

The
Last Move of God
of this Age

by

Colin Winfield

2020

In 1948 God began to prepare His end-time church for the end-time move of God as events in the world developed that would lead to the very end of the age. This booklet looks back to those beginnings and looks ahead to what scripture says is soon to come.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....

Chapters -

1. 1948 - A Very Significant Year.....Page 6

2. My Own Testimony of the
Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal.....Page 22

3. The End-Time Church Jesus Is Building.....Page 41

4. Looking To What Lies Ahead.....Page 51

5. Daniel's Prophecies.....Page 56

6. Identifying the End-Time Beast.....Page 75

7. The Hope of Christ's Appearing.....Page 84

8. The Birth Pangs Increase.....Page 92

Maranatha - Come Lord Jesus.....Page 105

The Last Move of God of this Age

INTRODUCTION

This book is written through the understanding we have as of the year 2020. It considers not only God's plan for His church, which is the body of Christ, but events that are unfolding across the whole world which relate to His overall plan and purpose for all mankind.

We begin by considering the necessary preparation of the true church that has taken place for her end-time ministry as this present age is drawing to its close.

The reality of any move of God is that it is a spiritual battle being outplayed upon the earth as God endeavours to draw men back to Himself. This book tells something of that battle as it affected those who make up the modern-day church. It is the story of every true member of the body of Christ, for this is 'our' story.

We look back to a movement that became known as the 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal' and look forward to what scripture says is yet to come, considering how the one leads to the other. The last move of God before Jesus' return that scripture describes is a move of God that will see the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations.

We begin our story in 1948, the year that led to the so-called 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal', a name that became synonymous with a move of God which seemed to bring forth a mixture in what goes by the name of 'Christianity', a mixture that made it difficult to discern what was 'of God' and what was the enemy trying to frustrate God's purposes.

To simply say the 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal' was of God is to misunderstand just what took place in the days of this last generation who are being prepared for end of this age.

We need spiritual understanding to make sense of what God is doing because God “works all things together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purposes,” (Romans 8:28) so even what Satan does, does not frustrate God’s plan and purpose.

There are very definite lessons to be learnt from understanding the wiles of the devil, and the shortcomings in those who were true believers in the past, as we move forward into even more difficult times for the world as God’s plan unfolds, a time of increasing deception. My prayer is that the reader will find this book helpful in finding their own place in the unfolding of this plan of God.

Back in the late 1970’s the ‘Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal’ that had its beginnings in America had reached Britain and saw many within her shores become Christians. There had been previous times of God moving by His Spirit before but this very definite move of God in the late 1970’s which had come to bear the title, the ‘Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal’, seemed to be different. It did not take place outside the denominations but within them.

I was born again of the Spirit of God in the late 1970’s, into what I thought was ‘normal Christianity’. We were going to learn, however, things would not last. We began to see increased divisions and splits in what had at first been a wonderful time of love and unity, with many coming to Christ along with an obvious awareness that God was at work. Aspects of this book are my account of events.

In its beginnings they were days of innocence. Even the most mature Christians were not much more than babes in Christ, largely ignorant of Satan’s schemes, and naivety made the growing number of Christians vulnerable to the attacks, snares and deceptions of the evil one.

This booklet will try to explain something of this history of the modern-day church, events made up of acts of God and acts which were not of Him; events that exposed the reality of a true and a false church that existed side by side. Understanding this mixture in turn points us to the

reason why events have to happen for God's plan for all mankind to come to pass, events we find in prophecy of scripture.

So let us begin

.....

Chapter One

1948 - A Very Significant Year

With World War II having come to a close, the United Nations had been established in 1945 with the aim of preventing future wars. One of its earliest acts took place on the 29th November 1947 when the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution recommending the adoption and implementation of a plan of partition regarding Mandatory Palestine. This led to the nation of Israel becoming a nation state and homeland under their own control after being dispersed by God throughout the world for almost two thousand years. 1948 was to be a most momentous year!

On the 14th May 1948, the day before the expiration of the British Mandate that had given the UK oversight of what had been known as Palestine, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, declared the establishment of a Jewish state to be known as the State of Israel.

This same year was to also see the formation of the World Council of Churches organisation, and concurrently see a move of God that would lead to what became known as the 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal'.

The so called, 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal' actually began in the mid 1950's in the USA and it was much later that it was to spread to Britains shores. But its roots can be traced back to a move of God in 1948 that became known as the 'Latter Rain Movement'.

The Latter Rain Movement

In 1948 a move of God began in North Battleford, in Canada. It must be realised that although moves of God are moves of the Holy Spirit they each produce a mixture of the Holy Spirit being at work, deeds of the flesh, and also Satan at work trying to spoil what God has purposed. Like every move of God over the previous two thousand

years, this move of God was only to last a short while. Beginning in a near purity that innocence enables, those involved would vary in wisdom, understanding and maturity, and true believers would also be mixed with false brethren, false apostles and false teachers. This is sadly the reality of the history of the Christian Church because this world still lies in the power of the evil one. (see 1 John 5:19)

The focus of the 'Latter Rain Movement' revolved around speaking in tongues and the baptism with the Holy Spirit like the Azusa Street Revival that had begun in Los Angeles in 1906. The 'Latter Rain Movement' additionally emphasised, healing, the ministry of the laying on of hands and personal prophecy, gifts the church had seemed to lose since its first beginning but were now being restored.

Of course, such gifts of the Holy Spirit had never been completely lost, but now it seemed God was working on a worldwide scale to empower and equip the church for its future role, to bring His church to maturity.

The 'Latter Rain Movement' had its roots in the rise of the so called, 'Healing Evangelists' that had appeared in America at that time. These included names such as William Branham, Oral Roberts, T.L Osborn, A.A.Allan, Jack Coe, Charles Price, and others who came into prominence in this eventful year of 1948. Billy Graham was to begin his ministry at this same time.

Men, of course, like to give names to what God does as they attempt to understand what perhaps they do not fully comprehend. With this temptation to give names to what is of God, comes the greater temptation to organise what the Holy Spirit is doing; to bring it under man's control. Encouraging such organisation and naming is a strategy that Satan has used to deceive Christians for 2000 years as he has endeavoured to spoil what God's intention is, to bring forth a many membered body - the true church - with His Son, Jesus, as its Head, with every member walking in faith, and led and taught by the Holy Spirit.

Over two millennia Satan has used the true church's naivety to spoil what was of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament records how from its very inception the spirit of antichrist could be seen within the church. (see 1 John 2:18-19) Because of this inevitability Jesus warned, "Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15) Jesus explained to His disciples that Satan would sow tares, sons of the evil one, among the wheat, the true sons of the Kingdom, a reality that Jesus said would last until the end of the age and the time of harvest. (see Matthew 13:24-29 and 36-42)

The reality of the resultant mixture saw the true church slowly lose its initial vitality, eventually seemingly buried in what became known as the 'Dark Ages', with a false church persecuting and shedding the innocent blood of true believers in the spiritual battle for truth, and the true life of the Spirit.

Although persecution in the West may have become more benign in modern times, the result of this mixture, all of which goes by the name of the 'Church' and 'Christianity', has been the creation of the numerous denominations and divisions we see today in what should be one body - the body of Christ.

The 'Latter Rain' revival, which began as a true move of the Spirit, was soon to be described by an eyewitness to that revival, as a river that was becoming broader and more polluted as it flowed on!

The World Council of Churches

Whilst this move of the Holy Spirit was in progress in North America the concept of ecumenical unity was also progressing, men attempting to rectify what they knew was amiss within their ranks. Having its roots in the early part of the twentieth century, in 1948, at a gathering in Amsterdam, Holland, the 'World Council of Churches' was to be formed.

In the timing of this we see the opposing sides in this spiritual battle between God and Satan that saw God moving by His Spirit to continue to bring the true Church to maturity, and Satan's subtle ploy to deceive by introducing a counterfeit of a unity of the Spirit; a unity and union at the cost of compromise to truth.

So we can see a significance to events that unfolded in 1948, events with a significance to one another, not all being of God but nevertheless in His foreknowledge.

As regards what goes by the name of 'Church' and 'Christianity', the nature of this spiritual battle involves a mixing of truth and error by the evil one in his attempt to deceive. Those ensnared in the mixture often find it difficult to see the error, seemingly preferring to compromise and overlook what is unscriptural in favour of relationships maintained in the name of love but at the expense of truth. This is the very nature of ecumenicalism.

For this reason it seems that every new move of God had previously begun outside the established church, but Satan had his plan to try to counter this. The Charismatic Renewal would seem to be a move of God 'within' the established churches!

The Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International

By 1952, just three and a half years after the 'Latter Rain Movement' had begun, this move of God began to lose its initial vitality. It was being spoiled by a struggle between professional ministries beginning to compete with one another. The Holy Spirit then began to move among laymen and the 'Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International' was inaugurated and this was to become a platform through which the Holy Spirit could work through every member of the body of Christ, and not primarily a clergy class.

Coming into being through the definite leading of the Holy Spirit, Demos Shakarian, a Christian businessman from Los Angeles, was used to start this 'Fellowship' following a vision that God gave him. In

the vision Demos saw a world-wide move of God with every person, hands raised, praising God, having come alive by the Spirit of God.

The evangelist, Charles Price, had prophesied over Demos that he would witness one of the major events foretold in the bible, being told that before Jesus returns to the earth, God's Spirit is going to descend on all flesh, and laymen would be the most important channel through which He would work. (See the book, the 'Happiest People On Earth' by Demos Shakarian)

In the years that followed, this vision became a reality, as by the power of God the gifts of the Holy Spirit were manifest in small, local groups of laymen who were sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This fellowship of small groups of laymen began to spread all over the world describing themselves as 'full gospel business men'.

Although International in scope, this move of God centred mainly in the USA in its early days. Meetings in restaurants and conventions would provide a means for believers to break free of denominational barriers and controlling eldership. Teaching and testimony would encourage believers to hear God for themselves and move under the anointing and leading of the Holy Spirit.

But like the 'Latter Rain Movement', just three and a half years from its inception, man would again begin to organise what had begun by the Spirit. History was still bound to repeat itself for those who made up the true church still suffered from a lack of true understanding and maturity.

The Beginning of the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal

On the 27th June 1956 the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International held their third International Convention, this time in Minneapolis. Speakers were to include William Branham, Oral Roberts, David du Plessis, Gordon Lindsay and others.

Some who write of the 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal Movement' place it as starting in 1959, but it was in this Convention of the Full

Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International in 1956 that you find it's actual beginning. During the Convention a business meeting had been arranged in which the decision was made to impose a constitution, by-laws, and doctrinal statement upon this movement which would effectively turn what had begun as an 'organism' led by the Holy Spirit, into another man made 'organisation'. This plan had obviously already been drawn up beforehand by some of the membership, including Demos, not understanding the effect this would have.

To confirm this decision that afternoon, by way of a show of hands, it was decided to replace what had been a Theocratic, Spirit-led group, into a democracy akin to every other denomination!

William Branham, whose prophetic gifting had blessed the Fellowship up to that time, left the Convention without ministering, saying, "It is going to be, what it is supposed to be." Satan had once again seemingly achieved the inevitable and been able to spoil what was of God.

That day some who had eyes to see saw that in place of God's call to 'Come out and be separate', as found in scripture, there was a change to, 'Let this Charismatic experience make you a better Lutheran, a better Baptist, a better Catholic'. The ecumenical idea which advocates, 'Stay in her', replaced what scripture actually says, that we must come out unto Him who is outside the camp and be separate. (see Hebrews 13:13)

That day in 1956, presentations introduced the words, 'Charismatic', 'Ecumenical', and 'Renewal', with the idea that God would bring together all denominations into a unity that the body of Christ should have, all under the guise that God was going to do a 'new thing'.

In glowing terms the word 'Ecumenical' was used to describe unity between Pentecostals with the ecumenical unity that had been developing among all the denominational churches allied with the World Council of Churches that had been formed in 1948.

The word, 'Renewal' was used to describe what was suggested as the Lord's desire to 'renew the churches, not just Pentecostal churches, but all Protestant churches'. The thought to extend this to Roman Catholicism would come in later years.

The next presentation used the word, 'Charismatic', a word not found in any dictionary at that time, and which was not used by Pentecostals, but which nevertheless referred to the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the speaking in tongues.

Then one of the influential personalities who'd gathered for this convention, spoke about the 'new thing' he felt God was about to do, linking this to what was described as "the the melodic sounding term, the 'Charismatic, Ecumenical, Renewal'!"

From that day forward the 'Charismatic, Ecumenical, Renewal' movement would become well known around the whole world. (For more detail see the book entitled, 'None Dare Call It Deception' by Clayt Sonmore)

The Beginning of the End of Pentecost

To better understand what took place on that eventful day in 1956, when the term, 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal' was first coined, one has to realise that this did not immediately bring spiritual death but rather introduced that which would eventually lead to it.

At the cost of 'compromise', ecumenicalism now tried to use old wineskins that God says cannot contain new wine. (see Matthew 9:17) The idea was sown that day, that God now wanted to put new wine even into stone cathedrals!

Many Christians had seen Pentecostalism as the full restoration of what the early church had had stolen. They still did not recognise the pride, hierarchy, control, and the kingdom-building that was still in place

in what are in reality men's organisations that replace the proper function of the true body of Christ as an organism - a living body.

In our use of the term, 'Pentecostal', it is helpful to realise that the Feast of Pentecost, from where this name is derived, was celebrated with leaven, leaven indicative of the mixture that Jesus spoke of; mixture that would be seen within that which goes by the name of the 'Church' until the end of the age when the tares would be taken out from among the wheat, leaving 'the righteous to shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father' before His return. (see Matthew 13:43) Jesus told His disciples that the church was destined to be troubled by mixture but spoke of this time of purity to come, at the time of harvest. Another feast beyond Pentecost!

Jesus was speaking of a time at the end of the age when Pentecost would give way in type to the Feast of Tabernacles, or 'Feast of Ingathering', a time that would see an end-time harvest of a multitude from every nation, and tribe, and people and tongues, (see Revelation 7:9) a feast that would see the true church brought to maturity.

Until that time arrives, to uproot the tares from among the wheat would only cause the wheat to be uprooted also, Jesus explained. In the foreknowledge of God the two were destined to grow side by side until the end of the age, the time of the last great harvest.

The Involvement of Two Very Different Men

Playing their part on this eventful day in 1956 was one of the invited speakers at this Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International Convention, David du Plessis, and the other, the Chairman of the Convention and International and founding Director of the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International, Clayt Sonmore.

David du Plessis was born in South Africa in 1905. He was to become known by the title, 'Mr Pentecost', and is considered to be one of the founders of the 'Charismatic Ecumenical Movement'.

David du Plessis moved to the United States with his parents in the late 1940's where he would later receive his preaching credentials with the Assemblies of God (USA).

From 1949 to 1958 David du Plessis took on the role of 'Ecumenical Secretary' to the 'World Conference of Pentecostal Churches' that had begun in 1947.

In 1951, three years after the 'World Council of Churches' first came into being, David du Plessis in his own thinking felt the Lord tell him to go to witness to the leaders of this council, to share what was on his heart - the concept of ecumenical unity.

Representing Pentecostals, David du Plessis was later invited to take part in Vatican II, the 'Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican' which was called to address relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. 'Vatican II' was formally opened under the pontificate of Pope John XXIII on 11th October 1962.

In years to come, when David du Plessis shared his story of his involvement in the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal, he recalled that in 1936, Smith Wigglesworth, who was in South Africa at that time, and staying with him at his home, came to his office one morning and without a word or greeting said, "You have been in Jerusalem long enough and the Lord says that you are to go to the uttermost parts of the earth. He has much work for you, and you will be going soon."

On another occasion, when giving testimony of this occasion, David du Plessis recounted that Smith Wigglesworth laid his hands on him and prophesied over him, "The Lord would pour His Spirit upon the established Church and the ensuing revival would eclipse anything the Pentecostals had experienced and you will be mightily used by God to bring acceptance of the Pentecostal message to the established churches."

Later David du Plessis added that Smith Wigglesworth had also warned him that “absolute obedience at all costs will be the price for a share in the greatest revival that has ever been known in history.”

David du Plessis’s testimony of this unwitnessed event is often used to substantiate the idea that God’s end-time revival will leave the denominations intact, and it causes many to look for revival without any necessity to come out of the denominations or repent of their unscriptural failings.

