

The End Of The Beginning

The Complete Guide to Future Events as Revealed in the Bible

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Every Yet-To-Be Fulfilled Prophecy Explored

Volume II The Last Days

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
Volume II Introduction: The Last Days.....	152
8. Getting All Caught Up	156
9. Signs of the Times.....	192
10. The Next-To-Last Days.....	210
11. The Gap	249
12. Peace and Safety.....	284
13. Jerusalem, Jerusalem	316
14. Mystery Babylon	347
15. The Muslim Connection.....	379
16. The Mother of All Battles	419
17. Winners, Losers, and Wannabes	455
18. No More Mr. Nice Guy	497
19. Visions of Grandeur	527
20. Babylon is Fallen.....	568
21. Somebody's Gotta Do It.....	592
22. The Great Awakening	609
23. Days of Wrath	636
24. Armageddon	668

Volume 2: Introduction

The Last Days

The sorts of things most people think of as “Bible prophecy” will be the subject of this, the second volume of *The End of the Beginning*. These seventeen chapters will cover the time between the rapture of the church and the Battle of Armageddon. Most of this will happen within a seven-year period of time popularly known as “the Tribulation” and the years immediately preceding it. I’m guessing (based on the abundant clues provided in scripture) that the rapture will take place several years prior to this. How long a gap there will be is left unstated (for our own good, no doubt), but it is becoming increasingly clear that it won’t be a long one—not decades or centuries, but only a few years, perhaps only months.

Indeed, logic would tell us that the rapture itself will play a key role in the unraveling of society that will lead to the Tribulation’s evils. Paul tells us that the One who restrains evil in the world today (One who could *only* be the Holy Spirit who indwells the souls of the followers of Christ) will be “taken out of the way” *before* the identity of the “lawless one” (the Antichrist) is revealed. And *his* treaty is the starting gun—the sign that the final seven years of this age have begun. The clock of Israel’s destiny will once again be ticking, after a hiatus of almost two thousand years. (Our timetable is provided in the sweeping Daniel 9:24-27 prophecy.) The sudden absence of the church (and the Holy Spirit who lives within us) will *in itself* be enough to precipitate the fear, anarchy, lawlessness, and war that will inevitably make the insanity of an all-powerful one-world government under the total domination of a single satanically inspired individual seem like a good idea.

Though topical in nature, I have endeavored to present these prophetic subjects in (roughly) the chronological order in which they become critical to the story. What can the world expect once the rapture is history? As it turns out, the Bible has a lot to say about the conditions that will prevail on the earth during these dark days—even before the Antichrist takes control of the earth in the name of Satan. Recurring events of the sort that have always been a part of life on earth will be intensified to the point of their becoming “signs” of the end, things Christ likened to the “beginning of sorrows”—a pregnant woman’s labor pains commencing. That is, although the world has always sporadically experienced wars, famines, diseases, earthquakes and storms, apostasy and lovelessness among men, these things will happen with new and unprecedented intensity and frequency as the end approaches. If “mother earth” is ripe for judgment (and she *is*) then the rapture will be like her “water” breaking. Once the church is gone,

there will be no turning back, no respite from God's incessant and recurring reminders that a paradigm shift of "Biblical" proportions is on the way.

Two cities—and what they symbolically represent—loom large in these prophetic scriptures. The first, Jerusalem, will prove to be the focal point (and the bone of contention) of all the players in this last great drama. It should be obvious that without Yahweh's oft-stated and undying love for this city (and the people to whom He gave it), nobody would give the City of David a second glance. Jerusalem has no strategic military significance, no port, no industry to speak of, no great influence over the commerce of nations—and yet, it is the most fought-over city on the face of the earth, and will remain so until King Yahshua establishes His throne here.

The second city doesn't even exist anymore in any literal sense—and it hasn't for thousands of years. Babylon, a once mighty city-state on the Euphrates River, in the epicenter of Mesopotamia's fertile crescent, is now nothing but a metaphor for man's rebellion against His God. Babylon's history goes all the way back to its beginnings as Babel—the site of a famous tower and the man-centric pagan religion it represented, whose insidious influence and inspiration have permeated virtually all of human civilization, right down to the present day. Babylon is Biblical code for "false worship," the institution of religion (as opposed to simple trust in Yahweh), and ultimately anything and everything man venerates and reveres in place of Yahweh. Today, Babylon encompasses and represents everything God intends to deal with in judgment during the Tribulation—every manmade religion (and note: *all* religions are manmade), and every "stealth" false god like power, sex, money, pride, greed, and self-reliance.

In the strangest twist imaginable, our study of prophecy will reveal how Yahweh will use the Antichrist to subjugate, consolidate, and appropriate every vestige of Babylon into his own satanic "one-world religion," usurping the entire financial/commercial infrastructure of the earth in the process. The Antichrist's rise will be fueled by his betrayal of Babylon. All religions will be absorbed into his religion; the world's entire "military/industrial complex" will become an extension of his ego; all political power will rest with him; all financial tools will be his to wield as he sees fit—until Yahweh's Messiah crushes him and his system to powder (as it's described in Daniel 2:35, 45), and along with it what was once Babylon.

One of Babylon's most significant permutations (at the moment) is Islam, which for the past half century has been growing in strength, numerical superiority, wealth, political clout, and belligerence. It is as if, after thirteen centuries of clueless religiosity, they finally decided to read—and heed—their own scriptures, which unequivocally demand that they use every means at their disposal to rid the world of Jews and Christians (for starters), eventually

enslaving, converting, and/or killing every living human being. Today, about one person in five on this planet is a Muslim (nominally, at least).

A blind man could see what will happen within Islam when the restraining power of the Holy Spirit is no longer active in the world: the Muslims will do what their scriptures require them to do: lash out at the world in homicidal rage—starting with the Jews. It is no coincidence that the “starting gun” for the Tribulation (as Daniel reveals) is a “covenant (or treaty) with many” brokered by the Antichrist, which is calculated to secure peace and safety for the nation of Israel. Safety from whom? From their Islamic neighbors, who will “sign on” to the treaty as a diversion to induce Israel to drop her guard, because Muhammad declared, “War is deceit.” A good-sized chunk of prophetic scripture deals with the fallout of *dar al-Islam*’s inevitable breach of that peace—how the Antichrist will be powerless to stem the tide of Islamic invasion within Israel despite his successes elsewhere; what will happen to the invading nations; how Yahweh will personally intervene on behalf of Israel (resulting in their belated eye-opening epiphany concerning the reality of their God); how the Antichrist (in order to prop up his sagging Messianic credentials) will escalate this regional Middle Eastern conflict into a full-scale thermonuclear world war that will destroy a third of the planet; and how the Antichrist will gain dominance over the whole world as a result.

The Antichrist’s short and brutal career as the dictator of planet earth is another central theme of the Bible’s prophecies concerning these times. We will study his personality profile, his descriptions (the beast from the sea, the little horn, the prince who is to come, the son of perdition, the lawless one...), his relationship with Satan, his apparent resurrection from the dead, his association with the “beast from the land” (a.k.a. the “false prophet”), and his insatiable lust for power. We’ll discover his agenda *vis-à-vis* Israel, his regime’s devastating effect on planet earth and its rapidly diminishing population, the war of the “kings of the east” (something I’m calling World War IV, China’s genocidal land grab, perpetrated with the Antichrist’s blessing) and finally, his ultimate demise.

We’ll also meet the “ants at his picnic,” so to speak. Two “witnesses” whose mortal lives are sealed by Yahweh until their job is done will pronounce curse after curse on the Antichrist’s kingdom—which by this time will include the entire earth. These curses will apparently be implemented by the angels of the seven bowl judgments. Adding to his woes will be 144,000 young Jewish evangelists (also sealed by God) who will make it clear to Israel why the Antichrist is *not* their savior (as he’d like them to believe). They’ll shepherd Israel’s remnant through their 1,260 days of exile and reintroduce their people to the Messiah their forefathers rejected.

The events of the Tribulation will swirl around Israel as if it were the eye of a hurricane, and they'll conspire to bring the nation back to Yahweh—and then to His Messiah, Yahshua. The first undeniable demonstration of God's power on their behalf will be His blatantly miraculous intervention on their behalf during the War of Magog. The result will be that **“Then they shall know that I am Yahweh their God.”** (Ezekiel 39:28) And the last nail in the coffin of their historic unbelief will be the return—as prophesied—of the risen Messiah to the Mount of Olives. It will be Israel's Great Awakening, their definitive observance of the Day of Atonement, when Israel will—as a nation—afflict their souls in repentance and respond to their Anointed King's offer of imputed righteousness, just as the Torah requires.

There is a five-day gap on the Levitical calendar between the Day of Atonement (which prophesies Israel's repentance) and the Feast of Tabernacles (which predicts the earthly reign of the risen Christ). During those five days, the most infamous conflict of human history will be fought: the Battle of Armageddon. Calling it a “battle,” however, is a bit naïve (which is no doubt why scripture doesn't actually use that phrase). Yes, the world's collected armies have assembled at Har Meggido to annihilate the hated Jews once and for all, but they didn't count on facing the returning Messiah-King, Yahshua, who will (as Isaiah says) tread out the winepress of Yahweh's wrath alone, leaving no one alive who had come to attack God's beloved people. Their corpses will be strewn in bloody heaps from one end of the Land to the other—a fitting end to three and a half years of worldwide rebellion against Yahweh.

Thus ends Volume 2, which explains why there's a Volume 3 to this book: there is far more to the future of Yahweh's plan than merely getting rid of the evil in the world—though that's a necessary piece of the puzzle. The story doesn't end with wrath and damnation, but with a bright eternal future for those who have allied themselves with the Living God. It's not necessarily over when it's over. For God's children, it will *never* be over.

Chapter 8

Getting All Caught Up

I feel like I owe you an apology. (I *don't*, you understand. I just *feel* like I do.) Here we are seven chapters deep into a book on Biblical prophecy and I haven't given you ten sentences about the future. But eight is the scriptural number of new beginnings, isn't it? Don't give up.

Just before His crucifixion, Yahshua comforted His disciples by telling them, **"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."** (John 14:2-3) How, precisely, did He intend to do that? Whether or not they understood it at this point, He had told them plainly that He was about to be killed. And you don't normally see this kind of behavior—going, preparing, and coming back—in dead people. Yes, He'd said He would rise again the third day, but what did that mean? He'd often resorted to parables and metaphors to teach some hidden truth. Was this one of those times? If you listen to the questions the disciples asked him, it's clear that they didn't really understand. I know I wouldn't have.

