent horn that will in due course be broken off, just as Daniel saw. (see Daniel 8)

According to this prophecy, Javan, (Western Turkey, that we have seen is most often rendered as 'Greece' by bible translators. At

the time of Alexander the Great the Macedonian Empire stretched from Macedonia through Thrace into Western Turkey) will respond to the ram expanding its territorial influence, as the he-goat with one horn coming across the earth without touching the ground, shattering the two horns of Medo-Persia, which today is Iran and Iraq, if this is to be rightfully this prophecies fulfilment. (see Daniel 8:5-7&21)

This conflict has to precede any attack on Israel according to prophecy but this is already under consideration.

In December 2017 the question was asked in the Turkish press, "What if an army of Islam was formed against Israel?" This article called on the 57 member states of the OIC to form a joint "Army of Islam" to besiege and attack the state of Israel. It was suggested that if the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation member states unite and form a joint military force, it would be the largest army in the world!

Such is how current world events and our everyday newscasts are beginning to reflect prophecy.

When the he-goat's horn is broken off, the prophecy says, four horns will come from its nation, (see Daniel 8:8&22) just as in the days of Alexander the Great when his empire split into four. Prophecy tells us that it will be from out of one of these four horns that a small horn will arise - the antichrist. (see Daniel 8:9-14 & 23-25)

It was from the part of the Empire of Alexander the Great that the Seleucid Empire arose under the rule of King Antiochus Epiphanes, who was obviously a shadow of the coming antichrist. Might we expect the antichrist to arise from the same region?

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CHAPTER SEVEN

The Reestablishment of the Nation Of Israel

In fulfilment of prophecy, in our lifetime, we have seen Israel reestablished as a nation. The Jews, in returning from **many** nations, from their dispersal among the nations two thousand years ago, has fulfilled the prophecy of Ezekiel: “After many days, **in the latter years**, you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, having been gathered from **many** nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continuous waste.” (Ezekiel 38:8)

We need to note that this is the **partial return** to the land that Ezekiel prophesied. The full return and restoration of the “whole house of Israel” will only occur after the war takes place that Ezekiel also prophesies. This, we will see, takes place when Jesus returns to the earth as King. (see Ezekiel 38-39)

The mountains of Israel equate to what is referred to as the ‘West Bank’ today, the area which the United Nation refuse to accept as rightfully belonging to modern day Israel although they won this territory in the Six Day War in June 1967; a war they had to fight when confronted by Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

It was on the 14th May 1948 that the modern State of Israel was established by the Israeli ‘Declaration of Independence’ which then led to its acceptance by the United Nations on 11th May 1949.

After the slaughter of 6 million Jews in the ethnic cleansing undertaken by Nazi Germany during World War II, many Jews looked again to return to their own land.

Large-scale immigration of Jews to the land of Israel, however, began in 1882, which was at that time under the occupation of the Ottoman Empire.

Systematic persecution of Jews in Russia saw many thousands return to Israel between 1904 and 1914.

After World War I, when the British had driven the Ottoman Turks out of the land of Israel, and after the 'Balfour Declaration' of 1917 had promised to support the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, many thousand more Jews returned to the land of Israel that was still called Palestine from the time of the Roman occupation.

More persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe saw more Jews arrive in Palestine in the 1920's, as even greater numbers came back to their land before World War II.

After World War II nothing could now stop the return of Jews from **many** nations of the world, from Africa and Asia as well as Europe. More than 200,000 immigrants have arrived from North America alone since 1948, and the return continues to this day as we are seeing the partial return from **many** nations in fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy.

The population of Israel stand at over eight million today whilst perhaps double this number of Jews remain amongst the nations. The exact figures are contested.

Israel's Uncertain Future

Before the full restoration of the whole house of Israel her future will yet see more conflicts because **“to the end wars are determined”**. After the partial return to the land, after they have

been gathered from 'many' nations, Ezekiel goes on to foretell of the invasion of Israel. (see Ezekiel 38-39)

When Jesus' disciples asked Him, "What will be **the sign** of Your coming and of **the end of the age**," (Matthew 24:3) Jesus replied, "You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, for these things must take place, but this is not yet the end, for nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom... these things are the beginning of birth pangs." (Matthew 24:6-8)

Jesus then told His disciples that when the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel is seen standing in the holy place, **then** great tribulation would be seen "such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world!" (see Matthew 24:15-21)

Jesus said of this future time, that those in Judea would need to flee the mountains again, just as they had in AD70.

Zechariah prophesied that God would gather "all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city." (Zechariah 12:1-2)

As we see these events that are foretold in prophecy unfolding we can nevertheless be assured that God is working out His pre-ordained plan.

In His purpose men's hearts are revealed and a means of escape granted to those who turn to the Lord. Mercy always proceeds judgment.

Despite attempts of Satan to frustrate and oppose God's plan of salvation, in the midst of what is coming "the gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all

the nations, and then the end (of the age) will come.” (Matthew 24:14)

When explaining these things to His disciples Jesus said that we should therefore **“be on the alert”**, and Jesus told them the parable of the fig tree: “When its branch has already become tender and put forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Even so, you too, when you see all these things recognise He is right at the door.” (Matthew 24:32-33) In scripture the fig tree represents Israel as a nation. We need to note that it is putting forth its leaves once more.

We see that Jesus told us to look for and recognise those signs that He foretold. From this it is clear that Jesus will not return at an unexpected time as some Christians believe. First, all that which has been prophesied must come to pass.

Speaking about the end of the age Jesus also said, “Behold the fig tree and all the trees.” (Luke 21:29) In scripture just as the fig tree represents Israel, the trees represent other nations. So it is as we watch what is happening in Israel and in the nations that surround her, we will be able to tell that the coming end of the age is drawing near.

As we are begin to see the fulfilment of end-time prophecy in current events let us ask the Father for “all discernment” that only He can give, that we might be careful to discern aright the signs of the times. (see Matthew 16:2-4)

A Prophetic Word

“In the times that are ahead there are events that will come upon the world that will go beyond the word ‘unprecedented’. One day you will hear the most solemn news. This statement from the media will be brought to the nations with much grief, emotion and

deep regret; ‘People of the world, this current news and situation is of such magnitude that the world as we know it has been forever changed. The world that we have come to know will never be the same again. The past world has gone from us and this new life of uncertainty will now take us all on a new course.’

“Many past and present prophecies warn of this time of coming judgment but the nations are deaf. Their ears are full of readiness to hear only good things; news that will only fill their hearts with ‘self’.

“This day will come at its appointed time.

“Come close to Me, stay close to Me, enter into the secret place of the Most High, that you may hide under the shadow of the Almighty, and you shall have peace in this coming storm. For I shall be the eye of the storm that comes, and those who abide in Me shall dwell in that eye with Me and shall know peace whilst others will only know devastation and destruction. There will only be two places - ‘in the eye’ or ‘in the storm’. There will be no hiding place for the storm will cover the earth. It will be a storm of many troubles, the storm of My judgment.”

