

**Trying To Understand**

# **THE END OF THE AGE**

**AND THE AGES TO COME**

by

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This book has been written to discuss what Scripture tells us about the end of this present age, and the ones that follow, to encourage the reader to check 'if these things be so', as he looks to Scripture, and to the Holy Spirit to disclose what is to come, so he may be prepared and able to play his full part.

## INTRODUCTION

"When He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the Truth.... and He will announce to you what is to come," John 16:13.

As we fast approach the end of this present age, there is little unity of understanding amongst Christian believers regarding what lies ahead. Books on prophecy are many and varied, and, although written by Christians, these differ from one another considerably. Something is most drastically wrong. To add yet another book to these books seems likely only to add to the existing confusion. However, in writing this book, as I feel led to do, I do not wish to impose my thoughts upon the reader, but rather discuss "prophecy of Scripture", asking the reader to check any understandings with the 'Word', and with the Holy Spirit who brought the 'Word' forth. My prayer is that its contents will help the reader understand the times we now find ourselves in, and understand with more clarity what lies ahead, and so be prepared, for prepared is what we must be.

"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," (2Pet.1:21&22). Only the Holy Spirit can give us spiritual understanding, yet few look to Him as their Teacher. Therefore, this book comes with the prayer that the reader will be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, that the eyes of their heart might be enlightened, that they might know what is Truth within its pages. (See Eph.1:17-23).

John told us that believers have received an anointing from the Father which abides in them and that they have no need for anyone to teach them, but as His anointing teaches them about all things, and is true and is not a lie..., they are to abide in Him, (1John 2:27). Few have dared to trust in this gift which is the only safeguard Scripture gives for discerning the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error, looking to the greater One in them who is greater than the spirit of antichrist who is in the world, (1John 4:1-6). This is the reason we so easily move, at worst, into deception, listening to false prophecies and interpretations, and at best, only receiving a mental understanding, giving mental assent to what is read, rather than spiritually understanding it. There is no shortcut in this process, except the benefit of having a fellow believer teach what he has himself learnt from the Teacher, the Holy Spirit. We can then receive that same revelation and understanding they have received in a much shorter time, remembering we must still check everything against Scripture with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So, the contents of this book, like any other, need to be checked in this way. To help, Bible quotations have been highlighted by placing them in italics throughout this book, giving the appropriate Bible reference to assist deeper study. In the first instance, however, this book may be read straight through if so desired, and for this reason scriptures are mainly quoted in full. But first let us ask for that spirit of wisdom, spiritual understanding and discernment, which only the Holy Spirit can impart to us, and may we each look to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, who is able to teach us all things in this most dangerous hour, with its false prophets and teachers multiplying as never before.

When trying to understand the end of this age and the ages to come, it is essential we place events in their proper sequence. Many incorrect understandings come by expecting a fulfilment of prophecy at the wrong time. Many Bible students have discounted any future for the whole house of Israel, believing wrongly that the 'Church' has replaced Israel, with the result that their end-time understanding is flawed. Others spiritualise, or allegorise, Scripture to the extent that a literal fulfilment of Scripture is not expected. To these, and any reader who may identify themselves as one who does not hold to the 'Futurist' interpretation of Scripture, as regards the Second and Pre- millennial Coming of Christ, which this book supports, I would ask them to read on before discounting it.

Also contained within this book, the reader will find understandings based upon personal testimony. These are included because of their significance to the subject. These reader needs to ask the Holy Spirit as to whether these are 'of the Lord', along with the rest of this book's contents.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### GOD'S PLAN - THE PROPHETIC IN SCRIPTURE

Each year, at Christmas time, we are all used to looking at the Christmas Story and reminding ourselves of the prophecies regarding Jesus' first coming. These include those spoken by Isaiah, "Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His Name, 'Emmanuel,'" (Isaiah 7:14), and "A child will be born to us, a Son will be given," (Isaiah 9:6). Although we are used to reminding ourselves that the coming of Jesus the first time was prophesied, and in the plan of God, are we equally aware that God has shared with us, through the Scriptures, His overall plan for mankind, and that there is still much to be fulfilled?

The 'prophetic' is an integral part of Scripture. The phrase, "...that Scripture might be fulfilled..", (e.g. John 19:24&36) is one that we often read in the Gospel record. As we read the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, we can see that we are living in the middle of what God has told us is going to happen. This 'forth-telling' is what is meant by the 'prophetic'. It is God declaring what will happen before it happens. In Amos 3:7 it says, "Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets."

The Scriptures seem to divide time, from the creation of man to the "new heaven and the new earth," of Rev.21:10, into periods of time which are sometimes called 'dispensations'. Scripture refers to these periods as "ages", (Eph.2:7), which are marked by certain spiritual or moral characteristics. In this age, the one in which we presently find ourselves, we read of the gospel being preached to "all the nations," (Luke 24:47). We, who have believed that Jesus is the Son of God and has been raised from the dead, and have been born again, are part of that company who have been 'called out' from among the nations and the world, but do we realise that this was prophesied in the book of Genesis?

Genesis 12:1-3 says, "...and in you all the families [nations] of the earth will be blessed." Paul, in Gal.3:8, refers to this very Scripture, saying, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you.'"

Paul goes on to explain that it is by faith we have been saved, and quotes from Genesis again, (Gen.17:7): "I will establish between Me and your seed [sometimes translated descendant] after you... an everlasting covenant." We are told in Gal.3:16, that the "seed" is Christ.

So we see that it was in God's Plan that the nations would get the opportunity to believe, [by faith], because of His promise to Abraham nearly 2000 years before Jesus was born! God also explained that the Israelites would go into captivity in Egypt, telling Abraham in Genesis 15:13, "Your descendants will be taken into Egypt and enslaved and oppressed for 400 years." Later, we see that when God was outlining the conditions of the Old Covenant, which He gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, He knew the Israelites would go astray. God told Moses that if the Israelites would obey His commandments they would receive blessings, but if they were disobedient they would be cursed. The blessings of the Old Covenant brought 'health and prosperity', but the curses brought 'sickness and poverty', (Deut.28). Part of the curse was to be "scattered among all the peoples, from one end of the earth to the other," (Deut.28:64). The amazing fact, that God knew this would happen, is found in Deuteronomy 30, where God explains that "when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all the nations where the Lord your God has banished you, and you return to the Lord your God, and obey Him with all your heart and soul, according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you," (Deut.30:1-6). This same thing was prophesied in Deuteronomy 4, telling us it will be in the "latter years" that "Israel will return to the Lord," and "listen to His voice," the Lord having scattered them "amongst the peoples," but promising He would not fail them, nor destroy them, nor forget the covenant made with their fathers, (Deut.4:24-31).

#### Where Are We Now in God's Plan?

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus prophesied regarding Jerusalem; that when she was "surrounded by armies" her desolation was at hand and the people would "fall by the edge of the sword" and "be led captive into all nations; and Jerusalem would be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," (Luke 21:20-24). Jesus' words were dramatically fulfilled when the Roman Armies, under the Emperor Titus, destroyed Jerusalem in AD70. [This event must not be confused by a yet future time when the inhabitants of

Judea are commended once more to "flee to the mountains," which Matthew records will be necessary when the abomination of desolation is standing in the holy place, Matt.24:15&16].

This century has seen the beginning of the return of Israel from many nations and so we now find ourselves living in the days when the prophecies in Deuteronomy are going to be fulfilled. The "times of the Gentiles" are coming to an end. We have seen the Jews beginning their return to the land, and the nation of Israel once more established as a Nation State on 14th May 1948. Since then we have continued to see the return of Israel to her own land, but there is more prophecy to be fulfilled. Some mistakenly think that as a result of the annexing of Jerusalem by the modern State of Israel, during the 'Six Day War' in 1967, the end of the "times of the Gentiles," has already been ushered in, overlooking the fact that this age of grace is not yet complete.

In Jeremiah 31:10 we read the word of the Lord, "Declare in the coastlands afar off and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him,'" and the following scriptures all refer to the return of Israel to her homeland: Jeremiah 3:12,18; 16:14-16; 23:3,7-8; 30:3; 31:8; 32:37; Ezekiel 20:34-43; 28:25-26; 36:22-28; 39:25-29; and Isaiah 11:11-12; 42:9; 43:4-7; 16-19; 46:9-13 and 48:6. In these scriptures we see the phrase repeated by God, that there will be a time when Israel will no longer say, " 'As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but 'as the Lord lives who brought up and led back the descendants of the house of Israel from the north land and from the countries where I had driven them,' Then they will live on their own soil," (Jer.23:7-8).

To this day, the Jews still celebrate and remember how they were brought out of the land of Egypt, doing this when the Passover is celebrated. There is coming a time, however, when an even greater Exodus will be remembered instead.

We see this future stage in God's plan for Israel in the New Testament, in Romans Chapters 9 to 11, where Paul explains that God has not rejected His people, Israel, (Rom.11:1). Paul explains that the Jews' transgression has become salvation to the Gentiles, and the Jews' rejection, the reconciliation of the world, (Rom.11:11&15). Paul uses picture language when he says some branches of the olive tree, which is Israel, were broken off on order that the Gentiles, who are the wild olive tree, might be grafted in. This gives us a picture of where we have got up to in God's plan because natural Israel is not yet grafted back in. More Gentiles are still able to be saved.

In 2Cor.5:18 Paul says, "We have been reconciled to God through Christ, and have been given a ministry of reconciliation," but Paul tells the Church in Rome, "I do not want you to be uninformed brethren... a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in," (Rom.11:25). Paul explains that the natural branches will then be grafted back in, (Rom.11:24). We can see in this picture of the olive tree, that the plan of God began before the 'Church age', and also goes beyond this age. We can read about the time when Israel is grafted back into the olive tree in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel prophesies, in Chapters 38 & 39, of a war which has yet to take place, and says that it will be at a time when the Jews are "gathered from many [not all] nations," (Ez.38:8). The ongoing return to the land of Israel by Jews now provides the possibility of a soon coming fulfilment of this yet unfulfilled prophecy. After this war, Ezekiel tells us God "will have mercy on the whole house of Israel" and "bring them back from the peoples, and gather them from the lands of their enemies." "Then they will know that I am the Lord their God, because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again into their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer," (Ez.39:25-28). This future time is when Israel will be grafted back into the olive tree.

It is after the 'Ezekiel war', when God has gathered Israel "from all the lands," and brought them back into their own land, (Ez.36:24), that He will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them. According to Ezekiel 36:26 & 27, the whole house of Israel will enter into the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus, as was also prophesied by Jeremiah in Jer.31:33 & 34.

Israel's receiving of this "new heart" and a "new spirit" is that which has already happened to believers in this age, because this very scripture from Jeremiah is applied to us in Hebrews 8:7-13. The New Covenant we have already become partakers of is exactly the same one that the whole house of Israel will become partakers of also. The whole house of Israel is to be 'born again', and this is concurrent with the grafting back in of the natural olive branches. which takes place after the times of the Gentiles has been fulfilled.

Whilst at this time the 'new birth' is by grace, through faith, Israel's 'new birth', when she has been gathered again to her own land, will be by promise, and will be done by God in a sovereign way, Jesus being in their very midst. Natural Israel's 'new birth' is in the next age, whereas ours is in this. We need to note, however, that the new birth we have received, and that which Israel will receive, is still part of the same New Covenant made through Jesus dying upon the cross and being raised from the dead. This is why Jesus had to come the first time for salvation before His second coming for judgement.

This book will explain that when Jesus comes again He will first come in the clouds for His saints before He comes to the earth with them. Jesus' 'Second Coming' being in two stages. That natural Israel will still not have believed, when Jesus comes in the clouds, is foretold by Jesus, "Behold He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him [Israel]; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him," (Rev.1:7). Zechariah prophesied of this 'mourning' in Israel when "they look on Him [Jesus] whom they have pierced," and "they will mourn over Him as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first born," (Zech.12:10).

It is essential to rightly divide the 'word of Truth' regarding Israel if we are to gain a correct understanding of the present 'age,' and as we do, we will see that God's plan involves something much greater than just the Church in this age.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CITY OF GOD - GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MAN

Many Christians believe that the focus of their lives lies at the end of this present 'age'. This Chapter looks at the more distant focus, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. This should be our focus, for, like the saints of old, our eyes should be on this ultimate purpose, the City of God. Additionally, it is necessary to understand which scriptures refer to the ages to come and which are to be fulfilled in this age, for much confusion comes from looking for the fulfilment of prophecies in this age which are not directly relevant to it.

Because the writer to the Hebrews states we have already come to "the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," (Heb.12:22), some discount the future aspect of the City of God. This belief is often found amongst those who hold to an understanding known as 'Replacement Theology'. This 'belief' considers God has replaced 'Israel in the flesh' by the Church, ignoring the outstanding promises of God to His people, Israel, regarding the land, etc.. There has been a reaction to this, however, which has resulted in an overemphasis on the Jewish roots of the Church.

Those who do not believe that God's purposes for Israel have finished yet, often separate the Church from Israel in their understanding, even giving the impression that the Church is secondary to Israel. They appear to ignore the reality that the Church in this age comprises those who have been called out of the nations, whether they be Jew [of Israel], or Gentile.

It is, therefore, necessary for us to have a much broader overview of God's purpose for all mankind, even though it may challenge our concept of who is the 'Church', and who is 'in Christ'. Also, it is essential for us to understand the correct place of God's promises to Israel, placing the prophesied future events regarding the end of this age, the millennial reign of Christ and the coming new heaven and new earth, in their correct order, so that the Holy Spirit can give us a clearer understanding of the role He has for us, the Church, to play in this end-time hour.

#### The City of God

Hebrews Chapter 11 tells us about a group of believers that were made righteous by faith. Sometimes they are referred to as the 'heroes of faith'. The list includes Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel, and goes on to say there are many others. Verse 13 tells us, however, that they died in faith "without receiving the promises, but having seen them, and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth," they made it "clear that they are seeking... a heavenly" country, (Heb.11:13-16). Verse 16 goes on to say that God "has prepared a City for them."

What Abraham had been looking for, "dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise," was this "City, which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God," (Heb.11:9&10).

None of these 'heroes of faith', although they "gained approval through their faith, received what was promised, because God had provided something better," so that "apart from us, [those of us who have been born of God in the time since the cross], they should not be made perfect," (Heb.11:39 & 40).

We begin to see, that rather than being a separate group, we, who call ourselves Christians, are one with all who have believed in God from the beginning of creation, and with all those in the future whose names are also written in the Lamb's book of life, (Heb.11 and Rev.21:22).

In Paul's letter to the Galatians he explains that Abraham had two sons, one by a bond woman and one by a free woman. The son born according to the Spirit, by the free woman, through the promise, is an allegory of the New Covenant, this woman corresponding to "the Jerusalem above," which is free. We are told this 'City' is our mother, (Gal.4:22-26). Paul tells us that we, "like Isaac, are children of promise," the children of Sarah the barren woman, (v.27&28). We see that our mother is this same 'City' that Abraham and the other Old Testament saints were looking for.

In Rev.3:12, Jesus promises, that 'on' those who 'overcome', He will write "the name of the City of His God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from... God." Yet Hebrews 12:22-24 says we have already "come to Zion, and the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a New Covenant, and to the sprinkled blood." This apparent paradox is created because at this time, in the spirit, we have already come to the City, whilst at a future date, in our immortal bodies, we will also enter this same City. This group, who are "the Church of the firstborn", does not only comprise of those who have been born of the Spirit since Jesus' resurrection, but also the Old Testament saints.

John, in the book of Revelation, was shown the "new heaven" and the "new earth," after Satan had been thrown into the lake of fire along with Death and Hades. An angel then said to John, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb," and he carried him in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed him the "holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." Its foundations had the names of the twelve apostles written on them, and the gates had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel upon them. Here, again, we see the combination of Old and New Testament saints. The City was of pure gold and had no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The glory of God illumines it and the Lamb is its lamp. The only ones who can enter are those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, (Rev.21:9-27), and this group includes both Old and New Testament saints, for this is the culmination of the ages.

We can see from these scriptures that the focus of Abraham's life, and the lives of many others, was this City, the City to which we, the Body of Christ, the Church, have already come to in the spiritual realm, but are yet to reach in the natural realm. It is important for us to understand this goal and focus of all ages past, and the one which is yet to come, despite any confusion caused because this City is called, "our mother" as well as "the bride, the wife of the Lamb," (Gal.4:26 & Rev.21:9).

The Church is normally thought to consist only of the believers in this age, the last 2000 years, and not to include the Old Testament saints. Because Christians are referred to in Scripture as the "Bride of the Lamb," which comprises those who have been born again between the time of Jesus' resurrection and His second coming, many think that 'Israel in the flesh' is destined for a different end. Scripture would suggest otherwise.

### **The Church and Israel**

Paul explained to the Gentile believers in Ephesus, that they were at one time separated "from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise... but now in Christ Jesus... [they had been] brought near by the blood of Christ," who has "now made both [groups] one, and broken down the dividing wall," (Eph.2:11-14). We, who believe, are now in the Commonwealth of Israel. We need to absorb the fact that God, in His foreordained plan, has brought those Gentiles who have been saved by grace, into this commonwealth.

We see this unifying process described in Romans 11. Paul says that the Gentiles have been grafted into the "cultivated olive tree," (v.24). Israel [in the flesh], we are told, is partially hardened until the "fullness of the Gentiles has come in," having been broken off for their unbelief.

The olive tree, at present, is made up partly of Israel, who in past ages have believed, and partly of Gentiles and Jews of this age who are born again of the Spirit. Part of Israel, some of those who have been cut off, are yet to be grafted back in again, (v.25).

Here again we see that God's plan will combine the Church in this age, [Jews and Gentiles saved by grace], and natural Israel, kinsmen according to the flesh, in the age to come.

It is necessary, at this stage, to understand that "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel," (Rom.9:6). Paul explains that Abraham's descendants are only those who are children of the promise, because it was through Isaac that his descendants would be named, (v.9&10), saying, "It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants." This means that those with a natural birthright are not automatically saved.

In the days of the Old Testament, 'belonging to Israel' did not guarantee salvation. Isaiah, we are told, cried out concerning Israel, "It is a remnant that will be saved," (Rom.9:27 and Is.10:21&22). Before Jesus came, it was only those who pursued the law "by faith" that attained to righteousness, (Rom.9:32). Likewise, in the days that lie ahead, not all who are Israel of the flesh will make it into the Millennial reign of Christ. Many who are by natural birth in the nation of Israel will remain cut off.

### **The Present Age, the Age of Grace**

In the period of time since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ people of all nations, including Israel, have been able to come into the New Covenant by grace, through faith, by the blood of Jesus. This New Covenant is the same covenant that Jeremiah prophesied as pertaining to Israel in Jer.31:31-34, as quoted in Heb.8:8-12. Some of the Gentiles and some of the Jews have become partakers of this Covenant now, whilst part of Israel will not come into it until the next 'age'. As already explained in the previous Chapter, we need to recognise that the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus, through the cross, is the very same Covenant we have come into now, and which a future remnant of Israel will come into in the Millennial reign of Christ, when Jesus comes to the earth as King. In the present age we are made partakers of this Covenant by faith, whilst in the next age Israel will become partakers through the promise. Ezekiel prophesied about this time when Israel would come into this New Covenant in Ez.36:26-28, the time when the whole house of Israel will again dwell in the land: "I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe all My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers. So, you will be My people, and I will be your God," (Ez.36:24-28).

### **Jesus Second Coming - First on the Clouds, Then to the Earth**

When Jesus returns, He comes first in the clouds, and the dead in Christ will arise, and then we who remain will be caught up together with them to be with Jesus in the air, (1Thess.4:16&17). What has come to be known as the 'Church Age' will have been completed. This is the event which is called the 'Rapture', a term which is not actually found within Scripture. It combines the 'catching away' of those saints who are alive when Jesus returns with the 'first resurrection,' (Rev.20:6). Those that are not raised again at this time will rise at a 'second resurrection' at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth, (Rev.20:5 & 12). Those who are alive when Jesus returns, but are not 'caught away', are those who have not believed. Those who have not believed will include that part of Israel which is still cut off from the cultivated olive tree. These, with the unbelievers of other nations, will go through the events which Scripture refers to as the "wrath of God," (Rom.1:18; Eph.5:6; Col.3:6; Rev.14:10&19; Rev.15:1&7; and Rev.16:1), or "the great day of the Lord... a day of wrath... the day of the Lord's wrath," (Zeph.1:14,15&18). This is a time of great judgement during which many are killed and through which only a number will enter the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth. Many confuse the future time of 'great tribulation', which is coming upon the earth, with the separate future time of 'God's wrath' being poured out before the second stage of Jesus' return; His return to the earth. Jesus comes first "on the clouds of the sky"- with His angels to catch away the saints, and then,

3½ years later, to the earth - with the saints. Scripture does not confuse these very different occasions and is very clear about the distinct twofold nature of Jesus' Second Coming.