Maybe they thought back a few weeks to the Lazarus incident. Upon hearing that His dear friend was ill, Yahshua had purposely hung back in Perea—on the other side of the Jordan—until Lazarus had been dead for several days. **"Then Martha [his sister] said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'" (John 11:21-27)**

Only then did He go out, stand in front of his friend's tomb, and shout, "Lazarus, come forth!" Good thing Yahshua wasn't speaking English; if He had, three other guys would have come out first. He had that kind of power over death, and he had just proved it—again. Neither Lazarus, nor the daughter of Jairus, nor the son of the widow of Nain had been able to remain dead in His presence. But it was one thing to bring a corpse back to life; it was something else entirely to come back yourself, under your own steam. Or was it? If you're God in the flesh, what's possible and what's not? The disciples had to have been confused. They were still not sure what Yahshua was talking about.

It wasn't long, however, before they discovered that He wasn't speaking in parables. He'd been talking about real physical death, real burial in a real tomb,

and real resurrection. “Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they [the Galilean women], and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as [the women] were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”’ And they remembered His words.” (Luke 24:1-8)

A bit of explanation is in order here. The Jews of Yahshua’s day, especially the wealthy ones, didn’t bury their dead in the ground or cremate them as we do today. Rather, they would lay the corpse in a cave, anointing it with fragrant spices to mask the stench of decomposition while they waited for the flesh to rot off the bones. Some months later they would go back, remove the bones and place them in an ossuary—a small box made for the purpose. (One such recently discovered ossuary was purported to have held the bones of James, Yahshua’s half-brother.) The tomb itself would have been used over again many times throughout a family’s generations—there were often several recesses or platforms for the bodies carved into the rock. The tomb was accessible through a small passage, perhaps three or four feet high. A stone disk, big enough to cover the opening and eight or ten inches thick, would have been rolled in front of it. The stone had to be heavy enough to keep the tomb secure from marauding animals, but light enough that it could be rolled aside by a couple of strong men if and when the need arose. It was this stone that the women had been concerned about moving that Sunday morning. But when they’d arrived, they found that it had already been rolled away.

The tomb was empty. Since it was a newly built structure, none of Joseph’s kin had ever been laid there; Yahshua had been the first to use it. This was a private garden, and the tomb was the only cave in the immediate vicinity. The women had followed Joseph and Nicodemus the short distance (a few dozen meters) from the crucifixion site, and they had watched the two men place the corpse of Yahshua into the tomb. There was no mistaking the grave. And there was no denying that Yahshua was no longer there.

If the women hadn’t been so badly shaken (mind you, *they* were the ones out talking with angels and crawling into tombs—the men were all cowering in a locked room), they might have said, “I can see that He’s not here, but what do you mean *risen*? You mean like Lazarus? Back from the dead?”

“No,” the angels would have said. “Not exactly. Lazarus is alive, but he’s still mortal; some day his body will die again, as is the way of all men. Yahshua, on

the other hand, is *risen*—He has put on immortality. He hasn't *postponed* death; He has *conquered* it. And because He did, you will too."

What actually transpired is this: "Then they [the two men in shining garments—angels] said to her [Mary Magdalene], 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.... Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."' Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side." (John 20:13-14, 17-20)

Besides the fairly remarkable fact that Mary was holding a conversation with someone who had been dead for the last few days, we need to notice a few things about the body that Christ now occupied. First, it was a real body, not a vision, spirit, or ghost. She apparently fell at his feet and grasped Him in worshipful reverence until He gently insisted that she not restrain Him from doing what he needed to do. Although we aren't told, my guess (SF3) is that Yahshua "ascended to His Father" that very Sunday morning after meeting with the faithful women, presenting Himself as the "wave offering" before the throne of God (cf. Leviticus 23:11) in fulfillment of the Feast of Firstfruits. He then returned to show Himself to His disciples. (He seemed to be in a hurry when He encountered Mary. It wouldn't have made sense to hang around for forty days until His "ascension" after telling her in so many words, "Don't hold me back; I need to go now.")

Indeed, later in the same day, Yahshua appeared to the disciples and encouraged them to touch Him, to handle Him, to satisfy themselves that He was real, having "flesh and bones." He still bore the marks of the crucifixion, proof that it was Him and not some look-alike imposter. "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, 'Peace to you.' But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.' When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, 'Have you any food here?' So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence." (Luke 24:36-43) Though He obviously didn't need food to sustain life anymore, He could still assimilate and enjoy the bounty of the earth. Sounds to me like the best of all worlds.

Second, this resurrection body Yahshua now inhabited had what Star Trek fans might call a “cloaking device.” That is, whether or not people who had known Him recognized Him as the risen Christ—or saw Him at all—was apparently a matter of His discretion. Mary, who knew Him well, thought He was the gardener until he spoke her name. Two disciples walking to a nearby village chatted with Him for hours before suddenly realizing that they were in the presence of the risen Messiah: **“Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?’**

“Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?’

“And He said to them, ‘What things?’

“So they said to Him, ‘The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.’

“Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:13-27)

Paul would later explain that the whole Hebrew Bible had been speaking of this very thing. All of Scripture led to the resurrection and coming glory of Yahshua the Messiah. He *was* the redeemer; but redemption always carries a price tag. **“Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the gentiles.” (Acts 26:22-23)**

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus found Yahshua’s explanation of the words of the prophets as compelling as Paul would later. **“Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, ‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.’ And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them,**

that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.” (Luke 24:28-31)

Not only did Cleopas and his friend not recognize the face and voice they knew so well—the very One whom they had been convinced “was going to redeem Israel”—but when their eyes were finally opened, He vanished into thin air. Though it was getting toward dark, they hoofed it back to Jerusalem as fast as they could, a brisk two-hour walk from Emmaus. By the time they got there, Yahshua had already had a one-on-one conversation with Peter (Luke 24:34, I Corinthians 15:5) who had in turn gone back and told the other ten. Then, as Cleopas and his pal breathlessly told the disciples of their encounter, Yahshua Himself suddenly appeared in the room—though the doors were locked—and showed them all how real He was, as we read above in Luke 24:36-43.

We can conclude from the narrative that Yahshua, in His resurrected body, was not restricted by time or physical barriers. He could be wherever He wanted, whenever He wanted. He could appear or disappear at will, reappearing moments later at some distant location of His choosing. He could assume either the recognizable form of His old physical body or that of someone unknown to those who were familiar with Him in His humanity. It’s possible, of course, that rather than changing forms Himself, he altered the perception of those He encountered until He wished to reveal Himself—a feat no less miraculous. Luke does mention that “their eyes were restrained.” But that wouldn’t explain the capacity for time travel or the ability to pass through locked doors. The evidence about Yahshua’s resurrection body clearly points to an objective reality, not a mass hallucination. At the very least, we can be assured that Yahshua’s new body was nothing like the one He had inhabited in his earthly life.

Interestingly, His “clothing” apparently had the same attributes. He had been stripped naked when they crucified Him, and the grave clothes had been left behind in Joseph’s tomb. Yet no one reported seeing a naked man running around Jerusalem accosting mourners, and He left no clothing behind when He went poof in Emmaus. This leads me to the inescapable conclusion that the Yahshua all these folks saw after the resurrection was whatever and whoever the risen Christ wanted them to see. If He had desired to manifest Himself as a turnip at this point, He could have done that, for His body was no longer restricted by the confines of atomic structure or DNA. It looked real and felt as solid as any human flesh, but it was no longer subservient to the laws of physics. Yahshua’s spiritual body was constrained only by the will of God.

Yahshua did not show himself to everyone. He restricted his appearances to those who had already shown faith in Him. Why? Because to *prove* His resurrection to those who had rejected Him would be tantamount to forcing their acceptance, and if you’ll recall, love must be voluntary—if it’s forced, it becomes

something else. His appearances to His disciples, however, gave them confidence to carry out His instructions: **“God raised up [Yahshua] on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.”** (Acts 10:40-42)

His appearances also gave them assurance that there was life beyond this life. And it logically followed that it didn't much matter what happened to their mortal bodies. There was something better waiting for them, and not just as disembodied spirits playing phantom harps on clouds somewhere. Our new bodies were going to be real, just as Yahshua's was real. In some ways, these bodies will be like those of angels: **“In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.”** (Matthew 22:30, cf. Mark 12:25) Those like me (I can't imagine, or even *remember*, life without my wife) have some hurdles to get over here. Procreation is a thing of the past: spiritual beings can't beget other spiritual beings the way physical beings reproduce themselves. That makes sense, because each of us is a “new creation” in Christ—spiritually, no one makes us without consulting us first, the way our parents “made” our physical bodies. I believe that in the resurrection our personal relationships will be deeper and more meaningful than ever, but alas, scripture doesn't say much about it.

Seeing Yahshua alive, the disciples at last had confirmation of the hope that had been voiced in the earliest scriptures, a hope of resurrection, of a new bodily existence, of eternal life. Job in his anguish had pleaded: **“Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You.”** (Job 14:13-15) Somehow he sensed that physical death wasn't the end, but that he would be changed, renewed, even from the grave. **“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth. And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me.”** (Job 19:25-27)

Job's hope was of a bodily resurrection from his grave, but David took it one step further: **“I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”** (Psalm 17:15) Yahweh's favorite human fully expected to awake from death in a body that looked something like his God's—whatever that was. He wouldn't be satisfied until he could walk and talk with his heavenly Father as Adam had before he fell. In our present sinful state, it's sometimes hard to comprehend how we could be made in God's image. But in our new spiritual bodies, I think the likeness will be readily apparent.

Paul put it like this: **“We who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.... For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”** (Romans 8:23, 29-30) Becoming “conformed to the image” of Yahshua is a process that begins when we are born anew as spiritual beings, a process that will not be complete until we are “glorified,” i.e., given our sinless resurrection bodies.

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this [body] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” (II Corinthians 5:1-8) In other words, giving us a spiritual body—an immortal body—was Yahweh’s plan all along. And the reason (one of them) for giving us His Spirit was to prove to us that He would someday put His plan into action in our lives.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (II Corinthians 4:16-18) No wonder the early Christians made such cheerful martyrs. They realized, as a few of us do today, that **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”** (II Corinthians 5:17) Yahshua himself had said, **“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”** (John 12:25-26) A new creation for a new location.

Let’s pause and check our bearings. We’ve established that Yahshua of Nazareth was God’s promised Messiah, the one of whom the prophets had

spoken. We have eyewitness reports saying He was crucified and entombed, that He rose from the dead on the third day after his death, and that he was then seen by a number of His followers, first immediately after his resurrection and then sporadically over the next six weeks. Then, **“[Yahshua] was taken up after He, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”** (Acts 1:2-3) We have heard the disciples’ testimony concerning the unusual properties of the body Yahshua now inhabited. Now we need to ask the hard question: *what does all this have to do with us?* After all, according to Isaiah, the Messiah would be “mighty God, everlasting Father.” Does this imply that whatever Yahshua did and however He appeared, it’s unique and only applies to Him?