D.A. - 2011

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Israel's Seventieth Week Begins

As the seventieth week that is decreed for the nation of Israel draws near we know that **the times of the Gentiles is also drawing to a close**. Much of our understanding of this coming time comes from the Book of Revelation. This is **“the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place, and He sent it and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John.”** (Revelation 1:1)

With much symbolic language the picture that we see described in the Revelation is perhaps hard to understand yet we are told that, **“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things that are in it; for the time is near.”** (Revelation 1:3)

The apostle John, to whom the Revelation was communicated, was told, **“Do not seal up the words of this prophecy, for the time is near.”** (Revelation 22:10)

“The Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7) Prophecy is given that we might not be caught unawares by what is coming. Ignoring prophecy will not prevent things happening although we might find it hard to contemplate.

As we now consider the last seven years of this age we will see events described that shock us, not only great tribulation and distress upon the nations such as have not occurred since there was a nation, but even more shocking events following that, as we see the coming wrath of God described.

Some who would try to avoid such a consideration will actually experience its reality. God does not want us, therefore, to be unprepared by being unaware of what is coming. Jesus told us to “**be on guard**, that *our* hearts may not be weighed down by frivolity and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on *us* suddenly like a trap, for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But **keep on the alert at all times**, praying in order that *we* might have strength to escape (as we go through) all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:34-36)

May this be our prayer as we now look at what comes next for the nations of the world and may the Holy Spirit give us understanding.

The Coming Beast From The Sea

We see that the antichrist, who is described in the Book of Revelation as the “beast”, has yet to arise. John saw “a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and on his heads, blasphemous names.”

“And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like *those* of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And **the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority**. One of his heads was as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed *and followed* after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?’ There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months (Three and a half years) was given to him.”

“And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:1-8)

This same “beast” was also seen in the vision that Daniel had. He saw a “fourth beast” which he saw as a fourth kingdom to arise upon the earth, which would be different from all the *other* kingdoms, and which would devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. “As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.” (Daniel 7:23-24)

This ‘little horn’ that will arise amongst the ten horns is the antichrist, the one who will set up the abomination of desolation in the holy place. (see Daniel 8:11, 9:27, 11:31, 12:11 and Matthew 24:15)

The antichrist, the man of sin, will sit in the temple as if he is God, displaying himself as if he is God. This is the lawless one, the son of destruction, who exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship; the lawless one who the Lord will eventually slay “with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8) John saw this fate of the beast in the ‘Revelation’. (see Revelation 19:15)

We see that it is when the antichrist sits in the temple as if he is God that there will be “distress such as has not occurred since there was a nation.” (Daniel 12:1) This act brings about the ‘great

tribulation' caused by Satan having great wrath because he knows his time is short. This is not God's wrath.

Having been thrown down to the earth itself after war in the heavenlies, following "Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon," (Revelation 12:7-8) Satan gives the beast "his power and his throne and great authority." (Revelation 13:2)

In the Revelation that John saw this time of great tribulation is brought about as Jesus breaks the seven seals that seal a scroll that was given to Him to open.

The Four Horses Of The Apocalypse

It is when the seven seals are broken that the last seven years of this age unfold. These seals are broken by Jesus, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the root of David, for only He is found to be worthy "because He has overcome." (see Revelation 5:5)

Although great tribulation, caused by the great wrath and anger of Satan, is coming, let us not forget that God is still in control. It is Jesus who breaks the seals.

The breaking of the **first seal** sees the little horn, the antichrist, sitting on a **white horse** and "a crown *is* given to him and he *goes* out conquering and to conquer." (Revelation 6:2)

The breaking of the **second seal** sees a **red horse** going out, and "Peace is taken from the earth", and it is granted that "men slay one another." (Revelation 6:4)

The breaking of the **third seal** reveals a **black horse**, and economic chaos ensues - "a quart of wheat for a denarius (a day's wage) and three quarts of barley for a denarius and do not harm the oil and the wine." (Revelation 6:6)

As Jesus breaks the **fourth seal an ashen, sickly pale horse**, is seen as a quarter of the earth are killed with the “sword and famine and pestilence and by wild beasts.” (Revelation 6:8)

The breaking of the **fifth seal** reveals the martyrs who have by then “been slain for the word of God and because of the testimony that they had maintained.” (Revelation 6:9)

The saints will have already been persecuted by the beast and the dragon, who makes war with those “who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” (Revelation 12:17) At this time it is given to the beast “to make war with the saints and to overcome them.” (Revelation 13:7) We are told that in this “is the perseverance and faith of the saints.” (Revelation 13:10)

This fifth seal which reveals “the souls of those who are slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony they have maintained”, will see these martyrs “cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth.’ They will be told, “Until their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed, even as they had been, should be completed also.” (Revelation 6:9-11)

The end of the age is still to come at the appointed time, a day and hour only the Father knows.

Victory in the Midst of Tribulation

This time of great tribulation represented by the four horses of the apocalypse, is the time when the true church’s greatest victory will take place as they lay down their lives in love, just as Jesus was victorious when He laid down His life in love upon the cross. So it will be that the church will walk in victory. They will

overcome Satan because of the “blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and *because they do not love their life even unto death.*” (Revelation 12:11) In this way they gain a spiritual victory and spiritually overcome despite being overcome.

This victory of the true church will bring about a harvest of souls that Jesus said would come at the end of the age, when the tares, the sons of the evil one, will have been removed from among wheat, the sons of the Kingdom, so that the righteous might “shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” (see Matthew 13:38-43) Daniel was told of this same time when **“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”** (Daniel 12:3)

This is the time when the **“gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations.”** (Matthew 24:14) An “eternal gospel” has to be preached “to those who live on the earth and to every nation, and tribe, and tongue and people.” (Revelation 14:6)

It is also the time when anyone who “worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand” will be doomed to God’s wrath that is yet to come. (Revelation 14:9-10) At this time “no one *will* be able to buy or sell, except the one who has the mark of the beast, the name of the beast or the number of his name.” (Revelation 13:17)

The saints who come from the great tribulation are not small in number, but will be “a great multitude which no one *can* count, from every nation, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues.” **This is the final harvest of this age.**

Daniel was told that this time of distress “would be for a time, times and half a time” - **three and a half years** - (Daniel 12:7) in

which “many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.” (Daniel 12:10)

The Description Of The Beast

John tells us of the beast that he saw “coming up out of the sea (of nations) having ten horns and seven heads.” He says that “the beast he saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like *those* of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. **And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and his authority.**” (Revelation 13:2)

We see that this beast resembled aspects of the first three beasts that Daniel saw in the dream he had when he was in Babylon.

Of the first three beasts Daniel saw, one was “like a leopard”, and as he kept looking another, a second one was, “resembling a bear,” and the first beast was “like a lion and had wings of an eagle.” (see Daniel 7:4-6)

Although the names of these kingdoms were not revealed in Daniel’s dream we have seen that that the leopard represented Greece (Javan), the bear represented Medo-Persia and the lion represented Babylon. We are told that the fourth beast will have features representing all three?