Because of his involvement in the Ecumenical movement David du Plessis at one point had to surrender his Assemblies of God preaching credentials under pressure from their denominational leadership who opposed his ecumenical efforts, but later these were reinstated.

David du Plessis’s testimony would suggest that the ‘Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal’ was ordained of God rather than being Satan introducing compromise.

Clayt Sonmore, the second personality who was party to that eventful day in 1956, was one of the twelve founding directors of the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International. He was born in 1924 in Minnesota, the son of Norwegian immigrants. His involvement with the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International began after the Lord told him, “I’ve not called you into the traditional ministry, but to be a full gospel businessman for My glory.” Clayt Sonmore was to be used to help facilitate large meetings and crusades throughout the USA and around the world through the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International, but resigned from that organisation in 1964.

Clayt Sonmore’s testimony of the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International Convention in 1956 gives a picture of God’s true intent being highjacked. He suggests a pre-arranged plan was put into place, to impose organisation and man’s order into what had been, up to that point, an ‘organism led by the Holy Spirit’.

After Clayt Sonmore resigned from the Fellowship in 1964 he began to write about the unfolding revelation he'd been given, that God had a plan 'Beyond Pentecost'. He subsequently published in a book by this title. In his second publication, entitled, 'None Dare Call It Deception' he went on to tell of being led to witness the Roman Catholic strategy to embrace ecumenicalism when he attended meetings in 1971 and 1972 at the Roman Catholic University of Notre Dame in Indiana, USA, convened to discuss the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal.

In this second publication Clayt Sonmore tells of being shown in a dream during the 'National Lutheran Charismatic Conference on the Holy Spirit' that followed in June 1972, a dream of him speaking directly to David du Plessis who was to give the concluding address to the more than 12,000 delegates of the convention who were mainly Lutherans and Catholics.

In the dream Clayt Sonmore says he saw himself join David du Plessis and two others who were breakfasting in the Curtis Hotel in his home city of Minneapolis. He saw himself tell David du Plessis after his other breakfast guests had left, details of his experience of attending the two meetings at the Catholic University of Notre Dame. In the dream Clayt saw himself conclude with a 'word of the Lord' to David du Plessis, which later he described as also being for the "entire Pentecostal camp" - a camp Clayt wrote, that was "overflowing with a mixture of 'precious and vile.'" The word he was to deliver to David du Plessis was, "Do not any longer be a part of the False Prophet that gives life to the image of the Beast!"

On waking from this dream Clayt Sonmore tells of actually going to the Curtis Hotel where everything he'd seen in his dream became a reality. David du Plessis, Clayt commented later, was understandably shocked by their two hour conversation. By then it was time to go to the nearby auditorium for David du Plessis to give his concluding conference speech and Clayt walked with him there.

With 10,000 people in attendance, and another 2,500 in another auditorium linked by close circuit television, David du Plessis began his

prepared presentation after a standing ovation, explaining that the Ecumenical movement had begun with the leadership, referring to the inception of the World Council of Churches in 1948, and how this had over the previous two decades moved down through the ranks to the congregation. He went on to say, “Now, in the last decade we’ve had the Charismatic Movement that started with the congregation, and has moved up through the ranks to the leaders, these two movements bringing all of God’s people together into the one great body of Christ.”

Clayt Sonmore, aghast at what he was hearing, realised that nothing he’d shared with David du Plessis that morning - none of which he had refuted - had been received.

Clayt Sonmore was later to write, “I recognised instantly that almost nothing short of a miracle of deliverance, complete with exorcism from this spirit, could ever change him. This is almost sadly true of the millions in the world who have given themselves to the same spirit - the Charismatic, Ecumenical, Renewal spirit that in essence insists, contrary to the Word, ‘God is going to renew old wineskins.’”

Some might be confused by Clayt Sonmore likening the Protestant ecumenical arm of the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal movement to the False Prophet in type, and the Catholic arm of the same movement as being likened to the Beast, but this was how he was best able to explain it.

Clayt Sonmore added by way of explanation, however, “The False Prophet of Charismatic Protestantism is giving life - a false life or false substitute spirit, calling it a genuine work of the Spirit - to the image of the Charismatic Roman beast.”

The Nature of Deception

The nature of deception is such that those who are deceived actually believe a lie, and consider error to be truth, and Satan, the father of lies, is a master of deception, having used his skills over and over

again ever since he first deceived Eve in the garden of Eden, orchestrating such deceptions to his own advantage.

David du Plessis, in explaining how he came to champion ecumenicalism, admitted he had been deeply affected by the opposition to Pentecostalism in his younger days in South Africa. It is hard for many to realise how much Pentecostal believers were ostracised by evangelical believers in this movements early days. David du Plessis, described how this resulted in him having great anger towards his fellow believers. He said himself, that “he lost sight of the truth that churches were still churches.” (from his sermon entitled ‘70x7’) He admitted that he had taken the “Pentecostal attitude of ‘Come out from among them.’”

This statement might sound like truth but if one were to analyse this statement often made by Pentecostals, one would conclude it to mean, ‘Come out and join the Pentecostals.’

But David du Plessis’s experience, that saw his own parents expelled from the Dutch Reform Church because they embraced the baptism in the Holy Spirit experience, would lead him to embrace his message of forgiveness, and to his ministry of bringing about ecumenical unity.

But such is the subtle nature of deception, that it mixes truth and error in such a way as to deceive. It has to be realised that his statement, “that churches were still churches,” is not actually truth because the denominational churches are NOT true churches, but rather men’s organisations in which the ‘church’ - true believers - might be found along with false brethren.

Satan has deceived the true church, which is the body of Christ, into thinking it is these organisations of men that are the ‘church’ rather than the true church only being those who by the Spirit have been baptised into the body of Christ. (see 1 Corinthians 12:13) The church is the people and not the building or organisation, and only comprises those who are born again of the Spirit of God.

David du Plessis would uphold compromise in the name of forgiveness. Of course we are commanded by the Lord to forgive seventy times seven times, and to love all, even our enemies, but forgiveness does not mean we accept the error others might hold to.

These errors are found behind the spirit of ecumenicalism that upholds compromise to scripture in the name of love.

The Unscriptural Nature of ‘Men’s Churches

This stance might be difficult for some to receive. Some might ask, “How can so many have it so wrong?”

The apostle Paul wrote, that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

With many differing translations of the bible and with varying interpretations of the original texts, the scriptures carry no authority in the opinion of some, and are not considered as being the inspired words given by God.

The apostle Peter wrote, “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.” (2 Peter 1:20-21) The understanding that the scriptures are the inspired word of God must come by revelation of the Holy Spirit, not by intellectual choice.

Jesus said, “When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” (John 16:13)

So we see that as regards understanding the scriptures, the scriptures and the Holy Spirit are inextricably linked. Jesus told His disciples, “If

you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

In contrast, we see men’s denominational churches built according to the worldly pattern of hierarchy, with authority flowing down through a structure of positions, yet Jesus said, ““You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. **Yet it shall not be so among you**; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.” (Matthew 20:25-27)

Jesus taught that the true church is a level brotherhood. Jesus said, “But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and **you are all brothers**. Do not call *anyone* on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, *that is*, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant.” (Matthew 23:8-11)

The denominational churches have a priesthood, or clergy class, above their flocks, but every true believers becomes a priest, part of “a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that *they* may declare the praises of Him who called *them* out of darkness into His wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9) There is no hierarchy in the body of Christ, except Jesus being her only Head and every member is part of the same priesthood and level brotherhood.

In contrast, each denominational church bears a different name, for each has a different head linked to the man who created the house which it denotes, but “Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house. And we are His house,” (Hebrews 3:6) We are “members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner *stone*.” (Ephesians 2:19-20)

The purpose of this book is not to highlight all of the aspects where denominations err from the truth, but these few examples are given to

explain something of the serious problem that ecumenicalism does not address.

Lessons To Be Learned

The history of that which goes by the name of 'Church' since 1948 gives understanding to the necessary journey that the true church has been on, so as to be able to discern between truth and error. It is the nature of purity to be aware of what is not right and chose truth.

As we begin to look ahead to what is coming there is a necessity to learn the lessons from our past and to identify what is wrong with the church that we see, identifying the chains that have bound the true church.

Such has been the necessary preparation of true believers for the coming times that will see the building of the true church by the Lord Jesus Christ.

.....

Chapter Two

Having looked back at the modern history of the church, in this chapter I share my personal testimony of my journey of going into the organisations that go by the name of 'Church' and the Lord leading me back out of them. It is a journey taken by many for it has been necessary for the end-time church to sample what was not of God and fully understand that only a true leading by the Spirit will bring forth the church that will overcome, the church that Satan will not prevail against.

My Own Testimony of the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal

I began this book explaining how the modern history of the church is also the history of each of its members, for all who are true believers have played, and will play their part in this unfolding story. The following is my story.

I was born again in the late 1970's, at the time the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal was seeing many come to faith in Christ in Britain. God was definitely moving by His Spirit. To distinguish what was of God and what was not, was not so easy, however.

My wife, Sandra, and myself, had been church goers in our younger days, me from my early teens attending a Methodist Church. To my knowledge, in all my time attending the local chapel I never heard the truth of the gospel. In fact, I had in my late teens seriously questioned the spiritual reality of our 'church going' but I got no satisfactory answers to my search for truth. All seemed increasingly hypocritical to me, a 'profession' with no reality. So after we were married and had left our home town because of work, we took the opportunity to stop going to church.

It was some years later, now living in the town where we now reside, that I was sent a copy of a book by Dennis Bennett entitled, 'Nine O'clock In The Morning'. What I read was to affect me deeply although

at the time I was quite scathing about the reality of Christianity that it spoke of.

I was particularly struck by the testimony of modern day believers speaking in tongues following being baptised in the Holy Spirit. In all my churchgoing I had never heard of such a thing, but it spoke to me of a reality of God who up to that time I thought was unknowable.

Interestingly Dennis Bennett became synonymous with the Charismatic Renewal in the USA in the early 1960's. It was after declaring from the pulpit that he had been baptised in the Holy Spirit that he was asked to resign from St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, where he was a priest. He continued his ministry at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, Washington, until 1981 after which he left that parish to found and lead the 'Christian Renewal Association' with his wife Rita. He was also instrumental in the 1973 founding of 'Episcopal Renewal Ministries'.

As I read this book I was unconcerned by his links to the denominational church he belonged to, only taken up by his testimony of the small home group where his story unfolded. At the time I thought there can't be any such group here in the UK, for I thought I would have surely heard of one and in any event I had no idea where to find one. For this reason I didn't even think to look for such a group, but I was left with an inner longing for that reality I'd read about - a reality of God.

With growing questions in my mind, about what life was really all about, a few months later the idea came to me to go to a Quaker meeting after my father, who had been visiting us, talked about the sincerity he'd found among Quakers during the war. Having shunned what I had experienced of church for being hypocritical, what my father said about sincerity appealed to me.

I'd never been to a Quaker meeting before but I could see a 300 year old Meeting House from the top of my garden. So I came to go to my first Quaker meeting in 1978.

This particular Sunday morning I joined a small elderly congregation of Quakers in a very historic old Meeting House dating back to the 1680's. As far as I can recall it was a silent meeting, with no one standing up to speak. I had never sat in silence for an hour before, consciously sitting in the presence of God. Only with hindsight did I later realise that for me I was there searching for the God I did not know but longed for. I can only say that I found Him that morning! Or rather, He found me! Something happened within my heart that I knew was God.

The result was that same evening, as I sat at home reading a bible, that for the first time in my life seemed to suddenly make sense, it was as if the scriptures had come alive! And as I sat there reading about Jesus I recall saying in my heart, perhaps even saying aloud, "Jesus, I know you are alive and real." My mind and my confession were catching up with what had happened in my heart earlier that same day. I somehow had a 'knowing' within because in the meeting that morning it was as if my heart, in my inner being, I had been made conscious of the reality of God within. Although spiritual it was also a physical reality.

The next morning, as I awoke from sleep, I wondered if that inner sense of God would be gone, but it wasn't!

So began my new life in Christ. I couldn't wait to go to the next Sunday's Quaker meeting. For several months I kept going to Quaker meetings and reading Quaker books that were on sale at the Meeting House. Some books would mean nothing to me but others would, particularly those which spoke of the reality of God moving in the lives of early Quakers. The amazing thing was that many of these stories centred on the very town where I lived! Just as I'd found when reading 'Nine O'clock In The Morning', I was again reading about a reality of God, but this time the stories spoke of happenings where I actually lived - but which happened 300 years ago!

Particularly meaning much to me were teachings by George Fox, the seventeenth century founder of the 'Religious Society of Friends'. It was he who had bought the land and bestowed the very Meeting House I was going to, for believers to use until the coming of the Lord.

But it wasn't George Fox who was my teacher but the Holy Spirit who I knew was now within me.

This reality is described in what was to become one of my favourite scriptures, one George Fox would often quote: "As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." (1 John 2:27) I now knew this reality beyond any shadow of doubt, yet I knew of no other Christians. The Holy Spirit alone was my Teacher for those first months.

In George Fox's Journal, a copy of which I had by then bought, I read stories of the reality of God that centred on Ulverston and this area where I lived. What I read described a move of God in the seventeenth century that saw great persecution of Christians in the nation but thousands coming into the reality of God's Kingdom. In his Journal George Fox describes his travels throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and even onto the Continent of Europe and the British Colonies in America. Wherever he went he would point men to the Holy Spirit as the One who would lead them to Jesus Christ, just as had happened to me. But also he would expose the denominational churches as being counterfeits of the true church, bringing great persecution upon himself and others that would result in hundreds of true Christians being imprisoned all over our nation, many of them dying there for nothing more than upholding the Truth they had come to know.

Because Jesus commanded us not to swear oaths but, "Let your 'Yes be yes and your no be no'", the magistrates courts would tend the bible to these seventeenth century Christians to 'swear' to tell the truth and then imprison them when they refused. Later I was to realise that this move of God in the seventeenth century had many similarities to the end-time move of God as described in scripture.

It was almost nine months later when, one Sunday morning in my Quaker meeting, a Quaker lady rose to her feet and spoke about the

Holy Spirit and how we should be taking note of the reality taking place all over the country, referring to the affects of the Charismatic Renewal among a small number of Quakers at that time.

After the meeting she was taken to task for what most in this small meeting thought was heresy. But I went up to her to tell how interested I was in what she'd shared. In reply she asked if I had ever been to a home meeting. When I said, "No", she told me of a meeting that was held in Ulverston. I was to discover that there was a home group in Ulverston just like the one I'd read about in 'Nine O'clock In The Morning'!

So began my contact with Christians who believed and walked in a reality of the Holy Spirit, singing truth-inspired spiritual songs I'd never heard before. Here I found believers who spoke in tongues and meetings would sometimes see prophetic words spoken just like those mentioned in the New Testament. If anyone was ill they would lay hands on the person needing prayer and pray for their healing in Jesus Name. The Lord had led me to find that which I so longed for - the reality of the living Christ Jesus in believers that I'd read about over a year before.

Sandra, who had seen a huge change in me since I was saved in that first Quaker meeting, gave her life to the Lord too and together we became part of these home meetings each week.

We now began to hear more about the so called Charismatic Renewal movement. Those who came to our home meetings went to different denominations, some Anglican, some Brethren, some Baptist and some Methodists, and I was still going to my Quaker meetings. We had become part of what God was doing in the nation - you could say - part of the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal that was affecting people in all the denominations.

What God was doing was certainly having an impact on all denominations as testimonies of the reality of the baptism in the Holy Spirit spread.

As all this was happening the Assemblies of God Pentecostal denomination sent a young Pastor to Ulverston to start a new work here, invited by members of a local 'Church of Christ' group who were looking for the spiritual reality that everyone now seemed to be seeking.

These, like so many, wanted this reality of God that was sweeping the nation. Zealousness wasn't in short supply, but to understand why things would not remain as they were at first it has to be realised that we were babes in Christ, lacking discernment, yet sincerely looking for all the Lord had to give us.

In response to this longing in my heart for all the Lord could give, I recall one morning praying earnestly and asking the Lord for more. Such was my spiritual hunger. That same morning, upon visiting new Christian friends who lived in town, we met their visitors who in conversation asked if we'd ever heard of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship. They told us that they knew the organisers of a Convention taking place in Blackpool the following week and offered to book us in if we were interested.