Fortunately, scripture does not leave us in the dark on this point. Paul explained it with the flawless—if somewhat wordy—logic of a transformed Pharisee: **“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”** Okay, Paul, I think we all get it. **“Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”** (I Corinthians 15:12-22)

Or, to put it more simply, **“If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”** (Romans 8:11) That’s basically what Yahshua told Nicodemus in John 3. The bottom line? **“Jesus Christ our Lord...was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God...by the resurrection from the dead.”** (Romans 1:3-4) Paul had a point. Yahshua, though the Son of God, had lived the life of a mortal man. He had proved His mortality by dying (duh). But if He had risen from the dead, as over five hundred eyewitnesses enthusiastically affirmed (I Corinthians 15:6), *that* proved that not only was resurrection possible, it was something God was prepared to do.

Possible? On the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted David in making the case that God was *certain* to raise Messiah from the dead, and because of this, we could have hope as well. **“God raised [Him] up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: ‘I**

foresaw Yahweh always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in the grave, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.” (Acts 2:24-28; cf. Psalm 16:8-11, Acts 13:30-36)

We have further confirmation that we will experience a bodily resurrection—and not merely a spiritual change of address—in this benediction from Paul: “**Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.**” (I Thessalonians 5:23-24) Spirit, soul, *and* body! He also reminds us, “**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**” (Philippians 3:20-21) John puts it like this: “**Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**” (I John 3:2) Wow!

Remember the Feast of Firstfruits? God had predicted this very thing. Yahshua was the sacrifice. He was the “grain offering” who ascended to the Father. Just as the sheaf of barley was a precursor of the entire coming harvest, Yahshua was “merely” the first of many mortals who would ascend to the Father. We will follow Him. “**If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. [But even] if we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.**” (II Timothy 2:11-13) Our resurrection, like our salvation, is not dependent on our works but upon the character of Yahweh—and our faith in Him. Of course, our works *reveal* that faith.

“**God...has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**” (I Peter 1:3-5) Yes, we look like ordinary sinful people as we walk through our lives trapped in these mortal bodies. But our glorious new existence is already a *fait accompli*, ready to be revealed. Ready or not, world: our salvation will soon become apparent. And when it does, we will be revealed to be what Yahweh made us: “incorruptible and undefiled.”

“**But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, to each seed its own body.... So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (I Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44)

Allow me to interrupt scripture with scripture here. In another letter, Paul wrote, **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”** (Galatians 6:7-8) Even though our resurrection is all Yahweh’s doing, we aren’t passive pawns here. We aren’t *predestined* to either corruption or eternal life. Rather, we’re active participants in sowing the seeds of our own future realities.

Back in Corinthians, Paul was about to explain how our bodies, built for life on earth, cannot at the same time be suitable for life in the spiritual realm. **“And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man [Adam] was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man [Yahshua] is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.”** (I Corinthians 15:45-50)

How does this work? Yahshua’ life-changing words to Nicodemus in John 3, **“You must be born again [that is, from above],”** come to mind. We must be born of *both* water and Spirit. But logistically, how do we obtain our “spiritual bodies?” How do we follow Christ in this last great adventure? Surely not in the same spectacular fashion in which Yahshua left this earth. Millions have died “in Christ” since His resurrection, but we don’t stand on hilltops and wave goodbye to them as they ascend bodily toward heaven. Rather, our souls and spirits immediately enter the presence of their Savior. As Christ said to the repentant thief on the cross, **“Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”** (Luke 23:43) Or as Paul reminds those indwelt by the Holy Spirit, when we are absent from our mortal bodies, we are present with Yahshua. (see II Corinthians 5:5-8). When we die, however, though our eternal spirits still live, our bodies are left behind, emptied of life. They’re “sown in corruption,” a nice way of saying they rot, stink, and deteriorate. So far, this doesn’t sound a whole lot like Christ’s bodily resurrection. But just as His corpse spent time in a tomb before He rose in His new, incorruptible body, so those who “sleep” in Yahshua must spend some time in the same state, separated (thank God) from their mortal bodies. Thanks to Him, this condition is no more permanent with us than it was for Yahshua.

Again, it is Paul who explains it: **“I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who**

sleep 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 will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." (I Thessalonians 4:13-16)

I probably read this a thousand times before I saw it: God will bring "those who sleep in Jesus" (i.e., their conscious souls and eternal spirits) back with Him when He returns, and *then* "the dead in Christ" will rise. *He's talking about the same people!* This can mean only one thing: the souls and spirits of the godly dead will be reunited with their bodies as Yahshua was with His—not their corrupt, mortal, decayed bodies, you understand, but new, transformed, "spiritual" bodies, just like the one Yahshua walked around in after His resurrection.

Of course, Paul wasn't speaking to dead people. His audience, based on his previous teaching, knew that Yahshua could return for them at any time. He was talking to "we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord." Logic dictates that if the Church doesn't die out completely—which is pretty hard to imagine if the gates of hell can't prevail against it—there will still be a community of believers living upon the earth when Yahshua returns, no matter how long He waits. Paul just got through telling them that God was going to take care of resurrecting the godly dead before he dealt with those still living. But what then? In the same breath, he says, **"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them [the godly dead] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."** (I Thessalonians 4:17-18)

What? All of us? Yep. This is one of those bombshell passages that defines our whole perception of future events. An entire generation of believers will not taste physical death. Instead, they (or is it *we?*) will be instantaneously "caught up" into the air. This event will apparently happen immediately after the dead in Christ are raised, for we all have the same timetable and the same mission: to "meet the Lord in the air." Indeed, it is said we will be caught up "together." In other words, there will be no discernable time gap. This same event was spoken of in the Old Testament: **"He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people: 'Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.' Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge."** (Psalm 50:4-6) The "covenant by sacrifice" is our trust in the death of God's Messiah to atone for our sins—whether before or after the fact. These saints will be gathered both from "the heavens" (those who have already died) and "the earth" (those who still live).

Note that we will meet the Lord "in the clouds," or "in the air." Peter Pan notwithstanding, this is not normal behavior for human beings. But Yahshua has already demonstrated that it's perfectly natural for one who has assumed his or

her “spiritual body.” This is precisely what He did, standing in the presence of His disciples on the Mount of Olives, forty days after His resurrection: **“While they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”** (Acts 1:9-11)

The Greek word for “caught up” used in Thessalonians is *harpazo*. It means “to catch away, snatch up, pluck, pull, or take as if by force.” The Latin equivalent is *rapiemur*, from which we derive the commonly used term for this event, “rapture.” (Latin Vulgate: “*Deinde nos qui vivimus qui relinquimur simul rapiemur cum illis in nubibus obviam Domino in aera et sic semper cum Domino erimus.*”) Interestingly, the word Luke used for “taken up” in the Acts passage just quoted is not *harpazo* but *analambano*, “to receive up or take in.” Whereas Christ’s ascension into the clouds was a rather leisurely affair—with dozens of guys standing around with their hands in their pockets staring up into the sky, straining to catch a last glimpse of Yahshua—the rapture will apparently be a sudden, now-you-see-me-now-you-don’t sort of thing. The kind of disappearing act Yahshua performed in Joseph’s garden tomb will be the order of the day.

Some light might be shed on the subject if we look at a few of the other scriptural instances of *harpazo*. Philip, in a unique demonstration of the Spirit’s power, was “raptured” without actually being raptured. That is, he disappeared from view just as Yahshua did in Emmaus, and showed up miles away, but he was still in his mortal body! **“Now when they [Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch whom he was baptizing] came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught [harpazo] Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus.”** (Acts 8:39-40)

The same word is used by John to describe the people’s intention to “take Yahshua by force” and make Him king. Paul was “taken by force”—*harpazo* again—from an angry mob by the Roman guard in Jerusalem. It is used twice in the passage describing Paul’s “near-death experience” when he was “caught up” into heaven. There is nothing casual or passive about the word.

The fascinating instance, however, is in Revelation, where in John’s vision, the intense spiritual warfare surrounding the advent of Yahshua is in view. **“And the dragon [Satan] stood before the woman [Israel] who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child [Yahshua] who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up [harpazo] to God and His throne.”** (Revelation 12:4-5) So in a sense, Yahshua *has* experienced the rapture, just as the Church will. A cursory reading might lead to the conclusion that the “male Child” was “raptured” in order to keep Him safe from the dragon’s clutches, but

that's not the case. Yahshua was tested in every way possible and remained untouched, defeating death itself in the end. Satan would certainly have "devoured" Him if he could have. But he had no real power over God's Anointed.

Nor does he have any power over the Bride of Christ. When Yahshua told the church at Philadelphia, **"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth,"** (Revelation 3:10) He was talking about the rapture. They would be kept out of "the hour of trial," not in order to keep them safe, but because they had *already* persevered in the name and power of Christ. There was no need for testing, no reason for wrath.

The rapture, then, is a one-time event, still future. When it comes to pass, every believer from the Church age, whether dead or living, will suddenly receive his or her "spiritual" body, in which we will depart this earth to meet Yahshua in the air. The rapture, in fact, is the very event that defines the end of the Church age. The Ekklesia is characterized by one thing above all others: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But Paul writes of a time when the Spirit will no longer be here: **"He who now restrains [lawlessness] will do so until He is taken out of the way...."** (II Thessalonians 2:7) He is surely referring to the Holy Spirit because there is no one else who can truthfully be said to be "restraining" the "mystery of lawlessness." Some commentators assert that the restrainer is the Church, but aside from the fact that we are just as often part of the problem as we are part of the solution, we on our best days are impotent to restrain evil without the Spirit's power (though the Spirit often accomplishes His work in and through individual believers). So in this context it's a moot point whether Paul is talking about the Spirit or the Church.

That being said, the Holy Spirit cannot be "taken out of the way" as long as the Church is here on earth, for He (or is it "*She*?" In Hebrew, *Ruach Qodesh* is a feminine noun) dwells within us. Yahshua explained to His disciples, **"I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."** (John 14:16-17) The indwelling of the Spirit was still future when Yahshua spoke these words, but it all became "present tense" on the Day of Pentecost, seven weeks later. So for the time being, we're a package deal. No Spirit, no Church.

It's not that the Spirit's influence will be non-existent after the rapture. But at the time of the rapture, there won't be a single Spirit-indwelled believer on the face of the earth. Since the belatedly repentant saints of Laodicea *are* a part of the church (according to Yahshua), they will (by definition) host the Holy Spirit. But though comfort and peace will be theirs, they will have no power to restrain lawlessness (see Daniel 12:7; Revelation 13:7).