The Ten Horns Of The Beast

In the Revelation, John was shown that the beast has **ten horns**, just as Daniel had seen in his vision. John was told, “The **ten horns** which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but **they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour**. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.” (Revelation 17:12-13)

Together with the beast, **the ten horns** “will wage war against the Lamb,” but eventually the Lamb will overcome them, because “He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him *are the* called and chosen and faithful.” (Revelation 17:14)

Despite the opposition to Jesus Christ and the persecution that will come against the church from the beast and the ten horns, the saints still overcome them spiritually; a spiritual victory through their faith, perseverance and love, which eventually leads to the saints receiving the Kingdom.

The Revelation also speaks of a Harlot, Mystery Babylon, that will ride the beast. John was told that “the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, **these will hate the harlot** and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire for God has put it in their hearts **to execute His purpose** by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.” (Revelation 17:16-17)

The ten horns, which are ten kings who receive authority as kings with the beast, are ten nations and scripture tells us they will try to remove Israel from being a nation: “They have said, ‘Come let us wipe them out as a nation; that the name of Israel be remembered no more.’” (Psalm 83:4)

The psalmist lists these ten nations; **Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon, Amelek, Philistia, Tyre and Assyria**, (see Psalm 83:6-8) nations that surround Israel, and all of which are Islamic.

When Daniel had the dream and saw the four beasts that would arise beginning with the Babylonian Empire, he also saw the fourth and final beast had **ten horns**. Then, “While *he* was

contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and **three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots** before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.” (see Daniel 7:7-8)

When Daniel was given more detail of what was to transpire when the little horn arises, he was told that the little horn would “enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.” (Daniel 11:41) We see these are three of the ten horns that were “pulled out by the roots before it.” (Daniel 7:8)

The Seven Heads Of The Beast

John also saw the beast as having seven heads: “Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns **and seven heads.**”

John was then told the meaning of the seven heads: “Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; **five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.** The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.” (Revelation 17:9-11)

We are told that the seven heads are seven kings or kingdoms that span a portion of history, five having fallen and the sixth being in existence at the time John recorded the Revelation. John, of course, saw the Revelation during the time of the Roman Empire, leaving another Kingdom to emerge, the seventh. This suggests that Rome is the sixth and not the last kingdom to emerge which is the last ‘beast’ kingdom.

Prior to the Roman empire there had been Greece, Medo-Persia, Babylon, Assyria and Egypt, empires that Satan had used historically to persecute Israel in some way.

Following on from Rome, as we have seen, history tells us that Islam arose creating an Islamic empire that culminated in the Ottoman empire, the seventh kingdom.

John was told of this kingdom that was yet to come, that it “must remain a little while.” (Revelation 17:10) John had already been shown shown that one of the heads of the beast was “as if it had been slain,” but “his fatal wound was healed.” (Revelation 13:3) Now he was shown that the beast that “was and is not” is “himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven.” (Revelation 17:11) The seventh kingdom appears to die but rises again almost as if it an eighth.

The Fatal Wound That Will Be Healed

The seventh kingdom, the Islamic caliphate that rose up in the 7th century to overspread the Middle East, that culminated in the Ottoman empire, appeared to be fatally wounded when the Turks were driven out of Jerusalem in 1917 towards the end of the First World War.

As General Edmund Allenby and his British troops were getting into position to take Jerusalem it was reported that the night before the invasion, Allenby prayed that he might take the city without destroying the holy places. He had wired London for instructions and had received a scripture verse as a reply; “As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending, also He will deliver it; and passing over He will preserve it.” (Isaiah 31:5).

General Allenby read London's reply aloud before all his troops that were positioned in the foothills of Jerusalem. He then commandeered every available aircraft to fly over the city, skirting low over the Temple Mount, and from behind clouds that only allowed their sound to be heard, they dropped leaflets on the city that called on the Turkish army to surrender.

The Turks believed in an old Islamic prophecy that they would never lose the Holy City until "a man of Allah came to deliver it". According to reports, the signature of General Allenby on the paper dropped from the sky was interpreted by them to read 'Allah' in Arabic meaning 'God', and 'beh' in Arabic, that means 'son'. They surrendered the city without a single shot being fired.

As General Allenby entered Jerusalem through the Jaffa Gate he dismounted from his white horse aware that only the Messiah will enter the city on a white horse.

The coalition of British, French and Italian forces went on to occupy Constantinople. The first French troops entered the city on November 12, 1918, followed by British troops the next day. The Italian troops landed in Galata on February 7th in 1919.

This occupation came to an end as the last Allied troops departed from the city in 1923. By 1928 an amendment of the Turkish Constitution removed the provision declaring that the "Religion of the State be Islam". Under its first President after the war, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, a modern, democratic and secular state was created, and under his leadership the caliphate, the supreme political and religious office of Sunni Islam, and symbol of the sultan's claim to world leadership of all muslims, was abolished.

Although Turkey was then theoretically a secular state, during World War II Islam remained a prerequisite for acceptance as a full member of the Turkish nation. The head was only wounded! After the relaxation of authoritarian political controls in 1946 there

came a growing reaction against secularism. Islam was not dead in Turkey.

In recent years we are now seeing the Islamic kingdom reemerging “as if it has been healed,” a healing that has almost been completed.

Mystery Babylon

It is in the Book of Revelation that we first hear mention of “a woman sitting on *the* scarlet beast full of blasphemous names having seven heads and ten horns.”

John is “carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness” to be shown the Harlot. (Revelation 17:3) Upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the abominations of the earth.” John saw this woman was “drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.” (Revelation 17:5-6)

This great harlot, John is told, also sits on “many waters” which are “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” (Revelation 17:1 and 17:15) John is also told that this woman is a “great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.” (Revelation 17:18)

This woman, Babylon the great, John is then told, “has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird, for all the nations have drunk of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.” (Revelation 18:2-3)

Although described as a 'city' we see this harlot is much broader in scope than any specific city, although she is personified by several. Some consider her to be personified by New York, others consider she is personified by Jerusalem, and others see her personified by Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Perhaps she is personified in them all.

John then hears the cry, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon," and a voice from heaven saying, "**Come out of her My people that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues, for her sins have piled up as high as heaven.**" (Revelation 18:4-5)

God's people are still to be found within this city at that time!

God has 'remembered' her iniquities and "in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire," and as the kings of the earth see the "smoke of her burning" they weep and mourn. (Revelation 18:9)

Who Is The Harlot?

To understand who the Harlot is it is necessary to go back to the days after the flood when men said, "'Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly.' And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, 'Come, let us build for ourselves **a city**, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'"

Just as in the Garden of Eden, Satan had once again deceived man into trying to usurp God's power and authority.

God saw **the city** and the tower which the sons of men had built and said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the

same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech."