Within just a few days we found ourselves as a family, Sandra & I and our two children, at the North West Convention of the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International at the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. What we experienced over those next few days we found astounding. We heard testimonies of amazing things that God had done and was doing in the lives of different men and women. We sampled worship the likes of which we had never experienced before, and we heard teaching that had us begin to consider for the first time God's plan for the world through Jesus Christ. We also heard about a coming European Convention of the Full Gospel Business Men, to be held shortly in London at the Wembley Conference Centre. We just *had to go!*

So within weeks we joined a gathering of Christians from all over the world, including Demos Shakarian, sampling more of this wonderful

cross-denominational move of God that was now beginning to grow rapidly in the UK.

The Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship was to become the fastest growing Christian organisation in the nation at that time, part of the Charismatic Renewal movement that was affecting all the denominations up and down the land. The Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship was providing a place for believers to grow spiritually under the leading of the Holy Spirit. With an emphasis on salvation everywhere this exciting spiritual dynamic was spilling over into every day life, certainly in our lives, as we talked about what the Lord had done in our lives to family, friends, and those we met through work.

Because in this move of God, experience surpassed real knowledge, spiritual wisdom and maturity, most Christians were vulnerable but we didn't know it. In our home group, looking for more of God, we decided to start attending our local Anglican Church together. We weren't mature enough to recognise the preciousness of what we already had and we weren't mature enough to rely on the Lord alone. The central idea that was part of the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal, to bring spiritual life to the denominational institutions wasn't questioned.

The call from within the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship was also to stay in and change the denominations from within. This was the lie that was part of this Charismatic Renewal movement and we too were naive enough to think that the new wine of the Kingdom could change even centuries old Christianity with all its aberrations and falsehood. And this was happening everywhere! Divisions between denominations were being bridged among Christians, Christians who were now sharing the common experience of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. As the local Pentecostal Church grew in numbers we would join them on occasions. The whole locality was experiencing wonderful cross denominational unity.

However, all the while this was happening, there were some in these denominational churches not so accepting of this 'renewal in the Holy Spirit'. Many were actually put off by a spiritual reality they did not

understand - even feared. But we had high hopes such opposition would be won over! We were always excited to hear that a member of the clergy somewhere had been baptised in the Holy Spirit. Such news had the effect of keeping our hopes of renewal of these institutions alive.

One such Anglican vicar in a nearby village had been involved in the Charismatic Renewal movement in London, and unbeknown to us he had invited the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship to begin a work in our area. He organised a meeting in a large hotel in the nearby Lake District and when I saw this advertised I had to be there.

The large room at the hotel saw many assemble from a wide area, including pastors and ministers from different denominations - even nuns - all who had experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit in their lives. After a film presentation about the Fellowship an invitation was made for those interested in forming a local 'Chapter', as these local groups were called. I put my name down!

A week or so later a meeting was convened at the local vicarage that saw a small group of us gather to consider starting a local Chapter. Each of us were invited to share our testimonies and the representatives from the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship left the room to prayerfully choose who they believed the Lord wanted to be the 'officers' of a local Chapter - the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer - to coordinate the local group. Much to my astonishment I was selected as President!

For those not involved, it might be thought that we were just being carried along by the excitement of it all but there was no doubt in my heart that God was behind this. Here we were, zealous but naive, immature but sincerely looking for God to guide us by His Spirit - and He was doing!

We subsequently arranged our first dinner meeting which was held in a local hotel and the crowded room was full of expectation. I felt very much out of my depth but threw myself upon the Lord and tried to bury

my natural fears and anxieties. We knew we had the Lord to guide and lead us.

At our second dinner meeting, that once more saw the room filled with people from a wide area, we saw local members of a Brethren Assembly ask for prayer in their desire for more of the Holy Spirit, and we saw others respond to an invitation for salvation and other needs. As if to leave us with no doubt that God was with us, after nearly everyone had gone, and with just the few officers of the Chapter remaining, we were to see an amazing miracle of healing!

A visitor to the area had been invited to the dinner, a very crippled young man with obvious twisted limbs. As our guest speaker prayed for this young man after everyone had left we saw his legs and arm straightened under the power of God! God was certainly showing us that indeed His power was real and it seemed that He wished us to know what He could do if only we would believe and follow Him. There was nothing counterfeit about this.

From these beginnings in the early 1980's, what had begun in the Spirit with such excitement began to lose some of its first fervour, however. Opposition increased from those who were nominal Christians within the local churches, and denominational divisions increased as each denomination became more concerned about the growth of their own particular denominations rather than the Kingdom of God. The so called 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal' was not achieving the change it had initially seemed to promise!

The Full Gospel Business Men began to be treated perhaps more as a threat than a blessing in this, despite having no intentional opposition to the denominations. After all, it was taught within the Fellowship that we should encourage new believers to join a local church.

Although many thought the Fellowship should not get involved in teaching, despite this being very much what it did in its early days in America, we found ourselves growing in spiritual understanding that you did not find in denominational churches. So we began to teach

those who wished to know more about what God was teaching us, about who we were in Christ.

Within a few years, as we began to grow in the Lord and travel around the country, and even abroad, sharing our testimony and teaching, I was invited to become a National Director of FGBMFI UK. The National Directors, who had had such love and harmony between themselves in the early days of the Fellowship in the UK, were now finding divisions and differences in understanding amongst themselves difficult to handle. They thought that by inviting five younger men to join them that unity might be restored. But the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship were not alone in experiencing growing difficulties. The move of God that had been experienced by so many in the UK was now beginning to wane everywhere. And no one knew why!

Whilst I was now part of this national scene in FGBMFI, back in Ulverston I had got involved in everything to do with the local Anglican church. I'd volunteered to be trained so I could be part of the 'ministry team'. In my willingness to see God move I was prepared to do whatever I could to help Him along! How misled could I be, but I had much yet to learn.

My position on the National Council of FGBMFI gave me a vantage point so that I could observe that what was happening in Ulverston was also happening in every town and city in the country. Something was not right. The reality of God that had been so evident in previous years had given way to differing conclusions as to what was amiss and what was right.

National initiatives within the denominations endeavoured to breathe life back into what was dying. Denominational initiatives like, 'Jesus in Me', or 'JIM', was one such initiative that the local Pentecostals undertook. Teaching about apostolic oversight saw the Shepherding movement take hold locally. In other parts of the country the Restoration movement was built on these teachings. Excitement would come with each new idea. Coming out of the Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal movement John Wimber and the Vineyard denomination

came upon the scene. There seemed no end to the different permutations on what Christians thought God wanted to do, but each still bore the marks of denominationalism and each had a man, or men, leading each movement.

In different towns, fellowships and churches, there were split after split as members became disillusioned. One group would move to a Baptist Church, another group would leave the Pentecostals and go to the Anglicans, one group replacing perhaps an earlier group who had left or been told to leave. If anyone did not agree with a particular creed or tradition, they would be asked to find what they wanted elsewhere. Many even stopped going to church meetings altogether. Many would leave a church group with disillusionment and hurt and would seem to disappear back into the world.

So-called non-denominational church groups began to spring up in every town - if you can't change the existing churches let's start a new one - but by definition they still carried the names of their particular group with their own particular creed and understanding, and all with similar hierarchical structures within. They might be independent but they were still built on the same unscriptural principals. They might have sampled what was wrong but nowhere it seemed could you find what was right.

Being aware of this, as the 1980's progressed, Bob Spilman, who was the European Director of FGBMFI as well as an International and fellow National Director of the Fellowship asked our fellow directors if he could, along with others here in the North West of England, seek the Lord as to what the reason was for the decline now troubling what had been so much 'of God' in the late 1970's and early 1980's. They agreed to this initiative, but not because they really wanted to know the answer. Perhaps they thought nothing would come of it.

So I became part of a small group of Full Gospel Business Men in the North West of England who, along with Bob Spilman, began to ask the Lord to show us the reason for the churches woes. Over the following months, and then years, what God began to show us had us searching

the scriptures to see if what we were being shown was right. We were guilty ourselves of not walking according to scripture! For one thing we were so called 'National Leaders' despite Jesus commanding us to, 'Call no man leader, for One is your Leader, even Christ.' (Matthew 23:10)

Precept upon precept, slowly the Holy Spirit answered our questions and brought amazing confirmations as to what He was showing us. One such confirmation came in 1992. Bob received from Clayt Sonmore, a copy of his book, 'Beyond Pentecost' that was originally his letter of resignation as Director of FGBMFI, and which told of his reasons for resigning and the faults that maligned that which goes by the name of 'Church' everywhere.

The timing of us receiving this book that Clayt Sonmore had begun writing in the 1960's, was highly significant. It explained and confirmed so much of what the Holy Spirit had been showing us at that time in the early 1990's. We were now able to receive what Clayt was saying and it explained so much. It was God's timing.

Clayt Sonmore had sent his book to every International Director of FGBMFI in the world. In the UK the only Director to consider that what he was saying was relevant, was Bob Spilman, who ordered more copies to pass round.

The Beginning of the Separation of the Bride and the Harlot

Following on from us receiving this publication of 'Beyond Pentecost' by Clayt Sonmore, God was going to speak to us further. We were yet to receive the most awesome prophetic word!

One of our small group had received a quite miraculous revelation and vision in which God showed him that He was now going to begin to separate the Bride and the Harlot that had been mixed together since the time of the early church!

Asking if he could share what he had received, we met on 6th January 1993 to hear what our brother had received from the Lord by way of vision and revelation. What we heard that evening added to what the Lord had been showing us, going on to speak of the church having reached a new time, one which we perhaps didn't fully understand. Indeed some who gathered that evening were soon to consider that what we had heard was not of the Lord.

However, within just days Bob Spilman and myself, who were both on the National Board of Directors of FGBMFI UK, met with our fellow directors for a business meeting. Unexpectedly, what had obviously been a pre-organised plan, we were asked to agree to one of our number being made head of FGBMFI Europe and Great Britain. This plan seemed to be known to all the directors except Bob and myself. Discussions had obviously been taking place behind the scenes that had convinced our fellow directors that this was the only way to achieve unity in the Fellowship - for one of our number to be appointed first among those who had previously been equals, so as to overrule divisions. Bob and my explanation that Jesus was our Head, and no man should be above us but Him, fell on deaf ears. We tried to explain that if we had no unity as to what God was leading us to do, we should wait on Him. This did not interest them. Their minds had been made up. Bob and I were given the ultimatum that if we did not agree with this proposal we must resign as directors there and then! We were given no alternative! We could do no other. We resigned as directors giving our brothers hugs as we left them with their misconceived plan.

So it was that within days of being told that God was about to separate the Bride and the Harlot, the true and false church that had been mixed together for 2000 years, we were now both on our way to being excommunicated from the Fellowship!

We left the meeting that day, perhaps shocked, but with no hard feelings towards those who once we had been so close to. We understood that they had not seen what we had seen.

This was no isolated incident. Back in Ulverston a similar separation was happening. In the local house fellowship Sandra and I were then part of, and of which I had been an elder, we were also given an ultimatum, to either submit to the control of the local elders or leave. We were given this ultimatum because we had dared to question the idea of every attendee of this local fellowship signing a pledge to love one another, adding a vow to the Lord's command to love one another as He loves us. It was thought that this would somehow knit everyone together. Our explanation that Jesus had taught that our 'yes' should be 'yes' and anything beyond this was of the evil one, was ignored. (see Matthew 5:37) Just as in the days of the seventeenth century Quaker Christians, this very same command of Jesus was to come with a cost. To question the elders was considered to be rebellion against their assumed authority. They asked to see Sandra & myself a few days later and we were told that without our unconditional submission to them we must leave this local fellowship.

We were not alone, however, in now being separated from the denominational church system. Already a number of Full Gospel Business Men had left the Fellowship of their own accord, having witnessed what had happened to Bob Spilman and myself.

Although we were seeing this effect both locally and nationally, within weeks we learnt that the same thing was taking place in the United States. Demos Shakarian, who the Lord had used to start the Full Gospel Business Mens Fellowship International, drew up a legal document in January 1993 to make his son, Richard, head of the International Fellowship organisation. Because Demos was growing old he felt that the 'Fellowship' needed a titular head to replace himself when he died. That which had begun by a move of the Holy Spirit with Jesus as its recognised Head, had been turned slowly into an organisation of man's making following that fateful day in June 1956, and now this action was fully removing Jesus as Head of what had begun by the Spirit.

Within months Demos Shakarian died, on 13th July 1993, leaving as a result of this action, a division that within the year saw the Full Gospel

Business Mens Fellowship International split into two different international organisations and the UK and Europe branch of it also divided into these same two differing organisations as well. The director who had offered himself as the head of FGBMFI UK and Europe also died within the year! Such was the seriousness of these linked events! Events pointing to the truth of the vision and revelation that the Bride and the Harlot were beginning to be separated.

Coming Out - Unto The Lord

Because of the speed of these events in early 1993 on a worldwide scale, we expected this separation the Lord had told us about to be completed quickly but we had much more yet to learn. Whilst one might come out of what was once part of an organisation of man, to come out **‘unto the Lord’** is not inevitable. ‘Coming out’ is not a matter of where one goes on a Sunday, it has to be a reality of what has taken place in ones heart. Whilst we might have ‘come out’, just as Israel of old left Egypt, we, like them, might still have Egypt remaining within us!

As the events of 1993 unfolded, in our endeavour to fully understand what had happened to us we had a local meeting to share the vision our brother had received of God beginning to separate the Bride and the Harlot. We also invited Clayt Sonmore to come to the UK to share with us. We might have understood what was wrong but we still had to learn to walk in what was right, however - to walk by the Holy Spirit both individually and corporately. We had yet to fully understand how to walk in what God would do next.

Seeking Scriptural Confirmation

Whilst we were in no doubt that what was taking place in our circumstances was of God, I also knew that this must not contradict scripture but be found within it.

So it was I sought the Lord for scriptural confirmation as to what was taking place. The Lord began to show me clearly that the only place this reality is to be found in scripture is in the parable of the Wheat and

Tares and the parable of the Dragnet that Jesus taught. (see Matthew 13) Both parables, understood in different ways by some perhaps, nevertheless place this separation of the Wheat and Tares at the end of the age, at the time of harvest. Some think its timing refers to the actual return of Christ but the Lord was telling us that this was already beginning to happen and indicative of the end of the age drawing near!

Although many have an expectation in their hearts that we are nearing the end of the age and the return of the Lord, the prophetic understanding of most Christians about the end of the age still remains poor. Many Christians still hold to a belief in a pre-tribulation rapture, popular amongst many Christians, and the Lord's imminent return any day without warning. Others hold to other end-time understandings but, nevertheless still look for revival, hoping it might come with no required change to their denominational structures.

As regards an end-time harvest, however, so longed for by so many, the only place this is found in scripture is in the great tribulation. Yet many Christians do not even believe the true church will still be here during this time! (see Revelation 7:9) Many do not see the distinction in scripture between the great tribulation caused by Satan who knows his time is short, and God's wrath that He will pour out before Jesus' millennial reign.

We were being challenged once more - what does scripture say? To rightly understand the times that are unfolding we need revelation of prophecy of scripture that only the Holy Spirit can give us. If we are to understand what God's plan and purpose for mankind is, recognise our part in it, and understand how He will bring this about, an understanding of prophecy of scripture as regards the events at the end of the age are essential. And this must also be linked to world events that are unfolding. This can be no unsubstantiated theory.

Some confuse such interest as a search for knowledge for knowledge sake. For some this might be the case. But God does not wish His sons to be unaware, but rather understand His plans and purposes so

they can walk with Him in it, avoiding deception and error and fully aware of Satan's strategies to steal, kill and destroy.

Jesus forewarned us, that the end of the age would be a time of deception and false signs and wonders, saying, "If it were possible, even the elect might be deceived." (Matthew 24:24) It is essential we therefore look to the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth and tell us of these things that are yet to come. (see John 16:13)

What The Lord Had Shown Us

To share the answers the Lord had given us, as to why what had been so obviously of God but which was now seemingly dying, I wrote a booklet in 1994, entitled, 'Who is Leading the Church?'. In this booklet I poured out what the Holy Spirit had shown us and found that it resonated with many, such that the booklet found itself being passed around the world and translated into several languages and I heard from all over the world that God was saying the same things to others.

Satan's Counter Attacks

The end-time spiritual battle, however, had hardly even begun and within a year the denominations seemed to be affected by spiritual manifestations many considered to be of the Holy Spirit but which others questioned with great concern. Extreme spiritual manifestations saw congregations laughing uncontrollably, many making animal noises and falling into trance-like states, some, their limbs thrashing about in the air uncontrollably.