In Dan.12:2, Daniel refers to the first resurrection when he says that only "many" - not all - "who sleep in the ground will awake... to everlasting life." The rest will be part of the 'second resurrection'. Daniel, in this scripture, is speaking to Israel, not the Church, and so we can see that along with those Christians who have died in the last two thousand years the Old Testament saints will be part of the 'first resurrection', a resurrection to which they wished to attain: "...Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah.. David, and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight; women received their dead by resurrection, and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection," (Heb.11:33-35).

Before Jesus' first coming, when the righteous saints died, they did not go to heaven but went to Sheol, the place of the dead. Sheol was divided into two parts. The righteous went to the part known as 'Abraham's bosom', to which Jesus referred when He told the story of a man called Lazarus who went there, (Luke 16:19-31). Sheol's location is possibly in the centre of the earth.

When Jesus died we know that He went to Sheol. Peter tells us that when Jesus was "made alive in the spirit" He made "proclamation to the spirits in prison," (1Pet.3:18&19), to those who once were disobedient at the time of Noah. He preached the gospel, even to those who were dead, (1Pet.4:6), that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may, nevertheless, "live in the spirit according to the will of God." The number of persons responding and involved is unknown to us.

When Jesus rose from the dead "He ascended on high and led captive a host of captives," (Eph.4:8). It seems that those in 'Abraham's bosom' were released from Sheol and translated to heaven to be with the Lord there. At the time of Jesus resurrection the Old Testament saints became able to partake of the New Covenant and be made alive in the spirit! The 'many' that Daniel referred to, those righteous saints who died before the time of Jesus' first coming, are now, therefore, in heaven, where they await their immortal bodies, which they will receive when they partake in the "first resurrection," (Rev.20:6). Since Jesus' resurrection and glorification they have been made partakers of the New Covenant also. It is not something they have yet to come into. The efficacy of the 'Cross' embraces not only those who came after it, but includes those who went before. Abraham and the other 'heroes of faith' have never been cut off from the cultivated olive tree.

When Jesus rose from the dead we know that the tombs opened and "many bodies [not spirits] of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and, coming out of the tombs after the resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many," (Matt.27:52&53). These are just part of that company in 'Abraham's bosom' who have gone before us, having already received their resurrection bodies, being "first fruits" along with Jesus, (1Cor.15:23), when He rose from the dead. Who comprise this group we do not know.

At the time of the forthcoming "first resurrection" and simultaneous "catching away of the saints", when Jesus comes "on the clouds", we will also receive our immortal bodies along with those Old Testament saints who did not receive their immortal bodies at the time of Jesus' resurrection, (1Cor.15:20-27). We will subsequently return to the earth with Jesus, after the "wrath of God", to be part of His 1000 year reign upon the earth, (Rev.19:14).

### **Jesus Second Coming and the Ages to Come**

Jesus' second coming has two stages which begin when He comes "on the clouds of the sky," (Matt.24:30). He comes with His angels, [not His saints], to "gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other," (v.31). It is not until after the 'wrath of God' that He comes to the earth, to the Mount of Olives, with the saints. Zechariah prophesies of this second event, saying, "In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives... then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones(saints) with Him," (Zech.14:4-9). It is at this time that the Beast and the False Prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire, and Satan is bound for a thousand years, (Rev.19:14-20:2).

Zechariah prophesies, "In that day, living waters will flow out of Jerusalem", just as Ezekiel does in Ez.47:1-12. Ezekiel, in Ez.40-47:12, describes a New Temple which will be built, after the "whole house of Israel," who God had sent "into exile among the nations," have been brought "back from the peoples," and "from the lands of their enemies," (Ez.39:25-29). Speaking of this time when God will have brought all of



them from "all the lands...into their own land," He says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you", (Ez.36:24-27). THIS IS WHEN THAT PART OF ISRAEL WHICH HAS BEEN CUT OFF FROM THE CULTIVATED OLIVE TREE COMES INTO THE NEW COVENANT. This happens after the "wrath of God" and Jesus' subsequent return to the earth itself. This is the time when we will see that "God has not rejected His people," as Paul explains in his letter to the Romans, (Rom.11:1), the time when Jesus will be in the midst of His people and "King over all the earth," (Zech.14:9). Those of Israel who have come through the 'wrath of God' will then be given new spirits, but unlike the Church, who have partaken in the "first resurrection" 3½ years earlier, they will not receive immortal bodies. They will not until the 'second resurrection'.

During the millennial reign of Jesus, those of the "first resurrection", changed in the twinkling of an eye into their immortal bodies when they were caught up to be with the Lord in the air, (1Cor.15:52&53 and 1Thess.4:17), will rule the nations "with a rod of iron," (Rev.19:15 and 2:27). Our roles and positions during the Millennium will depend on the "crowns" given to us when we come before the judgement seat of Christ, (2Cor.5:10). The judgement seat of Christ is not to be confused with the White Throne judgement after the 'second resurrection', (Rev.20:11&12). So, it is not until the end of the Millennial reign of Christ and the second resurrection that the rest of Israel get their immortal bodies.

After the millennial rule of Christ on the earth, Satan is released from his prison, the abyss, where he will have been imprisoned throughout Jesus' 1000 year reign. He will then deceive the nations once more so that they gather for war "on the broad plain of the earth" surrounding "the camp of the saints" at Jerusalem. But they are destroyed by fire from heaven, (Rev.20:3 and Rev.20:7-9). Satan is cast into the lake of fire, (v.10), and all the dead are raised in the 'second resurrection', and judged according to their deeds. If any man's name is not found written in the book of life he is thrown into the lake of fire, which is the "second death", (Rev.20:11-15). The "second death" has no power over those who were part of the "first resurrection", (Rev.20:6).

Peter tells us that the "heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up," (2Pet.3:10).

### **A New Heaven and a New Earth**

Peter explains we "are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells," (2Pet.3:13). John was shown this "new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away," (Rev.21:1). He also saw "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God," (v.10), "made ready as a bride and adorned for her husband," (v.2). All that have their names written in the Lamb's book of life are able to enter her, (v.27). Here we see the culmination of the purposes of God. Nations still exist yet man has been made one with God. Originally innocent, man became defiled, but will then will have been made pure.

### **From Innocence to Purity**

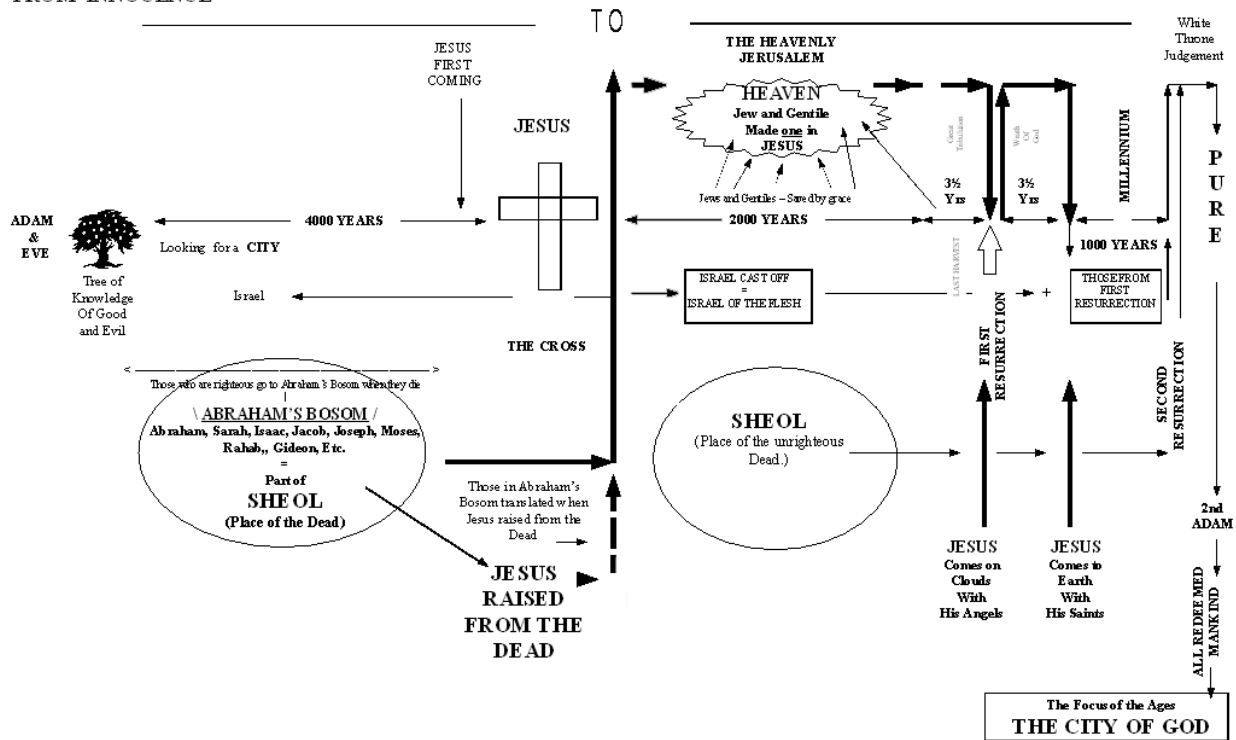
In the beginning God made man. He was innocent. When Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, (Gen.3:6 ), he fell. So began man's journey which was to result in some attaining to purity. Purity necessitates being delivered from evil. The first Adam initially communed with God, for he knew to do no other, being created to do so, but he fell. Those of the second Adam commune with God, their Father, for they love Him more than evil. Only through Jesus and His victory through the cross and resurrection is this achieved. This act of the Saviour avails for all mankind and those who obtain salvation will reach the CITY OF GOD, the new Jerusalem.

In Christ Jesus, we who were formerly far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. He made both those who were formerly the "Uncircumcision," the Gentiles in the flesh, and "so called, Circumcision [Israel]... ONE" having

# GOD'S PURPOSE IN MANKIND

FROM INNOCENCE

TO PURITY



**This Diagram shows the make up of the 'Ages of Man' from Creation to the culmination of the Ages when there will be a new heaven and a new earth containing the City of God.**

**Man was created 'innocent' but one day will be made 'pure,' through the victory won for him by his Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

broken "down the barrier of the dividing wall, that in Himself He might make the two into ONE NEW MAN... reconciling them both in ONE BODY to God through the cross," (Eph.2:11-22). Many years before the cross, Moses considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of Egypt, (Heb.11:26), for he was looking to this reward. To be 'in Christ' is the purpose of God for all mankind. A purpose that began before this present, so called, 'Church age'; even before the foundation of the world.

As this age reaches its climax, the Lord is wanting us to understand the prophecies that apply to this time we are now in. To do so, it is necessary to place the prophesied events of the Millennium and beyond in their correct place and time scale. This prevents us wrongly applying prophecies to ourselves which we should not. Only then can we see our role and place more clearly. It is very important that we do not expect events taking place in this present age which are to be worked out in the ages to come. Likewise, we must ensure we are expectant of those events which are to be worked out in this age.

So, as we are each involved in playing our part in God's plan and purposes, may we each have our eyes on the CITY OF GOD like the saints of old, considering our activities relative to the 'Great Plan', the road on which we are all travelling.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### SEVEN THOUSAND YEARS OF 'MAN'S' HISTORY

"With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," 2Peter 3:8.

As we look forward, 'trying to understand the end of this age and the ages to come,' this Chapter will consider an overview of God's purpose for Mankind as regards approximate time-scales, purposely ignoring detail. This will enable the reader to have a summary of what previous Chapters have stated, and to more easily understand what the following Chapters are going to consider. The following Chapters will hopefully provide understandings which will be useful, and may prove crucial, as we each find ourselves involved in the very working out of these future plans and purposes of our heavenly Father.

Just as there were seven days in which God created heaven and earth, we can see another 'seven days' during which the purpose of God for Mankind will unfold.

The Bible provides the genealogical information to show that from Adam to Christ there was about 4000 years, or four days of one thousand years each, corresponding to the first four days of Creation, of which we read in the book of Genesis.

From the time of Jesus walk upon the earth to the present is another two thousand years, or two more days of one thousand years. It would seem that Jesus' 'soon return' is shortly to usher in His Millennial reign on earth, which will be the seventh day of one thousand years.

Accuracy regarding exact dates is not possible for many reasons. For example, calendar changes have occurred and the present use of the Gregorian Calendar, or Astronomical year of 365¼ days, replacing the Julian Calendar, was adopted only relatively recently, in 1582, when 11 days were lost from the year.

We can see a confirmation of this suggested time-scale in the prophecy regarding Israel, spoken by Hosea. As Israel's time of having been 'cut off' from the olive tree is nearing completion, we read how Hosea declared to Israel, "Come let us return to the Lord for He has torn us, but He will heal us. He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we might live before Him." (Hos.6:1&2). We can see a fulfilment of this prophecy in the death and resurrection of the Lord, but in the context of this Scripture we see that it refers to Israel herself. The house of Israel, having been cut off from the olive tree for the past two thousand years, will shortly be grafted back in again after the Lord returns to reign as King of Israel and all the earth, from Jerusalem.

As the sixth 'day' of one thousand years is drawing to an end, and the 'seventh' is shortly to begin, there is great confusion as regards the make up of the last seven years of this present age. Indeed, most of the controversy regarding what lies ahead is in regard to the last seven years of this age.

This book upholds the view that this last seven years is concurrent with the 'seventieth week' which concludes the seventy weeks which the angel Gabriel spoke of to Daniel, which have "been decreed for your people [Israel]..." (Dan.9:24). This 'seventieth week' is not, as most assume, the same as the 'week' of a "firm covenant" which will be made "with many for one week," of which Gabriel also spoke, (Dan.9:27). This important 'understanding' will be dealt with in detail in a further Chapter.

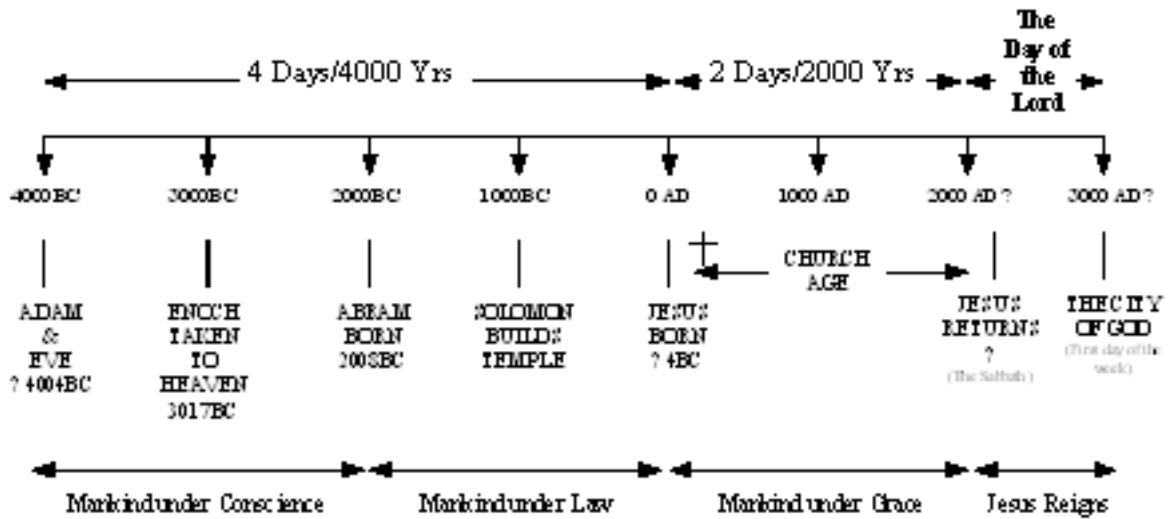
The Chapter that follows will discuss how the last week of this age is divided into two parts, both of equal length of 3½ years. The first half of this last week is described in Scripture as being the time of 'great tribulation', whilst the second half describes the time when the 'wrath of God and the Lamb' are poured out on the earth. The tribulation of the first half of this last week is caused by Satan having 'great wrath', whilst the second half of the last week is when God's wrath is to be poured out to prepare the earth for the millennial reign of Christ which is to follow.

The 'day of the Lord' is a day of a thousand years, but it will commence with the 3½ year period of God's wrath being poured forth, which itself is sometimes referred to as the "day of the Lord." These two halves of the last week need to be rightly divided if we are to understand what lies ahead.

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## Diagram showing 7000 years of "Man"

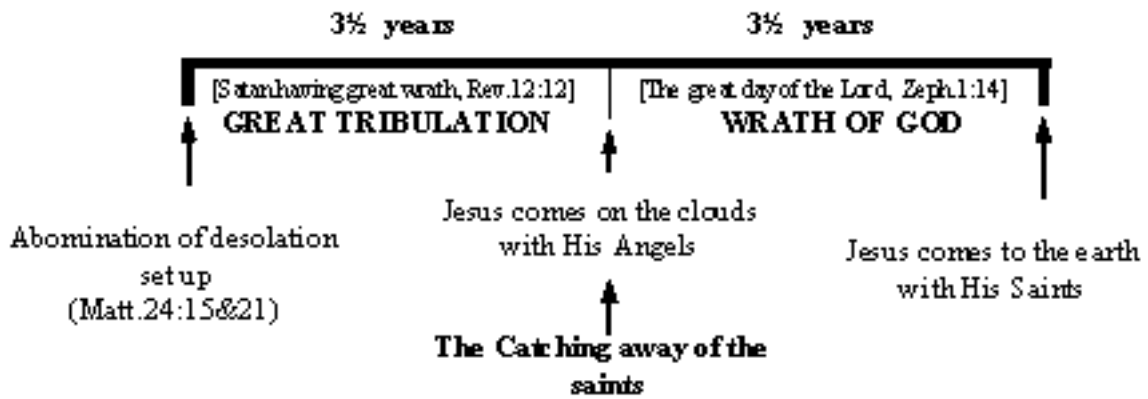
"With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2Pet.3:8)



## Diagram showing Last Week of this Age

### The Last Seven Years of this present Age

Daniel's 70th Week - Dan.9:24-27



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE WRATH OF GOD

Much wrong understanding regarding the end of this present age is caused because the believer does not rightly divide Scripture between the period known as the 'great tribulation' and the period of the 'wrath of God'. Many think that these terms describe the same period of time, but Scripture never uses these terms interchangeably!

The end-time scenario as understood by Christians varies considerably, yet only one scenario can be correct. We know from what was told to Daniel that his prophetic vision was to be sealed UNTIL the time of the end, the time just before the 'first resurrection', when "many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake... to everlasting life," (Dan.12:2&9). As we are now entering this time of the end, just before the 'first resurrection', we can expect that as "sons of light and sons of day," (1Thess.5:5), we will begin to receive an understanding of these 'times' as the Holy Spirit discloses to us "what is to come," (John 16:13). We need to be aware, however, that Satan is doing all he can to frustrate our understanding of this time of the end of this age.

Many Christians seem to want to believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, or other beliefs which discount the possibility that the present believer has to go through the time of 'great tribulation', because they find the scene described in the book of Revelation too undesirable to cope with. This is usually because they confuse the time of 'great tribulation' with the separate time of the 'wrath of God.' We may hold a wrong belief because of our wrong understanding, or we may choose a particular doctrine due to fear, because we may not fully trust God with our future and are unable to contemplate a scenario we would not like to be involved with. Nevertheless, we should not allow ourselves to hold a view which is contrary to Scripture.

Scripture tells us that when the 'beast' is seen "those who dwell upon the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life," (Rev.17:8). From this we know that believers will be able to identify the 'beast' at that time. It is a second 'beast,' the 'false prophet', who provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell except the one who has the mark of the first beast, the name of the beast, or the number of his name, (Rev.13:16-18). Those who partake in the "first resurrection" will include those saints who are slain because they "had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand," (Rev.20:4&5). This Scripture confirms that the 'first resurrection', that event which includes the 'catching away of the saints' and the 'dead in Christ being raised,' (1Cor.15:52), will occur AFTER the revealing of the beast, during the time of great tribulation!

Satan has done all he can to prevent Christians understanding the correct make up of the time of the end of this age, the last seven years, and in particular, he seeks to obscure the fact that those who are alive at the second coming of Christ will have gone through the 'great tribulation'. This is because Satan's defeat occurs during this time .

#### The Wrath of God

Many believers have been confused because they have not identified that the time of the "great tribulation," (Matt.24:21 and Rev.7:14), is different from the time of the "wrath of God". Because Paul tells us that "God has not destined us for wrath," (1Thess.5:9), many have mistakenly thought that Christians could not be here during the time of 'great tribulation'; thinking that the terms, 'wrath of God' and 'great tribulation', were used for the same future period. As already stated, these terms are not used interchangeably in Scripture.

The 'wrath of God' is a 3½ year period during which God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, before the coming of the Lord to the earth, to the Mount of Olives. This is after the Lord has already come on the clouds to catch away the saints. When God pours forth His wrath "men will seek death and they will long to die," (Rev.9:6), and is a time when many men will be killed. During the time of the sixth trumpet alone, a "third of mankind... is killed," (Rev.9:18)! But despite the awfulness of this time, we read that men will still "not repent," (Rev.9:20&21 and 16:9&11). It is also a time when a company of "bond servants," - "144,000 from every tribe of the sons of Israel" are "sealed on their foreheads" and cannot be "hurt," (Rev.7:3&4 and 9:4).