The rapture will apparently occur instantaneously worldwide, for Yahshua said, **“As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”** (Matthew 24:27) He mentioned both daytime and nighttime activities in His description of the event, which makes perfect sense if Christians all over the world are to be resurrected at the same moment: **“I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed; the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together; the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field; the one will be taken and the other left.”** And they answered and said to Him, **‘Where, Lord?’** So He said to them, **‘Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.’** (Luke 17:34-37, cf. Matthew 24:40-41)

That last phrase has always puzzled me (and don’t look so pious—you’ve never understood it either). So I did a little word study on it. The three key words are “body,” “eagles,” and “gathered.” The Greek word for body is *soma*. *Thayer* explains that it can mean the body of a man or animal, dead or alive; a star or heavenly body; a group of people, such as a family or organization such as the Church; or the thing that casts the shadow, as opposed to the shadow itself. *Soma* is related to *sozo*: to save or keep safe, to rescue from danger or destruction. “Eagle” is the Greek *aetos*, which is derived from *aer*, meaning air or breeze. And “gathered” is from *sunago*, “to lead together, that is, collect or convene, specifically to entertain (hospitably):—accompany, assemble (selves together), bestow, come together, gather (selves together, up, together), lead into, or take in.” (*Strong’s*)

I don’t know what Aramaic words Yahshua used, but their Greek equivalents are turning out to be intriguing, to say the least. He had told them, **“One will be taken and the other left.”** And they answered with a question: **“Where, Lord?”** His reply was a play on words answering *both* questions, that is, “Where will they be taken?” and “Where will they be left?” The first answer could be rendered, “Where my followers—the body of Christ, those who are safe—are found, that is where My Spirit will have gathered them together.” The second answer would be, “Where the corpses of those left behind are found, that is where the carrion birds will come together to feast upon them.” Or words to that effect.

If He had told me, **“One will be taken and the other left,”** I wouldn’t have asked Him, “Where?” I would have asked Him, “How?” Paul answered my question when he wrote, **“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”** (I Corinthians 15:51-54) There it is again, the definition of the rapture (although

Paul didn't use the word *harpazo* this time). All those in Christ will receive new, incorruptible, "spiritual" bodies. Some will be "sleeping" (i.e., dead) at the time and some will still be alive in our mortal bodies. The event will happen instantaneously, "in the twinkling of an eye." And just that quickly, Yahshua's personal victory over death will become our inheritance.

But wait a minute. What was that about a trumpet?

Back in chapter three we explored the first four of seven "Feasts of Yahweh," annual celebrations the Israelites were commanded to observe. We saw that each of them not only had a historical basis in the life of Israel, but a future, prophetic aspect as well. The next one in order is the Feast of Trumpets, sometimes erroneously called *Rosh Hashanah*, meaning "head of the year." This day has been observed—wrongly—as New Year's day on the Jewish civil calendar since the Babylonian captivity, a bad habit the Jews picked up from their pagan captors. (Yahweh put the new year in the spring.) The date of this holy convocation is the first day of Tishri, in the seventh and final month of the annual round of Levitical festivals. It falls in the Gregorian calendar's September or October.

"Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh.'" (Leviticus 23:23-25, cf. Numbers 29:1-6) There wasn't much to this feast, comparatively speaking. It was a special Sabbath (as usual, proclaiming that "you can't work for it") marked by the blowing of the *shofar*—a ram's-horn "trumpet" symbolic of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (whereas cow's horns were reminiscent of Aaron's golden calf debacle).

Nehemiah pointed out that the Feast of Trumpets was to be a day of rejoicing: On the first day of the seventh month, he told the returning exiles of Babylon, **"This day is holy to Yahweh your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law."** Yes, you would tend to do that when first confronted with the fact that you'd totally screwed up the Instructions of God—and didn't even realize it. **"Then he said to them, 'Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Yahweh is your strength.'" (Nehemiah 8:9-10)** Note that the "fat" was the portion of the sacrifice reserved exclusively for Yahweh—an indication that as of the Feast of Trumpets, we'll be eating at *His* table! Wine is indicative of the blood of Christ, shed for our sins. It will only be "sweet" when we drink it anew with Him in His Father's house (see Matthew

26:29). And we are admonished to “send portions to anyone who has nothing ready.” I take that to mean that we of the church of Philadelphia (those who will experience the rapture) must leave evidence behind for the potential participants of the Laodicean awakening—those who will come to faith in Christ too late to avoid the “trial that is to come upon the whole earth.” They will remember what we said, did, and wrote. Don’t clutter the message with non-essential issues: preach Christ, and Him crucified.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum of Ariel Ministries points out that the Jewish theology surrounding The Feast of Trumpets saw three reasons for blowing the *shofar*. First, it was a call to remembrance and repentance, for the day was the first of the ten “days of awe” that culminated in *Yom Kippur*, or the Day of Atonement. Second, it was to remind Israel of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. And third, tradition held that this was the day in which Satan came before God to accuse Israel (although my guess is that he does it all year round). So the Jews blow the *shofar* to confuse the devil. *It’s not working, guys.*

Likewise, the ram’s horn in Talmudic lore symbolized three significant concepts: the regathering of Israel (Isaiah 27:12-13), the resurrection of the dead, and the opening of three heavenly books. The Book of the Righteous revealed the identities of the totally good people, who would live for at least one more year; the Book of the Wicked (a.k.a. the Book of the Dead) had the names of those who were rotten to the core, and thus would not live to see another year; and (you can almost smell this one coming) the Book of the In-Between—recording, as you might guess, those “in between,” neither all good nor all bad. Everybody assumes they’re in this last book, of course, and should consequently make an effort to reflect and repent during the “ten days of awe” between the Feast of Trumpets (*Yom Teruah*—the Day of Blowing) and Yom Kippur.

The *shofar* is blown one hundred times during the Feast of Trumpets, using four distinct types of sounds. The *tekiah* is a long, continuous blast signifying joy and contentment. Three shorter blasts is called the *shevarim*, and breaking that into three sets of triplets, or nine staccato notes, is known as the *truah*. These three blasts are repeated throughout the festival, but at the very end comes the *tekiah gedolah*, or “great blast”—the last trumpet. Sound familiar? **“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.”**

Yes, the Feast of Trumpets is prophetic of the rapture of the Church. Does this mean that the rapture *must* happen on The Feast of Trumpets—in September or October? The return of Yahshua for His Church has been considered imminent ever since the Day of Pentecost. But that doesn’t negate the fact that *every single one* of the Feasts of Yahweh that have already come to pass has been fulfilled *on the very day* of its Levitical directive. That’s more than a little significant, if you

ask me. But doesn't saying the rapture will fall on *Yom Teruah* fly in the face of Yahshua's statement that "of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only"? (Matthew 24:36) No, not even on the face of it. Yahshua is very precise about what He tells us. We *still* don't know "the day or the hour," because we don't know the year. Though trying to guess the date of the rapture is a fool's errand, I must admit that during the last decade or so, I've occasionally caught myself glancing up at the clouds on autumn mornings and grinning. I can't help it.

But there's another factor buried in the cultural baggage surrounding the statement—something that gets lost in the translation. Remember what I reported about the *shofar* being blown to confuse the devil? The Feast of Trumpets is also known as *Yom Hakeseh*—"the Day of the Hiding," or simply the "Hidden Day." It was to be, according to Jewish tradition, symbolically "hidden" from Satan—so the accuser couldn't be effective in accusing anybody. I know it sounds naive, but it introduced an idiom into Jewish speech that was reflected in Yahshua's enigmatic statement. Following this tradition, Jewish believers never actually stated when the Feast would come, although everybody knew it fell on the first day of Tishri. They merely remarked, tongue in cheek, "Of that day and hour no one knows, only the Father." Unfortunately, Satan's not that dumb. But the fact remains, the only day of the year that was described this way—as being hidden—was the Feast of Trumpets, *Yom Teruah*, *Yom Hakeseh*. Yahshua was indicating by His use of the idiom that He would "gather His elect" on the Feast of Trumpets in some unspecified future year.

Thus it's no coincidence that the Rabbis connected the Feast of Trumpets with the resurrection of the dead. Equally intriguing is their association of the day with the Jews' regathering into the promised land. At the risk of getting ahead of our story, consider what will happen when the Church is raptured, leaving not a soul on earth, Jew or Gentile, who believes that Yahshua is the Messiah. Even now, those who acknowledge no accountability to God invariably look for something or someone other than themselves to blame for their troubles, and as often as not the Jews become these people's targets. If history is any indicator of future events, Gentiles will systematically persecute the world's Jews in the days following the rapture of their only real allies, and this will drive them to the one place left on earth where they are accepted and welcomed, if not quite safe—Israel. But we'll have to save the details concerning that theory for later.

Yahshua's resurrection and subsequent ascension paved the way for us, demonstrating His power over death and proving that He alone was the unmaking of Adam's curse. But none of the New Testament writers except Paul explains the mechanism of *harpazo*, this catching up of believers into the presence of God. This has led some misguided theologians to question the reality of the rapture, presumably on the premise that only "in the mouth of two or three witnesses" is the truth established. *Paul was entitled to his opinion, but...*

You want more witnesses? Fair enough. There are two Old Testament characters who learned all about the rapture the hard way. No traditions, no scholarly tomes for these guys. They lived it. The first was Enoch, the great grandfather of Noah. **"Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."** (Genesis 5:21-25)

"And he *was not*?" That's pretty thin, you might be saying. Fortunately, we have scripture to interpret scripture in this case: **"By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, and was not found, because God had taken him; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."** (Hebrews 11:5-6)

The Greek word for "taken away" is not our old friend *harpazo*. It is *metaitemi*, which *Strong's* defines as "to transfer, that is (literally) transport, (by implication) exchange, (reflexively) change sides—to carry over, change, remove, translate, or turn." Interesting, isn't it? I like the KJV's rendering here: "Enoch was translated." *Thayer's Greek Definitions* sheds even more light on the subject. The word means, "to transpose (two things, one...in place of the other); to transfer; to change..." In other words, Enoch's corruptible body was transposed, transferred, *changed* into something incorruptible, a body capable of being in God's presence. If I may wax metaphorical, his mortal body had been written in a primitive language—one limited in vocabulary and clumsy in grammar, little more than grunts and wheezes—and it was translated into *koine* Greek—expressive, robust, and precisely eloquent (and, if I may stretch my metaphor to the breaking point, a language that could live forever only because it had already died).

Of course, I've been ignoring the most important thing: God took Enoch home because the man pleased Him. Makes sense. Why would anyone, especially One as smart as Yahweh, want to have people around who didn't like Him or refused to believe He even existed? Enoch was chosen because he had faith in Yahweh and "diligently sought Him." God doesn't change, my friends. Who do you think He'll take next time?

The other Old Testament example of a rapture experience happened in the plain view of a reliable witness who recorded it for posterity. Apparently, what was about to happen to Elijah was no secret, either to himself or any of the other prophets of Israel, of whom there were many at this time (848 B.C.). Elijah's servant and fellow-prophet, Elisha, determined to be there when it happened. "It came to pass, when Yahweh was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Then Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here, please, for Yahweh has sent me on to Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As Yahweh lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!' So they went down to Bethel. Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that Yahweh will take away your master from over you today?' And he said, 'Yes, I know; keep silent!...'"

Then off to Jericho. Same thing happened. "So the two of them went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?' Elisha said, 'Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.' So he said, 'You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.' Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven...." Note that although Elijah's rapture was expected, it was still surprisingly sudden.