Such manifestations we had seen in a small way before, but this was now on a far larger scale. Going by the name of the 'Toronto Blessing' and the 'Laughing Revival', many were keen to embrace what they thought was God reviving that which was dying. Experience without true discernment was again allowing Satan to get many to embrace falsehood.

It was the flesh seeking after signs rather than hearkening to the voice of God, walking by sight and not by faith.

What Will It Take?

It is nearly thirty years since the Lord told us that the Bride and the Harlot were beginning to be separated. In this time we have seen well known Charismatic and Pentecostal ministers embracing Roman Catholicism, acknowledging an ecumenical position that once they would have denied. Some have converted to Catholicism. Whilst many still remain in the mixture the denominational structures maintain, many have seemingly embraced apostasy and embraced wholeheartedly the grosser errors of denominational Christianity. The separation of Tares from amongst the Wheat has been manifest as we have seen the beginning of a great falling away.

We still see many remaining in compromise to the word of Truth, still seemingly unable to hear the voice of God telling them what is amiss. Lacking a knowledge of the 'Word' many remain spiritually blind and so remain within the denominations, or linked to them. Such is the power of the spirit of antichrist that prevents the true church 'knowing' the Truth and so breaking free.

Such is the power of the spirits of antichrist that some of those who have seen, at least in part, and left the organisations they once belonged to, have still found it impossible or difficult to find an obvious alternative. Over these years since 1993, any new corporate gathering of those who had seen what was wrong soon found that any new gatherings still had faults that remained, faults that still appeared to be found within. To walk aright one has not only to know what is wrong but must walk in the Spirit.

So the Lord Jesus Christ continues to build His church and bring her to maturity and in this process it seems that God is continuing to expose the reality of every man's heart. A remnant might have gained freedom, but this work in the hearts of God's people is yet to be completed. And still there has been no great freedom to challenge those still trapped in

the kingdoms of men, those still within the denominations, but I believe this challenge will come - because scripture says it will. (see Matthew 24:9-14)

What will it yet take to yet set the true church fully free and bring her to maturity? This we need to also consider.

.....

Chapter Three

The End-Time Church that Jesus is Building

*Jesus “said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.... upon this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.’” (Matthew 16:15-18)*

Having considered events since 1948, events which have impacted the whole world, Israel and the church, we now begin to consider future events. We look first at what scripture says about the change that must be seen in the true church that Jesus is building - His body on earth - as we approach the end of the age.

There is a certainty in God’s purpose. Jesus will build His church. It will be built both numerically and also grow in stature to a mature corporate son.

We Still Await Maturity

As regards the church, the apostle Paul spoke of the equipping of the saints “for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12-13)

In Christ we are born again into the oneness of the Spirit, a unity we are called upon to *maintain* in the bond of peace. All believers have been called into the “one body and one Spirit, just as also we were called in one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (see Ephesians 4:3-6)

In Christ this is already ours. That we might fail in maintaining this unity of the Spirit only means that our progress to maturity and our attainment of a unity of the faith is frustrated.

It is evident that the true church still awaits the unity of the faith and the corporate maturity of the body of Christ, a maturity that comes as believers grow in a knowledge of God and of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan has done, and is doing, all he can to prevent and frustrate this spiritual growth of believers, bringing deception and confusion to prevent the church from 'knowing' the truth and appropriating the victory that Jesus has already won for them through His death and resurrection.

True spiritual understanding comes only by way of revelation of truth that the Holy Spirit alone can lead us into. An intellectual understanding of truth will not suffice. It is within, in our inner man, in the spirit and the heart of man, that we must understand and come to 'know' who we truly are in Christ. Then we must walk in this reality. This is the process of growing to maturity.

From the moment the "Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children," (Romans 8:16) as newborn infants every new believer begins this process of growth towards adulthood. Realising this, Satan therefore does all he can to frustrate this growth, both in the lives of individual believers and in any corporate expression of the church.

Such is the magnitude of this battle for the true church to walk in the fullness of the life Christ died to bring forth in His body, the church, it has taken the last two thousand years to bring the 'church corporate' to this place where we are today, and still the corporate maturity of the whole church awaits.

Jesus said, however, the 'gates of Hades' - or strategies of Satan - will not prevail against the church. The apostle Paul spoke, we can say prophetically, of the whole church reaching maturity. Writing to the

church at Ephesus, Paul said, “We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the Head, *even* Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.’ (Ephesians 4:14:16)

Although this describes the goal for each generation this also describes the corporate process that has been evident throughout the history of the church over the last two thousand years, and which will culminate in the last generation of the church that will see the return of Christ.

In these years since 1948 many prophetic words have been spoken that it is this present generation that will see the last move of God before Jesus returns. Far from this process being complete, however, the modern history of the church has seen Satan increasingly doing all he can to frustrate this reality.

The true church has yet to grow to that place where she cannot be deceived by Satan any longer, corporately completing her transition from innocence to purity, that Christ’s victory might be made manifest in the true sons of God; **a revealing or manifestation of the sons of God the whole creation anxiously still awaits.** (see Romans 8:19)

In this growth from infancy to maturity, from innocence to purity, we see that in innocence we can still be deceived, whilst in purity we have learnt to discern and reject that which is impure and false, and choose sanctification.

Each generation of the church, since its infancy, has benefitted from the spiritual battles won by those who have gone before. The end-time church, like the generations that have preceded them, will have to withstand the great onslaught of the evil one necessitating they walk corporately in the maturity, understanding, and wisdom that will see

them walking in the victory Jesus has won for them through His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

It is this end-time generation of the church that will withstand the tares being removed from abiding in their midst, and not be uprooted themselves.

The Great Falling Away

The preparation of the end-time church necessitates the wheat being separated from the tares that were sown in their midst, a process still taking place for it has already begun. Whilst the wheat who are separated from the tares are finally set free from all the chains that once bound them, the tares that are separated are seen to fall away from the faith they once seemed to have!

Regarding the end of the age and the coming of the Day of Christ, and the return of Jesus, Paul explained to the church at Thessalonica that this day would not come unless a falling away had occurred first. (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 - Greek 'apostasia' = 'falling away') This falling away is one of the signs that the coming of Christ is now drawing near.

What we have seen taking place since 1993, when the Lord told us that He was beginning to separate the Harlot from the Bride, has been a growing apostasy that has seemingly led many Christians further and further way from the truth as found in scripture.

The separation of wheat and tares has not only seen some breaking free from the chains that have been able to bind the church for two thousand years and so stop or frustrate any move of God, but has also seen others falling away from truth.

There has always been those holding to error within that which goes by the name of 'church', of course, but over these years since 1993 it has been a matter of observation to see many seemingly starting in a place of truth and finishing in entrenched religious error.

The Difference Between a False Brother and True Brother

The separation of tares from among the wheat, Jesus said, is the work of angels. (see Matthew 13:39) The outward appearance of a false brother can appear to be the same as a true brother who is deceived. To discern the true nature of men's hearts is, therefore, not always easy to distinguish. Although Jesus taught that false brethren would be known by their fruits, (see Matthew 7:15-20) the end-time separation of tares from among the wheat, is the work of angels, not men. This ministry of separation is not given to His true sons. The judgment required is not theirs to exercise.

Whereas Christians are called to "contend for the faith," (see Jude 3) it is not their place to judge any man. (see Matthew 7:1-6) There is a place for repentance that only God knows is still available to any individual, even the most sinful.

In building their denominational groups, men have sought to base unity on agreement to truth, looking for outward confession whilst God always looks at men's hearts. (see Jeremiah 17:10)

The Revealing of the Sons of God

As wickedness increases in the world Christ Jesus is working in His people, and though perhaps unseen by most, God is preparing His sons for what lies ahead, teaching them to walk by the Spirit - to be led by the Spirit of God - and to walk by faith.

Paul wrote, "**those who are led by the Spirit, these are the sons of God,**" (see Romans 8:14) explaining in his letter to the church in Rome that "**the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing (or manifestation) of the sons of God.**" (see Romans 8:19) This is the wonderful reality that awaits the true saints at the end of this age.

Since the very beginning of the church age Satan has been able to deceive the true church in their innocence, naivety, and lack of maturity.

The true church has therefore had to learn and experience what is wrong and what is error, as well as what is right and of the truth so as to be able to discern and stand against Satan's wiles and deception. In this individual and corporate process we can see that the end-time church is thus prepared for what lies ahead.

The Gifts and Calling of God

Although we see in scripture a climax to this corporate growth of the church, this process has been in progress for the last two thousand years. The apostle, Paul, explained to the church in Ephesus that when Jesus ascended on high, He gave gifts to His people, ascending far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things. To each believer is therefore given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. (see Ephesians 4:7-10)

These gifts are gifts of grace for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (see Romans 11:29) They are not earned, but each believer is bestowed freely with a measure of Christ's gift, a gifting particular to themselves, giftings which in total are found in fulness in the Lord Jesus Christ. Giftings which are for the benefit of the whole church.

As believers grow in understanding, and the eyes of their hearts are enlightened, they begin to 'know' the hope to which they have been called.

The most joyous thing for any believer is to move in the calling with which God has called them - a calling in accordance with the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power toward all who believe; the same power as the mighty strength the Father Almighty exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (see Ephesians 1:17-21)

Paul prayed, asking the Father to open the eyes of the saints that they might 'know' this very reality.

The Five-fold Ministry Gifts

To help bring about the maturity of the church, by His choice God has given some *as* apostles, some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. (see Ephesians 4:11) These are often referred to as the 'five-fold ministry gifts'.

These are no clergy class but true servants, willing to take the most lowly place in God's household, willing to wash the very feet of those to whom they have been called to serve, the task the lowliest slave carried out in ancient times and the task Jesus carried out among His disciples on the night He was betrayed.

The giftings of the five-fold ministry gifts are not therefore for themselves but for the benefit of the whole church. The anointing bestowed upon them by the Lord, grants them an enabling for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ, until all attain to the unity of the faith. (see Ephesians 4:12) The 'work of service' belongs to the whole church, not just some ecclesiastical priesthood as is seen in the institutions and organisations made by men.

That the church has been deceived into making these men with giftings a priesthood that has actually prevented the growth of the the church.

The plan and purpose of God is that the whole body, not just a part, grows in a knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. This is the goal that will see 'all' grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the Head, *even* Christ, that from Him the 'whole body' might be fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causing the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (see Ephesians 4:13,15b-16)

This picture describes how the whole church, the body of Christ - the true church, should operate. This is His glorious body that will minister at the very end of the age in love and power of the Holy Spirit replicating Jesus' own three and a half year ministry that requires the laying down of ones life in love.

We might not have been aware of it, but this is God's plan and though we might not recognise it Jesus has been building His church against which the gates and strategies of Satan will not prevail in this final battle of the age. (see Matthew 16:18)

Judgment Begins with the Household of God

A judgment is coming upon this current world in readiness for Jesus return to the earth as King. Scripture describes the awesome reality of the wrath of God that will come upon the last generation of this age, once the true church has been removed, wrath that the church is not destined for. (see 1 Thessalonians 5:9)

Judgment, however, begins with the household of God. (see 1 Peter 4:17) The apostle, Peter, writes, "If it is with difficulty the righteous man is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner". There is therefore a suffering according to the will of God for those who entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (see 1 Peter 4:18-19)

In readiness for the culmination of this age and her end-time ministry, the true church is thus being prepared, the true church being made up of the true sons of God, led by the Spirit, walking in righteousness and able to not only preach about the Kingdom of God but also walk in its reality.

As the church is being prepared, the hearts of men everywhere are also being prepared to receive the seed of God's Word which alone is able to save them from the wrath to come for it is God's will for all men to be saved.

In the soon coming time of great tribulation, the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached that will also save those who receive it from the wrath of God that will be poured out upon the unbelieving when the church is taken from the earth.

Before the wrath of God, the coming great tribulation, caused by Satan having great wrath, will see the true church laying down their lives in love that others might receive eternal life just as they have. This will bring persecution upon the saints as never before, yet those who are saved will be assured of the resurrection that awaits and do all they can to help others receive this wonderful offer of eternal life that Jesus died to bring to mankind.

So it is we can see the link between the church's growth to maturity and the timing of the separation of the wheat and the tares, and the end-time ministry of the church.

As the separation of wheat and tares is still in progress this has led to us apparently seeing what seems to be three groups, not two, as many true sons still remain in the mixture, still trapped in the institutions and organisations of men. A final call still awaits - "Come out of her My People."

Come Out Of Her My People

The Bride still awaits being fully separated from the Harlot, yet needing to make herself ready with with no spot or wrinkle, a separation **not just from the religious aspects of the Harlot but also from the worldly**. A time still awaits when Christ will give His last call, "Come out of her My People, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues." (Revelation 18:4) **Not just a coming out of men's churches but a coming out of the world in one's heart, wholly separated unto Christ to whom true believers belong.**

What constitutes the true church has nothing to do with the organisations of men which take the form of the numerous denominations and named Christian groups. The true church only

constitutes true believers who may or may not be in these organisations at this time. The true 'church' is the people, not the building or a particular named assembly. The church may be described as the church that meets in John's house, but it is not John's Church. The church may be described as the church in a town or city, descriptions only, for the only name over the true church is 'Jesus'. The individual members do not go to church, they are the church. And the true church is, of course, the body of Christ; "the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:22-23)

In confirmation of prophecy we have seen the beginning of the separation of the true sons of the Kingdom from the sons of the evil one in that which has gone by the name of 'Church' in the past, a major sign of the soon coming end of the age. As the end of this age reaches its conclusion we are going to yet see events unfold that will purify the true saints before the catching away of the true church at the revealing of the Son of Man with His angels.

.....

Chapter Four

Looking To What Lies Ahead

As we now look forward to what is yet to come, we need to compare what scripture says with world events that are beginning to unfold, events which all come to pass in the foreknowledge of God for He is working out His plan and purpose, events recorded for us in scripture.

Shaking is Here!

The writer to the Hebrews quotes the prophet Haggai, saying God has promised, “**Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.**’ He explains that this *expression*, ‘Yet once more,’ denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:25-29 and see Haggai 2:6)

The only unshakeable thing in this end-time spiritual battle which is to unfold is the Kingdom of God. Speaking of His Kingdom reality in this age Jesus said, “The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the Kingdom of God is within you.**” (Luke 17:20-21)

The Kingdom of God within brings forth the reality where Jesus truly reigns in the hearts and lives of His brethren in this age. It is for this reality of the Kingdom of God in the lives of the saints that this spiritual battle is being fought.

The Kingdom of God will manifest itself in this age in the hearts and lives of the true church manifesting Jesus’ rule. When Jesus returns to the earth, we will see Him reigning as King over all the earth in the age to come. The one thousand year millennial reign of Christ.

Even then, prophecy of scripture tells us, the final victory, the culmination of all the ages, will not come in the coming age when Jesus reigns upon the earth as King, but only when the city of God comes down from heaven upon a new earth, under a new heaven, after all His foes are swallowed up in Jesus mighty victory that took place upon the cross. (see Revelation 21)

So we need to realise that we are living in the middle of God's plan for mankind with current events part of the church's preparation for their role in the ages to come.

The Sign of the Fig Tree

As this age draws to its close, and we look for the signs of Jesus' return in this age and the events that necessarily precede this awesome day, Jesus told us to "learn the parable from the **fig tree**" saying, "when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near," (Matthew 24:32) adding, "**so, when you see all these things**", speaking of the signs He had just foretold, "recognise that He is near, at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

In scripture Israel is figuratively represented by the fig tree and we have seen in the years since 1948, Israel's reestablishment as a nation. The fig tree has begun to bear fruit once more.

As regards the season of Jesus appearing, Jesus told of the signs that point to His return, but Jesus, speaking of the very day of His return, says, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." (Matthew 24:33-36) Therefore we may know the season but we will not know the day.

The Signs of the Times

As Jesus' disciples looked at the Temple buildings in Jerusalem, Jesus told them, "Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." (Matthew 24:2) This prompted His disciples to ask, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (verse 3) Jesus replied -

- "You will be hearing of wars and rumours of wars."
- "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"
- "There will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places."