The 'wrath of God' is also referred to as the "great day of the Lord," and is graphically described by the prophet Zephaniah, (Zeph.1:14-2:3), as a "day of the Lord's anger," (Zeph.2:2&3), when "all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy," (Zeph.1:18).

### **The Day of the Lord**

The phrase, 'The day of the Lord' is often used incorrectly by believers because it is not fully understood that it is the 'day of the Lord's wrath' which will usher in the 'thousand year day of the Lord,' Christ's millennial reign on the earth. Satan has tried to prevent us considering the awful judgement of Almighty God, which is being stored up to deal with the abominations perpetrated by man before Jesus will return to the earth to reign as King. The Prophet, Joel, describes this day as "great and very awesome," (Joel 2:11). That God will judge this world according to its ways is a future prophetic certainty, but before this day He will bring forth His mercy, demonstrating His love for all mankind as the good news of His Kingdom is proclaimed to all the nations, with the offer of deliverance from the wrath to come. Joel prophesies of this time of mercy being available: "before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes... it will come about that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved," (Joel 2:31&32). Joel goes on to prophesy that 'the day' will usher in that time of peace, [the millennial reign of Christ], when the "Lord will dwell in Zion," and "the Lord will be zealous for His land and will have pity on His people," [Israel], and "will never again make them a reproach among the nations." He "will make up for the years that the swarming locusts have eaten" when He is "in the midst of Israel," (Joel 3:21, 2:18-27).

### **Like a Thief in the Night**

Those who uphold that there will be a Pre-Tribulation Rapture make much of the scriptures which speak of "the day of the Lord" coming "like a thief in the night," (1Thess.5:2), confusing themselves by thinking that this refers to the coming of the separate time of 'great tribulation'. The coming of the 'great tribulation' will not be as a thief - but the time when God pours forth His wrath will!

Paul writes that while "they are saying, 'Peace and Safety', destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child and they shall not escape," (v.3). This is speaking of wrath. Paul then tells us that we "are not in darkness, that the day should overtake us like a thief, for we are all sons of light and sons of day", declaring that "God has not destined us for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," (1Thess.5:4,5&9).

Jesus said, "Be on the alert for you do not know which day your Lord is coming... for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think." This does not prevent us, who are "sons of light," however, from knowing the "times [years] and seasons [months]", which Paul clearly states the Church in Thessalonica knew: "Now as to times and seasons, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you," (1Thess.5:1). Indeed, Jesus exhorts us to know, just like we know when "summer is here," by the fact that the fig tree has "put forth its leaves," (Matt.24:32), that when we "see" all those things which Jesus told us to watch for, we are to "recognise that He is near, right at the door," (Matt.24:33).

The idea of an 'imminent, sudden, unexpected and secret rapture' of the saints, which could take place any day, has been a very popular end-time doctrine, and is often upheld by the idea that somehow this expectation makes us behave better. Whilst being the focus of many sermons, this motive, of ever expectant imminent return, is suggested only by those who misunderstand 'righteousness and sanctification'. The true quality of our 'walk' is not reliant upon such a threat of always needing to be in readiness [although we should], but by knowing 'who we are in Christ'.

### **The Days of Noah, the Days of Lot, and the Days of the Son of Man**

Jesus told us that the coming of the Son of Man will be "just as it happened in the days of Noah... and the days of Lot," (Luke 17:26-36). "Just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. [This 'destruction' again speaks of 'God's wrath being poured out'.] Likewise, also as it was in the days of Lot. They were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building, but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all," (v.26-29). This scripture confirms that Jesus' second coming will be "as a thief" to the world, as it was in Noah and Lot's day, when life was proceeding as usual, and will initiate the time of 'God's wrath,' a time of destruction. However,

both Noah and Lot, types of the present day believer, were aware of the soon coming end [but not the day or hour], yet they could not convince the world of this truth. This scripture is not trying to inform us of the smallness of the number who will be saved on that 'day', as some suggest, but rather of its suddenness for the unbeliever, and is, analogous with the normality of the circumstances immediately preceding that 'day' and the awesomeness of the day of God's wrath which will come upon an unbelieving world.

Despite Jesus only giving us these two analogies as precedents for His second coming, some 'teachers' have added those of Enoch and Elijah, but these are just that, men's additions, usually added to uphold the idea that Christians will not partake in the 'great tribulation'!

During the time of the 'wrath of God', which begins to be described in Rev.6:12-17, ("wrath has come and who is able to stand"), we do not read of anyone being saved or anyone repenting, ("they did not repent", Rev.9:20&21 and Rev.16:9&11.) Only those of Israel, that perfect number known only to God, and represented by the 144,000 of Revelation Chapter 7, are "sealed" so as not to be harmed during the wrath being poured out by God upon the earth. The time of God's wrath being poured out concludes the last half of Daniel's 70th week, (Dan.9:24-27), the last of the 70 weeks which have been decreed for the people of Israel and Jerusalem "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," (v.24). It is also the last 3½ years of this present world order.

### **The First Resurrection and Catching Away of the Saints**

Paul, speaking of God, tells us to "wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead... who delivers us from the wrath to come," (1Thess.1:10). The catching away of the saints, those who are alive when Jesus returns, coincides with the 'first resurrection', the raising from the dead, of those who have "fallen asleep." Paul explains to the Church at Thessalonica, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall 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 shall rise first. Then we, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord," (1Thess.4:13-17). This concurs with what Paul explains to the Church at Corinth, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed," (1Cor.15:51&52).

Explaining that there is a difference between a natural body and a spiritual body, Paul says, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body... Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable... for this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality," (v.42-58).

The timing of this most amazing event is told to us by Jesus Himself: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days.... He [the Son of Man] will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other," (Matt.24:29&31).

### **The Two Stages of Jesus' Second Coming**

As we compare references in Scripture to Jesus' second coming, we can see there are two stages, between which it is important to distinguish. He first comes "on the clouds of the sky" with "His angels," (Matt.24:30&31). This is when "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory," (v.29&30). This is no secret coming, for "just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be," (v.27). "Behold, He is coming with the clouds and every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him [Israel]; and all the tribes will mourn for Him," (Rev.1:7). Zechariah prophesies regarding the "House of David" [Israel] that "in that day... they will look on Me whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns

for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born," (Zech.12:10). The description, 'All the tribes of the earth' includes Israel, some of whom are still not 'saved' when the Lord returns on the clouds, with only one third of those who then remain, still to make it "through the fire," the wrath of God which is to follow. This is made clear in Zech.13:8: "It will come about in all the land,' declares the Lord, 'That two parts in it will be cut off and perish, but the third will be left in it, and I will bring the third part through the fire. Refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My Name and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is my God'". After the 'wrath of God' Jesus' "feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east," (Zech.14:4), when "the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones [saints] with Him," (v.5).

By contrast to His coming on the clouds, which is with the angels, Jesus' coming to the earth is with the saints, - not with the angels. We have a description of the coming of the Lord to the earth with His saints in Revelation, Chapter 19. We read of "a great multitude [the saints] in heaven... for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride [the saints] has made herself ready; and it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints," (Rev.19:1-10). Then "heaven opened; and behold a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war... and the armies [the saints] which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses," (v.11-14). This is after the time of the 'wrath of God.'

### **The Great Tribulation**

Before the 'wrath of God' is the separate time of 'great tribulation'. Jesus explains that the "tribulation... immediately" precedes the 'first resurrection' and the catching away of the saints, when Jesus comes "on the clouds of the sky," describing this time as "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall," (Matt.24:21). Of this "great tribulation," Jesus said, "unless those days had been cut short no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short," (v.22). That "no life would have been saved" is due to the author of this tribulation being Satan, and not God. This time is also one of "false prophets" and "false Christs" showing "great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect," (v.24). This is the last contest of the 'righteous' with Satan.

### **The Beast and False Prophet**

During this time of "great tribulation" a man known as the "Beast", (Rev.19:20), the head of a worldly power which is described as a "beast... having ten horns and seven heads," (Rev.13:1), is given "authority to act for forty-two months [3½ years]... and.. to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation," (v.5-7). "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the earth." That is, all will worship the beast except Christians, (v.8).

Another "beast, coming up out of the earth" at that time, will exercise "all the authority of the first beast in his presence" and make "the earth and those who dwell on it to worship the first beast." He "performs great signs.. and he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or upon their forehead... that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, the name of beast or the number of the name... and his number is 666," (Rev.13:1-18). This second beast is called the "false prophet", (Rev.19:20). "If any one worships the Beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God... Here is the perseverance of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith in Jesus, (Rev.14:9-12). And we are told, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," during this time, (v.13).

"Underneath the altar" in heaven, John saw the "souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony they had maintained. These martyrs who have died for their faith "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 upon the earth?' ...and they were told that they should rest a little while longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed, even as they had been, should be completed," (Rev.6:9-11). These additional and final 'martyrs', who 'complete the number', come from the remaining time of "great tribulation." They form part of those believers who are caught up to be with the Lord in the air at the "first resurrection", being described as "the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God, and those who had not worshipped the Beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life



and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION," [N.B. It is after the rise of the 'Beast'], (Rev.20:4&5).

### **The Meaning of 'Tribulation'**

The word for 'tribulation' in Greek is 'thilipsis' and is sometimes translated as 'affliction' or 'persecution'. During the whole of the last 2000 years the Church has gone through tribulation, affliction and persecution, in varying degrees. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation," (John 16:33). Paul "strengthened the souls of the disciples" at Antioch, "encouraging them to continue in the faith," explaining that "through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God," (Acts 14:22). Paul was able to say that he gloried in "tribulation, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance," (Rom.5:3), saying, "Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword... separate us from the love of Christ?...But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us," (Rom.8:35&37). To the Church at Thessalonica Paul wrote, "We ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God, for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and tribulations which you endure, a plain token of the just judgement of God so that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which, indeed, you are suffering, since it is just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you and to give relief to you who are afflicted, and to us as well, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire dealing out retribution [wrath] to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus... when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day," (2Thess.4:8). This scripture clearly describes the sequence of Jesus coming with His angels - to catch away the saints - after the great tribulation - and before the wrath of God.

### **The Last Contest of the Righteous**

So we see that the last 2000 years of 'tribulation' of the saints will culminate in a time of 'great tribulation'. John records in the book of Revelation that he sees a "great multitude" in heaven "which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." It was explained to John, that "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation," (Rev.7:9&14). After Rev.7:14, when the saints are in heaven, the term, 'tribulation,' does not appear again in scripture, but the term, 'wrath,' appears thirteen times from Rev.6:16 to 19:15, with the phrase "they did not repent" appearing four times.

This order of events also concurs with the teaching of the early Church Fathers. Ireneas, [c.AD140-202], taught by Polycarp, who had been taught by John, spoke of the 'great tribulation' saying, "When in the end, the Church shall be suddenly caught up from the earth, it is said, 'There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.' For in this last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome, they are crowned with incorruption." Ireneas synchronised the "first resurrection" of Rev.20:4-6 with the event when the saints are "caught away," teaching that the "resurrection of the just" will take place after the coming of the Antichrist.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

In my early teens, I began going to Sunday School for the second time in my life. This second time, I managed to maintain a good level of attendance and so won a prize. This was to be presented on 'Prize Giving Day'. I was allowed to make a selection from a number of books on offer. I remember looking at an array of books, none of which really interested me. For no reason, other than I had to make a choice, I chose a paper back version of the Book of Revelation. It was my mother who encouraged me to read this book, with the exhortation that I had to understand it! This was many years before I became a Christian. This 'task' that my mother gave me all those years ago I still find I am trying to fulfill. I hope the following Chapter will be a help to the reader as he studies 'The Revelation' with the help of the Holy Spirit.

#### Placing Events in their Correct Sequence

When we correctly place the time of 'great tribulation' before a separate time when 'God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth', we find that the book of Revelation begins to make sense. As one reads prophecy of Scripture it is necessary to place each jigsaw puzzle piece in its correct place; only then will the whole puzzle come together correctly. The problem we face is that these puzzle pieces are not necessarily found in sequential order in Scripture.

An example of this can be found in Rev.20:1-5 where a reference to the "first resurrection" immediately follows a description of the events which occur after the time of God's wrath and Jesus' subsequent coming to the earth with His Saints. The 'first resurrection' actually occurs 3½ years earlier. Therefore, one cannot necessarily place an event in its proper time-scale by taking note of where it comes in the text. In some instances, events are described in a very different order to the order in which they are fulfilled.

Many, when trying to understand the book of Revelation, make the error in thinking that the events it describes are in time order. However, once one begins to understand the correct sequence of events, understanding the book of Revelation becomes easier, and all prophecies harmonious, one with the other.

#### The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation, from Chapter 4 onwards, describes the events which will occur during the last seven years of this age, and finishes by referring to the millennial reign of Christ which follows, and which in turn culminates in the second resurrection, and is in turn followed by the coming of the new heaven and new earth.

#### The 24 Elders

As one reads of the 24 elders in Revelation Chapter 5, those who only refer to the King James '1611' version of the Bible find they may be misled as they start to study this book. They read of the twenty four elders singing a "new song," with the words, "..Thou hast made us unto our God, Kings and Priests, and we shall reign on the earth," (Rev.5:10). This should read "..Thou hast made them unto our God, Kings and Priests, and they shall reign on the earth." In order to sustain a 'Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory' its adherents need to show that the Church is in heaven before the time of 'great tribulation', and some use this translation to uphold their belief. It is held by some, therefore, that the Church is seen in heaven before the 'great tribulation' in the form of the twenty four elders, not realising their belief is based on this uncertain translation.

It is most likely the twenty four elders represent the twelve apostles and the twelve heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

#### The Seven Seals

The first five seals of Chapter 6 all take place in the time of the 'great tribulation'. The first seal describes one who rides on a white horse (v.2), and is representative of the 'beast', the man the whole world will worship. The second, third and fourth seals inform us that this time will indeed be a time of great tribulation, during which peace is taken from the earth so that men will slay one another, (v.3&4). Economic turmoil will see famine, and Death and Hades will bring even more deaths through the "sword... pestilence and by wild beasts," (v.7&8). The fifth seal indicates this time will produce many martyrs of those "slain because of the

word of God and because of the testimony which they had maintained," (v.9). So, we can build up a description of the time of 'great tribulation' which is very different to the time of 'wrath' which follows it. Then sixth seal describes how ".the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth". This agrees with Matt.24:29, where Jesus says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky," the event, which Jesus tells us precedes His coming "on the clouds of the sky." Although this passage in Revelation makes no reference to Jesus' actual coming, it does declare that it inaugurates the "wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come and who is able to stand," (v.16&17). We clearly see that 'wrath' follows 'tribulation', these terms not being confused one with the other. Joel also prophesied of this occasion when "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord shall come," and this is quoted by Peter in his first sermon, (Joel 3:31 and Acts 2:20). Peter thereby indicates the coming of the Lord is after the great tribulation, and before Jesus comes in the clouds, by using this scripture. Peter, in describing the period of time during which the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh and he includes this event when the "sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come," (Acts 2:17), agreeing with the above interpretation.

Chapter 7 presents a 'pause' between the sixth and seventh seals, during which, the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel are "sealed" so as not to be harmed in the forthcoming time of wrath, and the "great multitude" who have come "out of the great tribulation" are seen in heaven: "for this reason they are before the throne of God and they serve Him day and night in His temple... and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes," (Rev.7:15-17).

It is the breaking of the seventh seal in Chapter 8 that actually instigates this 'pause', when there will be "silence in heaven for half an hour," (Rev.8:1), the events of which were described in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 then goes on to describe the effect of the blasts of the seven trumpets given to the seven angels. These trumpets unfold for us the awesomeness of the time of the wrath of God, a time much more severe than the one described as the 'great tribulation' with its focus on the persecution of the saints.

### **The Greater Severity of the Time of the Wrath of God**

In this time of God's wrath "a third of the earth is burnt up... a third of the trees... and all the green grass," (v.7). "A third of the creatures which were in the sea... died, and a third of the ships were destroyed," (v.9). "A third of the waters became wormwood and many men died from the waters," (v.11). And "a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten," (v.12), before a warning is given of the three remaining blasts of the trumpet, the "three woes," (v.13), for even worse is yet to come! All of this is much more severe than anything which occurred during the time of great tribulation.

The first "woe", heralded by the fifth trumpet in Chapter 9, is a time of torment for five months for those who do not have the "seal of God on their foreheads," the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel. Men will seek death but will be unable to find it: "they will long to die and death flees from them," (Rev.9:1-12).

The sixth trumpet brings the second "woe" when "four angels... kill a third of mankind", and yet "the rest of mankind... did not repent" of the evil deeds they had committed, (Rev.9:13-21)!

In Chapter 11 we read that before "the third woe", "two witnesses" are granted to prophesy for "twelve hundred and sixty days," [3½ years], eventually being killed by the 'Beast'. 3½ days after their death, however, "the breath of life from God comes into them," and they stand on their feet and they go up into heaven "in a cloud." Some suggest these 'two witnesses' represent the Church, quoting this Chapter as a description of the 'Rapture,' the catching away of the saints. But this event happens within the time of 'God's wrath', after the Church has already been gathered unto the Lord.

The text explains that these "two witnesses" are "two olive trees, and the two lamp stands that stand before the Lord of the earth," (Rev.11:4). In Zechariah Chapter 4 it is explained that "these two olive trees... beside the two golden pipes [of the lamp stand], which empty the golden oil from themselves," are "the two anointed ones who are standing beside the Lord of the whole earth," (Zech.4:11-14). Is it possible that these "two witnesses" are Enoch and Elijah, the only two men who have never died, as both were taken up into heaven whilst still alive at the end of their previous time on earth, (Gen.5:24 and 2Kings 2:11)? The writer to the Hebrews tells us, "It is appointed once for men to die and after this judgement," (Heb.9:27). Are these two men witnesses to the very purpose of God which has been played out from Genesis to Revelation?

As the "two witnesses" go up to heaven, "seven thousand people.. are killed in an earthquake" which shakes Jerusalem, and the text tells us "the second woe is past, the third is coming quickly," (Rev.11:14). It will not be until Chapter 19, however, that we can tell exactly what this "third woe" is, as when the seventh angel sounds the seventh trumpet, completing the seven seals, we are not told exactly what happens immediately but, instead, are told what the twenty four elders subsequently say: "The nations were [past tense] enraged and Thy wrath came [past tense], and the time came [past tense] for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy Name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth," (v.18). Readers of the King James 1611 version of the Bible find the present tense being used in that Bible version, saying, "Thy wrath is come," - present tense, but what the elders say does not describe the events after the seventh trumpet, but tells of the elders referring back to the beginning of the time of 'God's wrath', just after the first resurrection and catching away of the saints had taken place - past tense.

## Revelation Chapter 12

As Chapter 12 begins, the book of Revelation continues by describing events which go back to the beginning of the 'great tribulation', for in this Chapter the 'saints' are referred to once again. This 'division' is very important to notice and understand.

There are many 'end-time' doctrines based on Chapter 12 of the book of Revelation. In particular many of the so called, 'Manifest sons of God' doctrines use differing interpretations of this Chapter. However, using Scripture to interpret Scripture, the following can be understood.

"A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, and she was with child," (Rev.12:1&2). This appears to refer to Israel, analogous to Joseph's dream: "Behold, the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me [Joseph being the twelfth star]," (Gen.37:9.), which suggests this interpretation of this picture language.

"And another sign appeared in heaven... a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns," (Rev.12:3). The clear indication is that this is a reference to the 'ten horned' beast of Daniel Chapter 7, (Dan.7:7&24). Further reference to this beast, along with explanation, follows in Chapters 13 and 17, clearly describing events in the time of 'great tribulation,' (Rev.13:1 and Rev.17:3,7&9). That this sign describes this beast as being a 'dragon' alludes to the fact that Satan will give this world system, and the man who personifies this system, "his power and his throne and great authority," (Rev.13:2).

Daniel Chapter 7 tells us a little more about this same 'beast'. A little horn comes up amongst the ten horned beast having "a mouth uttering great boasts," (v.8&11). This little horn "will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One", who "will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time [3½ years]," (v.25).

Israel, as signified in Rev.12:1 as a 'woman', is "in labour and in pain to give birth," (v.2), and is seen by John giving birth "to a son, a male, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron," (v.5). We are told in Rev.19:15 that Jesus "will rule... the nations ...with a rod of iron," a task in which He is joined by those who overcome: "And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron," (Rev.2:26&27). Some would suggest that this task of 'ruling' is undertaken only by the Body of Christ without the actual bodily return of Jesus to the earth, but this does not accord with Rev.19:15.