"And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!' So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, 'Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah?' And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

"Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.' And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him. Then they said to him, 'Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of Yahweh has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley.' And he said, 'You shall not send anyone.' But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, 'Send them!' Therefore they sent fifty men, and they searched for three days but did not find him. And when they came back to him, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, 'Did I not say to you, "Do not go"?"' (II Kings 2:1-18)

If Elisha hadn't been so determined, it's possible that all we'd be able to say with certainty about his master is, "Elijah was not, for God took him." As it is,

we've got a detailed eyewitness account—one that's every bit as incomprehensible as the one about Enoch if you're not prepared to accept the power of God: **"A chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."** Elijah didn't just disappear from sight, nor did he die and leave a body behind. He rode a whirlwind into heaven. I can't think of anyone in the Bible who made a more spectacular exit, although Korah and his merry men (Numbers 16:31-33) came close.

We can draw several parallels between Elijah's departure and the rapture of the final generation of Christians. The chariot of fire served two functions. It separated Elijah, who was supposed to go, from Elisha, who was not. And it confirmed that the prophet was being taken on purpose by the hand of God, rather than merely being the unluckiest man in Israel that day. We too will be separated from those around us; the Holy Spirit who dwells within us has already accomplished this. God told us to "Be holy, for I am holy." *Holy* means separated, set apart for His purposes. And what about flaming horses? I don't expect too many "chariot-of-fire" experiences on the day of the rapture, but if the driver of that red Mustang tooling down the interstate on the big day happens to be a Christian....

Also, as in the coming rapture, Elijah left no corpse behind. Fifty students from the local prophets' seminary searched for his body for three days and found nothing. We need to be realistic here. If one man's departure almost three thousand years ago caused that kind of interest, the sudden disappearance of millions of people from the face of the earth will not go unnoticed. But the event will be met with, shall we say, mixed reviews.

Throughout much of the world, small pockets of Christians, two here, three there, a whole family at home, a few friends out sharing a pizza, will go missing. The following scenarios describe the kinds of things I imagine the rapture will leave in its wake. I have no knowledge of how many will be taken and how many will be left; therefore my "statistics" here are strictly guesses for the purpose of illustration, given so that you can appreciate what it might be like to be left behind. The time of day in any given location is strictly my conjecture. What does seem certain, however, is that the rapture will occur in "real time" at the same moment all over the globe, sometime during the twenty-four hour duration of the Feast of Trumpets, Jerusalem time.

An Australian surfer, catching some late afternoon waves with a friend after work, sees his mate's board float into shore without him. The first thing that goes

through his mind is, *shark!* But there's no body, no blood. He hears yelling down the beach. Others are missing too.

A husband in India sharing a meal with his family looks up from his food to find his wife and young son gone; his frantic search reveals that sixteen others in his village, including that missionary doctor and his family, are gone as well. No Hindus are missing, but (unfortunately, he reflects) none of the village's Muslims are either—only the Christians. *I warned her about talking to those people.*

Life in Mecca goes on as usual. No one is missing. Nothing is out of place. The *hajj* pilgrims visiting the Ka'aba catch the news in their hotel rooms on the local *al-Jazeera* affiliate and scratch their heads. Then somebody fires a Kalashnikov into the air and yells *Allahu Akbar!* A great victory is declared. *The hated infidels, those despicable, lying, Jew-loving unbelievers are gone! Some of 'em, anyway.* It will dawn on them slowly, if at all: Neither Allah nor his Apostle Muhammad (peace be unto him) ever did a miracle of any kind before. Why did he wait fourteen centuries and then do *this?*

Jerusalem dawns bright and clear. But it is soon discovered that 342 tourists, mostly from America and Canada, staying at five of the city's best hotels, have simply disappeared during the night. The *Shin Bet* swings into action, fearing the Palestinian Muslims, perhaps Hamas or al-Qaeda, have gone and done something rash. The IDF is put on full alert, but the reports trickle in: it's not just tourists. Hundreds of Israelis have failed to show up for work. Interviews with their employers all tell the same story: these are good, responsible workers, not prone to wildcat strikes, even though many of them have occasionally expressed odd Messianic theories. The black hats show up in droves at the Wailing Wall and immediately scour the nearby library for the proper prayer to recite (since you can't petition He-Whose-Name-Must-Not-Be-Spoken—*ha-Shem*, or “the Name,” for short—if a Rabbi hasn't pre-approved your words). But there's nothing in all of Judaism to cover this. They finally select something about heroic warriors missing in battle, form minyans, face the wall, and begin bobbing their heads.

The Vatican is all abuzz. Scattered reports are coming in from all over Europe. Thousands of Catholics and even more Protestants are gone. No one knows how. Sometime before dawn they simply disappeared. Among the lost are hundreds of priests, dozens of bishops, and even two cardinals. Scores of Europe's Protestant pastors are nowhere to be found. The clergy who are left talk in low whispers about those who were taken, their colleagues and friends. Invariably these were the more “radical” of their number, daring to challenge the Church on issues like the inerrancy of the papacy or the efficacy of the ecumenical movement—foolishly hindering their own careers in the process. Somebody mentions the rapture theory; he's laughed out of the room. A shaken

Pope prepares a statement stressing hope and unity as hundreds of thousands of worried Romans crowd into Saint Peter's Square.

The Western hemisphere is hardest hit—especially the U.S. and Canada. The American Vice President and three members of the cabinet are missing. A third of the House of Representatives and twenty percent of the Senate seats are vacant. Thirteen state governors are gone. Local administrations find that so many people in positions of responsibility are absent, the day-to-day functions of local government—from trash pickup to emergency services to education—quickly begin to grind to a halt.

Business is devastated. The heart of the American workforce, not those who have clawed their way to the boardroom, but those who faithfully serve in the mailroom, the factory floor, in kitchen and cubicle, are absent in the millions. Few companies are left whole. Many of the best companies—those still being run by founders who built their firms' strength through hard work and an attitude of service—are found leaderless.

The damage is not spread evenly over the country. Some cities are left more or less intact—San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, percentage-wise, are relatively untouched. But rural America is in shambles. Whole communities in the South and Midwest are like ghost towns, with half their populations AWOL. America's backbone is broken.

Because the “event” happened in the daytime here, there is far more “collateral damage” than elsewhere. Thousands of traffic accidents occur simultaneously as cars and trucks being driven by Christians are suddenly left unmanned. Exacerbating the problem is the fact that emergency personnel—police, firefighters, EMTs, and hospital ER staffs—have seen their own ranks “thinned.” Commercial aircraft manned by all-Christian flight crews stay aloft, but only because their auto-pilots keep them on course; landing—hours later—will prove to be their passengers' downfall. Life in the air traffic control towers becomes even more chaotic than usual, and not only because they're suddenly short-handed. Slowly, the infrastructure begins to break down because Christians are no longer there to do their jobs. Power grids fail, water and sewer systems malfunction, and half-staffed hospitals can't keep up with the carnage. Airports shut down. An instant gasoline shortage develops because the refineries aren't fully manned and fuel trucks can't get to their destinations. The supermarkets run out of food.

The media, of course, doesn't miss a beat. They're on top of the biggest story since 9/11 with every resource they've got—which is almost as much as what they had before the “Event.” Sure, there are a few low-level grunts missing—graphic artists, sound techs, and makeup people—but most of the on-camera network stars are ready to go. They quickly line up “experts” to hypothesize about

what's happened: law enforcement types, psychologists and parapsychologists, scientists, military leaders, politicians, and, of course, clergy.

The cops will only comment on what they're doing to contain and rectify the situation—meaning cleaning up the mess, not finding the missing millions. They're making lists, checking them twice, and trying to get hotlines set up for anyone with questions, or better, with answers. Likewise, the politicians offer condolences and hopeful promises of speedy resolution, assuring the public that the FBI, CIA, NSA, the Secret Service and the whole Department of Homeland Security are on this thing like a duck on a June bug. Meanwhile, the Attorney General's office is exploring the Constitutional ramifications of a special election. After all, the "Event" has shifted the balance of power in both the House and Senate solidly toward the liberal side of the aisle. ACLU lawyers begin preparing class action lawsuits blaming government agencies for being woefully unprepared for anything like this.

TV psychologists and psychiatrists do their level best to make the remaining audience feel good about what's happened, whatever it is. They offer tips for dealing with stress and grief, confidently advising that the sooner the nation gets beyond this, the sooner we can begin to build a better world. Nobody overtly speaks ill of the dead (or departed), but there is a subtle, underlying tone of—what is it? Relief? A newfound sense of liberation? Buried between the words in interview after interview is the unarticulated thought that those who are missing are the same ones who caused all the divisiveness in our world—they were the ones who wouldn't compromise, wouldn't accommodate, wouldn't make the first effort to get along with the peaceful religions of the world, wouldn't admit the obvious fact that there are many paths to god. *The fundamentalist whackos are gone. Perhaps we should draft some legislation banning Evangelical Christianity, so this kind of thing can never happen again. At least now we have a chance to start over, new and fresh. Are we not better off without them?*

CBS does a human interest piece on the black humor that invariably arises in times like this, especially in America. Within hours of the event, the sick jokes start circulating on the Internet. *What do you call it when a hundred million Christians disappear into thin air? A good start.... Have you heard of the new Christian diet? No, how much weight can you loose? All of it!...*

For the first time in their lives, the parapsychologists find themselves getting respect, and not only because Halloween is just around the corner. Their theories actually sound sort of plausible in the wake of this horrible, wonderful event. Here at last is proof: we are not alone in the universe. One of two things has happened, they announce. Either the aliens have come and selectively abducted all the intolerant troublemakers from the earth, or, more likely, the missing were actually aliens living among us, and they've gone back to their home planet. That

buzzing some heard—it sounded like a horn, a trumpet of some sort, didn't it?—that must have been the signal to return to the mother ship.

Although he really hates it, the military spokesman finds himself agreeing with the parapsychologist. It has to be aliens, because nobody on earth has the technology to do what's been done. *We're the best there is, and we can't do it.* As much as al-Qaeda would like to claim credit for this, they have demonstrated that the apex of their achievement is simply blowing things up. And though they get lucky from time to time, they've never been very good at it. It can't be the Chinese, either, because they've lost a fair number of people themselves. The Russians? Same story. So yessir! It has to be an alien strike force, and we need to ready ourselves to repulse any further aggression. The earth has a new enemy, an enemy from outside our world, and we all need to come together to fight it! World unity is what is needed now more than ever. *Thank god for the United Nations.*

The scientific expert delivers a technical treatise on how making people disappear might be possible—something about string theory and warping the space-time continuum. It's not *real*, of course, just a concept some guys at Cambridge are fiddling with. It all happens in the sixth or seventh dimension anyway. Not terribly practical. On the other hand, you could make people disappear today using the CIA's satellite-based laser weapons. *We're not talking about "teleporting" them, you understand, but evaporating—disintegrating them.* The audience feels strangely unsatisfied with his explanations. After half a century of believing "the scientist is god," they're now leaning toward the guy who thinks we've got little green men living among us. He makes for a more convincing sound bite.