"So it was that the LORD scattered them abroad from there, scattering them over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building **the city**. Therefore its name was called Babel, (or Babylon) because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:3-9)

What we see formed in the hearts of men was that they thought they could build **a city** and a name for themselves without reference to God.

Even today, men and nations seek to be the means of their own salvation whilst ignoring the existence of God, and in their rebellion desire to bring the nations together, nations God has divided and set boundaries to. Men still think they can impose their agenda on this present world. And of course, behind it all is the great deceiver.

In the name of 'globalisation', and upholding a form of secular humanism, the so called 'elite' of the world gather to plan how *they* can impose *their* plan upon the world, just as all those who gathered on the plain in the land of Shinar did all those centuries ago. We see that the hearts of such men remain unchanged. **We see that the city of Babel still exists!**

What we see is a religious, political and economic entity that not only ignores, but opposes the reality of a spiritual relationship of man with God as their Father.

The religious aspect of the Harlot is found in false Christianity, as well as in other religions, religions that link themselves to the political and economic aspect of the Harlot in the nations of the world. **This Harlot that was birthed in the land of Shinar is to be judged by the beast before the end of the age.**

The Harlot Seen Reflected in Europe

Displaying great arrogance the European Union is man's attempt to bring about a union of nations that God has divided and set boundaries to. It even represents itself as a woman riding on a beast! This political, economic entity has created its own court to rule on 'human rights' that are often elevated above God's commands. They often call evil, good, and good, evil, their values not being based on biblical or godly principles.

In Greek Mythology the woman riding the beast was called 'Europa' and the bull on which she rode was called 'Zeus', who subsequently raped her. It is from this woman that Europe gets its name.

This symbol is seen on its currency, has appeared on postage stamps, and statues can be found both in Brussels, outside the European Union Headquarters, and in Strasbourg outside the Winston Churchill building that is used by members of the European Parliament.

The European Union building in Strasbourg is even built to represent the part finished tower of Babel!

We see that Europe, the seat of the Roman Empire that was, represents the Harlot far more than any reemerging Roman Empire.

The Judgment of the Harlot

We see the judgment of the Harlot is carried out by the beast, with ten horns, **“for God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose.”** As the Harlot is burned up with fire and suffers plagues, pestilence, mourning and famine, it is stated in the book of Revelation that **this is the judgment of the Lord God.** (see Revelation 18:8)

Clearly described is a huge economic collapse, as “in one hour such great wealth is laid waste,” and in one hour “all who had ships at sea” and “became rich by her” lamented, because “no one buys their cargos any more.” (Revelation 18:19)

Her “merchants were the great men of the earth,” and “all the nations were deceived by *her* sorceries,” and **“in her was found the blood of the saints and all who have been slain on the earth.”** (see Revelation 18:23-24)

Just as **“all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah,”** who was murdered “between the sanctuary and the altar,” fell upon the scribes, Pharisees and hypocrites in Jesus day, leaving Jerusalem and that generation desolate, so will the Harlot be judged accountable at the time of her judgement. (see Matthew 23:13-36)

So we see that it is the beast system that will be used to bring about the judgment of the Harlot, and following the judgment of the Harlot, buying and selling upon the earth will require “the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name,” the number of the beast being “six hundred and sixty six.” (see Revelation 13:16-18)

The Nature Of The Beast

The end-time kingdom of the beast is ruled by the little horn of Daniel's vision. He is referred to as the 'lawless one' and the 'man of sin' by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians. He is also referred to as the antichrist by John, the one who "will go to destruction" and will come to his end when Jesus returns to the earth, "whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming." (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

His demise is foretold and certain; "And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone." (Revelation 19:20)

In the book of Revelation John was shown a sign in heaven, "a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns." (Revelation 12:3) Clearly **the power and authority behind the end-time beast is Satan.**

And John heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to you having great wrath, knowing that he only has a short time." (Revelation 12:12)

As we have seen it is the wrath of Satan that will cause the great tribulation and distress among nations that comes following the antichrist sitting in the temple as if he is God, the abomination that causes desolation.

The whole earth will be amazed after the beast and they will worship the dragon because he gives his authority to the beast,

and they will worship the beast saying, “Who is like the beast and who is able to wage war with him? He will be given a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty two months.” (see Revelation 13:4-5) **For three and a half years** the beast will carry out a reign of terror, until Jesus returns in the clouds for His saints, but his final demise comes at the end of the time of God’s wrath, a further three and a half years later when Jesus returns with His saints to the earth.

Jesus first comes on the clouds with His angels for His saints and then three and a half years later, after the wrath of God, comes to the earth with His saints to begin His millennial reign.

Empowered by Satan, the beast will persecute natural Israel, seen as “the woman who gave birth to the male *child*,” Jesus Christ. But she will be enabled to seek refuge “for a time, and times and half a time” - for three and a half years. (Revelation 12:13-14). Satan will still be trying to destroy Israel, just as he has so many times before, “being enraged at the woman.” (see verse 17)

The beast will then “make war with the saints and overcome them,” and in this we are told, “is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.” (Revelation 13:7-10) What we see described is a huge end-time spiritual battle, a battle that the saints will eventually win.

Jesus points us to the book of Daniel which speaks of the rise of a ‘despicable person’ and says that at “the appointed time... forces from him will arise and desecrate the sanctuary fortress and do away with the regular sacrifice, and they will set up the **abomination of desolation.**” (Daniel 11:31) This will bring “a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time.” (Daniel 12:1)

Some would hope for peace upon the earth without any change in mankind's nature but it impossible.

To the End Wars are Determined

In the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the Book of Daniel a picture is painted for Daniel, of wars between nations and conflicts within nations, but not overall dominance of the world by the beast. Although “**authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation is given to him,**” (Revelation 13:7) it is hard to imagine what the world will be like when wars break out that take peace from the earth, along with pestilence and famine. Jesus said, “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but **for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short,**” such is the state of the world at that time. (Matthew 24:22)

During this time of great tribulation the true church will emerge, not only preaching the gospel of the Kingdom but living in its reality, Jesus providing for His saints, protecting them in the will of God. Just as in Jesus' earthly walk “no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come,” (John 7:30) so it will be for the church at that time because Jesus will be their Lord, their Shepherd and their Protector.

Daniel says that at that time “**those who have insight** among the people will give understanding to the many,” and “**those who have insight** will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” (Daniel 11:33 and 12:3)

In this we see the ministry of the end-time church who will preach the gospel of the Kingdom to the whole world laying down their lives in love, even unto death, for “some of **those who have insight** will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make pure, until the

end time.” (Daniel 11:35) This is the end-time ministry of the church.

“By smooth words” the beast “will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant... and he will exalt and magnify himself and do as he pleases.... He will speak monstrous things against the God of gods and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.” (Daniel 11:32 and 36)

The end-time beast Daniel describes is “dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong” having “iron teeth.” It will trample down “all the beasts that went before it.” (Daniel 7:7)

In contrast, the Roman Empire was not as aggressive as we see this beast is, but sought tribute and taxes from those nations it conquered to feed the excesses of Rome, building roads and infrastructure. **The end-time beast is a destroyer, and very different in its nature to Rome.**

The nature of the beast that arises can be seen in the the Islamic expectation of a supreme, military and political leader, **the Mahdi**, who will have a powerful army with which he will endeavour to control every nation in the world and dominate the world by force, even rising up within nations to make war on their streets.