John then sees the "woman", Israel, fleeing "into the wilderness... for one thousand two hundred and sixty days," [3½ years], to a "place prepared by God," (v.6).

## The Key Role of Michael

John next describes a "war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon... and the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth," (v.7-9). This event is that which will trigger the very end of this age, Daniel's 70th week, and bring about the 'great tribulation' for 3½ years, after which there will be 3½ years when God's wrath will be poured out.

Some suggest that the Church is involved in this battle to throw Satan down to the earth, but Scripture does not indicate that it is. On the contrary, only "Michael and his angels" were "waging war with the dragon," (v.7). However, it is clear that the Church is tremendously effected by this event.

### **The 'He' of Paul's Letter to the Church at Thessalonica**

Paul wrote to the brethren at Thessalonica regarding "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him," telling them, "not be quickly shaken from your composure... that the day of the Lord has come," (2Thess.2:1&2). Paul explained that they were not to be deceived by anyone for that day would not come "unless the apostasy [falling away] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition," (v.3). Criteria not fulfilled in by a Pre-tribulation Rapture! Paul reminded these brethren that he had already explained to them "what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed... only 'he' who now restrains will do so until 'he' is taken out of the way," (v.6&7).

A classic 'end-time' belief has been that this 'he' of Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians is the Holy Spirit, who will be removed along with the Church in whom He dwells, at a 'Rapture', a catching away of the saints, which is to take place before the 'great tribulation', but this is not based on any specific scripture. Scripture, however, does tell us of one who is pivotal to the rise of the 'beast' and the coming of the 'great tribulation', and that is Michael.

### **The 'Time of Distress' and the 'Great Tribulation'**

Daniel was told that at the time of the end "Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, [Israel], will arise and there will be a time of distress such as has never occurred since there was a nation until that time," (Dan.12:1). It is the rising up of Michael which will see this "time of distress" commence. The description of this event is the same as that used by Jesus to describe the 'great tribulation': "There will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall," (Matt.24:21). The "time of distress" of Chapter 12 of Daniel is the same time as the "great tribulation" of Chapter 24 of Matthew's Gospel, an event which occurs when Michael is taken out of the way, enabling the man of sin to be revealed, (2Thess.2:3-9).

### **What 'It' is that Brings Forth the End-time Ministry of the Church**

Many are looking for an end time 'anointing' upon the Body of Christ, the Church, to bring about a final revival harvest. This, and only this, is considered by many to be the crucial ingredient which will bring about the last great harvest, a harvest without, and before, any time of tribulation. Recent years have therefore seen great excitement about 'anointings upon believers', many of which have proven false. There has been much talk of revival as a result of this expectation, but none of this has been in the context of that which is found in Scripture. There is only one scriptural end-time harvest and this is the one found in the time of "great tribulation".

Realising that there must be some 'change' which effects the body of Christ so as to bring in the end-time harvest, many have studied previous 'moves of God', concluding that there must be a special anointing upon believers at such a time. It is not an 'anointing,' however, which brings the change in the Body of Christ, so as to bring in this harvest, although the Church will be anointed at that time, but rather the fact that Satan is thrown down from heaven and so is no longer accusing the brethren before God day and night. That the Body of Christ will be anointed at that time is not the critical factor.

This future 'change' for the Body of Christ, the Church, disclosed to us in this Scripture, therefore, is due to the fact that the "accuser of the brethren has been thrown down [from heaven], who accuses them before God day and night," so "NOW the salvation, and the power, and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come," (Rev.12:10). It is this fact that will bring about the Church's victorious end-time ministry, resulting in a harvest, a great multitude from every nation and tribe and people and tongue.

### **The End-time Harvest**

Jesus spoke of this "harvest" which, He explained to His disciples, is "the end of the age," (Matt.13:39). There is only one harvest found in Scripture, which is when a "great multitude, which no one could count, from all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues... come out of the great tribulation," (Rev.7:9,13&14). Daniel was told that it was in this "time of distress" that those "who have insight will shine brightly like the

expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness [bring in the harvest], like the stars for ever and ever," (Dan.12:1&3). This agrees with Jesus' description of the "harvest... the end of the age" when He says "the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father," (Matt.13:39&43). This is when the "gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end [of the age] shall come," (Matt.24:14). Present day evangelistic activity cannot bring about this result which will only find its fulfilment at the end of the Church age.

### **Satan having Great Wrath causes Great Tribulation**

The effect of Satan being cast down upon the earth necessitates him having to find a man in whom to be personified, for Satan, a spirit, once cast to the earth, needs a body through which to be effective. This he does in the man known as the 'Beast' who personifies the end-time world system, also described as a 'beast.' Although a loud voice will say, when Satan is cast down to the earth, "Rejoice O heavens and you who dwell in them," this same voice declares, "Woe, to the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to you having great wrath, knowing he only has a short time," (Rev.12:12). Satan is the cause of there being great tribulation, not God!

When the dragon sees he is thrown down to the earth he persecutes the woman, [Israel], but she finds a place in the wilderness where she is "nourished for a time, and times and half a time, [3½ years], from the presence of the serpent," (Rev.12:13&14). Enraged with the woman he will then go off to "make war with the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus [Christians]", (Rev.12:17). Daniel also saw "the horn was waging war with the saints [Christians] and overpowering them... and they will be given into his hands for a time, and times and half a time [3½ years]", (Dan.7:21&25).

Revelation Chapter 13 explains that Satan gives his "power and his throne and great authority" to the "beast... having ten horns and seven heads," and the whole world, being amazed, worships the dragon, and the 'beast' to whom he has given his authority, (Rev.13:2-4). The 'beast' will speak arrogant words and blasphemies, and be given "authority to act for forty two months," [3½ years]. He will make war with "the saints," (v.7), "...and all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose name has not been written in the book of life of the lamb, slain from the foundation of the world," (v.8). "Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints," (v.10). So we find the time of the 'great tribulation' being described for us, one of tribulation and persecution of the saints, the true Church, but a time in which she will be victorious.

### **The 'Beast' and the 'False Prophet'**

During the 'great tribulation' another beast will arise at the time of the first beast, one with "two horns like a lamb." He speaks "as a dragon" and "exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence," making "the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast," (Rev.13:11&12). He "deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast," (v.14). He gives "breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed," (v.15). "He causes all... to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, so that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name," (v.16&17). "His number is 666," (v.18). This second beast is called the "false prophet," (Rev.16:13), "who performed the signs in the beast's presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast, and those who had worshipped his image," (Rev.19:20).

In Chapter 14 an angel declares, "If any one worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he will drink of the wine of the wrath of God.' Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and the faith in Jesus," (Rev.14:9-12). This scripture places this conflict clearly before the 'wrath of God'.

That this happens in the time of 'great tribulation', before the 'wrath of God', is confirmed by the fact that the "first resurrection" includes those "who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand," (Rev.20:4&5). This is why a voice from heaven is heard in Chapter 14 saying, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow with them,'" (Rev.14:13).

Chapter 14, however, describes events which link the time of 'great tribulation' and the 'wrath of God', indicating once more the 'interlude', the "silence in heaven for about half an hour", (Rev.8:1), which we found in

Chapters 7 and 8. The sequence of events as described in earlier Chapters is being repeated. Once again the saints are seen in heaven, this time represented by 144,000 "who had been [past tense] purchased from the earth... the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes... purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb," (Rev.14:3-5). These are not the same 144,000 of Chapter 7, who represent Israel, but that perfect number, [not an exact number], who represent those who come from the time of 'great tribulation', those who have not been defiled by the religious whore of Babylon, or her daughters, keeping "themselves chaste," (Rev.14:4).

In this Chapter we read of the warning not to "worship the beast", telling us that those who do "will drink of the wine of the wrath of God," (Rev.14:9&10). This warning is clearly for the saints: "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God, and their faith in Jesus," (v.12), because what follows indicates the different outcome for those who listen to the "eternal gospel" preached to "every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people," (v.6), and those who do not. We subsequently read of the 'last harvest' being reaped, as the "hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe," (v.15). But we are also told this initiates the "wine press of the wrath of God", which awaits those not part of this harvest, (v.18-20). Again, the correct division of this Scripture is essential to place these events in their correct order, as they are guaranteed to be in the correct time sequence in the text. Whichever tense the translators have used in the Bible version we read can effect our understanding of these end-time events, and in what order they come, and we need to be aware of this.

A second angel declares "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality," (v.8); Babylon's first mention.

Another angel declares to Him who is "Sitting on the cloud, one like the Son of Man [Jesus] having a golden crown upon His head and a sharp sickle in His hand... 'Put in your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe,'" (v.15). This is referring to the 'first resurrection and catching away of the saints', the culmination of this last great harvest. This immediately precedes another angel declaring, "Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the vine of the earth and throw them in to the great wine press of the wrath of God," (v.18&19).

And so we see that the 'wrath of God' is outlined once more in Chapters 15 and 16, repeating that which was of the "seven trumpets," (Rev.8:1), described in earlier Chapters. This time the 'wrath of God' is portrayed by a vision of "seven angels" who have "seven plagues, the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished," (Rev.15:1). This "sign in heaven", as the vision of the "seven angels" with the "seven plagues" is described, is concurrent with John seeing "those who had [past tense] come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name," in heaven "holding harps of God", (v.2). This scripture concurs with there being a time of 'great tribulation', during which the 'beast' is in conflict with 'the saints', before the separate time when 'God will pour forth His wrath', for John then sees the seven angels given "seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God," (v.7), after the saints are in heaven.

### **Seven Golden Bowls Full of the Wrath of God**

As the "seven bowls of wrath" are poured out in Revelation Chapter 16 the first "became a loathsome and malignant sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and had worshipped his image," (Rev.16:2).

The second bowl of wrath causes the sea to become "blood, like that of a dead man and every living thing in the sea died," (v.3).

The third causes the "the rivers and the springs of water" to become "blood," the angel and the waters saying, "Righteous art Thou... because Thou didst judge these things, because they poured out [past tense] the blood of the saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it," (v.4-6).

The fourth bowl is poured out upon "the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire..." who "blasphemed the Name of God, who has power over these plagues, and they did not repent," (v.8&9).

The fifth bowl is poured out upon the "throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened and they gnawed their tongues because of pain... but they did not repent of their deeds," (v.11).

The sixth angel pours forth his bowl of wrath upon "the river Euphrates," mirroring the sixth blast of the trumpet in Chapter 9, which also refers to the river Euphrates, (Rev.9:13-19), so that "its water was dried up, that

the way might be prepared for the kings of the east," (v.12), two hundred million horsemen according to Chapter 9, (Rev.9:16). Do they come from China?

Before the seventh bowl is poured forth, John sees the "kings of the whole world gathered together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty... to the place which in Hebrew is called 'Har-Magedon,' [Armageddon]." This war does not take place at "Har-Magedon" but "outside the city", [Jerusalem], as the prophet Zechariah foretells: "I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle," (Zech14:2), just before Jesus returns to the earth with the "holy ones" [saints], (v.4) . This battle takes place when the seventh bowl is poured forth, as we will see when we consider Revelation Chapter 19. So, this battle will precede the second coming of the Lord to the earth, "a unique day which is known to the Lord," according to the Prophet, Zechariah, (Zech.14:7), agreeing with the interjection in Revelation Chapter 16: "Behold, I am coming like a thief," (Rev.16:15).

The seventh angel pours out his bowl upon the air, bringing a "plague of hail ...huge hailstones about one hundred pounds each," causing men to blaspheme, (Rev.16:21), and a voice from the throne says, "It is done!" (v.17). This coincides with a "a great earthquake such as there has not been since man came upon the earth" splitting Jerusalem in "three parts" (v.18&19), as also prophesied by Zechariah, who speaks of "the Mount of Olives... split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south," (Zech.14:4).

Before concluding the 'Revelation', Chapters 17 and 18 describe 'Babylon the Great,' who "was remembered before God to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath," (Rev.16:19).

### **The Great Harlot - Babylon the Great**

Chapter 17 announces the "judgement of the great harlot," (Rev.17:1), and provides the information and interpretation that the reader needs to understand the picture language being used in this and other Chapters. She is a "woman sitting on a scarlet beast..." the beast "having seven heads and ten horns," (v.3). "Those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast," (v.8). We are told of the seven kings who are represented by the seven heads of the beast, "five have fallen, one is, the other is not yet come... and the beast is himself an eighth, and is of the seven." "The ten horns" are also "ten kings" who "receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour," having "one purpose,.. they give their power and authority to the beast," (Rev.17:12&13).

### **'Three' Major Players**

Many confuse the three major players described in Revelation Chapter 17, the 'beast,' the 'false prophet,' and the 'harlot - Mystery Babylon,' as they endeavour to understand just who these represent in reality. For example, the head of the religious harlot system cannot also be the 'beast,' an amazingly common error, because the harlot rides on the back of the 'beast'. The man known as 'beast', who the whole world will worship, must be a different personality to the man who heads up the 'harlot religious system'. Although many might 'see' other interpretations in 'type', these do not allow for the fulfilment of all that is written regarding the end-time events unless these three key figures are recognised.

The fate of the 'harlot' is in the hands of the 'beast' for "the ten horns... and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose," (Rev.17:16&17). Before her judgement, a voice is heard from heaven saying, "Come out of her My people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues, for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities... for this reason, in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire," (v.4-8).

This separation of the saints from this religious harlot must take place before, and during the 'great tribulation', when, in the time of "harvest... the end of the age... the Son of Man will gather out of His Kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness," separating the "tares" sown "among the wheat", which are allowed to "grow together until the time of harvest," (Matt.13:24-30 and 36-43). The tares are gathered up and bound into bundles to be burnt. This 'burning' is not, necessarily, carried out immediately, the very separation enabling the "righteous to shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father," (v.43). The fate of the tares, as part of the harlot, is to be "burned up with fire," a judgement carried out by the beast, (Rev.17:16&18:8). The call to "Come out of her My people" has always been part of the will of God for



His people, that they should "Come out from their [unbelievers] midst and be separate", just as Paul exhorted the believers in Corinth to do, (2Cor.6:14-18). But we see there is a full separation of tares and wheat which takes place at the end of the age before the judgement of the great harlot, and this we will discuss later.

It is often speculated that the Pope is 'the Antichrist', 'the Beast' who all who "dwell on the earth will worship," but it will be seen that he cannot be, because he is the 'head' of the harlot, the false religious system, who rides on the back of the seven headed beast. These are separate personalities.

We are told the "great harlot" has caused all who "dwell on the earth to be made drunk with the wine of her immorality," (Rev.17:2). It can be confusing to note that in the religious system, the "great harlot", "the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth," is found, (Rev.18:24), sharing the guilt are the "Scribes and Pharisees", upon whom, according to Jesus, fell the "guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, who was murdered between the temple and the altar," (Matt.23:29-35). By the events which are described in the Book of Revelation, the 'Beast' will share in this same guilt of the shedding of the innocent blood of the saints. Just how this 'blood guilt' falls upon any these differing groups may be difficult for us to understand, but clearly it can.

### **World-wide Economic Disaster**

We see that when "Babylon, the great city" is "thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer," then "the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more," (v.21&11). It seems that the judgement of the harlot will coincide with economic disaster. Is this because the beast will have to remove the harlot before the whole world will worship him, and the circumstances will also have to be created so that no one will be able to buy or sell without his mark? This would suggest he brings down the economic system of the world at this same time. Again, many look for an imminent economic collapse without our even having entered the time of 'great tribulation'. However, a collapse on the unprecedented scale of the one described can only occur when the "ten horns, and the beast... will hate the harlot and... make her desolate... and will burn her up with fire" (Rev.17:16).

Chapter 19 returns again to the scene in heaven where the "great multitude", are, and where "the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready, and it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints," (Rev.19:1,6&7). It is then that the saints, described as "the armies which are in heaven," wearing "fine linen, white and clean," and riding "white horses", follow Jesus on His white horse coming to "judge and wage war." From Jesus' mouth "comes a sharp sword, so that with it He might smite the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron... On His robe is written King of kings and Lord of lords," (v.11-16).

Unlike Jesus' coming on the clouds 3½ years earlier with His angels, this time He comes with the saints to the earth, just as Zechariah prophesied: "Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones [saints] with Him," (Zech.14:5), and "His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives," (v.4).

Jesus' coming to the earth completes the time of the 'wrath of God' as it is His return to the earth which sees a culmination of God's 'wrath' with Jesus treading "the wine press of the fierce wrath of God," (Rev.19:16), the third woe. As the "beast and the kings of the earth and their armies are assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army," (v.19), the, so called, battle of Armageddon begins. In a final act of 'wrath' we see the "beast... seized, and with him the false prophet... these two... thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone, and the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh," (v.20&21). Thus, we see the outcome for the 'Beast' described in the Book of Revelation which we can also read about in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians: "the lawless one... whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to an end by the brightness of His coming," (2Thess.2:8).

### **The Millennial Reign of Jesus upon the Earth**

Chapter 20 sees an angel come down from heaven "having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand." He binds Satan and throws him into the abyss, shutting and sealing it over him "for a thousand years," (v.1-3). The Millennial reign of Christ upon the earth has begun!

We are told that after the thousand years Satan will be "released for a short time," but meanwhile he cannot "deceive the nations any longer," (v.3).

Reigning with Christ will be those who are part of the "first resurrection". This includes those "beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and because of the Word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand," (Rev.20:4-6). Perhaps this Scripture more than any other makes it very clear that the 'first resurrection', and concurrent 'catching away of the saints,' [often referred to as the 'Rapture'], occurs after the 'great tribulation', during which the 'beast' is first revealed upon the earth, making it quite clear that the Church will be on earth during the 'great tribulation'.

The "second death", we are told, will have no power over these who partake in the "first resurrection," (v.5). They will already have their immortal bodies.

Little is said about the Millennial reign of Christ upon the earth in the book of Revelation except that when the thousand years is over "Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations" once more, gathering them together for another war, (Rev.20:7&8). This war takes place on the "broad plain of the earth surrounding the camp of the saints and the beloved city, [Jerusalem]," (v.9).

This area, containing the temple which will stand in Jerusalem during the thousand year reign of Jesus as King of the whole earth, is described in Ezekiel, Chapters 40 to 48. The land promised to Abraham, "from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates," (Gen.15:18), is divided between the twelve tribes of Israel, but with "the remainder for the Prince [Jesus] with the holy allotment and the sanctuary of the house... in the middle of it," (Ez.48:21).

This war is short lived, it seems, as "fire comes down from heaven" and devours those who are gathered. Satan is now "thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also," (Rev.20:10).

### **A New Heaven and a New Earth**

We are told that after the thousand year reign of Christ "no place is found for earth and heaven," (Rev.20:11), "the first heaven and the first earth" passing "away," (Rev.21:1). Peter tells us that "the present heavens and earth, by His Word, are being preserved for fire," in the "day of the Lord which will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up," (2Pet.3:7-10). We can see that the 'day of the Lord,' beginning with 'the wrath of God', which came "as a thief," (1Thess.5:4&5, 2Pet.3:10, and Rev.16:15), is actually one thousand years long, for it is at the end of the thousand years that this judgement comes, as Peter explains, for "with the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," (2Pet.3:8).

### **The Great White Throne Judgement**

John was shown the "Great White Throne and Him who sits upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away," (Rev.20:11). Jesus Himself told of this time of judgement, explaining there would be a "resurrection of life" and for "those who committed evil deeds... a resurrection of judgement," (John 5:29).

John saw that taking part in this "resurrection of judgement" were all those who have died from the very beginning of the earth who were not part of the 'first resurrection', plus all who have died during Jesus' thousand year reign: "the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened, and another book was opened which is of life, and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds," (Rev.20:12). "The sea... and Death and Hades gave up their dead," for this judgement, (v.13), before "Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire," which "is the second death," (v.14), as was anyone whose name "was not found written in the book of life", (v.15). "Blessed and holy is the one who had a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power," (Rev.20:6). Their judgement is already complete..

### **The Holy City, the New Jerusalem**

In Chapter 21 John sees the new heaven and new earth, and "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband," (Rev.21:2). This is the consum-

mation of the ages, this City prepared for all those who sought this better resurrection. It has "no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb," (v.23).

Now has come the time which Paul spoke of, "the end, when Jesus delivers up the Kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power," having reigned "until He put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death," (1Cor.15:25&26).

David had prophesied of God the Father saying of His Son, "Sit at My right hand until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet," (Ps.110:1 and Heb.1:13). Now this is fulfilled, when the Father has "put all things in subjection under His feet... and when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all," (1Cor.15:27&28).

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## CHAPTER SIX

### THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

As we fast approach the end of this age, the need for the Body of Christ to have discernment has never been greater, for we are told in Scripture that "in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons," (1Tim.4:1). The picture that Jesus painted of the time just before His return, is one where "many will come in Jesus' [My] Name saying, [quite rightly], 'I am [Jesus is] the Christ,' and will mislead many," (Matt.24:5). They are saying the right things yet they still mislead! This is a time which appears to be already upon us.