The network bigwigs figure that when things happen that offer no facile explanation, you've got to look at the religious angle. So the media lines up experts from every faith they can find. They want to get a Graham or Falwell type, but they can't locate one. However, they get a Catholic archbishop, the minister of a huge Protestant church in New York (*a veteran of the prime-time news/talk shows—she'll be perfect for this*), a Muslim imam, a Jewish rabbi, a Hindu scholar, and they even hook up with the Dali-lama via satellite. They all say pretty much the same thing: we've seen the hand of god here, as far as we can tell; *it's a sign, an omen; god is trying to tell us we must achieve unity through tolerance for all religious beliefs; we must pray for understanding and enlightenment.*

After a diligent search, Fox News finds a defrocked television evangelist who'd once had a huge following but had been caught with a prostitute and was subsequently convicted of altering the ministry's books. They sober him up long enough to tape an hour-long interview with a junior reporter, an attractive brunette. She is shocked to learn that he does not agree with the other esteemed

men and women of the cloth, except for one thing. It's a sign, all right, and the sign reads: "Going Out of Business." He starts out lucidly enough, explaining to her how he knew all about the Bible in his head, but never really took it to heart. He relates how he became a famous TV preacher, how he'd gotten everything he'd ever wanted—and how he'd lost it all.

After a short prison term, he had wound up selling used cars in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in his words, "running from God, and from myself." But his head-knowledge had never left him. He relates how, on the day of the "event" it all came back to him: "**Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.... Death is swallowed up in victory.**" The ex-evangelist looks the young reporter in the eye and says, "At that moment, I knew it was all true—the reality of God, the sacrifice He made for my sin, His victory over death—the whole thing. I fell on my knees and asked Jesus for His forgiveness. And y'know something? He forgave me, He saved me, right there in the parking lot. I know He did."

The anchor isn't interested. She tries to steer him back to the point.

The evangelist's look turns cold. "You don't know what took all those people away, do you? I do. It's called the rapture of the Church. Jesus came back and took his people home—*all* of 'em." The evangelist looks down, as if to gather his thoughts. When he raises his head, tears are flowing down his cheeks. "When you folks phoned me, I was drunk, dead drunk. When it hit me that I'd missed the rapture, I went home and crawled inside a bottle of Scotch. Wanna know why? 'Cause it's over. Earth is toast. We're all..."

"Surely you're overreacting," the reporter interrupts. "I mean, it's a terrible tragedy that so many people have died, but..."

"They didn't *die*! Don't you get it? God took his people out—*alive*—because He's about to judge the earth!" So much for lucid and rational. The ex- and future evangelist launches into a forty-minute rant, explaining what he knows about the rapture, the coming Tribulation, the Antichrist, World War III, the Abomination of Desolation, the Battle of Armageddon, Judgment Day, and the second coming of Christ. The reporter nods knowingly and tries to ask intelligent questions. But she knows the interview is a lost cause. The guy is clearly a couple of sopranos short of a choir. She takes the tape back to the network. They never run it.

Okay, back to reality.

If you recall, one of the Bible's ways of prophesying an event yet future is to present a "type" or a dress rehearsal foreshadowing it. Thus Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah was a dress rehearsal of Yahweh's sacrifice of *His* son, Yahshua, two thousand years later. It should not be surprising, then, to find that there are types of the rapture in the Old Testament, or that Yahshua told parables illustrating this concept in the Gospels.

If you know anything about the old Bible stories, your mind has probably already flipped back to the flood of Noah—a picture of divine judgment out of which only a few people are saved by the hand of Yahweh. The story goes like this: **"Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And Yahweh was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So Yahweh said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found grace in the eyes of Yahweh... Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God....**

"The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth... But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.' "So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood....And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive." (Genesis 6:5-13, 18, 7:7, 21-23)

Yahshua talked about the days of Noah being a sign of His return. **"As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."** (Matthew 24:37) So this has to be a picture of the rapture, right? No, sorry. Close, but no cigar.

Look at the details. Yes, there's definitely judgment here. And Yahweh has devised a way for Noah and his family to survive His wrath, along with the animals that were under his protection. But when the flood was over, Noah returned to the devastated earth and began to rebuild. His sons and their wives repopulated the earth. This indeed is a perfect picture of something yet to come, but it isn't the rapture. It's God's protection of Israel and a belatedly redeemed gentile remnant through the coming period of wrath known as the Tribulation, or

the “time of Jacob’s trouble.” It is this comparatively small group that will rebuild and repopulate the world after the “coming of the Son of Man.”

As I said, though, the Noah-rapture theory was close. The antediluvian type of the rapture, however, was not Noah but his great grandfather Enoch, who as we have seen was “translated” 669 years before Noah entered the ark. I have no idea if that time period is indicative of anything yet future. We were given enough genealogical data to figure it out, so who knows? The thing to notice is that the two events are related, and the rapture type *precedes* the Tribulation type. That last point is important. Some have taught that the rapture will come at the end of the Tribulation, because they have erroneously equated Noah’s little adventure with the rapture instead of the “sealing” of the remnant. I’ll discuss some of these timing issues later on. Forgive me for jumping the gun a little.

There’s another Old Covenant character whose story can teach us some valuable lessons about the rapture. Abraham had a nephew named Lot. Like his uncle, he worshipped Yahweh, but he also had a head for business on his shoulders. Not content to sit around herding goats until God blessed him, Lot settled in the big city—Sodom—where opportunities abounded and a man of ambition could get rich. He quickly found out that it was a moral cesspool, a violent, evil city, and a terrible place to raise a family, but a man had to earn a living, didn’t he? So he climbed the social ladder, became one of the city fathers, and joined the local country club. Unfortunately, he was still living there when Yahweh—after decades of giving the Sodomites chance after chance to repent—decided that Judgment Day was in order.

Yahweh told Abraham what He was about to do, and Abe pleaded his nephew’s case for him. God told him—and this is important—that He would not destroy the city if there were righteous people living there. That didn’t mean He would turn a blind eye forever toward Sodom’s sin, for Yahweh is a just God. But He wouldn’t destroy the righteous along with the wicked, either. There was only one alternative: remove—*rapture*—the righteous people out of the city before judgment fell.

“When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, ‘Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.’ And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, Yahweh being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he [the angel] said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.” Then Lot said to them, ‘Please, no, my lords! Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a

little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.’ And he said to him, ‘See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.’ Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar [Hebrew: from tsaar—to be small, to be brought low, i.e. ignoble].

“The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. Then Yahweh rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from Yahweh out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

“And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Yahweh. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.” (Genesis 19:15-29)

A few things bear mentioning here. First, Lot goofed up God’s intended picture. He was told to escape to the mountains—metaphorically a place of majesty and power, the shelter only Yahweh can provide. God’s throne is sometimes described as “the mountain of Yahweh.” But Lot had spent too much time in the city. He was now a confirmed “indoorsman,” afraid of his own shadow, so the disgusted angel let the terrified refugee scamper to a little hole-in-the-wall burg a few miles to the east. Apparently the fire and brimstone hit a little too close for comfort, however: the very next verse (19:30) says that Lot *did* go and live in a cave in the mountains.

Second, the angel said, “**I cannot do anything until you arrive.**” Not *will* not, but *cannot*. Lot was under Yahweh’s protection: judgment would not fall until he was safe. In fact, Zoar was apparently slated for destruction along with the big cities near it, but the angel spared it for Lot’s sake.

Third, Lot’s children were spared because of his relationship with Yahweh (and not because they were such angels themselves—read the rest of Genesis 19). We need to address the emotionally charged issue of children in the rapture. Many commentators insist that all children “under the age of accountability” will be taken, but there’s no scriptural basis for saying this. We are given no clear word on the issue, and precious few hints. Yahshua obviously had a special concern for them, for he said, “**Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.**” (Mark 10:14-15) Some argue that Yahshua was thereby guaranteeing a place in his kingdom for children who die very young, or those who are still “young and innocent” on rapture day. Still, the case for universal child rapture is awfully thin.

Perhaps we can draw some enlightenment from Paul's observation: **"I was alive once without [or, apart from] the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me."** (Romans 7:9-11) Our infants possess the same sin nature we all inherited from Adam. But the implication could be drawn from this passage that those who have never actually committed a willful sin themselves—the kind of hand-in-the-cookie-jar experience that they knew was wrong when they did it—will be accounted as "alive" at the rapture. On the other hand, not having willfully sinned is not at all the same thing as having a relationship with Yahweh. Remember, Yahshua said that we are born "condemned already" (John 3:18), and that we must be born both of water *and* the Spirit if he wishes to see the kingdom of God.

I'm going to go out on a theological limb here, but it appears to be solid enough. Children who are not mature enough to make their own spiritual choices may be raptured or left behind on the basis of their *parents'* faith (SF4). They may be "saved" through the faith of either their mother or father—or left behind to face the last days with their unbelieving parents. Remember, there were children in Sodom who suffered the same fate as their evil parents, though Lot's less-than-perfect daughters were rescued with him. Paul writes, **"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy."** (I Corinthians 7:14) This, of course, puts a huge responsibility on the shoulders of parents (it's there anyway), for their kids' eternal fate is linked to their parents' in the rapture.

This is not quite as unfair as it may sound for those kids left behind, however. A few years will probably pass between the rapture and the Tribulation, and the Tribulation itself will last seven years, so a four-year-old child of non-Christian parents at the time of the rapture could easily be (I'm guessing) thirteen or fourteen by the time Yahshua returns in His glory—plenty of time to figure it out and make his own choice. In other words, such a child has the same opportunity to make right or wrong decisions as anyone else on earth, before or after the rapture. I have a feeling that kids will "grow up fast" during this time. The trick will be staying alive long enough to make the right choices.

Fourth, though the timeline in Lot's escape from Sodom was abbreviated—taking only a few hours, the coming of judgment once the rapture is accomplished is just as certain. Yahshua warned us, **"In the days of Lot they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it,**

and whoever loses his life will preserve it.” (Luke 17:28-33) The Sodomites thought it was just another day, but Lot’s departure signaled the coming of a rain of fire upon them. In the same way, the rapture will begin a chain of events that will culminate in the total annihilation of wickedness in this world. Yahshua is not saying that the rapture will happen on the same day that “the Son of Man is revealed.” He has given us enough chronological details elsewhere for us to know otherwise. He’s merely saying that when He *is* revealed, it will be too late to avoid certain destruction. It’s going to get messy. You don’t want to be here when it happens.

And what about Lot’s wife? She never understood that the world had nothing that could help her in the end. She appeared to be following Lot to a place of safety, but in her heart she longed for the good life of the city. Turning around, she made her choice not to trust Yahweh—she chose to put her faith in the world instead. But as strange as it sounds, whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life following Yahweh will preserve it.