The False Prophet

Supporting the end-time beast, John saw “another beast coming up out of the earth and he had two horns **like a lamb** and he spoke as a dragon.” (Revelation 13:11) This beast will “exercise all the authority of the first beast in his presence”, and he will make “the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast.” He will perform “great signs so that he even makes fire

come down from heaven to the earth in the presence of men,” and “he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs.”

He tells those who dwell on the earth “to make an image of the beast”, and there will be given to him to even “give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might speak!” He will kill those who do not “worship the image of the beast.” It is the false prophet who will cause all to “be given a mark on their right hand or their forehead” so they can buy and sell.” (see Revelation 13:11-18)

Islam expects the coming of a **‘muslim Jesus’**, a secondary, prominent leader that will emerge in the last days in addition to the Mahdi. This figure, they say, will even bear the name, **“the Lamb of God.”** This ‘other Jesus’ will uphold Islam as the only religion in the earth and execute any who do not submit. This false Jesus will oppose Christianity!

Executions will be carried out by **beheading**! John was shown in the Revelation, those already martyred for their faith, “those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of (the real) Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand.” (Revelation 20:4)

It might seem outlandish that such a reality lies ahead for the world but both the bible and Islamic expectation speak of these things, considerations many Christians would prefer to ignore perhaps, but will have to face.

Normality in the Midst of Great Affliction

Despite the severe affliction that will come upon the face of the earth, Jesus said that it will be as in the the days of Noah when

“they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all,” and just the same “as happened in the days of Lot, when “they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.” (Luke 17:20-30)

We see that Jesus’ return is sudden and will bring God’s judgement, but it seems that there will also be a semblance of normality?

The good news is that Jesus will come again to rescue those who are His. It is also a day when the dead in Christ will be raised from the dead; the first resurrection.

“God has not destined *the true church* for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:9) The coming of Jesus will bring the first three and a half years of Israel’s seventieth week to a close.

“As the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and the trumpet of God,” the “dead in Christ will rise first then *those* who are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus” those who are His “shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

This is the catching away of the saints who are alive at the coming of Christ, often referred to as ‘the rapture’ from the Latin for ‘catching away’, and also the first resurrection, the resurrection of the righteous of all ages.

The church will be caught up to be with the Lord but natural Israel is still upon the earth. **The first half of Israel's seventieth week is over.** Next, we will consider the second half of the seventieth week decreed for Israel, the day of God's great wrath, a day of God's judgment that will come upon all nations, which natural Israel also has to undergo.

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CHAPTER NINE

Jesus Returns for His Church - The First Resurrection

The first half of Israel's seventieth week concludes with the second coming of Jesus. Jesus said that immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not receive its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken and **THEN the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and "just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be."** (Matthew 24:29-30 and 27)

"Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him." (Revelation 1:7) This is no secret appearing.

"All the tribes of the earth will mourn as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, and with a great trumpet angels will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other." (see Matthew 24:30-31)

Jesus' second coming is 'on the clouds' as He appears in the sky with all His angels.

Then the dead in Christ shall rise first and those who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

In the book of Revelation John tells us more about this day, "I looked when **Jesus opened the sixth seal**, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is

rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.” (Revelation 6:12-15)

Jesus has returned for His elect but also has returned as Judge. For the elect it is a day of great rejoicing. For those who remain on the earth, one of mourning.

The Wrath of God and the Lamb

“The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from **the wrath of the Lamb!** For **the great day of His wrath has come**, and who is able to stand?’ (Revelation 6:16-17)

Jesus will come as a thief to many, and His appearance will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. The dead in Christ will be raised imperishable and those who are His and are alive will be changed; **the mortal will have put on immortality.** (see 1 Corinthians 15:50-54)

Jesus said, “Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. “Two will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two 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 24:36-42)

Those who are taken are those who are caught up to be with the Lord in the air. Those who remain are destined for the wrath of God!

Though we will not know the “day or the hour” of Jesus’ return, Jesus said that we can know that the day is near and that He is

“right at the door.” (see Matthew 32-33) We will not know the day or the hour but **the sons of Light can and will know the season.**

When those who do not know the Lord are saying, “Peace and Safety!” then destruction will come upon **them suddenly**, like birth pangs on a woman with child, and there will be no escape.” But for the true church, they will not be in darkness that the day should overtake them like a thief. (see 1 Thessalonians 5:3-5)

The church, not being destined for wrath, will be taken out of the world before the wrath of God comes as the judgement of God upon mankind who have not accepted the call of God to salvation.

The Great and Awesome Day of the Lord

The Old Testament prophets spoke of this day because it will affect Israel. All of natural Israel, all those born according to the flesh, are still upon the earth when God pours His wrath out upon those who have not given their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ in response to the good news of the Kingdom of God being preached by the end-time church. Jews who have believed in Jesus are part of the church but natural Israel remains. The prophets of old referred to this day as **“The Day of The Lord.”**

Joel prophesied, “The day of the Lord is coming. Surely it is near. **A day of darkness and gloom**, a day of clouds and thick darkness.” (Joel 2:1-2)

Obadiah declared, “The day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. **As you have done, it will be done to you.** Your dealings will return on your own head. (Obadiah 1:15)

Zephaniah said, “The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and coming very quickly. Hear, the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is **a day of wrath**, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in **the day of the Lord's wrath**; And all the earth shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy: for He shall make a complete end, even a terrifying one, of all those that dwell in the land.” (Zephaniah 1:14-18)

This is the beginning of the second half of Daniel's ‘Seventieth Week’, the time when God will pour His wrath upon those who are still populating the earth.

But first there is an interlude.

The Judgment of the Nations

The Bible speaks of different judgments at differing times.. When Jesus returns with His angels, coming in all His glory, **He will sit on His glorious throne, and all the nations (Gentiles) will be gathered before Him**. He will separate them from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left.

This judgment will decide who will survive the time of the wrath of God to populate the earth when Jesus returns to the earth as her King with His saints.

Unlike the saints, whose salvation and righteousness was not based on works, but on faith, as the nations are gathered before the throne of Christ it will be their works that are counted to them as righteousness. Before the wrath of God is poured out, this judgment decides the outcome of those who will receive of the awesome judgments that are about to fall upon the earth, a judgment that will also affect the eternal punishment of those who will lose their lives.