Jesus also said that it was at the time of tribulation that "many will fall away and will betray one another, and many false prophets will arise and will mislead many," (Matt.24:10&11). Jesus forewarned us that "false Christs and false Prophets would arise and would show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect," (Matt.24:24). Jesus also told us to "Take heed that you be not misled for many will come in My Name saying, 'The time is at hand,'" (Luke 21:8). Jesus forewarned us that we would hear of "wars and disturbances," but told us, "do not be terrified, for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately," (Luke 21:9). We must, therefore, expect all of this, for when these "things" are seen, which must first "begin to take place," there will be "dismay among nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." It was then that Jesus told us to "straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." All of these things have to happen before we see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory," (Luke 21:8, 21-28). All of this is a contrary picture to the one upheld by those who expect Jesus to return at any moment.

So, Jesus tells us to be aware of the times we are in, exhorting us to "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. Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognise that the Kingdom of God is near," (Luke 21:29-31). Jesus exhorts us, individually, to be "on the alert" so this day does not come "as a trap," (v.36&34), not speaking of the possible imminent coming of the Lord, but of the difficult times which will accompany the 'great tribulation', after which time the 'wrath of God' will come upon the world "as a thief".

Jesus, therefore, warns us, "Be on your guard, that your hearts may not be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness, and the worries of life... but keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man," (Luke 21:36). Again, some suggest this 'escape' refers to being counted worthy to be part of the 'catching away of the saints and first resurrection' before the 'great tribulation', rather than from the 'wrath of God', confusing these two different times.

'Escape,' in Greek, is 'Ekpheugô' which means 'to flee out of a place', and, according to Vines Dictionary of Bible Words, is suggested to be a reference to our escape from "the judgements of God," [which is the 'wrath of God']. This refers to Paul's letter to the Church in Thessalonica, where he says, "While they are saying, 'Peace and Safety' then destruction [God's wrath] will come upon them suddenly... and they shall not escape," (1Thess.5:3). It is at this time, when they will be talking of Peace and Safety, that the beast will be seen as a 'saviour' for the world, but it precedes the 'wrath of God', not the 'great tribulation'. This Scripture

does not refer to present aspirations for Peace, which already abound with little real fruit. Revelation 6:17 tells us that when this time of God's judgement comes upon the earth the "kings of the earth" will say "...the great day of their [God the Father, and the Lamb's] wrath has come and who is able to stand?" [See Luke 21:36 quoted above.]

### **Seeking the Truth**

Correctly placing these prophesied events in their right time-sequence is not easy. From these Scriptures from Matthew's and Luke's Gospels it can be seen how difficult it can sometimes be to correctly divide Truth. So how is it to be done?

The different beliefs found amongst those who say they belong to Jesus have never been so diversified. Varying beliefs abound amongst those who say they are Christians, and even amongst those who would share a similar testimony of 'new birth' and 'baptism in the Spirit'. Each believes they hold the Truth, yet each holds differing truths. Something is clearly amiss!

The cry of some is that we have to look to the 'Word' to ensure we are in the Truth, and that the Bible is the final authority in judging and discerning Truth. Unfortunately this does not help us if we are faced with differing interpretations of just what Scripture says. Who is right?

Some would say that we must get confirmation of what is true from, so called, 'leaders', but this does not help us if we are following 'leaders' who are giving false teaching!

Peter tells us, "there will... be false teachers amongst you who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them... and because of them the way of Truth would be maligned." Peter tells us that, "in greed they will exploit you with false words," (2Pet.2:1-3). In this end-time hour it is, therefore, essential to know how to discern the Truth.

### **How Do We Find Truth?**

Scripture does tell us the way to find Truth, but amazingly it is a way that is not upheld by many. Jesus explained to His disciples that "The Spirit of Truth... will guide you into ALL Truth," (John 16:13), and would "teach you ALL things," (John 14:25). It is, therefore, essential for each of us to look to the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us to be our personal Teacher, to enable us to discern and understand the written word of Scripture which He brought forth.

When Jesus was raised from the dead He breathed on the disciples saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit," (John 20:22). Luke, telling us of this incident, says that Jesus "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," (Luke 24:45), for their spiritual understanding could not come other than by the Holy Spirit. This is the same for all believers. Once we forget this, we are liable to be drawn away from the Truth. This has been a failing of the Church since its infancy. Although the written 'Word' is a "lamp to our feet and a light to our path," unless the Holy Spirit who brought forth the Scriptures turns on that light it will not be lit. It is not Scripture itself which brings enlightenment but the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will, therefore, never contradict Scripture as "ALL Scripture is inspired by God," (2Tim.3:16). This subtle difference is crucial for us to recognise.

The apostle John told the early Church, "It is the last hour and just as you heard that Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen," (1 John 2:18). John explained that these antichrists "went out from us," going out from amongst the Church! (v.19). He then goes on to point to the safeguard we have been given which enables us to be victorious against these wrong spirits. It is the only defence which Scripture points to, but it is all sufficient. It is the "anointing" within (v.20&27).

### **Greater is He that is in Us**

The letters of John are the only Scriptures that actually use the word 'antichrist', the title which is commonly used for the "man of sin", (2Thess.2:3). With John's warning to the Church, is also given the answer as to how we are to combat this wrong spirit.

John tells us, "you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all things," (v.20). He explains, "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 not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you are to abide in Him," (v.27).

John goes on to tell us that, [individually], we are not to "believe every spirit," but "test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone into the world." John encourages us by stating, "you are from God, little children, and have overcome [these spirits] because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world," (1 John 4:1-4).

Scripture does not tell us to look for a corporate operation of this testing, or even an operation via a, so called, leadership, but tells us this overcoming power belongs to us ALL, and is for each of us to operate in, [individually], for all true believers have the Greater One in them.

This is the marvellous reality of the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus, a covenant promised to Israel of old, which we, the Church, have already come into, and of which Jeremiah prophesied, saying, "they will not teach everyone his fellow citizen and every one his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest," (Heb.8:8-12 and Jer.31:31-34). Thus, we can understand Jesus' exhortation, "Do not be called Rabbi, [Teacher], for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers," (Matt.23:8).

### **The Place of Scripture**

Paul tells Timothy that "all Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work," (2Tim.3:16&17). However, we need to realise that "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of ones own interpretation, for no prophecy was made by act of human will, but men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God," (2Pet.1:20-21). Peter is emphasising that although the prophetic word, made more certain by their [the apostles] eyewitness testimony, is as "a lamp shining in a dark place." The Holy Spirit needs to be acknowledged as the author of the Scriptures and we are not to interpret the Scripture ourselves, (see 2Pet.1:16-21).

This same understanding is brought forth by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, who explains the New Covenant is "not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life," (2Cor.3:6).

This does not mean that the 'Word' is not important. The very opposite is the case, for without the "sincere milk of the word" we do not grow and we remain "babes in Christ," (1Cor.3:1-3 and 1Pet.2:2). To stray from the 'Word' results in us straying into error, but nevertheless, of itself, and without the revelation of it by the Holy Spirit, we are not able to "abide in the Word" and, therefore, cannot come to "know the Truth," (John 8:31&32).

### **What about Teachers?**

We know from Scripture that Jesus has given 'gifts' to the Church, including the ministry of 'teachers', amongst others: when Jesus ascended "far above the heavens, He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ," (Eph.4:10-12). Yet, Jesus said, "Call no man Rabbi" [Teacher], (Matt.23:8). These Scriptures seem contradictory unless one understands that when a brother teaches, directly or through books or tapes, what he says is of no use unless the Holy Spirit takes what is said and brings revelation and spiritual understanding to our hearts. We need to understand that the One who reveals Truth, the Teacher, is the Holy Spirit, not any man, even though a man may be used as the channel. We can mentally assimilate what any man teaches, or even what we read in the Bible, but only the Holy Spirit can lead us into all Truth and give spiritual understanding. Whatever we understand with our minds does not, necessarily, mean we spiritually understand it.

Those who have a gifting as a teacher need to beware lest they think their brethren cannot receive spiritual understanding without them. They are, in fact, only passing on 'revelation' which they themselves have been given by the Holy Spirit. Once the Holy Spirit is not recognised as essential for bringing forth 'revelation' and 'spiritual understanding' those who teach can move into false teaching and the area of 'mental assent.' Intellectual agreement to what Scripture says is worth little in comparison with having true spiritual understanding.

The Prayers that Paul prayed for the early Church clearly reinforce this fact that the Holy Spirit is our Teacher on an individual personal basis. Paul prayed for the already 'Spirit filled' believers in Ephesus, that they might be given "a spirit [inner man] of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him [the Father], that the eyes of [their] hearts might be enlightened," (Eph.1:17&18). Paul prayed for the believers at Philippi that their

"love might abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment," to enable them "to approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ," (Phil.1:9-10). For the believers at Colossae Paul asked the Father that they might "be filled with a knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" so they might "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord," (Col.19-12). All of these prayers are asking for an impartation from the Spirit of God, the only source of spiritual wisdom, discernment and understanding.

The Church has been robbed of this personal 'one to one' ministry of the Holy Spirit, and in His place men have built their own structures, upholding the doctrines of men proliferated by mental assent, with the unbeknown agreement of the evil one, albeit done in the Name of Jesus and for the Lord. Much is done for the Lord which He has never asked for!

### **What about Leaders?**

Jesus said, "Do not be called leaders, for One is your Leader, even Christ," (Matt.23:10). Having told us, "you are all brothers," (v.8), Jesus explains, "the greatest among you shall be your servant," (v.11). Jesus taught that we were not to have a situation amongst the brethren where we have 'authority', one over the other, as all worldly structures do: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors'. But not so with you", (Luke22:25-26).

Despite Jesus' teaching, it is commonplace to recognise brothers as 'leaders', and denominational structures are based upon authority being exercised one over another, just as one would find in any worldly organisation. These same leaders may see themselves as 'servant leaders' but they are still 'leaders'. It is wrong. So called 'leaders' exercise authority over those who they consider have been given into their charge. This is not Scriptural. Although Scripture confirms that there are those "who lead," (Rom.12:8), this is descriptive, not a title. These are 'lead sheep' not 'leaders [noun] of the sheep.' Although there are those who have been given to the Church, those who minister [serve] as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, these men are still brothers. They should be upholding Jesus over the flock as the "Only Master and Lord," (Jude 1:4), rather than themselves, helping to ensure that only the will of the Father is being fulfilled in each believers life, or in any corporate gathering.

Likewise, there is a ministry of 'elders', who "the Holy Spirit has made... overseers [bishops] to shepherd the Church of God," but these are still among the flock: "the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers," (Acts 20:28). Again, this difference may seem subtle, but it is nevertheless a very important distinction to make. Once a minister [a servant], steps out from under the Holy Spirits leading and begins to 'minister' [serve] by his own authority, this has to be discerned if one is not to come under 'control'.

We see, therefore, that each believer has to walk in close fellowship with the Holy Spirit. We cannot rely on a vicarious relationship with the Lord through other men, whether we call them 'our' pastor, priest or teacher, or not.

Because so many individual believers are so far from their correct place of "being led by the Spirit of God," the Church is also far from its correct place of having Jesus as its functioning Head. But although this has been a problem within the Church for the past two thousand years we should be encouraged by Jesus' words, when He said, "I will build My Church, and the gates [strategies] of Hades will not overpower it," (Matt.16:18). The Church will be brought back into her correct relationship with her Head, and it seems that there has been a quiet change taking place in recent years, beginning to bring this about.

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## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE TARES AND THE WHEAT**

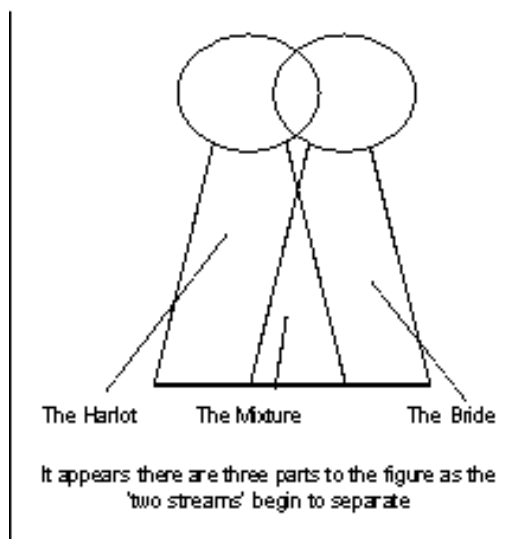
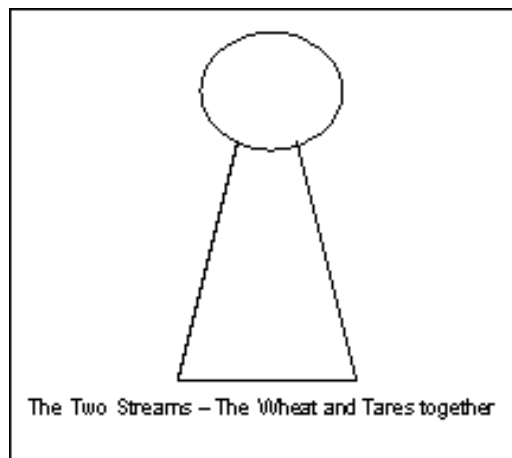
In this Chapter I wish to turn to personal testimony. In December 1992 a brother told us of a 'vision' and 'revelation' he had recently received, and asked if he might share this with us. On January 6th 1993 a few brethren, all involved in the work of the gospel, met with this brother for him to tell us more. He told us how the Holy Spirit had given him a series of visions explaining how the 'Bride' and the 'Harlot' had come into being. He had been shown how man's rebellion against God had created 'Baal Worship', 'Emperor Worship', and 'man's wrong use of God's Law'. He heard a voice saying, "Let's build a system that would be accept-

able to the world." He then saw 'Mystery Babylon' being built as a building comprising of the three previous rebellious systems which the world had seen, with their temples made with hands, their priests, idols, altars and laws. It was a woman; a harlot! He also saw a vision of a bride; who was the bride of Christ, the Church. In the vision, the two women, the bride and the harlot, were superimposed on one another, and with the vision came the revelation that they were currently mixed together. In the vision, however, he saw them beginning to separate! None of us who were gathered that evening, including the brother who shared the vision, realised the full import of what God was telling us. It was not until almost two years later that we began to understand more fully of just what the Lord had been forewarning us, but even then it was difficult to fully grasp.

However, within a few weeks of this vision being shared, two of us, who were at that time National Directors of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International in the UK, and who had gathered on that January evening, found ourselves being told we could not remain as National Directors unless we submitted to a leadership by just one Director, who the other Directors were desiring to be 'leader'. Our exhortation that we be 'led by the Spirit', doing nothing without corporate unity, so that Jesus would remain as our Head, was no longer seen by the majority as a way forward. I do not think the actions of our fellow Directors was fully understood, but I believe the 'headship' of FGBMFI UK was taken from Jesus that day, and we were soon to have our memberships withdrawn as a result of our refusing to submit in this way to a 'man'.

Within weeks we were to learn that at the very same time, within the first month of 1993, Richard Shakarian, son of Demos Shakarian, who the Lord had used to bring forth this world-wide 'Fellowship', had been made the legal head of FGBMF International in the USA, the 'International' effectively removing Jesus as its 'Head' also. Something we did not fully understand was happening to us!

### The Vision of the 'Two Women'



It was much later that I felt the Lord emphasise to me the significance of the timing of this warning we had been given. I was to realise that December 31st 1992 saw the actual beginning of the end of the world system as it had previously existed, as the European Union took from its member countries part of their previous sovereignty to create a new unified trading block with its own government already in place. Something of great spiritual significance was beginning to effect the whole world.

It was not until December 1994 that I first wanted to write down what I was beginning to understand. As I reflected on the change and subsequent happenings of late 1992 and early 1993, the Lord, I believe, was telling me to write about an unfolding revelation within my heart about the 'tares and the wheat', (Matt.13:24-30 and 37-43). At that time I received correspondence from one of the very first Directors of FGBMFI, one who had been used by the Lord, along with Demos Shakarian, in those first days of that 'Fellowship'. This brother had resigned in the 1960's after several years of seeing the 'Fellowship' moving away from being led of the Lord. One document he enclosed stirred my spirit very much. This was a copy of a letter sent to a brother in Alaska identifying that there had always been 'two women', 'two mothers', and 'two cities', making up what was of God. The letter described Abraham's house with Sarah and Hagar living together, (Gen.16), and it paralleled the passages in Revelation 12 and 17, which speak of two women representing the true and false Church. I was aware that even the early Church had two streams flowing together, because John refers to the spirits of antichrist going out from among them, (1 John 2:18-19). This letter explained that the spirit of religion had always plagued mankind, and had always sought to walk with those who were truly spiritual. My correspondent explained that in hundreds of corporate meetings, he had never experienced 'near perfect values' being manifested, other than for very brief moments, or periods. He explained that he had sought God for the answer to this universal dilemma caused by these two streams flowing together, and commented that "in the last two years" he had observed a "hidden remnant" who were a "being people" spread all over the world amongst his contacts. He described that he was beginning to see "a sleeping giant, this Gulliver, beginning to breathe from a new wind of the Spirit." The awesomeness of this confirmation effected me very much, for this brother was identifying the very thing that the Lord was telling me to write about. He was also confirming its timing - late 1992 and early 1993.

This timely letter was describing the reality of a separation of tares and wheat which had begun two years before, a 'revelation' which had been part of my very experience. I also realised that this conformed to Scripture if this was indeed the beginning of the separation of 'tares' from 'among the wheat,' as described in the parable of the 'tares of the field', (Matt.13:24-30 and 37-43).

### **The Parable of the Tares of the Field**

The parable of the 'tares of the field' explains that these 'two streams' cannot be separated until the time of the end. Jesus explained that it is at the "end of the age" that the wheat and the tares will be separated. The prophetic vision and revelation, we had been given in early 1993, could ONLY refer to this very time that Jesus spoke of through the parables of the 'Tares and Wheat', and the 'Dragnet,' (Matt.13:47-52). There is no other separation.

In both parables Jesus states that they apply to the "end of the age," (v.39&49). In one parable the "stumbling blocks" are gathered "out of His Kingdom," and in the other, "the wicked from among the righteous," (v.41&49). This is, therefore, not the 'the catching away of the saints,' who will, at that time be taken out from among the wicked, nor is it the end of the world; it is the end of the age. This is a separation of those who say they belong to the Kingdom from those who actually do, and Jesus tells us that this is "in the time of harvest," (v.30&39), the "end of the age".

Before the end of this age, and before the return of the Lord, we find another Scripture where there is a separation of those who belong to the Lord and those who do not, which again suggests God's people are mixed together with false believers and must be separated. This end-time event is found in Revelation Chapter 18. When the sins of 'Babylon the great' have "piled up as high as heaven," (v.5), a voice is heard from heaven saying, "Come out of her My people, that you might not participate in her sins and that you might not receive of her plagues," (v.4). We see that the fate of the 'tares', 'the bad fish', and 'city of Babylon', is the same, to be "burned up with fire," (Rev.18:8, Matt.13:30&50). This 'burning', although it leads to people being cast into the lake of Fire, consists, initially, of a judgement which is carried out by the "ten horns and the beast..", God having "put it in their hearts to execute His purpose," (Rev.17:16&17). The 'beast' "will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire." We are told "In one day her plagues will come, pestilence and famine and she will be burned up with fire," (Rev.17:16 and 18:8).



Many Christians have an end-time belief that has the Body of Christ being 'caught away' before the emergence of the 'beast,' his 'mark,' and the tribulation of the saints, the 'great tribulation'. They, therefore, maintain that any separation of tares and wheat, and judgement carried out at the hands of the 'beast,' is nothing to do with current believers, but concerns so called, 'tribulation saints', a separate body of believers. It is very necessary, therefore, to understand from Rev.20:4&5, that the "first resurrection," which is concurrent with the "catching away of the saints," includes those who have "not worshipped the beast or his image," and have "not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand", as previously explained.

It seemed that the countdown to the end of the age had begun in late 1992, with the 'Bride' and the 'Harlot' beginning to separate. As the 'two streams' were beginning to separate it was as though there were three, one completely false, one a mixture and the other being free. In reality, it has seemed as if only a few have broken free, but I have come to realise that in due course, as the gospel of the Kingdom is preached in the whole world, during the forthcoming time of 'great tribulation', more will break free. This will also be the time when many will be brought into the Kingdom, "a multitude which no one can count from every nation, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues," (Rev.7:9). This, the end-time harvest, will be gathered before the Lord returns.

### Looking Closer at These Parables

"The Kingdom of God may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men were sleeping his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also, and the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? 'How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' And the slaves said to him, 'Do you want us then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No. 'Lest while you are gathering up the tares you may root up the wheat with them. 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to be burnt, but gather the wheat into my barn,'"' (Matt.13:24-30).