I’ve given Lot a hard time for his apparent weaknesses, but in truth, we’ve all lived in Sodom at one time or another. We *do* have to earn a living, we *do* have to feed our families. We don’t have to buy into the system quite to the extent Lot did, but perhaps it was pressure from his social-climbing wife that got him so deep into Sodomite society. Peter sheds some light on Lot’s true feelings: **“[Yahweh turned] the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds).”** (II Peter 2:6-8) We who must live in Sodom—or San Francisco—need to be honest with ourselves: are we “oppressed” and “tormented” by what we see around us? Or would we have to be dragged kicking and screaming to meet Yahshua in the air?

Yahshua once told a parable that plainly outlined the conditions before, during, and after the rapture. The setting of the story is a wedding. The custom in those days was for the bridegroom to arrive at an undisclosed hour at his bride’s home, where she would be waiting expectantly with her bridesmaids. (They were smarter back then than we are now. The groom’s arrival was supposed to be a “surprise.” That way, there was no way he could show up late.) Then the couple, carrying palm and myrtle branches, would be led in festive procession to the bridegroom’s house. The bridesmaids, of which ten was the usual number, carried

olive-oil lamps atop staves as the little parade made its way through the streets. Grain or money was thrown about, musicians played, and those who met the procession along the way considered it a joyful religious duty to join in the festivities, which typically lasted for a whole week.

That's the background. Here's the parable. **"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."** (Matthew 25:1-13)

The bridegroom, in case you haven't figured this out, is Yahshua. For the sake of the parable, the virgins—the bridesmaids—are the Church. (In actuality, the Church is the bride of Christ, but you can't make every metaphor work on every level.) The virgins are divided into two groups, those who are prepared—who have the "oil" of the Holy Spirit—and those who are not so prepared. If you'll recall, the churches listed in Revelation 2 and 3 included two that were characteristic of the last days: Philadelphia and Laodicea. The first represents the wise virgins; the second, the foolish ones.

As we speak, we are waiting for the groom to arrive, but He's been a long time coming—almost two thousand years now. It's been so long, in fact, most of us have dozed off. But sleeping or not, the bridesmaids of Philadelphia are prepared, and those of Laodicea aren't. When the Bridegroom comes (at the rapture of His Ekklesia), only the first group, those who have the Holy Spirit living within them, will be admitted to the party.

The lessons are stunning. All of the bridesmaids knew the groom was coming. None of them knew when. All of them wanted to go to the party, and all of them were invited. None of them stayed wide awake, watching for His coming. They all had the same opportunity, that is, they all had oil lamps with them. (We *all* do. It's called the *neshamah*, the "breath of life" mentioned in Genesis 2:7. It gives us the capacity for spiritual indwelling, and it's functionally what separates men from the animals.) The *only* difference between them was that the wise had oil—the Holy Spirit abiding within them—and the foolish didn't. Now, here's the

interesting part. All five of the foolish virgins went out and bought oil, and that meant they could still have a relationship with the Groom after the wedding feast. But the only time they could get this oil was while the party was going on. And they couldn't come into the party halfway through, because the doors were shut. They had to wait outside for the whole week.

This is all a picture of the rapture and the Tribulation that follows. But what does it mean to "buy oil" after the party's started? The oil, as I said, is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. Buying oil is thus a picture of receiving God's Spirit, of accepting His grace, for without it, there can be no relationship with the "Groom," Yahshua—they are One. The Laodiceans were told: **"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich."** (Revelation 3:18) Those who take this counsel are characterized in the parable as the "foolish virgins" who waited to buy their oil until it was too late to be admitted to the party—the marriage supper of the Lamb. Their faith will be tested, refined in the coming crucible of trial known as the Tribulation. They will not escape this trial—in other words, they will not be raptured like the wise virgins—but rather, they will go through the fire—seven years of hell on earth. Many will be martyred, though some will manage to stay alive until the end. Turning to Yahweh during the Tribulation, of course, is better than never doing it, but it's better yet to avoid the trial altogether.

The true Church of Laodicea thus is wholly comprised of those who accept the grace of Yahshua *after* the rapture. I should note that this group is not necessarily a hundred percent coterminous with "religious" people today who nevertheless reject Christ. Some of those people will *never* repent. Remember, Laodicea is part of the Church, part of the Body of Christ. Before it's over, they will *all* be saved. However, I'm getting ahead of the story again.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins wasn't the only time Yahshua instructed His disciples about the rapture and its aftermath. But they didn't get it, not right then. Still, you can't blame them for not understanding what He'd said until after His resurrection. This stuff is too wonderful for mortal comprehension: **"Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.... The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."** (John 5:25, 28-29) There *is* life after death, for both the righteous and the wicked. But alas, I'm going to have to save that whole topic for a later chapter.

"This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40) What did Yahshua teach His disciples to pray? **"Our Father, may Your will be done."** I think it's a safe bet that it will be, in the end. **"[That Day] will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be**

counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:35-36) I guess Yahshua doesn’t believe in a post-tribulation rapture. This verse doesn’t make any sense if the Tribulation comes before the rapture on God’s timetable. There’s no point in praying **“that you may be counted worthy to escape”** if the escape God has planned—the rapture—won’t happen until after “all these things” are past, as post-trib rapture theorists contend.

“Worthy to escape?” That’s the same sort of language Yahshua used to encourage the church of Philadelphia—promising to keep them out of the coming trial (Revelation 3:10). So with the exception of the last church on the list, Laodicea, we know that the rapture is scheduled to take place *after* the church age. John writes, **“After these things** [i.e., the church age described in the previous two chapters] **I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’”** (Revelation 4:1) The “trumpet” and “coming up” speak of the rapture. That means that “the things which must take place after this”—the Tribulation events—will *follow* the rapture of the church.

Yahshua explained who would participate: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.... I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.... Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”** (John 6:47-49, 51, 53-54) As metaphors go, that one has caused more confusion than most. But its quite simple, really. We are to assimilate Yahshua our Messiah as the Israelites assimilated the manna in the wilderness. That “bread” kept their mortal bodies alive for forty years; the “Living Bread,” Yahshua’s Spirit, the Word of God living within us, will keep our spiritual *resurrection* bodies alive forever.

Even the Torah specifies a pre-Tribulation rapture, if we’re sharp enough to sort out the symbols. The “Law of Leprosy” includes this notice: **“When you have come into the land of Canaan, which I give you as a possession, and I put the leprous plague in a house in the land of your possession, and he who owns the house comes and tells the priest, saying, ‘It seems to me that there is some plague in the house,’ then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes into it to examine the plague, that all that is in the house may not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to examine the house.”** (Leviticus 14:34-36) At first glance, this seems pretty counterintuitive: *Yahweh Himself* is said to be afflicting the house with the leprous plague, and the homeowner is expected to notice it and report it to the priest. But let us factor in Proverbs 3:33. **“The curse of Yahweh is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the just.”** Obviously, a “house” here is a symbol

for something larger—where we live, expressed in broad strokes, our whole socio-economic-religio-political world.

The lesson is this: the believer is to be cognizant of his surroundings, the society in which he lives. If he sees “a plague in the house,” (and who could miss the signs of spiritual disease in our world today?) he is to report it to the priest. That’s a picture of prayer, for the priest was the divinely appointed link between God and Man. The priest (and remember, *our* High Priest is Yahshua) first “empties the house,” that is, he takes out those within it who remain undefiled. That, my friends, is a picture of the rapture of the church. He does this *before* the stones of the house are subjected to examination, to testing or trial. Again, we are reminded of the promise He made to the church of Philadelphia: they would be kept out of the trial that is to come upon the world—the “leprous house” about which the church has been so fervently praying.

Note what the occupants of the “house” are instructed not to do: we are *not* to (1) tear down the house ourselves, (2) ignore the problem, (3) become tolerant of it, or (4) defer to the opinion of our neighbors or the government—human wisdom, such as it is. Rather, we are to go to the priest—that is, to Yahshua—in prayer. But wait—we’ve already established that the plague is *Yahweh’s* doing, sent in response to our society’s wickedness. Are we supposed to appeal to the One who sent the disease in order to be kept out of it? Yes, we are. **“The curse of Yahweh is on the house of the wicked.”** But **“I will keep you [the occupants of the house who noticed its evil condition and appealed to the Priest] from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”** (Revelation 3:10) In other words, **“The house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish.”** (Proverbs 14:11)

The continuing instructions explain (sort of). **“And he shall examine the plague; and indeed if the plague is on the walls of the house with ingrained streaks, greenish or reddish [the colors of Islam and Communism—a coincidence?], which appear to be deep in the wall, then the priest shall go out of the house, to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days.”** Is what seems like a problem *really* a problem? Only time will tell. The “seven days,” while generally metaphorical of God’s perfect timing, seems to indicate the seven years of trial the earth will experience after the godly inhabitants have departed—a time known as the Tribulation. Note that during this time, the Priest (symbolic of Yahshua) is “out of the house,” a condition that cannot come to pass as long as His people still inhabit the planet, since His Holy Spirit personally indwells the believing “householders,” the church—those “born from above” in Yahweh’s Spirit. As we saw before, isolation, separation, *holiness*, is part of the formula. The godly inhabitants of the “house” are not to be exposed to the potential threat while its true nature is yet fully undetermined. They are to be set apart from the world.

“And the priest [ultimately, Yahshua] shall come again on the seventh day [that’s the ultimate Sabbath—the Millennial reign of Christ] and look; and indeed if the plague has spread on the walls of the house [and we *all* know it has], then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which is the plague, and they shall cast them into an unclean place outside the city. And he shall cause the house to be scraped inside, all around, and the dust that they scrape off they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city. Then they shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and he shall take other mortar and plaster the house.” (Leviticus 14:37-42) Here’s the bottom line. If an idea is truly toxic, the Priest (Yahshua) will, after giving it time to show its true colors, remove its presence and consign it to an “unclean place outside the city” (for its practitioners, metaphorical of hell). This will happen during the Tribulation. Thus doctrines like Ba’al worship, rabbinic Judaism, apostate “Christianity,” Islam, and atheistic secular humanism will all appear in turn, poison their respective societies, and be removed from the house on the “seventh day,” unceremoniously scraped off and hauled away. But Yahweh doesn’t intend to leave gaping holes in the house of human society. “Other stones”—true believers, even if they weren’t originally part of the wall’s construction—will be brought in as replacements: it’s the Church of Repentant Laodicea. And the “plaster?” I believe this white, opaque coating is analogous to the garments of light God’s children will wear in His Kingdom—imputed righteousness.