Those who have given food to the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed those who were naked, invited the stranger in, visited those who were sick, and came to those who were in prison, to the extent that they did this to those, Jesus describes, as “one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them,” Jesus, tells them, “you did it to Me.” (see Matthew 25:31-46)

In contrast, the true church, those alive at the return of Christ, and also the righteous dead of all generations, who have all been raised as part of the first resurrection, these will have been caught up into heaven where they also will come before the **“judgment seat of Christ.”** With them are those John saw in heaven, “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, **standing before the throne**, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” (Revelation 7:9) John was told, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation.” (Revelation 7:14)

This ‘judgment seat’, or ‘bema seat’, was a raised platform from where crowns were given to those who had run in a race in Grecian games, as well as from where judgments were made in disputes before the Grecian tribunals.

At this time, Paul tells us, “all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that **each may be recompensed for his deeds in**

the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Paul explained that when the Lord comes He “will bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men’s* heart, then each man’s praise will come to him from God.” (1 Corinthians 4:5)

This is the day that God has fixed, “a day in which **He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man who He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.**” (Acts 17:30-31)

The judgment of the unrighteous dead, those who remain in Hades, (in Hebrew it is rendered as Sheol) the place of the dead, will await **the second resurrection** after the millennial reign of Christ, when they will come before the “great white throne.” (see Revelation 20:11-14) But for the righteous, this judgment after the first resurrection is not for the purpose of deciding their salvation, for their sins have already been judged upon the cross, but is for rewarding them for their works, and the distributing of crowns. For some, their works will be burnt up for they have built on a “foundation, other than the one that is laid, which is Jesus Christ... If any man’s work is burned up he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet as through fire.” (see 1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

As regards natural Israel, a number of God’s choice, 144,000, of those described as the bond-servants of God, are sealed on their foreheads during this interlude; 12,000 from each from every tribe of the sons of Israel, (see Revelation 7:4-8) that they might not be harmed by the coming wrath of God.

And so the wrath of God and the Lamb begins with the breaking of the seventh seal.

The Seventh Seal

Jesus now breaks the '**seventh seal**' and there are "peals of thunder, and sounds and flashes of lightning, and an earthquake." (see Revelation 8:1-5) Seven angels who have **seven trumpets** are preparing to sound and as each angel sounds there are seven judgments.

These seven awesome judgments are hard to consider.

1. Hail and fire thrown to the earth burn a third of the earth and a third of the trees.
2. Something like a great mountain is thrown into the sea and a third of the sea becomes blood, a third of the sea life, died and a third of the ships destroyed.
3. A great star called 'Wormwood' fell on a third of the rivers and springs and many die from the bitter water.
4. A third of the sun, moon and stars are smitten to prevent them shining for a third of the day and a third of the night. The last three trumpets that are then about to sound are three 'woes' to those who dwell on the earth
5. The **first woe** sees the bottomless pit opened and men without the seal of God on their forehead are tormented for five months, men seeking death but unable to find it.
6. Four angels that had been bound at the river Euphrates were released and armies with fire, smoke and brimstone coming from their mouths and a third of mankind is killed yet none of the rest of mankind repented of their idol worship, murders, sorceries or immorality.

Before the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, he descends to earth with a little book in his hand. It is declared that the mystery of God is finished and John is told to eat the little book and prophesy.

It is given for the nations to tread down the holy city for forty two months and God grants His authority for **His two witnesses** to prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days. When they have finished, the beast makes war with them and kills them. Their dead bodies lie in the street for three and a half days, bringing rejoicing until God breathes life back into them bringing great fear. A tenth of the city where Jesus was crucified falls, and seven thousand are killed by a great earthquake. **This, the second 'woe', is over.**

7. The seventh angel then sounds his trumpet and it is declared that "The kingdom of the world has become of the Lord and of His Christ and He will reign for ever and ever.

The seventh trumpet judgment is **the third woe** which we will see described when the seventh bowl of wrath is poured out.

John saw seven angels with seven bowls of wrath each describing the same seven trumpet judgments in similar but different ways for they describe the same events.

1. Loathsome and malignant sores came on those who had the mark of the beast and those who had worshipped his image.
2. The sea became like the blood of a dead man and every living thing in the sea died.
3. The rivers and springs became blood and those who had poured out the blood of the saints and prophets were given blood to drink.
4. The scorching sun made men blaspheme God and they did not repent.
5. The throne of the beast and his kingdom became darkened and they gnawed their tongues in pain so they blasphemed the God of heaven and they did not repent.
6. The river Euphrates dried up to make way for the kings of the east.

Before the seventh bowl of wrath is poured out, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, gather the kings of the whole world together for the “war of the great day of God.” They gather them together at the place called ‘Armageddon’ north of Jerusalem, but the battle takes place just outside Jerusalem in the valley of Jehoshaphat. (see Joel 3:12-13)

There was then a great earthquake, such as has not been since man came to be on the earth. The great city, Jerusalem, was split into three parts and the cities of the nations fell.

In heaven there is rejoicing because **God’s judgments are true and righteous** and he has judged the great Harlot who has corrupted the earth with her immorality. The marriage of the Lamb had come and “it was given to *the bride* to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

7. The seventh bowl of wrath, which is also the **third woe**, is poured out, and Jesus descends from heaven riding on a white horse, with His armies clothed in white linen following on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Assembled to make war against Him are the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies.

John saw “an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather yourselves together unto **the supper of the great God**; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.’ And I saw **the beast, and the**

kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”

The Judgment of the Beast and the False Prophet

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” (Revelation 19:17-21)

Ezekiel also speaks of this day, “Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: ‘Assemble and come together from all around to **the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel**. There you will eat flesh and drink blood. You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls—all of them fattened animals from Bashan. At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are glutted and drink blood till you are drunk. At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every kind,’ declares the Sovereign Lord.”

“I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay on them. From that day forward the people of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God. And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they

all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offences, and I hid my face from them.

“Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: **I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name.** They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.” (Ezekiel 39:17-25)

Satan is then thrown into the abyss in chains and the abyss is sealed for one thousand years and the saints will now reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Jesus Has Returned as King

The kingdoms of the earth have become the Kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ just as Daniel had seen. **“And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him:** His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:14)

The seventieth week decreed for Israel has finished. The Millennial reign of Christ has come.

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CHAPTER TEN

The Millennial Reign of Christ and God's Final Judgment

The description we have seen of the last seven years of the age, the seventieth week that Daniel was told was destined for his people, is perhaps hard to imagine. The figurative nature of prophecy may be difficult to transcribe into events that will actually be played out upon the earth. But it is important we do not discard the warning we are being given because of our lack of clear understanding, but rather we should ask God to open our understanding by His Spirit.

The first dream that Nebuchadnezzar had spoke of the Millennial reign of Christ. As God has brought forth understanding of what was to unfold upon the earth this has come with a focus on this time we will now consider, the Kingdom of God being set up on earth.

Jesus first came as a servant, but as the Millennial reign of Christ begins He will come as King of all the earth. The wrath of God has purged the world of the wicked and has culminated in Satan being put in chains, and for the first time **Satan is no longer able to interact with mankind, to deceive, to kill, steal and destroy.**

The Lord Jesus has now returned to the earth together with His saints who have put on immortality.

For one thousand years Jesus will reign upon the earth together with the saints.