Adding, "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs. (verses 4-8) Before His return Jesus said '**great tribulation**' would come upon the earth, "such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." (Matthew 24:21)

Jesus continued :-

- "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My Name."
- "Many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another."
- "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many."
- "Lawlessness *will* increase" and because of this "most people's love will grow cold."
- "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end (of the age) will come."
- "The **abomination of desolation** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place," will be seen.
- "Those who are in Judea must *then* flee to the mountains."
- There will be those saying, "'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is.'"
- "False Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders."

- There will be those saying, “Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms.’”

(see Matthew 24: 9-26)

Jesus, speaking of this time before His return, said that it will be a time that will see wars and rumours of wars, nation having risen against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. The Twentieth Century has seen two World Wars, wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and more recently throughout the Middle East. Horrendous though these wars were the great tribulation will yet see peace taken from all of the earth.

Although in recent years there has been a persecution of those which name the Name of Jesus Christ, with destruction of their places of worship and terrible affliction of those calling themselves ‘Christians’, the great tribulation will yet see persecution and betrayal of a higher order..

True Christians will be brought before kings and governors for Jesus’ Name’s sake, giving them opportunity to give their testimony, the Holy Spirit giving them the words to say, such that their opponents will not be able to refute or resist what they hear. (see Luke 21:15)

True Christians will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends at that time, causing many to be put to death. (see Luke 21:16)

This is the cost for the gospel of the Kingdom to be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and part of this last battle of the righteous - the true church - before the end of the age. (see Matthew 24:14)

But God Is in Charge

Despite this persecution Jesus nevertheless declared, “not a hair of your head will perish,” and although, for the saints to overcome they must have great perseverance, through their faith they will win their souls. (see Luke 21:18-19)

Although Satan is the one who is behind this wickedness and anger, we need to be assured that this time has not come without the foreknowledge and permissive will of God. These things have to be. Such is the nature and magnitude of this spiritual battle but in the power of His resurrection the true church will triumph. Jesus said, “The one who endures to the end, he will be saved.” The gospel of the Kingdom has to be preached in the whole world by the end-time church as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end (of the age) will come.

Jesus then tells of the sign when this great tribulation will begin; “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 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.” (Matthew 24:13-14 & 21-22)

The Coming Great Tribulation

So we see the present spiritual battle will intensify as Satan in his great anger causes the **great tribulation**, the time that Jesus told His disciples would begin when the **abomination of desolation would be seen standing in the holy place**, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet. (see Matthew 24:15-16)

Jesus pointed His disciples to the book of Daniel and this is where we will look next.

.....

Chapter Five

Daniel's Prophecies

The visions and dreams recorded for us in the Book of Daniel give us understanding of what has taken place in history and foretell of what is yet to come.

Beginning with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel was able to interpret, (see Daniel 2) each progressive vision or dream recounted for us in the book of Daniel gives more detail of the events which were to take place in the world from the time of Judah's exile in Babylon to the coming of Christ to the earth to set up His earthly Kingdom. We are, of course, now living in the middle of what these prophecies foretold.

As we look back at the fulfilled aspects of these prophecies we can see these have been wholly accurate. So accurate, some sceptical bible scholars have suggested they were written with hindsight!

Daniel's 70 Weeks

In the Ninth Chapter of Daniel, we read how Daniel was told by the angel Gabriel that seventy weeks were decreed for his people, Israel: "**Seventy weeks** have 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)

As we read of the events that take place in the first sixty nine weeks of this prophecy we see that they have already been fulfilled. One week, the seventieth week, remains, the last week of this age.

Speaking of this final week, Gabriel explained, "the people of **the prince who is to come** will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end

will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.” (Daniel 9:26)

A Covenant With Many For One Week

Gabriel then continues, referring to this ‘**prince who is to come**’, “He will make **a firm covenant with the many for one week**, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and oblation; and **on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate**, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” (Daniel 9:27)

Jesus did not mention this ‘covenant with many for one week’ when telling His disciples what would be the sign when the great tribulation would begin, when Israel would need to flee again from Jerusalem, Jesus only referred to the ‘abomination of desolation’. Because of Gabriel’s explanation to Daniel, however, we can still expect to see this ‘covenant with many’ that precedes the abomination of desolation.

Is the Week of the Covenant With Many the 70th week?

Many bible scholars consider the ‘week of the covenant with many’ as being the 70th week, the last seven years of the end of this age, but a careful reading of the text suggests that this is an assumption. Gabriel did not say they were the same week! Those bible scholars who conclude this, therefore conclude the abomination of desolation is in the middle of the seventieth week, an error that causes other events to be misplaced as to their timing.

But the ‘week of the covenant with many’, **if not the 70th week**, places this covenant at least three and a half years before the 70th week which would see desolation ‘coming on the wing of abomination” halfway through this week.

The complexity of how this prophecy has been phrased has led many to be confused regarding the order of events but a careful consideration of the wording needs to be made. The ‘week’ of the

‘covenant with many’ precedes the final week of the age because it is in the middle of this week that the abomination of desolation has to be seen which itself begins the final week.

We say, ‘at least’ three and a half years before the 70th week because Gabriel only said that in the middle of the week of the covenant with many, **“on the wing of abomination will come one who makes desolate.”** (see Daniel 9:27) The wording of this prophecy is such that it seems to suggest that the great tribulation might not come immediately although the covenant with many will break down after three and a half years.

If the setting up of the abomination of desolation comes exactly in the middle of the week the covenant with many is made, we can time the last week exactly, just from seeing when a covenant is made. But Jesus did not say to look for this covenant.

If there is an uncertainty as to the timing from the middle of the week to when the ‘abomination that makes desolate’ is set up it makes sense that the sign that Jesus spoke of was and not the ‘covenant with many for one week’ but the ‘abomination of desolation’ itself.

This might all sound very confusing but it seems such uncertainties regarding interpreting prophecy is the very nature of how God has hidden the truth that only those taught by the Holy Spirit can discern prophecy correctly.

My Own Testimony Regarding The Covenant With Many

From the very early days of being a Christian I read the Book of Daniel many times, trying to understand and make sense of it, and asking the Holy Spirit about the things I did not understand. Over the years I sensed within my spirit, like an inner knowing, that ‘the week of the covenant with many’ was not necessarily the ‘seventieth week’ but drew no conclusions. I still recall the Holy Spirit saying to me, “The week of the covenant with many is not the last week of the age.”

In 1992, however, a Christian friend who had himself studied these scriptures closely, told me that he felt the Lord had spoken to him that the 'covenant with many' would be seen soon. This instantly got my attention! So it was I planned to meet up for him to share with me what he felt the Lord had shown him.

Whilst the way my friend had come to his conclusion might be questioned, based as it was on timing the 'covenant with many' to the birth of the nation of Israel in 1948, my friend had calculated that we could expect to see this 'covenant with many' on 20th August 1993, almost a year away.

The Danger of Setting Times

Now it must be emphasised that time setting of prophecy has seen the downfall of many interpretations over many years, even centuries. And certainly as regards the coming of the Lord no one will know the day or the hour, only our Father in Heaven, as Jesus told us. (see Matthew 24:36)

However, having heard my friends prediction I was keen to watch for its fulfilment, watching the news closely as regards events unfolding in Israel.

The 20th August 1993 came and went, however, with no news that a covenant with many had been made. But then, within a day or so news came news that a Peace Accord had been agreed in Oslo a few days earlier - on the 20th August 1993! This accord mapped out a plan for peace with the Palestinians in Israel and became known as the "**Oslo Accord**".

I have given this turn of events much thought over the years and I can only conclude that the Lord wanted me to be take particular notice of this Peace Accord because of its significance. The Lord had certainly got my attention, such that over the next seven years I searched and kept newspaper cuttings each day, and I found that the events that unfolded indeed had great significance.

The Oslo Accord

The attempt to find peace between Israel and the Palestinians was in fact no new thing. The 'Oslo Accord' had not come completely out of the blue.

Dr Henry Kissinger, who served as United States Secretary of State and National Security Advisor under the presidential administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, was quoted in the Jerusalem Post on 2nd October 1988 as saying, "In the Middle East, I believe, if you attempt to achieve a total solution it must fail, because at this moment the differences are too great. But what is achievable in the Middle East is a series of interim arrangements that improve the situation for, say, five to ten years, after which the solution will be discussed anew. At the moment, for example, the biggest problem on the West Bank is to get agreement to the principle from Israel to withdraw from some Arab territories even if not all. If one could get a governing structure into some part of the West Bank governed by Arabs, supported by Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and if that group could coexist with Israel in a concrete manner for say, five or **SEVEN** years, at the end of that period one could consider the role of other organisations. This, I believe, is possible, and after American and Israeli elections that should be attempted."

Even earlier, the 'Camp David Accords' were signed by Egyptian President, Anwar El Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister, Menachem Begin in September 1978. The framework for peace between Egypt and Israel included a framework for peace in the Palestinian territories without any participation of the Palestinians. At the time it was condemned by the United Nations.



The so called 'Oslo Accord' conducted secretly in Oslo, Norway, hosted by the Fafo Institute (The Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research conducting social research both in Norway and internationally) had

indeed been agreed on 20th August 1993, with the negotiations carried out on behalf of Israel by Shimon Peres.

Interestingly, this 'accord' that was intending to divide the land of Israel was brokered by Shimon Peres on their behalf. The name, 'Peres' means 'division' in Hebrew and was one of the words written on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, which Daniel interpreted. (see Daniel 5:28)

In due course, however, Jeremiah's prophecy was to be fulfilled; "They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14), "We looked for peace, but no good came; For a time of healing, but behold, terror." (Jeremiah 8:15)



The Oslo Accord was officially called the, 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements' and was the framework intended to lead to the resolution of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This Peace Accord was subsequently signed at an official public ceremony in Washington on 13th September 1993 in the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation chairman, Yasser Arafat, the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitsak Rabin, and the US President, Bill Clinton.

Was It A Seven Year Treaty?

Although the Accord was never stated to be for seven years, September 13th 2000 was later scheduled to be the date for the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the 'Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum', seven years from the beginning of this agreement.



This Memorandum was signed on 4th September 1999 by the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Barak, and the PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat ,

overseen by the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, and witnessed and co-signed by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah of Jordan.

Before this planned end of the conflict was reached, however, the Camp David Summit that took place between 11th and 25th July 2000 ended without agreement and peace was not achieved.

Peace, Peace, But There Will Be No Peace



Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel who had been party to the 'Accord' received the Nobel Peace prize in 1994 along with Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat. Yitzhak Rabin subsequently addressed a "Peace Now" rally of 100,000 people in Tel Aviv on 4th November 1995, declaring it is now time for peace and safety. He stepped down from the podium after his speech and was assassinated!

The Oslo Accord, the first ever deal between Ishmael and Isaac, going against God's covenant with Abraham, was not blessed. The prophecy regarding Ishmael, "He will be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him," being fulfilled in our day in a startling manner as the worldwide fight between Islam and the rest of the world, as well as between Islam and Israel, plays out.

Jeremiah's prophecy that declared that there could be no peace was fulfilled as during the first three and a half years of the Oslo Accord Yasser Arafat continued to declare that holy war must continue until Jerusalem had become their capital.

In the spirit of the Oslo Accord and in an attempt to obtain peace in exchange for land, on 27th December 1995 Israel handed over Ramallah to the Palestinians and Yasser Arafat declared in his first speech there that Jerusalem would be next.

Just a week or so earlier, on December 4th 1995, the United Nations had passed a resolution that Israel's occupation of Jerusalem was illegal with 133 voted in favour, with only Israel voting against the resolution and the United States abstaining. The whole world appeared to be backing the Palestinian cause.

Following the assassination of Yitsak Rabin the increased sense of insecurity within Israel saw Benjamin Netanyahu elected as Prime Minister on 29th May 1996 in place of Shimon Peres, who had brokered the Oslo Accord, and who had become Prime Minister in Yitsak Rabin's place after his assassination.

Also within the first three and a half years of the Oslo Accord, in July 1996, a short lived Israeli-Hezbollah War broke out following rocket attacks from Lebanon. Hezbollah were contesting Israel's occupation of a 20 mile southern Lebanon 'security zone'. On 8th August Syria's President Bashar al-Assad refused peace talks demanding Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. He also demanded that they give back the Golan Heights that had been won by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967. Nevertheless a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon came into being on 14th August 1996.

Peace was still to prove elusive, however. In November 1996 Benjamin Netanyahu gave the go ahead for more settlements in the West Bank in exchange for withdrawing troops from Hebron and this caused a huge problem. Amazingly, it was reported in the press at the time that the number of settlers in the West Bank totalled 144,000! Called the 'Hebron Agreement', the two sides had agreed to a timetable for a three-stage Israeli troop withdrawal from Hebron and other West Bank areas, under a compromise prompted by King Hussein of Jordan.

Hebron is where the Cave of Machpelah is located, the burial tomb of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah, considered a holy site by both Jews and Muslims. At the time there were about 150,000 Palestinians and 500 Jewish settlers in Hebron. There had already been a massacre of Muslim worshippers by a Jewish religious fanatic in 1994 who burst into the mosque there and opened fire. Now

opponents on both sides were doing all they could to prevent the Israeli pull out. In Tel Aviv two explosions injured 13 Jews after another attempted massacre in Hebron's market area the week before. Benjamin Netanyahu, however, managed to seal a withdrawal pact in January 1997 after a dramatic intervention by King Hussain of Jordan. Israel withdrew its troops at dawn on 17th January 1997 and Yasser Arafat returned in triumph to Hebron after an absence of 32 years leaving Israel to attempt to revive talks with Syria on the future of the occupied Golan Heights.

The Middle of the Week - The Peace Accord Breaks Down

As the middle of this 'covenant with many for one week' arrived it seemed that the Oslo Peace agreement was already not working. In February 1997 Yasser Arafat spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos attended by the world's leading politicians, declaring that a chill had entered Israeli-Palestinian relations accusing Benjamin Netanyahu of breaching the Oslo peace arrangements whilst paying tribute to Shimon Peres whose hand he shook on leaving the podium that day.

On 19th February 1997, three and a half years from the agreement being arranged in Oslo on 20th August 1993, in contradiction to the accord, Benjamin Netanyahu gave permission for the building to begin on land at Har Homa, in Eastern Jerusalem in line with plans drawn up in the 1980's. March 1997 saw the beginning of the building of this new settlement which brought a response from both Egypt and Syria warning that building on this land, conquered from Jordan in 1967, would bring a risk of war!

At this same time King Hussain of Jordan had been speaking directly with Benjamin Netanyahu whilst in London, discussing plans for total Middle East peace in August 1996. However, by March of 1997 the relationship between them had broken down in frustration on the part of King Hussain. He wrote a four page letter to Benjamin Netanyahu on 9th March 1997 after slamming the phone down on him. Netanyahu had refused permission for King Hussain to fly Yasser Arafat to Gaza Airport. King Hussain wrote, "How can I work with you as a partner and

true friend in this confused state.” Benjamin Netanyahu replied two days later pointing out, “Despite tremendous resistance from some of my own constituency I have chosen the path of the Oslo process, ” but added, “I do not agree with any peace that prevents us building in Jerusalem.” 80% of the land had been purchased by Jews in 1948. This was no new plan, but President Mubarak of Egypt said, “If this settlement is built, **this will not be the end of the whole thing.** It will be the beginning of a new era of violence we would like to avoid.” Israeli forces were therefore put on emergency footing as Yasser Arafat gave the go ahead for violent protests among the 2.2 million Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, and Hamas called for a ‘continuous intifada’.

As details emerged of the tense and unprecedented exchange of letters between King Hussain and Benjamin Netanyahu a senior PLO spokesman said on the 11th March 1997, “**Mr Arafat has ordered a suspension to all top level contacts with Israelis.**”

King Hussein’s four page letter of the 9th March 1997, referring to decision of Benjamin Netanyahu to allow building on land in East Jerusalem, said of Netanyahu, “I have not a trace of trust in you,” and went on to say, “Should you not cancel the decision to build on Har Homa, it will bring about an explosion in the peace process.”

King Hussain’s letter was then blamed for provoking a massacre that happened next, the shooting of seven Jewish girls who were on a school outing on 13th March 1997 at the Jordanian beauty spot called, the ‘Island of Peace’. They were shot by a uniformed Jordanian soldier!

On 21st March 1997 a suicide bomber blew himself up in a Tel Aviv Cafe killing three people and injuring forty others. Israel’s Communications Director announced that **for now** talks would only continue “on issues relating to preventing terrorism... until there is satisfaction on a security level.”