"And His disciples came to Him [Jesus] saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' And He answered them and said, 'The One who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as to the good seed, these are the sons of the Kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 'Therefore, just as the tares are gathered up and with fire are consumed, so shall it be at the end of the age. 'The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 'Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father,'" (Matt.13:36-43).

"Again, the Kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled they drew it up on the beach and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad fish they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," (Matt.13:47-50).

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When we try to understand parables, and scripture which uses picture language, we can often make the mistake of reading too much into the characters or picture language used. New Testament parables often draw on Old Testament symbolism, and this symbolic meaning is often very useful to being able to understand them. We must not, however, read more into the symbolism than we should. If we do, rather than improving our understanding, we can end up with an incorrect interpretation.

For example, in the parable of the 'ten virgins', (Matt.25:1-8), we can miss the message of the story if we assume it does not refer to us, the Church, because we realise we are the 'bride of Christ', and, therefore, must take the role of the 'bride' in the story, and not the virgins. Obviously we do not have the same problem when the characters and objects of a story are not used elsewhere in Scripture with other meanings. Another example is trying to understand 'what is' and 'who are' the City of God. Again, we can get confused by reading too much into the picture language being used. The City of God, the New Jerusalem, is described as the

'bride', which is us, (Heb.12:22 and Rev.21:10), as well as our 'mother', (Gal.4:26). Strict literal interpretation is not always adequate.

When we try to understand the parable of the 'tares of the field' we, therefore, need to take care when we try to interpret the picture language being used. Fortunately we have the parable of the 'dragnet cast into the sea', which describes the same end-time event, to assist us in correctly understanding the parable of the 'tares of the field'. These two parables need to be compared to ensure they are correctly understood.

The 'seed', which Jesus tells us represents the 'sons of the Kingdom', must not be confused, either in its nature, or in any other way, with the 'word' which is represented elsewhere as "seed... which is incorruptible," (Matt.13:3-9 and 1Pet.1:23). Because the angels will gather the wicked from among the righteous, out of His Kingdom, it can be difficult to come to terms with the reality that those who represent the Kingdom are in fact a 'mixture'! We may even ask the question, "Can tares become wheat, and wheat become tares, teachers become false teachers, prophets become false prophets; can true believers fall away?" It is necessary for each of us to apply the test which Paul directed towards the believers at Corinth: "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves. Or do you not recognise this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail the test!" (2Cor.13:5).

That it is the angels who do the separating suggests this is a spiritual separation, certainly something we must not try to do ourselves. The involvement of the angels, however, can confuse us into thinking that this parable is referring to the Lord coming on the clouds with His angels who will gather His elect out of the world, from one end of the sky to the other. Jesus explains, however, that the 'world' is the 'field.' [The 'field' being made up of tares and wheat sown in soil - three elements.] The angels, in the parable, gather the wicked "out of His Kingdom", not out of the world, unlike the 'Second Coming' when the angels gather the righteous from amongst the wicked - out of the world. Some, who realise this difference, think the parable does not, therefore, refer to the Church, forgetting that Jesus is only referring to the 'sons of the Kingdom', who are the Church, being in the world but not of it.

Through the parable we are told that we must NOT uproot the tares from among the wheat. This means that if the tares represented false religions and cults we, the Church, would be wrong speaking out against, and rescuing people from, the likes of Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. The tares must therefore represent people who outwardly look like the Church but are not! To distinguish exactly who should be classed as tares is very difficult, because there are false cults and, so called, 'Christian' religious groups that some of the Body of Christ might speak out against, whilst others might accept. Many might identify certain groups as possible tares without discerning that within any group or denomination there have always been 'two cities', 'two women', and 'two streams flowing together'. This has been so, within the Church, for the last 2000 years, and was even the case before then, in whatever was of God. This was what God seemed to be confirming, even explaining, to me.

When I first came to write about this, the letter I received at that time, from my brother in America, described these 'two women', 'two mothers', in Abraham's home. Sarah, he pointed out, made the mistake of trying to ensure God's word be fulfilled by having Hagar bear Abraham's child. He explained that Man taking from God, what is God's purpose and 'fixing' it for Him, is the root of 'dual creations'. The result for Abraham was many years spent with two women in the same house, both claiming to be his wife, whilst in constant disagreement, the fruit of which can still be seen today.

Paul explains what these 'two woman', 'two mothers', and 'two cities', are, in his letter to the Church in Galatia: "Abraham had two sons, one by the bond woman and one by the free woman... The son by the bond woman was born according to the flesh and the son of the free woman through the promise," (Gal.4:22&23). Both of these women are mothers, and symbolic. Paul explains that "Hagar... corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children," but Sarah corresponds to the "Jerusalem above" which is "free", and who "is our mother," (v.25&26).

The sobering reality is that both of these women lived in the same house, and Abraham's house was the Lord's house!

My correspondent went on to explain further that we can find other scriptural examples of two women living in the same house. The story is repeated with Rachel and Leah in Jacob's house, Hannah and Peninnah in Elkinah's house, and Vashti and Esther in the house of King Ahasuerus. In each we see conflict. Likewise, my correspondent continued, in every corporate undertaking, no matter how 'God-directed', or seemingly

sanctified, this has always been the case. Whereas many would agree that the worst forms of Catholicism, and much of what is represented by the World Council of Churches, are found represented by the 'harlot' of Revelation 17, very few would identify that the ingredients of spiritual death found therein are also to be found in what we would describe as the best of corporate Christian activities and groups.

In the life of Judas Iscariot, the 'son of perdition', we see a foreshadow of the 'spirit of antichrist'. He lived and walked with Jesus and the other disciples, being one of the twelve, ministering in power and authority, healing the sick, casting out demons, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, (Matt.10:5-8). From Psalm 55:12-14, we see that it was "...a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend. We had such sweet fellowship together, walked in the house of God", who betrayed Jesus. Although apparently together they were not flowing in the same 'stream'.

The reality of these 'two streams' flowing together in the same house was evidenced in the early Church. John says, "many antichrists have arisen; they went out from us but they were not really of us," (1John2:18-19). Paul warned the elders at Ephesus that "from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves," (Acts 20:30), and not making disciples of Jesus.

The mixing of "precious and vile," (Jer.15:19), has been repeated over and over again during the intervening centuries. It seems that whatever started out in the Spirit has always ended up in the flesh. Initially, this deterioration is sufficient to blur our clarity of vision and discernment, but eventually the effects are disastrous. It has seemed as though there has been nothing we could do about this, but Jesus foretold of a time when this mixture would be separated out. Is this time now here? Has this separation begun?

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**A Comparison of the Parables**

**of the 'Tares of the Field' and the 'Dragnet'**

(Both Parables apply to the End of the Age)

Matt.13:24-30 & 36-43

Matt.13:47-50

The Kingdom of Heaven is like:-

**A man who sowed  
good seed in his field**

**or**

**A dragnet**

The Field  
= Soil  
= unbelievers

is the World is the  
.....

The Sea  
= Water  
= unbelievers

There is gathered :-

From the Field  
His Kingdom

=

From the Sea  
The Dragnet

Out of which are separated :-

**Tares and Wheat**

**Good and Bad Fish**

The separation is :-

Out of His Kingdom  
(NB. Not from the Field)

From among the righteous  
(NB. From the Dragnet not from the Sea)

**Tares**

=

**Bad Fish**

(Stumbling blocks and those  
who commit lawlessness)

Gathered :-

Gathered - into bundles

Gathered - to be thrown away

**Cast into the furnace  
of fire**

**Cast into the furnace  
of fire**

**The Wheat** -

**NOT when The Lord Returns  
to catch away the saints**

- **The Good Fish  
remain**

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### OVERCOMING AND BEING OVERCOME

As we consider the role of the Body of Christ, the Church, during the forthcoming time of 'great tribulation', the last 'contest of the righteous', it may be difficult to understand the paradox of the Church overcoming Satan, whilst at the same time being overcome by him. We read in the Book of Revelation that the saints overcome "because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even unto death," (Rev.12:11), whilst at the same time, Satan overcomes them, through the beast, who it is given "to make war with the saints and to overcome them," (Rev.13:7). This is our paradox, the Church 'overcoming' whilst being 'overcome'!

A 'prophetic vision' was received by an evangelist, Tommy Hicks, in 1961. This 'vision' gives us insight into this most amazing time of tribulation which will coincide with the Church's victorious end-time ministry. It is a 'vision' which also conforms with Scripture.

Tommy Hicks was an evangelist in the 1950's. He was the house guest of Demos Shakarian on 26th December 1952, the night that God gave Demos the vision which was to see the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship begin to grow under the Lord's hand. On this same night Tommy Hicks was told by God to go to Argentina to preach the gospel. Something he did a year or so later, after much prayer and preparation.

When Tommy Hicks first arrived in Argentina he went to see if he could meet President Juan Perón. A government official refused Tommy Hicks permission, but as this official walked away Tommy noticed that he had a limp and asked what was wrong. The official explained that he had had terrible pain for many years. Tommy asked if he could pray for him, and subsequently commanded the pain to leave 'In Jesus Name'. The man walked away but suddenly stopped, realising he was healed! He told Tommy Hicks to return twenty four hours later and he could see the President.

When Tommy Hicks had an audience with President Perón, the President told him of a severe skin complaint he suffered from. Tommy Hicks prayed for this too, and Perón was instantly healed! So he gave permission for Tommy Hicks to use one of the large stadiums for his crusade.

It is, supposedly, one of the biggest evangelistic events ever known. Over a period of several weeks more than six and one half million people heard the gospel. Many thousands gave their lives to Jesus. One afternoon, whilst preaching on Peter's shadow, Tommy Hicks' shadow fell across those with severe physical disabilities, those on crutches and in wheelchairs, and even some on stretchers. They were being healed! As they began to shout the whole arena erupted. Many healings accompanied this amazing event.

It was on 25th July 1961 that Tommy Hicks received a 'prophetic vision' of "The Body of Christ and the End-time Ministry". Tommy Hicks went home to be with the Lord many years ago, but I still have contact with a brother who remembers Tommy sharing this vision publicly. This is a transcript of Tommy Hicks telling of this vision and revelation :-

"My message begins, July 25th, about 2.30 in the morning, at Winnipeg, Canada. I had hardly fallen asleep when the vision and the revelation that God gave to me came before me. The vision came three times, exactly in detail, the morning of July 25th, 1961. I was so stirred and so moved by the revelation, that this has changed my complete outlook upon the Body of Christ, and upon the last end-time ministry. The greatest thing that the Church of Jesus Christ - that has ever been given to the Church - lies straight ahead. It is so hard to help men and women to realise and understand the thing that God is trying to give to His people in the end-time.

As the vision appeared to me, after I was asleep, I suddenly found myself at a great high distance. Where I was, I do not know, but as I was looking down upon the earth - suddenly the whole earth came into view - every nation, every kindred, every tongue, came before my sight. From the east and from the west; from the north and the south; and I recognised every country, and many cities that I had been in. And I was almost in fear and trembling as I beheld the sight before me. And at that moment, as the earth came into view, it began to lightning and thunder. As the lightning flashed over the face of the earth, my eyes went downwards. I was facing the north. Suddenly I beheld what looked like a giant - and as I stared and looked at it, I was almost bewildered by the sight. It was so gigantic and so great in stature; his feet seemed to reach to the north pole and his head to the south; its arms were stretched from sea to sea. I could not even begin to understand whether this were a mountain or whether this be a giant. But as I watched it, I suddenly beheld this great giant, I could see it was struggling for life, to even live. But his body was covered with debris from head to foot; and at times this great giant would move its body and act as though it would even raise up at times. And when it did, thousands

of little creatures seemed to run away - hideous looking creatures would run away from this giant - and when he would become calm, they would come back.

All of a sudden this great giant lifted his hand toward the heavens, and then it lifted its other hand; and when it did, these creatures by the thousands seemed to flee way from this giant and go into the darkness, and into the night.

Slowly this great giant began to rise - and as he did, his head and hands went into the clouds. As he arose to his feet he seemed to have cleansed himself from the debris and filth that was upon him, and he began to raise his hands into the heavens as though praising the Lord. And as he raised his hands it was even unto the clouds.

Suddenly, every cloud became silver. The most beautiful silver that I have ever known. As I watched this phenomena, it was so great, I could not even begin to understand what it all meant. I was so stirred as I watched it and cried unto the Lord, and I said, 'Oh, Lord, what is the meaning of this?' And it felt as if I was actually in the Spirit and I could feel the presence of the Lord, even as I was asleep.

And from the clouds, suddenly, there came great drops of liquid light raining down upon the mighty giant, and slowly, slowly, this giant began to melt; began to sink, as it were, into the very earth itself. And as he melted, his whole form seemed to have melted upon the face of the earth. And this great rain began to come down; liquid drops of light, as it were, began to flood the very earth itself. And as I watched this giant that seemed to melt, suddenly it became millions of people over the face of the earth. As I beheld the sight before me, people stood up all over the world. They were lifting their hands and they were praising the Lord.

At that very moment there came a great thunder that seemed to roar from the heavens. I turned my eyes toward the heavens and suddenly I saw a figure in white - glistening white - the most glorious thing I have ever seen in all my life. I did not see the face, but somehow I knew that it was the Lord Jesus Christ. And as He stretched forth His hand - as He did - He would stretch forth His hand upon the peoples and the nations of the world, men and women. As He pointed towards them, this liquid light seemed to flow from His hand into this person and a mighty anointing of God came upon them. And those people began to go forth in the Name of the Lord.

I do not know how long I watched. It seemed it went into days and weeks and months, and I beheld Christ as He continued to stretch forth His hand. But there was a tragedy. There were many people, as He stretched forth His hand, that refused the anointing of God, and the call of God. I saw men and women that I knew, people that I felt that certainly they would receive the call of God, but as He stretched forth His hand toward this one, and toward that one, they simply bowed their heads and began to back away. And to each of those who seemed to bow down and back away, they seemed to go into darkness. Blackness seemed to swallow them everywhere.

I was bewildered as I watched it. But these people that He had anointed - hundreds of thousands of people all over the world - in Africa, Asia, Russia, China, America - all over the world - the anointing of God was upon these people as they went forth in the Name of the Lord. I saw these men and women as they went forth. They were ditch diggers; they were washer women; they were rich men; they were poor men. I saw people who were bound with paralysis and sickness, and blindness and deafness. As the Lord stretched forth His hand to give them the anointing, they became well; they became healed, and they went forth.

And this is the miracle of it. This is the glorious miracle of it; those people would stretch forth their hand exactly as the Lord did, and it seemed that there was this same liquid fire that seemed to be in their hand; as they stretched forth their hand they said, 'According to my word, be thou made whole.'

As these people continued in this mighty end-time ministry, I did not fully realise what it was. And I looked to the Lord and said, 'What is the meaning of this?' And He said, 'This is that, that I will do in the last days. I will restore all that the cankerworm, the palmerworm, the caterpillar - I will restore all that they have destroyed. 'This, My people in the end-time, shall go forth; as a mighty army they will sweep over the face of the earth.'

As I was at a great height, I watched these people as they were going to and fro over the face of the earth. Suddenly there was a man in Africa, and in a moment he was transported in the Spirit of God, and perhaps he was in Russia, or China, or America, or some other place, and vice versa; all over the world these people went. And they came through fire and through pestilence and through famine. Neither fire nor persecution - nothing seemed to stop them.

Angry mobs came to them with swords and with guns, and like Jesus, they passed through the multitude and they could not find them. But they went forth in the Name of the Lord, and everywhere they stretched forth their hand the sick were healed, the blind eyes were opened. There was no long prayer.

And one of the things that seemed - after I had reviewed the vision so many times in my mind; and I thought about it so many times - I never saw a church, and I never saw or heard a denomination; but these people were going in the Name of the Lord of hosts. Hallelujah!

As they marched forward, everything they did as the ministry of Christ, in the end-time. These people were ministering to the multitudes over the face of the earth. Tens of thousands, even millions, seemed to come to the Lord Jesus Christ as these people stood forth and gave the message of the Kingdom - of a coming Kingdom - in this last hour. It was so glorious.

God is going to give to the world a demonstration in this last hour such as the world has never known. These men and women are of all walks of life. Degrees will mean nothing. I saw these workers as they were going forth over the face of the earth. When one would seem to stumble and fall another would come and pick them up. There was no big 'I' and little 'You', but every mountain was brought low and every valley was exalted, and they seemed to have one thing in common; there was divine love that seemed to flow forth from these people as they went together, as they worked together, as they lived together. It was the most glorious thing that I have ever known. Jesus Christ was the theme of their life.

As I watched from the very heaven itself, there were times when great deluges of this liquid light seemed to fall upon great congregations. And that congregation would lift their hands and seemingly praise God for hours and even days as the Spirit of God came upon them. God said, 'I will pour My Spirit upon all flesh,' and that is exactly the thing that God was doing; and to every man and to every woman that received this power and the anointing of God; the miracles of God - there was no ending to it. And then again, as these people were going about the face of the earth, a great persecution seemed to come from every end of the earth.

Suddenly, there was another loud clap of thunder that seemed to resound around the world, and I heard, again, the voice. The voice seemed to speak, 'Now this is My people, this is My beloved bride.' And when the voice spoke, I looked upon the earth and I could see the lakes and the mountains. The graves were opened and people from all over the world; the saints of all ages seemed to be rising. As they rose from the graves, suddenly, all these people came from every direction, and they seemed to be forming again, this gigantic body. As the dead in Christ seemed to be rising first, I could hardly comprehend it. It was so marvellous; it was far beyond anything I could ever dream or think of.

But, as the body suddenly began to form and take shape again, it took shape again in the form of this mighty giant. But this time it was different. It was arrayed in the most beautiful, gorgeous white. It's garments were without spot or wrinkle as the body began to form. And the people of all ages seemed to be gathering into this body, and slowly, slowly, as it began to form up into the heavens, suddenly from the heavens above, the Lord Jesus came - became the Head. And I heard another clap of thunder that said, 'This is My beloved Bride in who I have waited. She will come forth, even tried by fire. This is she that I have loved from the beginning of time.'

As I watched, my eyes suddenly turned to the far north and I saw - seemingly destruction - men and women in anguish and crying out, and buildings in destruction. Then I heard again the fourth voice that said, 'Now is My wrath being poured forth upon the face of the earth.' From the ends of the whole world the wrath of God seemed to be poured out and it seemed that there were great vials of God's wrath being poured out upon the face of the earth. I can remember it as though it happened a moment ago. I shook and trembled as I beheld the awful sight of seeing cities, and whole nations, going down to destruction. I could hear the weeping and the wailing. I could hear people crying. They seemed to cry as they went into caves, but the caves and the mountains opened up. They leaped into water, but the water would not drown them. There was nothing that seemingly could destroy them. They were wanting to take their life but they could not take it.

Then again, I turned my eyes unto the Body, arrayed in the beautiful white garment. Slowly, slowly, it began to rise from the earth. As it did, I awoke. I had seen the end-time ministry; the last hour. Again on July 27, at 2.20 in the morning, the same revelation; the same vision, came exactly as it did before.

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This vision pertains to the time of 'great tribulation', describing the Church's ministry during this period, and finishes as God's wrath begins to be poured out, just as the Church is caught up to be with the Lord. Presently, it seems we are in that time just before the 'giant' suddenly begins to break free; as the chains come off. The debris and demons, being the spirits of religion and antichrist, amongst others, which have ensnared the Body of Christ for the last 2000 years, are soon to go. Corresponding to the vision of 'the separation of Harlot and Bride', we see an end-time release of the Church, the Body of Christ. A release which will bring the Body of Christ into a corporate ministry, the likes of which have not been seen before.

Tommy Hicks says that as the giant stood up, seemingly having cleansed itself from the debris, liquid light rained on the giant. There was no big 'I' or little 'You' in this equal brotherhood, made up of people from every walk of life. These ordinary people, rich and poor, were used to release many from sickness, paralysis, blindness or deafness. This mighty end-time army came through fire and pestilence and famine. Angry mobs with swords and guns were unable to touch them, if it were not their time. On occasions they were translated in the Spirit. The scene being described was of a demonstration of 'overcoming power'.

There was no church [building], or denomination, although there were congregations, and as they went forth in the Name of the Lord Jesus, [no other name], and gave the message of the Kingdom in this final hour; a multitude seemed to come to a salvation knowledge of the Lord. The gospel of the Kingdom was being preached in the whole world as a witness.

Like any other vision, this one must conform to Scripture. It certainly should not alter Scripture. The only place in Scripture where this vision fits, is within the time of the 'great tribulation.' Here it fits exactly.

### **False Expectations**

Many are presently looking for a great revival, but are seeking for it in a time other than this time of the end; other than during the time of 'great tribulation'. Some hold the belief that they will bring in a harvest to give to the Lord, many thinking this would occur before the year 2000. Others even believe they will take the kingdoms of this world for the Lord before He returns. But there is only one last great revival harvest mentioned in Scripture and this is part of that which takes place in the time of the 'great tribulation'. Despite this, few have held to this understanding.