Jesus' Awesome Return

“In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south... Then **the Lord, my God, will come, and all the saints with Him!**

All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site.

“And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And **the Lord will be King over all the earth**; in that day the Lord will be one, and His name One.” (see Zechariah 14:4-10)

Jesus' Entry Into Jerusalem

In our present day, the Eastern Gate in the old walled city of Jerusalem that leads directly onto the Temple Mount, is bricked up and has been for many centuries. It is also blocked by muslim graves dug outside to stop its use. Ezekiel had prophesied, “This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.” Then speaking of Jesus' return, Ezekiel says, “As for the Prince... He shall enter by way of the porch of the gate and shall go out by the same way.” (see Ezekiel 44:2-3)

Ezekiel was led to “**the gate facing toward the east**; and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east, and His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory... and the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east, and

the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.”

The Rebuilding of the Temple

Ezekiel heard a voice speaking from the house, “He said to me, “Son of man, ***this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever.***” (see Ezekiel 43:1-7)

Ezekiel was then given to describe the detail of how the temple will be rebuilt, the altar and the nature of the offerings, and how the land will be divided between the twelve tribes of Israel with a portion for the Prince where the camp of the saints will be.

Water shall flow from under the threshold of the house towards the east, to the Arabah, getting deeper as it flows down to what was the Dead Sea, but this will become fresh and the sea full of many fish like the Great Sea, the Mediterranean. (see Ezekiel 40-48)

Israel’s Restoration

The whole house of Israel will now be gathered from all the nations, to return to the land, to be with Jesus their King. Natural Israel, Israel born after the flesh, will be given new hearts and come into **the New Covenant** that the true church received in the previous age.

Now God says, “**I will set My glory among the nations**; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the Lord their God from that day forward. The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies,

and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.”

“Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘**Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel**, and I will be jealous for My holy Name, after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their *own* land and no one made *them* afraid. When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I *am* the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 39:21-29)

God had spoken through Ezekiel centuries earlier, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land, and I will make them **one nation in the land**, on the mountains of Israel, and **one King will be King for all of them**; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.

Speaking of Jesus, God said, “My servant David will be King over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their Prince

forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will **set My sanctuary in their midst** forever. **My dwelling place also will be with them**; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.” (Ezekiel 37:21-28)

The New Covenant

Just as the church had entered the New Covenant by faith in the previous age, Israel is now given a new heart, and a new spirit is put within them.

Speaking of their restoration God says, “**I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you**; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Jeremiah also prophesied of this day, “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a **New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbour and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:8-12)

With Israel's restoration, and return to the land promised to Abraham so many centuries before, "the city shall be rebuilt for the Lord." (Jeremiah 31:38) Jerusalem becomes not only the capital of Israel but the whole world.

The Nations Will Go Up To Jerusalem

The earth will be then be populated by all those who have come through the wrath of God. "Then it will come about that any **who are left of all the nations** that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to **worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths**. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "HOLY TO THE LORD." And the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the bowls before the altar. Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the Lord of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts in that day." (Zechariah 14:16-21)

Speaking of Jerusalem, God says, "The mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all **the nations will stream to it**. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, **that**

He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths’.

For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples, and **they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.**” (Isaiah 2:2-4)

In that day, **“The wolf will live with the lamb,** the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra’s den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for **the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.**” (Isaiah 11:6-9)

The Saints Will Rule With Christ

Jesus taught His disciples, “He that overcomes and keeps my works unto the end, to him will **I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron;** as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father.” (Revelation 2:26-27)

Jesus gives an example of the reward for the faithful servant saying, “because *they have* been faithful in a very little,” they would “have authority over ten cities.” (Luke 19:17)

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be **priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.**” (Revelation 20:6)

Satan Released From Prison

Despite Jesus Himself coming to the earth as King, teaching the nations and disciplining them, those who have still not been given new natures and new spirits, still carry man's complaint that began in the garden of Eden with Adam - spiritual separation from God.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to **deceive the nations** which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And **the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also**; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:7-10)

Sheol or Hades, the place of the dead, in the centre of the earth, had only been a temporary holding place for the unrighteous. The time had come for their final judgment before the great white throne. This is the day of the resurrection of the unrighteous of all ages, the second resurrection of everyone who has ever lived, those who were not part of the first resurrection.

The White Throne Judgment

John was shown “**a great white throne** and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according

to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one, according to their deeds.

Then death and Hades were thrown into **the lake of fire**. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15)

From the time of man's fall we have seen Almighty God acting in righteousness and justice to bring man back to Himself. Showing that all man's deeds in which he trusts in his own righteousness, are but filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6)

God had demonstrated that even when Satan had been removed from their midst, they still would not fundamentally change. Their fault went deep within their heart and only in Christ could man be saved. God's judgments are seen to be righteous and just.

Now mankind's salvation is complete. "*God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there shall no longer be any death, their shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain. The first things have passed away and He who sits up[on the throne will say, 'Behold. I am making all things new.'*" (Revelation 21:4-5)

The culmination of all ages has come. A new heaven and a new earth await.

"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward *us*, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be

destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought we to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! (2 Peter 3:9-12)

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

A New Heaven and a New Earth

The earth on which all acts of unrighteousness have been acted out, defiling that which God had made in perfection, itself has to be judged.

John describes this scene, “Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘**Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.**”

The Judgment

“He who sits on the throne, said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new,’ and He said, “It is done. **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.** I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving, and abominable and murderers, and immoral persons and sorcerers, and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

The New Jerusalem

One of the seven angels, who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, spoke to John, saying, “**Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**”

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me **the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God**, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

John tells us, “I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And **the city** has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.”

There are still nations, for “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (see Revelation 21)

At last God has brought mankind to His Eternal City, **the city of God.**

The City Reached by Faith

Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

“**By faith** we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. **By faith** Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. **By faith** Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. **By faith** Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

“**By faith** Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. **By faith** he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was **looking for the city** which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. **By faith** even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.”

“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the

earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, **a heavenly one**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for **He has prepared a city for them.**”

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your descendants shall be called.’ He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. **By faith** Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. **By faith** Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. **By faith** he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they

attempted it, were drowned. **By faith** the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. **By faith** Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.”

The bible tells of “Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David, and Samuel and the prophets, who **by faith** conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, *and* chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.”

All of these, gained approval through their faith, yet did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect - and enter together into **the city of God**. (Hebrews 11)

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CONCLUSION

Until the Words of God are Fulfilled

In the Book of Psalms, a psalm of Asaph declares the reality that it is God who lifts up and it is God who brings down; “We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks, for Your name is near; Men declare Your wondrous works. **‘When I select an appointed time, It is I who judge with equity. The earth and all who dwell in it melt; It is I who have firmly set its pillars.’**” (Psalm 75)

So it is, we have seen God bringing forth His plan in world events despite the wickedness of mankind and Satan’s activities to prevent God bringing forth His will.

In scripture we have seen that the exercise of man’s will and Satan’s attempts to frustrate God’s will, do not stop what God has purposed coming to pass.