Rioters in Bethlehem stormed against Israeli troops guarding Rachel’s tomb. Press reports stated that what had started ‘was the ‘battle for

Jerusalem'. Yasser Arafat delivered an angry speech to the Palestinian Legislative Council in Gaza saying, "Israel must know it cannot play with the issue of Jerusalem," and Hamas threatened more suicide attacks such as the one in Tel Aviv.

On 23rd March 1997 Benjamin Netanyahu said, "I am not suspending talks because our people are meeting their people, but the first item on the agenda is the fulfilment of the Palestinian obligation to fight terrorism. They have to start complying with that, or else we cannot move."

The Palestinians shrugged off the Israeli threats, claiming that negotiations were already in deadlock. They blamed Israel's decision of the 18th March to defy world opinion and send in bulldozers to begin the building at Har Homa of the new settlement for 32,000 Jews.

The Palestinian statement went on to say, "We do not need much effort to prove our truthfulness and the seriousness of our threats.... to teach the arrogant Netanyahu a lesson he will not forget for days and years." In Hebron, Palestinian mobs attacked soldiers guarding the Jewish settlers there, hurling petrol bombs and shouting, "We do not want peace, we want Hamas!"

Yasser Arafat addressed an extraordinary summit meeting of the 54 members of the 'Organisation of Islamic Countries' making an emotional appeal to Muslim countries to rescue Jerusalem from "Zionist clutches"! Yasser Arafat added, "It is a religious duty of all Muslims to act to save Islam's holy site from the danger of Judaisation."

Yasser Arafat said that Israel's latest move had taken the peace process down a dead end. The one day meeting, attended by Iran's President, the President of Turkey, and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, closed by adopting a declaration supporting the claims of the Palestinians on Jerusalem.

Interestingly, at this same time it was announced by religious Jews that a red heifer had been born to a black and white cow and dun coloured bull, hailing it as a miracle and sign that the building of a Third Temple in Jerusalem could soon begin.

Just three and a half years since the Oslo Accord had been agreed the spiritual battle was now at its height. Palestinian hospitals were put on an emergency footing as concerns grew. The 'Tunnel Riots' six months earlier, when a new tunnel was opened by the Jews under the Temple Mount, had seen 80 deaths and 1500 injured. Now more deaths and injuries were expected.

At this time a scandal also threatened Benjamin Netanyahu as accusations of fraud and breaches of public trust were brought against him. Defying calls for his resignation, the Israeli government coalition held and to a standing ovation Benjamin Netanyahu, controlling his anger, declared, "I have come to tell you today that we will lead the State of Israel. We will continue on this path until the year 2000 and, I tell you, beyond the year 2000."

It seemed Benjamin Netanyahu was still looking towards the fulfilment of the seven year peace process and attempts to restart it would continue. This scandal, however, completely overshadowed America's attempt to revive the collapsing Middle East peace process at that time.

On 15th April it was reported that two weeks earlier Iran, with the help of Russian experts, had tested components of a long range missile capable of hitting Israel. With a range of 950 miles, Benjamin Netanyahu warned that Iran was trying to develop missiles that could strike not only Israel but Western nations. Rather than peace having been achieved the Middle East war was taking on a far wider perspective.

Was This The Covenant With Many For One Week?

I have given much detail regarding the Oslo accord, detail that suggests it perhaps fulfils the criteria for it being the 'covenant with

many for one week' that Gabriel told Daniel must occur before the abomination of desolation is seen.

The seriousness of the Oslo Accord being contrary to God's will cannot be overstated. This attempt to seek peace at the expense of God's covenantal promise to Israel to provide them with their own land can be compared to when Israel had endeavoured to seek peace in ancient times by entering into covenant with her nearby enemies. These covenants entered into with her enemies were undertaken rather than seeking God for the reason they were in danger from surrounding nations - because of their own sin.

The northern kingdom of Israel made a covenant with Assyria, and the southern kingdom of Israel did likewise with Egypt, seeking peace by going into covenant with their enemies to obtain peace, rather than repenting of their sin and seeking God for forgiveness to restore God's protection. In Isaiah 28:15&18, Isaiah describes these covenants as a "**covenant with death**"! In Isaiah 30:1 God says, "Woe to the rebellious children,' declares the Lord, 'Who execute an alliance but not Mine, and make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, in order to add sin to sin.'" We see history repeating itself with modern-day Israel entering into covenant with the Palestinians to try to obtain peace in the Oslo Accord.

Since the Oslo Peace Accord Israel continues to seek peace with her Islamic neighbours whilst at the same time they are involved in proxy wars in the Middle East. Can there be peace when according to sharia, in certain situations, deception, known as 'taqiyya', based on Quranic terminology, is not only permitted but sometimes obligatory.

Other aspects of Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 9:27 might cast doubt on the Oslo Accord being the 'covenant with many for one week', however

The Ending of Sacrifice and Oblation

Looking at the words of Gabriel, he states, "In the middle of the week he (the prince who is to come) will **put a stop to sacrifice and**

oblation.” (Daniel 9:27) Many consider that this suggests a temple must be rebuilt before this could be fulfilled. If this is correct we look further into the future, therefore, for another covenant instead of the Oslo Accord. But is it possible that the cessation of sacrificing land for peace that occurred in the middle of the week of the covenant with many, known as the Oslo Accord, fulfils Gabriel’s prophecy? Or do we look for another?

In Hebrew the words “sacrifice” and “oblation” are different, but they mean essentially the same thing. Some scholars suggest that the first word is talking about the daily temple sacrifices - the morning and evening lamb sacrifice, and the second word referring to all of the other temple offerings presented to the Lord, but in English the word translated ‘oblation’, which is ‘Mincha’ in Hebrew, is, much contested amongst Jewish scholars.

Rabbis who study the **Talmud** debate whether the daily prayers (or mincha) had their origin in the behaviour of the Biblical Patriarchs or in the **Temple** sacrifices. According to the first opinion, the Mincha prayer originated with **Isaac**, who "went out to ‘meditate’ in the field”. (see Genesis 24:63) The word translated ‘meditate’ is uncertain in meaning, it is said, but this is where some rabbinical scholars think the mincha prayer originated.

Such an explanation that would suggest a temple need not be rebuilt is perhaps not totally satisfactory and leaves other questions unanswered and many still look for the rebuilding of the Jewish temple.

Does Another Temple Have To Be Built?

Because of the wording of Daniel 9:27 we might ask the questions, “Does the ‘sacrifice’ refer to animal sacrifices in a rebuilt Temple?” or, “Is the correct understanding of Daniel 9:27 not as obvious as many assume?” We might ask the question, “Does a Temple have to be built before we see the abomination of desolation.”

Such a Temple, of course, would be outside of God's will, for natural Israel is presently a cut off olive branch, (see Romans 11:13-21) and a Temple would be of no use to them in rectifying their fault!

Depending on the correct interpretation of Daniel 9:27, the coming abomination of desolation could be further into the future or the abomination of desolation might be a soon-coming event. It seems we are left with uncertainty.

Only by the Holy Spirit's revelation can these prophecies of scripture be correctly interpreted. They are not a matter for ones own interpretation. As to the actual event, scripture tells us, "**Let the reader understand.**" (see Matthew 24:15)

The Holy Place

Because Daniel 9:27 speaks of 'sacrifice and oblation' being stopped by the prince who is to come many think a temple has to be built in which sacrifices can be reinstated. However, Jesus made no mention of a temple, but only spoke the holy place as the location of the abomination that causes desolation. (see Matthew 24:15)

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem itself has been the focus of conflicts from before the time of Jesus as well as in more modern times. The eventual complete break down of the Oslo Accord also came about due to a lack of agreement regarding the division of the Temple Mount between Israel and the Palestinians in the Camp David Summit of July 2000.

The Temple Mount is known in Hebrew as "Har HaBáyit" meaning the "Mount of the House". To Muslims the Temple Mount is known as "Haram esh-Sharif", meaning "the Noble Sanctuary" in Arabic. Rabbinical scholars consider the Temple Mount as the place where God gathered the dust used to create Adam. It is the place where Abraham took his only son, Isaac, to be sacrificed, typifying and foretelling of God sacrificing *His* only begotten Son. It is where Solomon built the first temple and it is where the subsequent temple

stood, the one rebuilt in Ezra's day which was enhanced by Herod , the temple which Jesus called, "His Father's house". (see Luke 2:49). It is the location of Mount Moriah. It seems without doubt to be 'the holy place' which Daniel prophesied will see an abomination that will result in desolation. (see Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31 and Daniel 12:11)

New Testament References to the Temple

In scripture there are two separate words used for 'temple', one being 'hieron' in Greek, that refers to the whole building, and the other being, 'naos', which only refers to the 'holy place' where God dwelt within the Temple of old. Before the temple was built God's presence was found in the tabernacle of David, and before that in the tabernacle in the wilderness before Israel had reached the Promised Land.

In scripture the church is also described as being the 'naos', both each individual members of the church and also the church corporately. The word, 'hieron' is not used to refer to the church.

In 2 Thessalonians Paul refers to the man of sin sitting in the 'temple', the 'naos', not the 'hieron'. In Revelation 11 the temple that John measures is the 'naos' not the 'hieron', as are all other references to the temple in the book of Revelation.

In Matthew 24:15 Jesus only refers to the abomination of desolation standing in the 'holy place', using the Greek words, 'hagios' meaning 'holy' and 'topos', meaning, 'place', and does not use the word 'naos'. Jesus makes no reference to an actual temple.

However, might a Temple be rebuilt, one which would be an abomination itself? One in which the antichrist himself will sit upon the Temple Mount?

Daniel had a vision himself concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, the surrender of the sanctuary and the trampling underfoot of the Lord's people - "How long will the vision *about* the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror,

so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" (Daniel 8:13)

The Temple Mount, it seems, will certainly be the location of the abomination that is yet to be seen, just as it has been in history.

Over the centuries since Herod's Temple was destroyed, the Temple Mount has been the scene of much unholiness. In 130AD the Roman Emperor, Hadrian, vowed to rebuild Jerusalem but he built a temple dedicated to Jupiter on the Temple Mount!

A Jewish attempt to rebuild the Temple was destroyed by an earthquake in 363AD and so it became a local rubbish dump!

After the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in 638AD Caliph 'Omar ibn al Khatab, disgusted by the state of the site, had it thoroughly cleaned and granted Jews access to the site again but further Umayyad caliphs commissioned the construction of the al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock shrine that we see today. The Dome of the Rock was completed in 692AD, built on the footprint of Hadrians Temple dedicated to Jupiter.

With the crusades in 1099 Jerusalem was captured and the al Aqsa Mosque became the headquarters of the Knights Templar in 1120AD. Then, following the Ottoman conquest of Jerusalem in 1516, the Ottoman authorities continued the policy of prohibiting non-Muslims from setting foot on the Temple Mount until the early 19th century, when non-Muslims were again permitted to visit the site.

Since the Muslim reconquest of 1187AD, an Islamic trust known as a Waqf has managed the Temple Mount continuously, however, and still does to this day.

On June 7, 1967, soon after Israel had taken control of the area during the Six Day War, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol assured that "no harm whatsoever shall come to the places sacred to all religions". Together with the extension of Israeli jurisdiction and administration over east

Jerusalem, the Knesset passed the Preservation of the Holy Places Law, ensuring protection of the Holy Places against desecration, as well as freedom of access to it.

The site, therefore, presently remains within the area controlled by the State of Israel with administration of the site itself remaining in the hands of the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf.

My Visit to the Temple Mount

In 1991 we visited Israel as a family and during our visit we tried to visit the Temple Mount but found the access gates locked. We discovered they only opened them at certain times and only certain gates granted access to the Temple Mount itself. So it was on our last day in Israel that we finally got onto the Temple Mount.

As we climbed the steps to the where the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa mosque are located I was expecting to sense the evil of the place yet I can only describe what happened next as being enveloped in the presence of God.

For me this unexpected and very tangible experience left me in no doubt that this is indeed the most holy place! Even without a temple.

God then spoke very clearly to my heart, saying, "You can go into the Dome of the Rock but you must not go in the Al Aqsa mosque." Although this is no longer possible we bought a ticket that allowed us to go into both, and my son and myself went into the Dome of the Rock shrine as the Lord had said we could, and stood on the top of Mount Moriah.

Let the Reader Understand

In conclusion, we come back once more to what we are told in scripture. We cannot perhaps say with certainty that the next event that will be seen will be the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place.

We remain, however, with the scripture, “**Let the reader understand,**” (Matthew 24:15) as we watch and pray as events unfold.

.....

Chapter Six

As we look for the abomination of desolation that will see the time of great tribulation coming upon the world, we know that this will be caused by Satan himself who knows his time is short. (See Revelation 12:12) And we know by comparing the prophecies of Daniel and the book of Revelation that Satan will empower an end-time beast, a man heading up a beast empire.

The question is asked among all bible scholars as to who is, and from where will this beast arise? The beast who is referred to as the 'man of sin', the 'little horn' and the 'antichrist', the man who will head up the fourth beast empire.

Identifying the End-Time Beast

As we consider the unfolding of events in the world it is necessary to rightly identify the fourth beast that we read of in the book of Daniel, the end-time beast spoken of and described in the book of Revelation, and which is personified in a man also known as the 'beast' whom the whole world will worship. Like much prophetic interpretation this is also a matter of dispute among bible scholars. To enable us to understand we therefore look to scripture to explain and interpret scripture with the help of the Holy Spirit as our Teacher.

The Dreadful and Terrifying Fourth Beast

In the book of Revelation the apostle John sees the end-time beast coming up out of the sea *of nations*, a beast with ten horns and seven heads - "I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were 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. I saw one of his heads 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 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 from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain." (Revelation 13:1-8)

Daniel saw this same beast in a dream and vision he had during his captivity in Babylon, seeing four beasts that would arise, the fourth having "ten horns" and speaking "boastful words". This fourth beast Daniel describes as being "extremely dreadful with its iron teeth and claws of bronze", and from the horns of which came the one who "uttered great boasts" and which "waged war with the saints and overpowered them." This fourth beast, Daniel was told "would devour the whole earth". (see Daniel 7)

In later years the angel Gabriel was sent to Daniel to explain Israel's future after his intercession for Israel in their captivity in Babylon. Daniel had read in the book of Jeremiah that their captivity would only last 70 years and that period had been fulfilled. So Daniel began to pray for their prophesied deliverance. (see Daniel 9:2 and Jeremiah 25:11)

In response to Daniel's prayers Gabriel was sent to give Daniel an understanding of Israel's future, their future to the very end of this age. Gabriel explained to Daniel that "seventy weeks had been determined for his people, Israel, and his 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's prophetic explanation to Daniel of what was to come explained that, "After the sixty-two weeks **the Messiah will be cut off** and have nothing, and the people of **the prince who is to come** will destroy the city and the sanctuary." (Daniel 9:26)

The Prince Who Is To Come

This part of the prophecy stating the "Messiah will be cut off" obviously refers to the crucifixion of Jesus, but the common interpretation of the 'people of the prince who is to come' is the assumption made by many bible scholars that this must refer to the Romans because it was the Romans who destroyed the city of Jerusalem in AD70. From this conclusion it is assumed that the end-time beast must therefore be a revived Roman Empire.

In the prophetic visions of the book of Daniel, we see, however, that they speak of four empires that would come and go before the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth, the yet future time when Jesus returns to the earth. The identification of the fourth empire has seemed obvious to many bible scholars as the Roman Empire arose chronologically after the third beast, the Empire of Alexander the Great but is this assumption correct?

In the 7th Chapter of Daniel, the dream and vision that Daniel saw of the four great beasts, these are not named, but history would suggest the first three obviously refer to Babylon, the empire under which Daniel was in captivity along with his people, and then Medo-Persia and then Greece, that followed on from each other. Israel was actually still in captivity in Babylon when the Babylonian Empire fell.

The fourth empire we know is also the final beast empire that will have ten horns and from which a little horn will arise - the antichrist - and which will devour the whole earth. (see Daniel 7)

Because many bible scholars interpret the fourth beast to be Rome, the empire which followed Greece in chronological order, a revived Roman Empire is now expected to emerge by many, lending itself to the

interpretation that the **prince who is to come** and his people must be centred in Europe. Many are therefore looking to Europe and looking to the European Union in particular as the seat of the antichrist.

There have been, of course, many empires upon the earth from the time of Israel's exile in Babylon but the empires mentioned are those that are linked to Israel in particular and which will still be linked to Israel at the very end of this age.