### **Tribulation**

Paul, we know, strengthened the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God," (Acts 14:22). This does not describe a passive, 'accept anything' attitude, for "the Kingdom of God suffers violence and violent men take it by force," (Matt.11:22). This verse does not describe 'force against God', but the battle required against Satan who is doing all he can to keep us out of God's Kingdom, or from the benefits of living in the good of it. Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. We fight a spiritual fight of faith. We need to 'fight' in the heavenlies, but 'love' in our lifestyle. This is how we overcome. When we stand in the Spirit, in the authority and victory of Jesus, the spirit in the world will cause us to be "hated by all nations on account of Jesus Name," and we will be "delivered up to tribulation," (Matt.24:9); but we still overcome.

Our flesh might say, "I do not want to overcome because I do not want what it entails," but this is our flesh! It is in the Spirit where we experience His Kingdom reality, and no matter what the circumstances, if we are in the Father's will, having committed our way to Him, we can be in no better place.

### **The Paradox of Overcoming and Being Overcome**

When we contemplate what it will be like during the 'great tribulation', the aspect of 'overcoming' and 'being overcome' seem to be contradictory, as well as disconcerting. It has seemed as though the Church has not wanted to face the reality of an end-time tribulation, preferring to allot the persecution of that period to a group other than themselves! Also, Satan has done all he can to keep us from facing the realities of this 3½ year period because, in reality, this is where his defeat is found, and our victory.

### **Daniel's Vision**

Daniel had a "dream and visions in his mind" which told of the four great worldly powers which would arise on the earth. This described the fourth 'beast' [power] as having "ten horns", from amongst which a "little one came up" having a "mouth uttering great boasts," (Dan.7:7&8). He eventually saw this "beast... destroyed and given to the burning fire," (v.11). He saw that after this 'beast' was manifested, "One like the Son of Man was coming... with the clouds of heaven," (v.13). This clearly agrees with the timing of the 'first resurrection and catching away of the saints' occurring after the rise of the 'beast', the revealing of the man of sin. The description of the "Son of Man", coming "with the clouds", corresponds to Rev.1:7: "Behold, He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him," and Matt.24:30&31: then "they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

Daniel saw that the Son of Man was given "dominion, glory and a Kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and tongues might serve Him," (v.14), after His coming "with the clouds," (v.13).

In the visions, Daniel was given an interpretation of what he first saw. He was told that the "four beasts" were "four kings who will arise from the earth," (v.17), and it was explained to him that the other 'horn' which came up among "the ten horns which were on" the "head" of the fourth beast, "that horn which... uttered great boasts," was "larger in its appearance than its associates," (v.20), despite being seen initially as a "little



horn.". He saw this horn "was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until... the time arrived when the saints took possession of the Kingdom," v.21&22).

We see that this beast, which Daniel saw "uttering great boasts," and which "will devour the whole earth," is mirrored by John's description in the book of Revelation, where he describes a beast with "ten horns" who speaks "arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty two months, [3½ years]", who makes "war with the saints... to overcome them", and who "all who dwell on the earth will worship," (Rev.13:5-8). Daniel tells us that this beast, the little horn, will "wear down the saints of the Highest One... and they will be given into his hand for a time, and times and half a time, (3½ years)," (v.25). Thus we see a picture of the Church being overcome.

But Jesus tells the church in Thyatira, "He who overcomes... I will give authority over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron," (Rev.2:26&27), This they do with Jesus, when Jesus comes from heaven with His "armies, [His saints], clothed in fine linen, white and clean", the time when Jesus "will rule" the nations, "with a rod of iron," (Rev.19:14&15). Daniel, likewise, sees this same time, when "the Kingdom, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His Kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions will serve and obey Him," (v.27).

Those Christians who hold that the Church will take the kingdoms of this world for Jesus, before He returns, and present them to Him, hold a belief which is contrary to Daniel's vision, and therefore contrary to Scripture.

### **A Paradox - being Victorious Whilst being Persecuted**

When we look at Chapter 12 of the book of Revelation we come across what seems to be a paradox, however, for we read that the saints "overcome him [the beast] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony, and they did not love their life, even to death." (Rev.12:11). We see that 'overcoming' may still necessitate dying! Overcoming obviously does not mean victory in the natural realm but victory in the spiritual realm. This gets us to the crux of the problem - the concept of being victorious whilst being persecuted.

In facing this reality some might suggest we are in danger of taking upon ourselves a 'persecution complex', that by expecting to be persecuted we will thus give ground to Satan in our lives. Nevertheless, we have to face up to the fact that Jesus wants us to "overcome" as He "overcame and sat down" with His "Father on His throne," (Rev.3:21). Jesus, of course, overcame despite Satan's apparent victory when Jesus was crucified.

We are called to be "found in Him, not having a righteousness of our own," that we might "know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death," (Phil.3:9&10). This 'suffering' is not talking about sickness but about the laying down of our lives, [not necessarily unto death], in God's will, and in love. Jesus told us, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master," and we are "not to fear those who kill the body", but are "unable to kill the soul," (Matt.10:24-28). Our victory in this age is in the spiritual realm, which enables us to fulfil our calling to love and lay down our lives for others. This may result in our circumstances looking anything but victorious, but this is, nevertheless, real victory.

Nowhere in the Bible are we referred to as 'Overcomers', but we are exhorted to 'overcome'. We know that "whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith," (1John 5:4). We are not given an 'overcoming life,' - a guaranteed bed of roses - but life as we overcome. There is a big difference, and it is important that we understand this distinction as regards our role in the age to come.

We need to realise that Stephen was victorious when he was stoned to death, (Acts 7:54-60). If it had not been God's time for him to die, Satan could not have taken his life. In contrast, John died in old age. It was appointed for Paul to preach the gospel before kings, and in order to fulfil this, his captivity and imprisonment was within God's will for his life. But just as Jesus could not be seized, "because His hour had not yet come," (John 7:30), so shall we be immune from Satan's strategies which are outside God's permissive will, providing we have committed our way unto the Lord and we are walking in the light. Rev.6:11 suggests there has to

be a 'complete' number of those slain because of the testimony which they had maintained, (Rev.6:11 and 20:4). This has to be fulfilled. This is part of the Church's ministry, a ministry that mirrors that of her Head.

We need to understand, however, that 'our' will is involved in whatever happens to us, and which path God would have us take. God does not want to override our will, although circumstances may overtake us. The Lord does not ask us to do something without first giving us His ability to do it. If we have committed our way unto the Lord, and desire to walk according to His plans and purposes, we can trust Him, even though at times we might find ourselves in circumstances which appear as if all is lost. Paul found himself imprisoned, beaten times without number, often in danger of death, five times receiving thirty nine lashes from the Jews, three times beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked three times, spending a night and a day in the deep, in dangers on journeys, from rivers, from robbers, from his own countrymen as well as Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, on the sea and also among false brethren, (2Cor.11:23-33), demonstrating just what it meant for him to lay down his life. Yet in all these things he overcame! This is truly, 'overcoming power.'

When trying to understand our 'paradox', we can gain some understanding by observing how 'spiritual warfare' is carried out. As Christians, our warfare is in the spiritual realm and not of the flesh. Our weapons are spiritual, just as Paul explains: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses - destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God," (2Cor.10:3-5). But in the natural we are called to love, laying down our lives, even unto death, should it be God's will. We can bind spirits [spiritual realm], but we cannot change men's wills [natural realm]. Thus, we cannot prevent persecution by our praying to alter men's wills, for persecution comes when men, by their own free will, oppose what is of God. This takes Satan some time to bring about, although it is nevertheless, man's choice. So, in the end-time we will see the saints being 'overcome' in the natural realm but at the same time 'overcoming' in the spiritual realm; but only in the overall will of God.

Those who "come out of the great tribulation," once they are with the Lord, "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat," (Rev.7:14&16). This indicates how hard a time some saints will have. During the great tribulation "men will be fainting from fear" as "there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars... dismay among nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves... the power of the heavens shaken," (Luke 21:25&26). The time of 'great tribulation' is one for "perseverance," a time to "keep the commandments of God and... faith in Jesus," a time when a voice from heaven is heard, saying, "Blessed are the dead who die from now on," (Rev.14:12&13). Let us remember, however, it is only some "they will kill," (Luke 11:49). Satan has tried to trick Christians into believing that all the saints who go through the time of 'great tribulation' will be killed, but this is not so. These Christians will have laid down their lives in love.

We may wish that we could improve the picture that Scripture paints for us of this time, but it is not possible. Understood correctly, however, what better time could there be in which to live? So, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we need to discern the false picture which Satan has painted, and understand the correct one.

### **What Will Tribulation be Like?**

Jesus said, "I came to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled. Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on the earth? I tell you, no, but rather division," (Luke 12:49-51). Jesus said, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword," and that families would be divided because of Him, (Matt.10:34-35 and Luke 12:52-53). In these circumstances will we prove to truly be His disciples? Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate [by comparison with his love for the Lord] his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters; yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple," (Luke 14:26&27).

Some will be persecuted and brought "before kings and governors for His Names sake," but He will give them what to say in that hour. Some "will be betrayed, even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and some will be put to death," (Luke 21:12-16). Here we see this paradox once more, for Jesus said, "Not a hair on your head will perish. By your perseverance you will win your souls," (Luke21:18-19).

Some believe that this scenario only refers to the time just before the Roman Emperor, Titus, besieged Jerusalem in AD70, because the following passage in Luke 21:20-24 refers to an event when "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles," and the Jews would be "led captive into all the nations." This was obviously fulfilled when Titus besieged Jerusalem. In the midst of the description of the time of 'Jesus' Return',

Luke interjects these verses which were fulfilled nearly 2000 years ago! Once more we find the time sequence of these prophesied events is not in line with the textual sequence.

Also when describing that occasion, which was fulfilled in AD70, Jesus includes the advice for "those who are in Judea to flee to the mountains," (Luke 21:21). Similar advice is found in Matt. 24:15-20 which confuses some, but this refers to a future occasion, because the passage in Matthew's Gospel is definitely linked to the time of 'great tribulation'. We know it describes a different occasion because Jesus tells us this event occurs after the "abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet," is seen "standing in the holy place," (Matt. 24:15); this is a prophecy which has not yet been fulfilled. This second occasion, when "those who are in Judea" are exhorted by Jesus to "flee to the mountains," (Matt. 24:16), is timed at the very beginning of the 'great tribulation,' just as Jesus goes on to explain; "For then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall," (v. 21).

### **Difficult Times**

Jesus explained that "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved, but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short," (v. 22). Jesus tells us to pray "in order that you might be able to escape all these things that are about to take place and to stand before the Son of Man," (Luke 21:36), a prayer which needs to be ours in this end-time hour. Let us remind ourselves, too, that "immediately after the tribulation of those days" Jesus will come "on the clouds" to "gather together His elect," (v. 29&31), the most amazing event that awaits those who overcome.

"Beloved... we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is, and everyone who has this hope in Him, purifies himself, just as He is pure," (1 John 3:3).

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## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **END-TIME CONFUSION - CONSIDERING OTHER BELIEFS**

As already stated, a unity of understanding amongst believers regarding the days we are in and those which lie ahead, has been hard to find. There is little agreement even amongst those who might agree about other scriptures. Making things more difficult to understand, there has been an increase in spiritual manifestations since 1993. Most of these have been seen before, but not with such magnitude. For some, these have brought an increased expectation of revival, as some have suggested these very spiritual manifestations are an indication of the beginning of an end-time revival which will bring in an end-time harvest. But this is a harvest outside the time of 'great tribulation.'

One effect of these recent manifestations, which have multiplied since 1993, has been that 'end-time beliefs' have suddenly become pertinent. In recent years, beliefs about the end of this age had not been so widely discussed, as the prophetic expectations of many had come to nothing during previous decades. Before 1993, having a differing eschatology [doctrine of the last things] was the cause of little division. Indeed, few took any notice of the different understandings upheld by the different denominations, or if they did, they largely remained silent regarding their concerns. This has now changed.

### **Kingdom Dominion Theology**

Those Christian groups who have believed that they would be involved in taking the kingdoms of this world for Jesus before He would return, have not looked for an imminent rapture, for they believed the Church had to obtain victory in the natural realm first, some actually believing they would take over the governments and systems of this world in the Name of the Lord. As part of this belief, this group have embraced, so called, 'faith teaching', and teachings on 'spiritual warfare' which have a goal of winning towns, cities, and even nations, for Jesus; beliefs which were of benefit to this end-time doctrine of taking 'dominion' in the world. Cries of "My nation [the reader can add their own] for Jesus" sound impressive, but discount the reality of the prophetic scriptures. This eschatological view sees the Church replacing Israel, adopting what is called, a 'Replacement Theology', which holds that there is no real future for natural Israel. This has been embraced by many of those who consider themselves to be part of the 'House Church Movement'. Believing that God was restoring the Church to what it was in New Testament times, it also embraced the name 'Restoration Movement'. As the Church was, in effect, to have dominion in the natural realm, it caused no problem that

the structures within this movement were similar to those of the world system, with hierarchies of apostles with authority over those elders beneath them, who in turn exercise authority over 'their' flocks, all with other intermediate levels of authority. All are supposedly upheld by Scripture, but, as with any wrong belief, this 'understanding' is a mixture of Truth and error. Those unwilling to 'submit' to the 'authority' exercised within these type of churches, are dismissed as being 'disobedient' or 'rebellious', and their concerns are disregarded by those operating under a spirit of control.

### **Israel and the Church**

The beliefs of those, who suggest that the Church has replaced Israel, and become the sole benefactor of all the Lord's promises and covenants to Israel, with none of them pertaining any more to natural Israel in the future, may be described as holding to a 'Replacement Theology'. This doctrine has been greatly opposed by those Christians who would believe that Israel has an 'extra special' place in God's plan. This group rightly sees that the covenant promises for the nation and land of Israel are still to be fulfilled. Unfortunately, within this group there are various end-time beliefs which ignore that Israel is being returned to the land for further distress. Some even see the world 'believing' through a spiritually renewed nation of Israel before the Lord's return. Unlike the 'Restorationist belief', the Church is not seen as playing much of a role, other than to intercede for Israel. These beliefs are at opposite ends of the spectrum.

It is important to rightly divide Scripture with regard to Israel, the Gentiles and the Church. Many denigrate the Church by not realising its special significance in this present age and the one to come, and wrongly differentiate between Jewish and Gentile believers, not realising that these natural affinities are of greatly reduced significance once we become part of the Church, the Body of Christ. The Church is made up of believers, whether they are Jew or Gentile. Paul says, "Give none offence, neither the Jews, nor the Gentiles, nor the Church of God," (1 Cor.10:32). Paul recognises three groups, not two; 'Israel,' 'the Gentiles' and 'the Church'. He explains that "We were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks," (1 Cor.12:13); "There is neither Jew nor Greek..." in the Body of Christ, for we are all "one in Christ Jesus," (Gal.3:28); "He made both groups [formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by the so called 'Circumcision'] one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall," (Eph.2:14 &11). The Church, we see, is a separate group to natural Israel and the Gentiles.

So often we differentiate between Jewish and Gentile believers, creating a false division, and maintaining a 'difference' which denies our oneness in Christ.

Additionally, much of our wrong understanding regarding Israel has led to a Judaizing of the Church which has seen our progress hindered, our mission perverted, and our spirituality destroyed. At its worst, instead of pursuing a path of separation from the world and following the Lord in our heavenly calling, wrong understandings of scriptures pertaining to Israel have caused the Church to alter her purposes as regards God's intentions in the world. Many Christians look to the acquisition of wealth, the use of ritual, the erection of religious buildings, and the division of an equal brotherhood into 'clergy' and 'laity'.

### **The Classic 'Pentecostal' End-time Doctrine**

A different end-time belief can be found within the Pentecostal denominations. These have believed in, and taught their adherents to expect, the 'imminent return' of the Lord; to expect the Lord to come suddenly, at any moment. Much has been made of the 'benefit' that a believer is likely to live a better life if they have an expectation of the Lord returning at any moment. This 'benefit' has 'sold' this belief to many. However, those who hold to this view ignore the unfulfilled prophecies that are contained in Scripture, which have to be fulfilled before the Lord returns, usually by suggesting that many apply to a different group other than the Church. This is the reason a group known as 'tribulation saints' is suggested as being those who much of the book of Revelation applies to.

### **The Charismatic Expectation**

The 'Charismatic Ecumenical Renewal' was the name given, in 1956, to the movement, which was already beginning to be seen across all the non-Pentecostal denominations, which encouraged believers to be 'baptised in the Spirit'. Unlike previous 'moves of God', which were outside the denominations, this 'move of God' was happening within them. With this new movement spread the belief in a world-wide revival and harvest, producing a zeal for evangelism based on the scripture that the "gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world... and then the end shall come," (Matt.24:14). This 'evangelism', however, was often based

on a gospel of 'salvation' only, rather than the full gospel of the 'Kingdom', and largely ignored the spiritual growth of believers. Many para-church organisations arose, focusing on 'evangelism' and happy to point new converts to the denominational church system once they were 'saved'. The church system was pleased to accept this input of new life. Latterly these same churches have been more involved in 'evangelism' themselves, and the common goal of 'evangelism' has been seen across the spectrum of denominational churches, despite each holding differing beliefs. On closer inspection one realises that 'evangelism' means different things to different denominations, some purely looking to make church members without 'new birth'. In the last few years this evangelistic activity has emphasised the idea of there being an end-time harvest, with recent spiritual manifestations suggested as being indicative that the end-time revival had started.

### **Recent Spiritual Manifestations**

So, the belief in soon coming world-wide revival has grown on the back of the more recent spiritual manifestations which have supposedly been due to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Some, however, have suggested that these manifestations have been the result of 'wrong spirits', with the result that a polarisation of differing beliefs has been created. This controversy has caused the differing understandings about the end-times to be questioned, because many believe these 'wrong spirits' were introduced into the Church through the 1948-1953 'Latter Rain Movement', which upheld that there would be a mighty end-time ministry of the Church. The 'Latter Rain Movement' was a controversial 'move of God' which operated, unlike the Charismatic Movement which was to follow it, outside the Pentecostal denominations, and which saw a further restoration of Pentecostal gifts. The Church seemed to recover these gifts in the first years of the Twentieth Century, and this had led to these very Pentecostal denominations being created; 'Man' always seeking to put the Holy Spirit in a box!

Even before the more recent [c.1994] spiritual manifestations were widely seen, many had been questioning what they saw as the effects of the 'New Age Movement' upon, so called, 'Charismatic Christians'. This opposition had seen the similarity between New Age teaching and that of the, so called, 'Word of Faith Movement', and so called, 'visualisation techniques' etc., and were saying that these were errors which the Church was embracing.

Unfortunately, with these latest spiritual manifestations, what is 'of a wrong spirit' and what is 'of the Holy Spirit', has not been clearly distinguished. Differing views abound, and so a polarisation has been caused, resulting in one group upholding anything 'spiritual' was of the Holy Spirit, without due concern for the 'Word', the other upholding the 'Word' without due concern for the 'Spirit', in danger of refusing to acknowledge any spiritual manifestation as being 'of the Lord'. In effect the Church has been attacked from opposite directions at the same time!

### **The Manifest Sons of God**

Because of the controversy surrounding these recent spiritual manifestations, a previously little known end-time belief has become the focus of much recent questioning, largely because this belief came into prominence in the late 1940's, within the 'Latter Rain Movement'. This 'belief' upheld that an end-time harvest would be brought in by 'some' believers who will come into a 'fullness' before the Lord's return. The scriptural basis for this belief, however, is usually found to rely on the 'spiritualising' of different scriptures which will in fact have a literal fulfilment through the nation of Israel. These scriptures do contain much Truth which is pertinent to the Church now, because those things which happened to Israel happened "as examples for us", (1Cor.10:11), as Paul explains. However, those who uphold this 'Manifest sons of God' belief, tend to ignore a literal fulfilment of prophecy. More commonly, they only expect to see the culmination of all the ages being fulfilled through the Church at the end of this age. The standard of maturity attained by the Church in this age, and a resultant ministry due to this, becomes their goal rather than the City of God, in the ages to come.

The 'manifest sons of God' belief suggests that some believers will come into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ coinciding with an end-time harvest. This might seem to be in line with the contents of this book, but the concept means very different things to different people. Conversely, those who oppose anything that sounds like this 'manifest sons of God' teaching, tend to consider that all beliefs which suggest an end-time ministry in a time of 'great tribulation' are wrong. Indeed, there are some very strange doctrines which do seem to have their roots in this time of the 'Latter Rain', and this has reinforced the opposition to Christians even considering the views of this book.

One 'manifest sons of God' belief even suggests that some 'sons' will get immortal bodies whilst still on earth, before the return of Christ, and will take the kingdoms of the earth for the Lord before He returns Himself. This is not, however, the common interpretation of the scripture in Romans 8:19, from which this understanding gets its name: "the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the manifestation of the sons of God."