We have actually seen that God has used man in working our His purpose, for His purpose was to teach man His ways.

If My People Pray

God told Israel of old, “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among My people, if My people, who are called by My Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:13-14)

We have learnt that it is prayer by God’s people, as they turn to Him, that stays His hand and brings His mercy. We have seen,

“**righteousness exalts a nation**, but sin is a disgrace to *any* people.” (Proverbs 14:34)

Paul wrote to Timothy to **pray for governmental leaders and those in authority**. We might think it is ‘our’ political choice of government that guarantees our future but it isn’t ‘our’ politics that bring blessing, it is God working out His will.

Paul wrote, “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of **God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**’ (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

To look to political leaders whilst denying it is God who exalts any nation, we understand amiss and we deceive ourselves. God has the power to turn the hearts of leaders, overthrow their plans or bless their efforts. When we look at the personal lives of political leaders, those used during the greatest times in any nation’s history, we find the Lord can still bless a nations despite their human nature, or being men or women of questionable character.

The power of prayer of God’s people cannot be underestimated, but these prayers are not for the purpose of seeking ‘blessing for blessing’s sake’, but to beseech the Lord for Him to move in righteousness and bring forth His Kingdom in the lives of those He has created; to bring forth His will and purpose in eternity.

Gods Plan and Purpose Fulfilled - A Prophecy

We conclude our study with a prophecy, a word to those who might seek the Kingdom of God :-

“Many might say, ‘What is the purpose of it all, what good can come from such terrible things?’

“I tell you now, this is the single purpose and meaning of all that you see in the days ahead. It is to separate the whole creation into two groups. You have many names for these groups, but there are only two: ‘the hot of the cold’, ‘the right or the wrong’, ‘the good or the evil’.

“Yes, I shall divide ‘light from darkness’, ‘the wheat from the tares’, ‘the saved from the lost’, ‘the sheep from the goats’, ‘the forgiven from the guilty’, ‘the washed from the unclean’, ‘the humble from the proud and lofty’.

“Can you not see that there have always been two groups? - ‘Cain and Abel’, ‘the way of Adam or the way of Jesus’, ‘those inside the ark and those outside the ark’, ‘those who serve God and those who serve mammon’, ‘those who cry for Barabbas and those who cry for Me’, ‘the Kingdom of light or the domain of darkness’, ‘the household of God or the household of Satan’, ‘those who inherit everlasting life or those who suffer eternal damnation’.

“Yes, the wheat shall be gathered into My barn and the tares shall be burned.

“What is the third group? The third group, it does not exist. There is no lukewarm and complacent group; they will be spewed upon the cold for there are only two groups.

“At this time these two groups are mingled and bound together as one, sharing in their sins and their abominable ways. Where is My church? Why do you love the mixture of leaven? Why do you live in adultery and lust? Stand up! I say stand up and choose you this day who you will serve.

“Now, My acts have begun and they shall separate. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth but a sword. As you see my sword come upon the nations know that I am separating out those who are godly, those who are mine.

“There will be both the sword of My judgment and the sword of My word. The sword of My judgment will cut down many and separate hearts and nations and peoples and kingdoms, and I will judge righteously with My sword of judgment. The sword of My word is the word of the true gospel that will separate the good heart from the evil. This is the gospel of the Kingdom for it will fully separate. Yes, even those of one household will be separated; even your mind will be separated from your spirit, for it is a sharp two edged sword.

“This is the gospel of the Kingdom for it will separate the two kingdoms apart - those who are of the Kingdom of God and those in darkness.

“This will be the gospel of Truth. Those who follow the gospels of ‘self’, ‘greed’ and ‘self righteousness’ shall be spewed upon the cold and they shall suffer the sword of My judgment because they refused the sword of My word.

“The gospel of the Kingdom is good news in a dark and judged world. This is the good news, that while you were yet sinners, I died for you. I have made a way of escape. I have opened a door, the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel, for unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Then you will see the two groups. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son does not have life.

“In all of this past time of sin I still have a remnant who have not bowed the knee to idols, who can declare, ‘He has delivered us

from the power of darkness and has translated us into the Kingdom of His Son.’ Make it known! Speak up! Preach repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus. This is the Kingdom message; that by humility, deep repentance and faith in Jesus, they can be saved from judgment and darkness and can be saved into the Kingdom of Heaven.

“This is the last message of this age. There is none after it, for when it is preached to all the nations the end of the age will come. The gospel declares the end and delivers the end. As the sword of the word goes out so does the sword of My judgment. Those who reject the sword of My word shall come under the sword of My judgment.

“This is a serious time, a time of choosing, a time like no other.

“Now I say to you, speak My words, walk in holiness and righteousness, be rich in good works, consider others above yourself, give in good measure, have faith, be obedient, and above all, love with all your heart and soul and do not say, ‘I cannot walk as such,’ for it will not be by might or by power but by My Spirit, and as you walk thus so an entrance shall be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of your Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

D.A - 2011

This prophetic word speaks into our present situation. In our study we have seen that God knew the end from the very beginning. We now find ourselves in the middle of this awesome but most wonderful plan of God. Knowing God’s purpose let us seek His Kingdom and His righteousness that His purpose might be fulfilled in us by His grace.

Just as there is an invitation to be presented to all mankind in this day, there is a choice for those who are already part of the church

that is the body of Christ - a choice in response to Jesus' call to "Come out of her My people."

A Choice to be Made - Two Roads

"We have come to a parting of the ways. There are two roads ahead which depart in different directions never to cross or merge again. At the crossroad there are two groups of people. One group is full of excitement and bustle and activity. They are loading their vehicles with baggage, food and drink and ready to take the broad and smooth tarmac road up to a large house festooned with decorations prepared for a party. In the large garden there are exotic fountains. The house is called the house of feasting and the feast is called Belshazzar's feast where the guests will drink from gold, stolen cups.

In all their excitement, they do not see a warning sign at the crossroads. 'It is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting'.

On the other side of the crossroads, there are individuals who are discarding their baggage as if they are preparing for a long walk, removing all encumbrances. They set off in ones and twos down a narrow rocky track that leads down into a valley. Hidden from sight from the road above there is a small secluded garden. The valley is called the valley of Baca which is the valley of weeping and the garden is called Gethsemane. Seated alone at a plain wooden table in the garden is a man. As each individual enters the garden, He greets them with same words, 'I have been waiting for you. Eat and drink for the strength you will need for the road that lies ahead. My grace shall be sufficient for you and My strength is made perfect in weakness. Will you watch with me one hour? Will you drink the cup I am giving you and share it with Me?'

Looking back they can see smoke rising from the large house which is engulfed in flames.”

SW. 2011

If we know God’s will how will *we* respond? As we enter the last days of this age we cannot take with us, our baggage consisting of ‘self’ and hearts that still desire the things of this world above the Lord. The whole creation awaits the revealing of the sons of God, those who are led by and walk by the Spirit. May this be the desire of our hearts.

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