The Roman Empire

The Roman Empire, although an occupying force, did not “devour, crush and *trample* down the remainder with its feet,” with “iron teeth”, as Daniel saw. (see Daniel 7:7) Rome instead, was an occupying force that built up the infrastructure of the nations it subjugated and took taxes and tribute from them for its own benefit. Rome's soldiers were conscripted from the nations it conquered. The nature of the Roman Empire does not therefore describe the dreadful and terrifying fourth beast it seems.

In AD70, when under the command of Titus, the general in charge of the occupying force in Palestine, who would later become Emperor of Rome, Rome had an army mainly made up of soldiers coming from Assyria. Titus, himself, according to the Jewish historian, Josephus, tried at first to prevent the burning down of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple and the city in AD70. The '**people**' of the **prince who is to come** were not native to Rome, but rather from the Middle East?

Whatever our conclusion, this changes completely our expectation and identification of the dreadful fourth beast!

The Fourth Empire

We now ask the question, “If Rome is not the fourth beast who is the fourth empire?”

One empire that has occupied the whole area that once came under the sway of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece, has in fact been the Islamic Empire that only ceased with the demise of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 with the armistice of the 31st of October of that year that ended the fighting between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies at the end of World War I.

The early Muslim conquests that took place as this empire arose began in the lifetime of the Islamic prophet, Muhammed. His successors conquered large areas of the Middle East and Africa in addition to parts of southern Europe and the Indian sub continent. In the decades after his death, the caliphate founded by his earliest successors, called the Rashidun caliphate was succeeded by the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. While these caliphates gradually fractured and fell, other Islamic dynasties rose, growing into the Islamic Empire we see today, an empire that is divided in two, just like the fourth kingdom that Daniel spoke of in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. (see Daniel 2:31-43 and verse 42 in particular)

Over recent years we are now seeing the reemergence of the Ottoman Empire that saw its demise in 1918, and which is beginning to unify all the Islamic nations that are intent on removing Israel off the map.

We see in this interpretation of the Fourth Beast a link between current events and prophecy of scripture.

The Princes of Daniel's Prophecies

Helpful to understand, as we consider the prophecies in Daniel, is that the reference to 'princes' are references to angelic powers, both good and bad. Gabriel explains to Daniel that it had been the '**prince of Persia**' that had prevented him coming with explanation from God after Daniels intercessory prayers for Israel. Gabriel explains that this 'prince' was "withstanding him for twenty one days" until "Michael, one of the chief princes" came to help him. (see Daniel 10:13,20&21)

At the time of this battle in the heavenlies Daniel was in Persia, but speaking of the future Gabriel identifies the next 'prince who is to come' as being the '**prince of Greece**', explaining to Daniel, "Behold, the prince of Greece is about to come." (see Daniel 10:20)

In the visions and dreams that are recorded in the book of Daniel we see that each empire has a ruling prince over it, a Satanic angel, head over a principality and power over each empire. In Daniel 9:27 the '**prince** who is to come' needs to therefore be rightly identified just as the 'people' of the prince who is to come, and thus the fourth beast over which this prince rules.

Causing confusion, bible translators have translated 'Javan' into English as being 'Greece', but as we consider the identity of the end-time beast we need to correctly identify, the whereabouts of the Javan. In the second vision that Daniel had we need to understand that it will be from Javan, not actually modern day Greece, that eventually another empire would arise from which a king would come who we can identify as the antichrist. (see Daniel 8)

We therefore turn our attention to Daniel's next vision that we find in Daniel Chapter 8.

The Visions and Dreams of the Book of Daniel

Beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's dream that Daniel interpreted for him, (Daniel 2) we begin to see that four beasts or empires would arise beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Empire.

In the 7th Chapter of Daniel the four empires are described as 'beasts', each having differing but significant features. The dream and vision that Daniel describes that he had, tells of the fourth dreadful and terrifying beast as having ten horns from amongst which a little horn would arise. (see Daniel 7:7-8)

Daniel Chapter 8

The visions that are unfolded to us in the book of Daniel, each give more detail than the previous one. In Daniel Chapter 8 the vision tells us more about the third beast from which the fourth terrifying end-time beast would arise.

In this vision Daniel saw a ram which had two horns, with one longer than the other. He saw this ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him.

Daniel then saw a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground, having a conspicuous horn between his eyes. This goat came up to the ram that had the two horns and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. Daniel saw him come beside the ram, and in his anger he struck the ram and shattered his two horns. The ram had no strength to withstand him so he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from the male goat's power. (see Daniel 8:3-7)

After this the male goat magnified himself exceedingly, but as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

The Little Horn - the Antichrist

The vision continued as Daniel saw that out of one of these four horns came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the 'beautiful land'. It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down, and on account of transgression the host was given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice, as this little horn flings truth to the ground and performs its will and prospers. (see Daniel 8:8-12)

Gabriel Identifies the Kingdoms

We see in this vision the rise of the little horn, the antichrist, and from where he comes. Gabriel, we are told, was sent to give the interpretation of Daniel's vision and Daniel is told that the ram represents the kings of Media and Persia - known to us as Iraq and Iran in our modern day. The goat, Daniel was told represented the kingdom of Javan, translated confusingly, as we have discussed, in most bible translations as 'Greece'. We see that it will be from the kingdom of Javan that the little horn will eventually arise, the same little horn that had been spoken of as arising from the fourth beast in Daniel's previous dream and vision. (compare Daniel 7:8 with Daniel 8:9)

We see that the kingdom of Javan (translates as Greece) would divide into four kingdoms and from one of these kingdoms the little horn and the fourth empire would arise.

Alexander The Great

In history the kingdom of Javan is identified with Alexander the Great who came from the area of Macedonia - Northern Greece and Western Turkey, as we know it today. Most bible atlases accurately show Javan being located in western Turkey and northern Greece.

Alexander the Great's empire we know from history, split in four after his death, and four separate kingdoms eventually emerged in the resulting power struggle that resulted. These were the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, the Seleucid Empire, the Attalid Dynasty of the Kingdom of Pergamon, and Macedon.

From the Seleucid Empire, many years later, arose Antiochus IV Epiphanes who attacked Jerusalem and desecrated the temple in 164BC. Antiochus Epiphanes IV is widely considered as pointing forward in type to when the antichrist himself will sit in the holy place as if he is God on the Temple Mount.

The Little Horn

Just as Antiochus Epiphanes arose from the Seleucid Empire do we look for the emergence of the one described as the 'little horn', the antichrist, from this same region?

In Daniel 9:27 it says, the antichrist "puts a stop to sacrifice." In Daniel 11:31 it says the antichrist's forces "will do away with regular sacrifice," and in Daniel 12:11 it says "from the time the regular sacrifice is abolished" there will be "1290 days." but "How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to 1,335 days."

So it is, as we look for the **abomination that causes desolation**, we can compare current world with what scripture tells us is going to happen, for THEN the **great tribulation** will begin!

.....

Chapter Seven

Before we consider what scripture tells us of the events of the end of the age, we look to the very coming of Christ, His appearing, that requires clarification in our understanding first. There is great confusion amongst bible scholars and Christians regarding the coming of Christ. This is reflected in the many differing interpretations of what lies ahead, and when events occur.

These differing interpretations are given names which confuse even further those seeking to understanding the truth of scripture.

- Postmillennialism holds that Jesus established His Kingdom on earth in the first century and that He has equipped His church with the gospel, empowering her by the Spirit, and charges her with the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19) to disciple all nations. Postmillennialists expects that eventually the vast majority of people living will be saved following the successful preaching of the gospel. Postmillennialists believe that it is after the millennium that Jesus will return visibly, bodily, and gloriously, to end history with the general resurrection and the final judgment after which there will come the consummation of the ages on the new earth under a new heaven.
- Amillennialism is an interpretation of prophecy that suggests the thousand year reign of Christ spoken of in Revelation 20 is only symbolic, and Christ will only establish His permanent reign in the new heaven and new earth. This view does not hold that Jesus Christ will physically reign on the earth for 1,000 years.
- Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus will physically return to the earth before the Millennium, and is based on a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6 which describes Jesus's reign of a period of a thousand years. There are several differing versions of premillennialism which include....
- Pre- tribulationism is a a version of Premillennialism that holds to the belief that Jesus could return at any moment and certainly before the great tribulation. This belief considers the great tribulation includes the time when God will pour out His wrath.

- Post-tribulationism holds that Jesus will not return until after the great tribulation that includes God pouring out His wrath on the earth.
- Mid-tribulationism is the view that Jesus will return sometime in the middle of a seven year tribulation period but also considers the great tribulation includes the time when God will pour out His wrath.

Within these differing interpretations there are more variations yet only one can be the truth, and only one can fully agree with scripture. Prophecy of scripture, however, is not a matter of ones own interpretation, and our interpretation cannot rely on our intellect, it must come by virtue of revelation that only the Holy Spirit can provide, and the truth will also not contradict scripture for all scripture is inspired by God.

Whilst this book upholds the interpretation of a return of Jesus in the air and a catching away of the true church and resurrection of the righteous dead in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, the last week of this age, it carefully divides this week into three and a half years of tribulation, the great tribulation caused by Satan having great wrath, and three and half years when God will pour out His wrath before returning to the earth with His saints to reign upon the earth for one thousand years.

The Hope of Christ's Appearing

Perhaps the most commonly held view amongst those who call themselves 'Christians' has been the erroneous belief that Jesus would return before the coming **great tribulation**, the view that holds to a 'Pre-tribulation Rapture'. This belief upholds that Jesus could return at any day, and certainly before the great tribulation. Believing that the great tribulation will not affect them, many Christians are content to remain ignorant of prophecy, and world events are not viewed with a prophetic perspective, therefore. This often result in hopes and prayers only looking for the maintenance of an easy and comfortable life, seeking prosperity with no trials, rather than understanding the plan and purpose of God that is unfolding!

Bible teachers who hold to the belief of an imminent return of Christ at any moment suggest this is beneficial in maintaining a holy and righteous walk so as to be ready for His return, a walk we should desire to have in any event.

Satan has done all he can to stop Christians considering the great tribulation by creating much confusion as regards correctly understanding the final week of this age. As a result, a unity of understanding of what is coming is hard to find.

With ignorance comes a fear of the unknown and many prefer to not consider that which they are ill prepared to experience.

Prophecy, however, is a major part of scripture, and essential to grasp if we are to understand the plan and purpose of God that is unfolding.

Perhaps the reality of what scripture describes of the end of the age is too hard for some to contemplate, but the day that is coming will not be delayed, and if we look to our Shepherd to lead us in the time that is fast approaching, it need hold no fear for us.

This is the promise for those for whom Jesus is their Shepherd; Even though *we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil,*” for Jesus will be with us and His rod and staff will comfort us, preparing a table for us in the presence of our enemies. (see Psalm 23:4-5)

The sad reality, however, is that for many Christians Jesus is not their Shepherd. Whilst professing to be Christians, Jesus is not their Lord, and not their one and only Master. Their unbelief has resulted in them not being led by His Spirit or dying to their own life so as to receive His.

It is ‘in Christ’ and us knowing the reality of Him being ‘in us’, that we will overcome. Only if Jesus is truly our Shepherd will we have no want, know His care, and experience His protection, and, in the same way as Jesus passed through the crowds when those who wished to seize Him

could not do so, **because it was not yet His time**, (see John 7:30) so will we walk in this same reality.

Those in Christ - the true church - are called to walk in the will of God, just as Jesus did, walking in our heavenly Father's will that is outlined for us in scripture, being led individually and corporately by the Spirit. In this reality fear can be overcome and faith rises up so in the coming great tribulation, the victory Jesus won becomes our victory making us more than conquerors. (see Romans 8:37)

The Two Aspects of Jesus' Return

A careful study of scripture shows that there are two aspects to Jesus return, that Jesus first comes on the clouds with His angels to catch away His elect, before returning to earth itself with His saints.

Paul was able to say, "By the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

The catching away of the elect is also the first resurrection of all the righteous who have fallen asleep since the beginning of the world.

Between the catching away of His saints and them then returning with their Lord, God will pour out His wrath upon the earth in judgment and as a preparation of those who will remain on earth when Jesus returns to reign upon the earth as King.

The wrath of God is poured out on the earth for three and half years before Jesus returns to the earth itself with His saints to set foot on the Mount of Olives. (see Zechariah 14:4 and Revelation 19)

A commonly held misunderstanding held by many bible scholars is that the 'great tribulation' and the 'wrath of God' are descriptions of the same period despite these differing descriptions never being used interchangeably in scripture.

The Great Tribulation is not the Wrath of God

Many Christians confuse the time of great tribulation with the prophesied "day of the Lord" which the Old Testament Prophets spoke of - a day of God's anger and wrath. (see Zephaniah 1:14-18) The great tribulation, is caused by Satan venting his great anger because he knows his time is short, (see Revelation 12:12) and is not caused by God. The great tribulation is the outcome of the final spiritual battle of the age during which men can still find repentance leading to salvation. The great tribulation is a day of salvation, a day that will see the last great harvest of this age of grace.

We need to clearly understand, the great tribulation precedes and is separate from the time of 'God's wrath and the wrath of the Lamb'. (see Revelation 6:16)

The true church is present during the great tribulation but is taken out of the way before God's wrath is poured out on all who have not been saved, for scripture is clear; the true church is not destined for wrath, "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him." (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)

The great tribulation and the wrath of God are two completely separate periods of three and a half years that scripture distinguishes one from the other.

During the great tribulation God's love and mercy is extended to this last wicked generation, offering them the way of escape from His coming wrath. During the great tribulation men are still able to repent and enter the Kingdom of God that will be preached in the whole world

by the true church, the body of Christ as a witness to all nations. (see Matthew 24:14)

During the great tribulation the end-time ministry of the true church will bring great persecution upon the saints, who will not love their own lives even unto death, some even laying down their lives in love for their fellow man. (see Revelation 12:11) God's desire is that all men might be saved, not just from His wrath which is to come, but so as to obtain eternal life. (see 1 Timothy 2:4)

The Signs of the Times

When Jesus spoke of His second coming and the days which would precede this wonderful day He said, “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, recognise that the Kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.” (Luke 21:29-32)

The fig tree in scripture, as we have already seen, is figuratively used to speak of the nation of Israel and the other ‘trees’ a figure of all the other nations.

A careful reading of Mathew 24 shows that contrary to the teaching of some, Jesus Himself taught that His coming would not be an unexpected event. Of course, as regards our personally going home to be with the Lord before that day, we should be prepared each and every day.

But, as we have seen, Jesus explained to His disciples the signs that would indicate that the day of His appearing was drawing near, declaring of those who would see these signs, “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” (see Matthew 24:34) So it is these signs that will be seen by the last generation before His return will enable His disciples at that time to recognise His appearing is drawing near.

As regards Jesus second coming we may know the season, but as Jesus declared, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” (see Matthew 24:36)

Therefore, Jesus told us to be alert and ready, adding that those found doing the Master’s will when that day comes, would be blessed. (see Matthew 24:42-51)

When Jesus’ disciples asked Him to tell them what would be the sign of His coming and the end of the age, (see Matthew 24:3) Jesus answered them, explaining that the coming of the Son of Man would be “on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” a day “when the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light,” a day that will see “all the peoples on the earth mourn,” a day that would come “immediately after” **great tribulation** upon the earth, “such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world”. (see Matthew 24:29-31) This is no secret coming but one the whole world will be aware of, whether with joy for Jesus has come for His own, or with dismay for those who have not heeded the call to salvation.

The First Resurrection

The coming of Christ is also the day of the first resurrection, as we have seen, the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the righteous who have died since the very beginning of creation. (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

The Wrath of God

Those remaining on the earth after the first resurrection and catching away of the end-time church, includes those who make up natural Israel, those of the twelve tribes of Israel who have not yet returned to the Lord. Their restoration still awaits.

The wrath of God is described as a day of judgment through which only those destined to populate the earth during Jesus one thousand year reign upon the earth will survive.

The Abomination of Desolation

The sign that Jesus said would see this great tribulation begin was, when “the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” was seen “standing in the holy place.” Such is the suddenness of this desolation that Jesus said that those who were in Judea at that time would need to flee to the mountains, not even to get things out of their house. (see Matthew 24:15-21)

Such is the affliction of this time of great tribulation caused by Satan’s anger, that Jesus added, “Unless those days had been shortened no life would have been saved.” (Matthew 24:22)

Because the return of Christ will be expected by many this time of tribulation will bring reports of many saying that Christ - the Messiah - has been seen. False Christs will be carrying out false signs and wonders to mislead many. But Jesus said the coming of Christ would be “like lightening which comes from the east and flashes even to the west,” (see Matthew 24:23-27) and forewarns us not to be deceived.