### **An 'Out-Resurrection'?**

Another variation of this teaching suggests that those who move on into 'fullness' will be rewarded by being part of, what they call, an 'out-resurrection'. This 'prize', it is suggested, was what Paul was looking for, and of which he spoke in Phil.3:8-11, where he states he "counts all things to be loss... in order that he may attain to the resurrection from the dead." This doctrine suggests this 'out-resurrection from the dead,' will be a catching away of those saints who have, like Paul, counted all things as loss, and this will take place before the first resurrection mentioned in Revelation, Chapter 20. This doctrine is dangerously, and tenuously, created from an interpretation using just one verse! The proponents of this belief suggest the mention by Paul in this passage, of the "prize of the of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," (Phil.3:14), is a reference to the 'catching away'.

In the above ways, which are merely a few examples of the many differing end-time beliefs, Satan has ensured that our understanding of the end of this age is one of great confusion. This confusion has been increasing in these last few years, as we have begun to see a shaking which God promised would "shake not only the earth, but also the heaven... removing.. those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain... His kingdom that cannot be shaken," (Heb.12:26-28). As deception increases it seems possible that even greater confusion will arise.

### **The Importance of Understanding the 'Kingdom'**

Jesus told us to "seek first His [God's] Kingdom and His righteousness" and we would see and experience His provision, (Matt.6:33). Jesus preached about His Kingdom during His walk on earth and it was still being preached by Paul at the end of the book of 'The Acts of the Apostles,' (see Acts 28:31 - ".. preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered"). It is also going to be the preaching of the gospel of this Kingdom in all the world as a witness, which will precede the end of this age.

At this time, in this age, His Kingdom is not of this world [realm] but within us, (Luke 17:21). The reality of Jesus' Kingdom is seen, therefore, as He reigns and has dominion in our lives. This Kingdom reality brings with it His protection, provision, plan and purpose; a purpose which is the will of the Father. So many believe they are preaching a gospel of the Kingdom but in reality are only preaching a gospel of salvation!

It is this Kingdom which we have counterfeited in His Name, building kingdoms of men - our denominational church systems; often denying His rule without even realising we are doing it. When we walk in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, we find that we are part of a harmoniously orchestrated correctly functioning Body, the Church, made up of those who bring forth a manifestation of His Kingdom. It is this Kingdom reality, this gospel [which means good news] of the Kingdom, which is to be preached in the whole world before Jesus returns. This will bring forth the harvest which is at the end of the age.

### **The End-time Harvest**

Satan has done all he can to prevent us, the Church, from understanding, or even contemplating, this time of harvest, because it is the time of her victory over the power of the evil one, Satan, who is the god of this world, (1John 5:19, "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one." and 2Cor.4:4, "..the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving").

For 2000 years the Church has corporately been kept from walking fully in the power of the victory which Jesus won for her on the cross, and through His resurrection, except for brief times and in relatively few lives. Satan has prevented the Church from fully appropriating all that Jesus has already accomplished for His Church. It would seem that Satan is now doing all he can to increase his deceptions, because the time for the Body of Christ to break free from the bondage with which she has been afflicted is very near.

When the salvation, the power, the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ have come, then the brethren will overcome Satan who has managed to prevent this for so long. They will do this through the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and because they do not love their lives, even unto death. This will be the 'time of harvest' which will see the full separation of tares from among the wheat, the end of the age.

Then, One like the Son of Man will be seen putting in His sickle because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe. A great multitude that no one can count will come from this time, a time that will coincide with Satan having great wrath, creating great tribulation. He will overcome many, with the persecution of the saints, but this overcoming will only be in the natural realm. In reality the victory will belong to the Church, for the spiritual victory will be theirs in Jesus' love and power.

Many are looking for a harvest without tribulation, a harvest presently accompanied by false triumphalism, but it is a counterfeit harvest. Looking to false 'anointings upon', which are not from the Holy Spirit, there has been a desire to see a harvest without the necessity for the Lord's people being separated unto Him, holy. Instead, men have used their organisations and churches to declare a gospel focusing upon 'salvation only'. This is not wrong in itself, but it is not the full gospel, because this gospel does not lead to Jesus' true Lordship, its adherents being deceived into looking for a false harvest which does not entail Jesus being effectively Head of His Body, the Church.

At the time of the 'Latter Rain Movement' men received a prophetic view of this correct end-time harvest, but Satan has all but destroyed this 'true prophetic understanding', by having this Truth overstated and added to, so that it would be discounted. As the hour draws near, Satan has renewed his attack on the believers of that era. He highlights some 'false brethren', of the time of the 'Latter Rain Movement', so as to be able to discredit them all. Meanwhile, most believers continue looking to that which is not scriptural - a 'preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom in the whole world' without the great tribulation which will in fact accompany it.

This is our dilemma. What is Truth? What truly lies ahead? Even to discern if the contents of this book are true, we need to look to the Holy Spirit to lead each one of us into Truth and tell us of things to come. We must allow Him to give us His understanding and revelation of what He has had men write, in Scripture as well as in books, otherwise we will not understand. To do this we are going to have to draw near to the Lord. Our mental agreement and understanding will not be sufficient. Following what others believe, even our present day 'heroes,' will not suffice. We are going to have to buy oil for our lamps. (See Matt.25:1-13); to let our lamp go empty could be critical, as the foolish virgins found out.

The Lord knows our deeds, whether we are cold, lukewarm or hot. We may think we are rich, and have need of nothing, but in reality we may be wretched, miserable, poor and blind and naked, just like the Church in Laodicea, (Rev.3:14-22), and not even realise that the Lord is no longer in our midst, but outside, knocking on the door of our heart to come in. Just like the Church in Laodicea, Jesus has already left many gatherings and they do not even realise it! The time has come when we can no longer be lukewarm, caught up in mixture. We have to be hot to prevent Him spitting us out of His mouth, (Rev.3:15). Many are not going to see that they are in mixture, however, until more shaking comes. And that shaking will surely come.

As Jesus exhorted our Laodicean brothers, we are going to have to buy gold, which speaks of our need to walk in faith - faith which Satan has been attacking with vehemence for these last few years. Without faith we cannot please God, (Heb.11:6), or walk in the way that the righteous need to, (Rev.3:18). The 'just' will walk by faith, (Rom.1:17); there is no other way which produces victory. This gold will be refined by fire, tested by various trials and tribulations, which we are to count as joy, (James 1:2&3). When various trials come we need to remember "the proof of our faith", is indeed, "more precious than gold," (1Pet.1:6&7).

We are also required to buy white garments to clothe ourselves and hide the shame of our nakedness, (Rev.3:18). This speaks of our need to know His righteousness; to know who we are in Christ, and who He is in us, so as to appropriate the victory won for us in the blood of Jesus and through the power of His resurrection.

Lastly, each one of us must buy 'eye salve' to anoint our eyes, that we might 'see' spiritually, (Rev.3:18), or we will not be led by the Spirit, or receive spiritual understanding, wisdom, discernment, or a knowledge of the Father's will. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot even hear Jesus' voice asking us to open the door that He might come in and dine with us, (Rev.3:20). We must have "an ear to hear what the Spirit" is saying, (v.22). If we haven't, let us ask before it is too late.

We are entering the time which will abound in "deception of wickedness for those who perish because they will not love the truth so as to be saved, and for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness," (2Thess.2:10-12). This is the most awesome of times. It is the time to break free of all that has chained up the Body of Christ for nearly 2000 years, and those who do will rise up with power to overcome in this hour when the end-time harvest is going to be reaped.

This 'freedom' cannot be achieved by 'effort', however, but is ours in Jesus, through faith. So, may we each look to our Saviour in whom we have this victory.

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## CHAPTER TEN

### WHAT'S NEXT?

#### **The Last Seven Years of this Age**

This book upholds the singular view, that Scripture teaches that the Church will go through a 3½ year period of great tribulation before Jesus comes on the clouds with His angels to catch away the saints, the dead in Christ rising first. This to be followed by a 3½ year period when God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth, inaugurating the great day of the Lord. At the end of this 3½ year period of wrath, Jesus will then return to the earth with His saints to begin His thousand year reign on earth.

#### **A Firm Covenant with Many for One Week and the Abomination of Desolation**

Bible scholars will realise that an explanation is required as to where the 'week of the covenant with many' fits in, which is mentioned by Daniel, in Dan.9:27. Understanding the answer to this question is important, because it is in the middle of this week that "on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate." Jesus told us that it was when we "see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place," then "there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall," (Matt.24:15&21). These scriptures link the 'great tribulation' with the "firm covenant made with many for one week." The 'classic' interpretation of Daniel 9:27, is that the 'week' when "a firm covenant with many" is made, is the 70th week, of the 70 weeks which Gabriel explained to Daniel, were decreed for Israel. The full significance of this may not seem important, but in fact it is crucial. A correct understanding of this is needed to place the events of the last week of this age in their right order.

#### **Daniel's Seventy Weeks**

While in exile in Babylon, Daniel was reading the book of Jeremiah, that "this whole land [of Israel] shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years, then it will be, when the seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, declares the Lord," (Jer.25:11&12). Judah had been in exile in Babylon just seventy years as Daniel was considering this unfulfilled prophecy. This drove Daniel to seek the Lord God in prayer and supplication. Gabriel was therefore sent from heaven to give him "insight and understanding," (v.22). When Gabriel appeared to Daniel, he explained to him that "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," (Dan.9:24).

Gabriel explained, "You are to know that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty two weeks. It will be built again with streets and moat, even in times of distress," (v.25). It was being unfolded to Daniel that God's purposes for Jerusalem were to go beyond the seventy years as prophesied by Jeremiah.

Gabriel continued, "Then after the sixty two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have no one [or nothing], and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary, and its end will come with a flood. Even to the end there will be war. Desolation's are determined." (v.26). Jesus' first coming was being prophesied, together with His crucifixion, which would bring the Romans and their Emperor Titus in AD 70,



and would see Jerusalem and its temple destroyed once more. This completes 'sixty nine' of the 'seventy weeks,' but there is 'one week' left, yet to be fulfilled.

Gabriel then explains that the "prince who is to come... will make a firm covenant with 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 abomination will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate," (Dan.9:27).

It is important to note that no specific mention of the 'seventieth week' is made, but because there is a reference to a 'week' when a firm covenant is made with many, the assumption is that this is, therefore, the 'seventieth week'. This leads to the 'classic' interpretation of this passage, which then leads to the conclusion that if the 'seventieth week' is the last seven years of this age as well as the week of the covenant with many, the 'great tribulation' begins in the middle of it. It would follow then that Jesus must return at the end of the last week, and the 'wrath of God' must be concurrent with the 'great tribulation'. I was completely unaware of this logical reasoning, which has produced this 'understanding', without which, I could not have brought this book to its conclusion. But the Lord was to introduce me to it completely unaware of its pertinence.

### **My Testimony regarding the 'Covenant with the Many for One Week'**

Having read the book of Daniel a number of times, I found that in my spirit I had had the 'thought' that the 'week' of the 'covenant with the many' need not be the 'seventieth week', but concluded nothing from this. I had not consciously noted the Holy Spirit was drawing my attention to it.

In January 1996 I had planned to meet with a small group of Christians whilst away from home with my work. On the morning of this visit I hurriedly opened my Bible at random, wanting to read some scripture before starting work. That morning I was rather disorganised. I found myself reading Daniel Chapter 9, and as I read verse 27 I felt the Lord asserting, "The week of the covenant is not Daniel's 70th week." This incident, as it happened, seemed of no great significance to me, but in my spirit, it was very clear.

That evening, however, with my Christian friends, one brother in the Lord asked the question which was quite unrelated to our previous conversations of the evening. Referring to 'Daniel 9:27', he asked, "What did it mean, exactly?" So I explained the 'revelation' I had received that very morning.

A few days later I was invited to join with three Christian brothers as they met for their regular Bible Study one evening.. This they had been doing together for the previous six years in a town near to my home. I had recently passed them a booklet I had already written explaining the fact that the last seven years of this age will be split in the middle, the first half being the 'great tribulation', and the last half being the time of 'God's wrath being poured out'. A 'revelation' I believe the Lord had already given to me. They were interested in discussing it. One of these brothers explained that he had studied the scriptures himself for a number of years, and agreed with the conclusions of my book, but asked if I could explain one problem which confused him. He asked if I could explain Dan.9:27! He was obviously aware that if what I was saying was correct, by implication the 'classic understanding' of Daniel 9:27 could not be right. I was unaware of this significance at that time. So, I shared with these brethren the 'revelation' I had recently received.

The Lord now had my attention and I decided the following weekend to study Daniel's Ninth Chapter more closely, and write down my unfolding understanding regarding these jigsaw puzzle pieces, which I seemed to have suddenly been made aware of. I found I was able to continue this task as Monday arrived, as a sudden snow storm was preventing me going to work. Living on the coast, a 4 inch depth of snow was very rare indeed. This particular morning we were going to get localised snow which eventually reached a 15 inch depth. Quite unique; I was not going to get to work for a week! I was being given the opportunity to write down all that was being given to me.

The following day, taking time off from my writing and studies, we visited close Christian neighbours who were likewise 'snowed in'. I thought I might share with them all that the Lord had been saying. The conversation, however, did not open up regarding such 'deep' matters, and I intentionally did not want to 'force' this issue. However, just before we left, I noticed my brothers Bible open at Daniel's Ninth Chapter. Seeing me pick it up in this open position, he said, "Oh, Colin, I was going to ask if you could explain Daniel 9:27!"

So it was that in the three consecutive meetings with believers after receiving this 'revelation', that the 'week of the covenant with the many' was not Daniel's 70th week, I had been asked in each to explain that very verse.

To correctly interpret Dan.9:27 proves difficult as regards understanding exactly how a fulfilment of the 'covenant with the many for one week' will work out in reality. So, we continue to 'watch and pray' as we ponder on world events, whilst considering all that the Lord has actually said, for we must see this covenant made with the many for seven years before the time of 'great tribulation' arrives.

### **More Unfulfilled Prophecies**

Although the key event, which Jesus told us would happen before His return, is the "abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place," (Matt.24:15), "for then there will be a great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall," (v.21), we know that nothing can happen until Michael is taken out of the way. It will be when Michael, who stands guard over Israel, arises, that this "time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation" will be unleashed, (Dan.12:1). Therefore, we need to watch the nation of Israel, the fig tree.

For there to be "a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation" it would seem that we are possibly going to see wars, the like of which there has never been, with consequences that will effect the whole world. Jesus, however, told us that "wars" do not indicate the very "end," (Matt.24:6). It would seem, therefore, that it will be this coming world catastrophe that will enable the 'beast' to arise out of the sea [nations], offering peace and safety, and renewed economic order through 'his mark', which will enable him to take that place of being worshipped as the world's saviour. We will see.

We can find unfulfilled prophecies in scripture regarding the Middle East, which may well be the events which will be played out in the time of the 'great tribulation'.

### **Damascus is About to be Removed from Being a City**

There is a yet unfulfilled prophecy of Isaiah, regarding the city of Damascus: "Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city and it will become a fallen ruin," (Isaiah 17:1). Is it possible that a breakdown of the fragile peace between Israel and Syria will see Syria attack Israel, only for Israel to retaliate by destroying Damascus? If such a thing were to happen, would Syria's northern ally, Russia, have no excuse but to attack Israel? Alternatively will Damascus be destroyed when Israel is attacked from the north, during a war prophesied by Ezekiel?

### **The Ezekiel War**

This unfulfilled prophecy of Ezekiel relates to Israel being attacked by "Rosh, Meshech and Tubal," who Bible Scholars suggest is represented by Russia, along with "Persia [Iran], Ethiopia and Put [Libya]," who are presently all politically allied to Russia", (Ez.38:1-5). Ezekiel prophesied that this would occur "in the last days," (v.16).

This war begins when Israel has been "gathered from many [not all] nations," (v.8). The war, which Ezekiel prophesies, takes place when Israel is partially gathered from some nations, and her 'return' is completed after the war. The return of the Jews to their homeland, which has increased since 1948, when Israel was once more recognised as a nation state after nearly 2000 years, makes the fulfilment of this prophecy now possible. It is only after this war that God will "restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel," and "bring them back from the peoples and gather them [all] from the lands of their enemies." Gathering them again "to their own land," (Ez.39:25-29).

### **The Time of Jacob's Trouble**

Jeremiah prophesied that it was at the "time of Jacob's trouble," when he will "be saved from it," that God would "restore the fortunes of His people Israel and Judah," bringing them all "back to the land," (Jer.30:3-11). For Israel, this time of distress will overlap the time of 'great tribulation' and the time of 'God's wrath' through which they have to go, Jeremiah prophesying that God would "not destroy them completely, but... will chasten" them "justly and will by no means leave them unpunished!" (v.11).

So, even through this book, we can "declare in the coastlands afar off" that "He who scattered Israel will gather him," for God has "loved Israel with an everlasting love;" and we can proclaim, "O Lord, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel," because God says, "Behold, I am bringing them from the north country and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth," (Jer.31:1-11). Jeremiah times the fulfilment of this return as being "in the latter days.," (Jer.30:24&31:1).

### **Israel Returns and is Restored**

This 'return' of the whole house of Israel must occur before the millennial reign of Jesus. It is after this return that the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah are made into 'one' kingdom once more, (Ez.37:15-23): "Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick. Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations... and bring them into their own land and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and one King will be King for all of them [Jesus], and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms."

### **Jesus 1000 Year Reign**

When Ezekiel prophesies of this time, he clearly links it with the 1000 year reign of Jesus upon the earth: "My servant David [Jesus], will be King over them and they will all have one Shepherd... and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them and I will be their God and they will be My people," (Ez.37:24-28).

Also prophesied as occurring when Israel has been gathered from all the nations, is that God will lead Israel into the promised 'new covenant.' Ezekiel prophesies, "I will make a covenant of peace with them. It will be an everlasting covenant with them." (Ez.37:26). "For, I will take you from the nations, gather you from all [not some] the lands, and bring you into your own land, then... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh, and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes," (Ez.36:24-28).

### **A War against a People Who are Gathered from the Nations**

Ezekiel prophesies that the attack on Israel will come "out of the remote parts of the north... against My people, Israel... in the last days," (Ez.38:15&16). It occurs, Ezekiel prophesies, "when My people, Israel, are living securely," (v.14). "In the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword," whose inhabitants "have been gathered from many [not all] nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste, but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them," (v.8).

"On that day," or "at the same time," thoughts come into their mind and this 'northern army' will "devise an evil plan," (v.10). They will say, "I will go up against a land of unwalled villages, I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against a people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods and live at the centre of the world," (v.11&12).

Some pose the question as to whether this 'interjection' describes Israel, for Israel have few cattle and little spoil; "silver and gold" (v.13). They suggest that when Russia attacks Israel, Jerusalem being exactly due south of Moscow, that he will, 'at the same time', go 'up' and over the north pole into the USA to attack them. The United States of America are a most unique nation, made up of people 'gathered from the nations', living in the 'centre of the world' but having great spoil and millions of cattle! Some uphold that the USA could be represented in this prophecy in addition to Israel. With unfulfilled prophecy there is much conjecture and uncertainty. Unless the Lord gives us 'revelation' and spiritual understanding, our intellectual guesses remain only guesses.

So, it is with some uncertainty that I draw this book to a conclusion, pointing the reader at its close, as I did at the beginning, to the Holy Spirit. For it is only in Him that those things which are presently unclear will become clear, whilst He continues to point us to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

## **A Sign and Wonder coming true is not enough**

May we each remember that if a "prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among" us, and even gives us a "sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true," if he also tells us something which is contrary to the 'word of God' we must not go after him, (Deut.13:1&2). We are told that this very testing will show whether we "love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul," for we are to "listen to His voice, serve Him and cling to Him," only (v.3&4).

May we also remember that "when a prophet speaks in the Name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about, or come true, that is a thing which the Lord has not spoken," (Deut.18:22), but we should not be "afraid of him." The Lord, however, states that He will put His words in the mouth of His prophets, and warns us that if we do not listen to God's words, which the prophet speaks in His Name, the Lord will require it of us, (Deut.18:18); a warning which Peter spoke of in his second sermon, (Acts 3:22&23). So, may our hearts prove our love and fear of the Lord as we walk in a manner worthy of Him towards the goal of the City of God, and may we be fully prepared for all that might happen in our lifetime.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they might have a right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the City," (Rev.22:14), for the Lord tells us He "is coming quickly," (v.12&21).  
Amen.

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## **Concluding Remarks**

In this book I have endeavoured to refrain from time setting, or using conjecture as fact, hopefully pointing the reader to Scripture throughout, whilst testifying to some 'revelations', which I believe I have been given, so the reader can ask the Teacher, the Holy Spirit, about all these things. I realise that there is much unfulfilled prophecy that I have not dealt with, particularly Daniel's visions. I trust their eventual 'unsealing' will not effect the contents of this book, except to provide sure time scales, or confirmation of events mentioned, which lie just ahead.

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