The day of Jesus appearing will be seen by all but before then this time will be a day of deception, with many even coming in His Name saying that Jesus is the Christ. The day of Jesus’ appearing, the day of His return, however, will leave no doubt. It is an event the whole earth will see.

“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.” (Revelation 1:7)

Before then the signs of this day approaching are now for us to watch for and discern.

.....

Chapter Eight

As the birth pangs increase and we begin to see the signs of the times that Jesus said would precede the day of His second coming, the events of the last seven years of the age come more and more into focus. As the day of the Lord approaches world events will confirm this time is drawing near.

With its beginnings in 2019, 2020 has seen a worldwide pestilence, a pandemic going by the name 'Covid 19' bring the world to a standstill, with peoples in enforced isolation in an attempt to save themselves from this virus. All the while major world powers continue to confront each other as they vie for military supremacy. In all that is happening there is a denial of God, men seeking the means of their own salvation. But man is not in control, Almighty God is. The world's economy is being shaken as normal life becomes increasingly difficult. Political divisions are polarising people everywhere and ethnic and religious tensions are seen all over the world. Extremes of weather, 'natural' disasters and earthquakes make it obvious the whole earth is surely being shaken by Almighty God, but still there is no turning to Him. Denying God, men rather look for natural explanations for what is happening, considering them as problems that he considers he can solve.

As we see the world being shaken, the hearts of men everywhere are therefore being exposed, whether they are a believer or not. So it is we are seeing God working out His purposes - in His timing - and according to His plan.

Men's hearts are being laid bare everywhere and the fallow ground of men's hearts are being ploughed by virtue of what is happening in every part of the world in readiness for the true gospel of the Kingdom to be preached. As God shakes not only the heavens but also the earth, the only unshakeable thing remains - the Kingdom of God. (see Hebrews 12:25-28)

Whilst major world events in the past have made many speculate as to whether they were the signs Jesus spoke of, life has always returned to normal.

But as major events have begun to take place with increasing regularity, just like the birth pangs they emulate, current events at this time of writing are being reported each day on the world news. What is considered to be 'normal life' is being lost at the same time as wickedness, sin, and evil, is increasing, reflecting the state of men's hearts everywhere.

The apostle Paul wrote, "In the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power." (1 Timothy 3:1-5)

All that is coming to pass points to the reality of the spiritual battle that is increasing as never before and a sign of the time that is now here.

The Spiritual Battle

The apostle Paul identifies the nature of our spiritual battle describing Satan as the "prince of the power of the air". (see Ephesians 2:2) He writes, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*." (Ephesians 6:12) We see, however, a change will occur at the very end of this age for Satan is thrown down to the earth itself from his place in the first heaven.

Having great anger this leads to the time when "there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." (Matthew 24:21) We need to be clear; this is

not the wrath of God, but is caused by Satan having great anger because he knows his time is short. (see Revelation 12:12)

The spiritual battle at the end of the age is played out in events on earth and these are reflected in the spiritual battle that is taking place in the heavenlies culminating in Satan himself being thrown down to the earth! This time is drawing near, it seems.

The War Begins in Heaven

As we look ahead to what appears to be rapidly approaching we know from scripture that the time of great tribulation begins with “war in heaven”. The Revelation of Jesus Christ tells of “war in heaven, with Michael and all his angels waging war with the dragon” and his angels. (see Revelation 12:7)

The dragon, the serpent of old, who is called the devil and Satan, is then thrown down to the earth from his place as prince of the power of the air, the first heaven, from where he has been deceiving the whole world.

It is this war in the heavenlies that causes the devil to have “great wrath, knowing he only has a short time” left. (see Revelation 12:9&12)

This awesome event marks a huge change, for it will then be declared, “Now the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of God, and the authority of Christ has come.”

Up to this time Satan has accused the saints before God day and night, but now he is thrown down to the earth. (see Revelation 12:10)

Although the war has begun in heaven, we see the final battle of this age is transferred to the earth and the sea, to be fought by the true church, which is the body of Christ, against Satan himself.

This spiritual battle, although now reaching its climax, goes right back to the time of the infancy of the church, two thousand years ago. To

bring forth the corporate maturity of the body of Christ on earth, the reality in each believer of being led by His Spirit with Jesus as their Head and one and only Master, this has come at the cost of the lives of the saints down through the centuries from very beginning of the church age.

Standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before, Jesus is building His end-time church who will corporately demonstrate His love, holiness, righteousness and power to a world otherwise heading for God's wrath in this end-time hour.

The awesomeness of this time of great tribulation is told to us in the description of the events that will take place when Jesus breaks the seven seals that the book the Revelation speaks of.

The Seven Seals

The Revelation tells us of events written in a book sealed with seven seals that only Jesus is worthy to open and break the seals thereof. (see Revelation 5:1-2)

The first five seals tell of the great tribulation, the sixth seal tells of Jesus coming for His elect to remove them from the earth, and the seventh seal speaks of the wrath of God and the Lamb, poured out on those who remain on earth.

The First Seal

The first seal speaks of a white horse, and he who sits on it, going "out conquering and to conquer." (see Revelation 6:2)

The early church were aware that a day would come when the Antichrist would come, although even in their day "many antichrists had arisen," as the apostle John wrote. (see 1 John 2:18)

When Satan is thrown down to the earth the 'Revelation' speaks of a man through whom Satan will endeavour to rule the world. The

Revelation speaks of this man as being the ‘beast’ who heads up an empire which is itself described as a beast, a beast having “tens horns and seven heads.” (see Revelation 13:1)

Daniel had a dream and vision that spoke of this same beast with ten horns, telling of a little horn that would come up amongst the ten horns and cause three horns to be pulled up by their roots. (see Daniel 7:7-8)

Daniel was given the interpretation of this dream and vision, and it was explained to him that this little horn would wage war against the saints and overpower them. (see Daniel 7:21)

Prophecy of scripture interprets itself and we see, by comparing these scriptures, this is speaking of the beast who the Revelation also says will make war with the saints and overcome them. (see Revelation 13:7)

The spirits of antichrist have always been on the earth, and even found amongst those who went by the name of the church, but now the Antichrist is revealed, empowered by Satan himself. The events that follow in this time of great tribulation are caused by Satan having great wrath and anger for he knows that he has little time left.

The Second Seal

When the second seal is broken a red horse is seen, and he who sits on it “was granted to take peace from the earth”, with men slaying one another. (see Revelation 6:3-4)

At this time of writing we are already seeing threats of war erupting all around the world. This second seal sees wars erupting everywhere.

The Third Seal

When the third seal is broken a black horse is seen with its rider holding a pair of scales in his hand, and a scene is described in which food becomes costly: “A quart of wheat for a denarius [a days wage]

and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and the wine.” (see Revelation 6:5-6)

As the world’s economy is destabilised food production is disrupted. Famines have been seen before as greed and war have affected mankind’s ability to feed himself. Now it seems it is here again but in a far greater way than has been seen before as the next seal describes.

The Fourth Seal

The fourth seal being broken reveals an ashen horse, and its rider had the name, ‘Death’, and ‘Hades’ was following him. Authority is given to these riders over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with pestilence and with by wild beasts of the earth. (see Revelation 6:7-8)

2020 has seen the pestilence named ‘Covid-19’ spread all over the world in a similar way to what will be seen when the fourth seal is broken. The world is being warned of what is to come but who is listening?

The Fifth Seal

As the fifth seal is broken by Jesus, the apostle John, to whom the Revelation was shown, “saw underneath the altar, the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained.” (Revelation 6:9) These souls “cried 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?’ (verse 10) There is yet the judgment of God and the Lamb to come. What is being seen is caused by Satan’s wrath, though allowed in the permissive will of God as He removes His hand of protection, allowing men to reap the results of their own godless desires.

To each of these martyrs who John saw, “a white robe” was given, “and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the*

number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed, even as they had been, would be completed also.” (verse 11) Such is the cost of the lives of the saints during this time of the breaking of the first five seals, that there will be many martyrs who have laid down their lives in love to preach and manifest the Kingdom of God.

The Sixth Seal

The sixth seal brings the time of great tribulation to an end. Just as Jesus told His disciples, His coming would see that “the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light,” and when this seal was broken, John saw, “the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood.” (Revelation 6:12) And just as Jesus had told His disciples, that the coming of Christ would be “like lightening which comes from the east and flashes even to the west,” (Matthew 24:27) so John saw “the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up.” (Revelation 6:14)

The sixth seal being broken sees the great tribulation come to an end with the appearing of the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great glory, to gather His elect from one end of the sky to the other.

This is also the day of the first resurrection, for the dead in Christ will rise first and those who are alive and remain, who are in Christ will also arise to join them in the air.

Often referred to as the ‘Rapture’ of the church, the catching away of the saints has come for those in Christ are not destined for the wrath of God that is coming.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, telling them of this day, “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the

imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-54)

The Wrath of God

The sixth seal describes a “great earthquake” as described in the book of Revelation: “Every mountain and island were moved out of their places. The kings of the earth and the great men, and the commanders, and the rich and the strong, and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; **for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?**’” (Revelation 6:14-17)

An Interlude

Before the ‘seventh seal’ is broken the Revelation speaks of an interlude before God pours His wrath upon those who remain on the earth. First, there are 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel having a seal placed upon their foreheads, that they might be unharmed during this coming judgement of God. (see Revelation 7:3-8) Whether this is an exact number or represents a chosen number we are not told. But natural Israel is still on the earth, those of natural Israel who have not believed and so have not become part of the body of Christ. Israel’s restoration awaits the coming of their Messiah when Jesus returns to the earth itself after the wrath of God is poured out.

Among those caught up to heaven when Jesus returns in the clouds, John sees in heaven, “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’” (Revelation 7:9-10)

As this scene is described John asks who are these, the multitude dressed in white robes worshipping before the throne of God and he is told, **“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation,** and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the centre of the throne will be their Shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:14-17)

We see that the great tribulation had brought hunger and thirst and extreme temperatures, not global warming caused by men, but extremes of climate that reflect the reality of the spiritual battle that accompanies these awesome days of spiritual warfare that have already begun.

The day of God’s wrath is about come, the day of judgement that precedes the second coming of Jesus to the earth.

As Paul taught as regards the church, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.” (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10) When the true church has been taken from the earth the wrath of God is poured out. A day of judgment will have arrived!

The Judgment of the World in Righteousness

Of this judgment before Jesus can return to reign upon the earth, the bible tells us that Jesus comes as Judge. This day of judgment takes the form of God pouring out His wrath upon this last wicked generation for all their rebellious sin against their Maker.

Preaching on Mars Hill in Athens, Paul explained, **God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a**

Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31)

This ‘man’, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has not yet come to the earth itself at that time but before returning as King, the wrath of God and the Lamb will be poured out. In the time of Satan’s wrath that caused the great tribulation men everywhere had been given the opportunity to chose repentance for the forgiveness of sins and so escape from His judgment.

Those left upon the earth are without excuse. Paul explained to the church in Rome, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:18-20)

But in addition to this, in His love and mercy, the good news of the Kingdom of God will have been preached in the whole world as a witness. Now the awesome and terrible day of the Lord is at hand.

The Judgment of the Nations

Jesus taught His disciples about this day of judgment that precedes the wrath of God: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and 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 the left.” (Matthew 25:31-33)

This judgment of the nations will separate those who will, and those who will not, make it into the next age when Jesus will return to the earth as King. The result of this judgment will determine the the

consequences suffered by those who are on earth during the last three and a half years of this age.

Those of natural Israel having been sealed upon their foreheads, that they might not be harmed in the judgment, Jesus now divides those in the nations, placing those on His right hand, like sheep, saying, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 25:34) These are the ones who will go through to populate the earth when Jesus returns as King to rule over all the earth.

The sheep are chosen, we are told, by virtue of the help they have given to the saints, the true church, during the great tribulation. Jesus will explain to them, “For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say to them, **‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’**” (Matthew 25:35-40)

To the left Jesus will place the goats, those who will suffer the consequences of the coming trumpet judgments and bowls of wrath, before their eventual fate of ‘eternal judgment’. (see Matthew 25:40)

The judgment at this time is not the final judgment. This will occur after the thousand year reign of Jesus upon the earth. Then all the unrighteous dead are raised and will stand before Almighty God sitting upon His great white throne. In the Revelation the apostle John saw the scene, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from His presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened,

which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

The Seventh Seal

As the seventh seal is broken there is a silence in heaven for about half an hour. (see Revelation 8:1) John saw seven angels with seven trumpets standing before God and before the golden altar that is before His throne on which the prayers of all the saints are laid. Another angel holding a golden censer adds incense to these prayers so the smoke rises before God. He then adds fire from the altar and throws it to the earth commencing the day of God's wrath! (see Revelation 8:3-5)

The Seven Trumpet Judgments

The seven trumpet judgments are described, each describing particular judgments that come upon those remaining on the earth. Each judgment is also described a second time as a bowl of wrath, with all culminating with the final battle of the age, as Jesus returns to the earth on a white horse, His army made up of saints riding white horses riding with Him.

Satan will have gathered his forces at the gathering place known as 'Armageddon', (see Revelation 16:16) but the battle is fought outside the walls of Jerusalem.

This battle is described as the "marriage supper of the Lamb," the "great supper of God." (see Revelation 19:9&17) It is not a banquet as we might imagine, but the final battle sees the beast and the false prophet seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire, and Satan being bound in great chains, and thrown into the abyss and sealed there for a thousand years. (see Revelation 19:20-21 & Revelation 20:1-3)

Daniels Dream Fulfilled

What Daniel saw in his dream and vision, that he had in those far off days in Babylon, will now be fulfilled. “One like the Son of Man coming, and to Him is given dominion, glory and a Kingdom that all peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him.” (see Daniel 7:13-14) The thousand year reign of Jesus upon the earth will have come.

.....

Maranatha - Come Lord Jesus

The story we have told of this last move of God before Jesus returns, the move of God that began in 1948, is ongoing. It has not yet reached its conclusion, or its climax, but events unfolding as the year 2020 draws to a close are aligning with prophecy of scripture.

We are seeing mankind seeking to be the means of his own salvation, denying God and not recognising His plan and purpose. We see mankind, planning his own solutions to what he mistakingly thinks he can solve, seeking to be the author of his own salvation. Just as in the days when mankind decided to build the Tower of Babel, men are again gathering together in a union to produce what they mistakingly think is the only way to save themselves, the planet and the future they desire.

This year, 2020, has seen an increase in the shaking of all things, a shaking caused by Almighty God that has exposed the hearts of men everywhere. Instead of realising their need of a Saviour men have not turned back to God but rather increased their own efforts to provide answers to all that seems to be threatening their life and self seeking lifestyle. Loving 'self' rather than his Maker, and wanting to live in his carnal nature and sin, mankind's fault has been laid bare.

As the year 2021 approaches there is already a unified voice proclaiming the nations need to corporately agree on a plan to reset the agenda of the world to bring about a necessary salvation package.

Though not building with man-made bricks and tar as they did in the land of Shinar all those millennia ago, men are nevertheless wishing to build their own world order that will fulfil their ideas. The bible calls this 'Mystery Babylon' a religious, economic and political union of men. As we have seen in this book, the bible tells us this Harlot - for this is the title given to Mystery Babylon - will be judged. It will be destroyed by the coming end-time Empire that will see the man of sin being permitted by God to destroy this Harlot that has been riding the beast.

To know if a prophecy is true it will come to pass. The prophetic picture painted by this book will therefore need to stand this test. Scripture, inspired by God, will prove to be true. Interpretations of scripture, however, need to be tested.

To weigh prophecy, it is not a matter of our own interpretation, however. It can only be tested in the Spirit, and by the Holy Spirit, who alone can lead us into all Truth. So I conclude with a prayer.....

“We ask that Almighty God might fill the reader with a knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and with all discernment.”

May we not seek knowledge for knowledge sake, but seek to be in fellowship with our Maker, walking in His ways and in His will.

And we pray, “May His Kingdom come and His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ‘Come Lord Jesus.’”

.....

Colin Winfield 2020

For More Information

www.colinwinfield.uk