As the last days approach, even the most hardened skeptics can sense that there’s something going on. Major secular news magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* have devoted cover articles to the phenomenon of “Apocalypse Fever,” even taking the radical step of interviewing popular Christian spokesmen like Tim LaHaye and Hal Lindsey. Christians have no monopoly on insight, of course, but we do have a monopoly on peace. That’s why John 14:27-29 records what Yahshua reminded His disciples on the very night He was betrayed: **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.”**

And speaking of peace, let me leave you with this parting shot from Isaiah, a stunning Old Covenant confirmation of the rapture and its purpose: **“The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart. Merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.”** (Isaiah 57:1-2) Amplified to

reveal its full meaning, these verses would read: “The one who is just (*tsadiq*), lawful, righteous, and vindicated before God perishes (*abad*), dies, is put to death and exterminated, and nobody places (*sum*) this fact upon his heart (*leb*), mind, understanding or knowledge. [Then] men of mercy (*cheved*), goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and unfailing devotion are taken away (*'asaph*), gathered, brought together, assembled, withdrawn, or, in military terms, assembled as a rear guard, while no one considers (*biyn*), understands, discerns or perceives that these righteous people (*tsadiq*) are being taken away (*'asaph*), gathered or withdrawn from evil (*raah*), wickedness, adversity, misfortune, affliction, calamity, disaster, distress, and trouble. [That, in case you missed it, is a picture of the rapture, first of those who have perished and then of those who still live.] He [the one who was taken away—raptured] shall enter into (*bow*), come to, attain, be brought or introduced to peace (*shalowm*), safety, prosperity, and contentment; they shall rest (*nuach*), repose, and be quiet on their beds, each one walking (*halak*), going, following, or behaving in his uprightness (*nakoah*), straightness, or rightness.” That’s the best news of all: after we’re “raptured,” we’ll no longer sin—we’ll walk in righteousness forever.

Chapter 9

Signs of the Times

These had to be heady times for the disciples of Yahshua. They were finally—after three fascinating years of following Him around—starting to see some vindication, some evidence that His ministry was paying off. They had heard the teaching. They had seen the miracles. They had been there when He had accepted the adoration of the throng who had gathered along the road from Bethlehem with their palm branches to witness the arrival of the perfect Passover lamb, chosen by the High Priest from the sanctified flocks at the City of David. Of course, neither the crowd nor the disciples understood that Yahshua Himself was to be that sacrificial Lamb before the week was out. They had witnessed the Master’s cleansing of the Temple, proving to all that He was no ordinary Rabbi but a man who spoke with the authority of Yahweh Himself. Three of them already knew it beyond the shadow of a doubt, for they had seen him transfigured into a being of indescribable glory before their very eyes not many weeks before. Yes, the future was looking bright for the followers of Yahshua.

So it was in an upbeat mood that they strolled through the confines of Herod’s Temple like the country bumpkins they were, gushing at its magnificent architecture and massive stonework. *Will the Master make this His Kingdom’s headquarters? They sure don’t build ’em like this in Capernaum.* It was therefore something of a shock when Yahshua informed them that the whole thing was going to be turned into a pile of rubble. (cf. Matthew 24:1-2)

Later that day, or perhaps the next, the three who had witnessed His transfiguration, plus the brother of one of them, found themselves alone with the Master, and they asked Him the same thing you or I would have. **“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things [i.e., the destruction of the Temple] will be fulfilled?’”** (Mark 13:3-4, cf. Matthew 24:3, Luke 21:7) Here we go again, trying to sort out the answers to two questions at once. And the task isn’t made any easier by the fact that Yahshua took the opportunity to teach them truths concerning events which they hadn’t asked about. How could they? Curiosity doesn’t happen in a vacuum. Remember, they all still thought that Yahshua’s earthly reign was about to begin.

Yahshua saved the first question, “When,” for later. Instead He launched into a discourse that explained the signs and circumstances surrounding not only the impending sack of Jerusalem that would leave “not one stone upon another,” but also the last days of planet earth, to which there are some striking prophetic parallels to Titus’ 70 A.D. offensive. Once again, we see prophecies with near and

far fulfillments delivered in the same breath. But since this is our jigsaw puzzle to work out, let's take all the pieces out of the box that look like they might fit and examine them one by one.

“Jesus, answering them, began to say: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, “I am He,” and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.” (Mark 13:5-7, cf. Matthew 24:4-6, Luke 21:8-9) He began with a warning of false Messiahs showing up. Luke's version adds that they will say, **“The time has drawn near,”** and warns, **“Therefore, do not go after them.”** The word “He” in “I am He” was supplied by the translators; it isn't really there. Yahshua is warning us about men who say “I Am,” in other words claiming, on some level, equality with Yahweh. There have been many through the ages, enjoying varying degrees of temporary success. As the end approaches, expect to see more Muhammad, Hitler, Jim Jones, or David Koresh types attracting gullible followers. When Barack Obama was elected president of the United States in 2008, it was no fluke that his sycophants ascribed “messianic” qualities to him, laying unearned accolades like the Nobel Peace Prize at his feet. There are at least two messianic personalities specifically prophesied for mankind's future—the Islamic Mahdi (the “Gog” of Ezekiel 38), and the “Man of Perdition,” commonly known as “the Antichrist.” More about them later.

It bears pointing out that the phenomenon of “rumors of war” didn't really get off the ground until late in the 19th century. That's when newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst “engineered” the Spanish American War for no other reason than to enhance American prestige—and sell newspapers—telling his illustrator Fredrick Remington (or so legend has it), “You supply the pictures; I'll supply the war.” Only in recent decades have we had the technological capacity to “hear” about every little conflict that might or might not be happening in the world. Yahshua knew there would always be wars—we're fallen creatures: it's in our nature to fight against each other in the name of pride, power, or possessions. But we aren't to mistake our detailed knowledge of current events for the end of the world. Ignorance may pass for bliss, but enlightenment doesn't have to ruin your whole day.

And as for false Christs (in the “religious” sense), they fall into two categories—those pretending to be godly, and those who admit to no god whatsoever. They both say the same thing: “I have the answer. Follow me.” The first group attempts to undermine the faithful by pretending to be one of them; the second attacks from outside. Some in the false-godly group leans toward legalism—the piling up of rule upon rule until the underlying truth is buried under a mountain of minutia. The law of the Sabbath, for example, had been given to instruct the people about Yahweh's grand plan. The Jews turned it into an onerous

burden, specifying precisely how far you could walk or how much you could pick up without becoming a heinous lawbreaker. And how in the world do Roman Catholics get the doctrine of priestly celibacy out of **“A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife...”**? (I Timothy 3:2) Later in the same passage, Paul actually calls such synthetic legalism demonic: **“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”** (I Timothy 4:1-3)

Others in the destroy-from-within crowd are merely in it for the money (or power, or sex). These “gurus in Rolls-Royces” are easy enough to spot, but their message tickles the ears so nicely, people follow them in droves anyway. Make no mistake: these slick talkers are not the semi-harmless parasites they seem, but dangerous heretics. **“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit [KJV: make merchandise of] you with deceptive words.”** (II Peter 2:1-3) We (and they) have been warned.

At some level, the false-prophet syndrome applies to anyone who puts self or things before God, whether they’re “religious” or not. Paul warns us that things will get worse as we approach the end. **“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** (II Timothy 3:1-7) These epithets were applicable to some extent in Paul’s day, of course, but who can deny that they are more than descriptive of today’s world? They are *characteristic* of our entire generation. These traits define the age we live in. As such, this kind of behavior has come to seem normal—everybody’s doing it. But we have been warned: these are indicators that we are in the Last Days. There is peril here. Turn away!

Humanity has made such great scientific strides in the last century, it’s no wonder many have come to regard—in their hearts if not with their lips—science and technology as the new “gods.” As we ease into the 21st century, the salient question is no longer, “Can we do it?” but “Should we?”. But having declared ourselves—or worse, the work of our hands—as god, we no longer have any basis

upon which to answer our own question. If the theory of evolution is fact, (it's not, by the way) then why should we do anything that isn't in the interests of our own short-term self-preservation or gratification? There's nothing left to do but mock those naïve throwbacks of a quaint and bygone era that truly believe in one all-powerful Creator-God.

On the other hand, that very Creator-God saw this attitude coming, and warned us about it a couple of thousand years before it happened. **“Remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus, the Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.”** (Jude 17-19)

Jude was referring to what Peter had said: **“Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth, standing out of water and in the water. By the word of God, the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth, which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”** (II Peter 3:3-7) In other words, these scoffers believe that Noah's flood is just a myth told to entertain and intimidate small children. *I don't believe it ever really happened, so you can't frighten me with wild tales of a coming judgment by fire. If God didn't judge us then, He's not going to start now.* The bad news is, what you don't know *can* kill you.

Back on the Mount of Olives, Yahshua continued his discourse describing what the world will be like as we approach the end. **“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows [i.e., birth pangs].”** (Mark 13:8, cf. Matthew 24:7-8, Luke 21:10-11) The Luke passage adds, **“There will be... pestilences...”** Some of these signs are manmade. We've heard about so many “wars and rumors of war,” we've almost gotten used to it. Famine is the inevitable result of prolonged war, for war interrupts whatever productive activities a nation may have had going for it, including the production and distribution of food.

But you don't need war to experience famine. It can be caused by errant political theories, as we saw in the U.S.S.R. and China under Communism. And wherever Islam makes inroads, poverty and strife invariably raise their ugly heads, for Islam is a doctrine that promotes piracy and plunder, not productivity and prosperity. Famine follows folly. I offer Ethiopia and the Sudan as 20th century examples. And although there is no shortage of politically caused famine in this world, other factors—now in evidence as never before—also contribute to

it: soil and water table depletion, drought, genetic modifications to foods (making them grow faster or look better, but robbing them of nutritional value), and even the alarming disappearance of honeybees. A third of the food we eat is dependent on honeybees for pollination, but in some places, bee populations have fallen by over seventy percent, the result of a mysterious phenomenon known as Colony Collapse Disorder. Just when the world needs more food, less is available.

“Pestilence,” or disease, has always accompanied war, though any disruption in the fabric of society—cultural, political, or even weather related—can promote the spread of disease. For the last hundred years, pandemics have swept the globe every thirty years or so, as if to remind mankind that even with all of our scientific knowledge and pride in our ability to manage our environment, we are still pitifully impotent. Recently, pestilence has been promoted from war’s byproduct to part of the very arsenal. Anthrax, smallpox, Ebola, and bubonic plague are being cultivated as weapons of war. But as deadly as all these are, they may not do as much damage in the long run as sexually transmitted diseases like Aids—the *self-inflicted* pestilence that would die out tomorrow if Yahweh’s design for the family were universally observed. I hate to sound unsympathetic, but God’s pattern—one man joined exclusively with one woman for a lifetime—is the only “cure” that makes any sense. Anything else is a band-aid on a train wreck.

Earthquakes, of course, aren’t man-made phenomena (*yet*, that we know of) and they’ve occurred sporadically throughout recorded time. The USGS reports that for the last century, there have been an average of 19.5 good-sized earthquakes (magnitude 7.0 or greater) per year, worldwide. So on the face of it, the prophecy can be considered “fulfilled” in spades. But there’s more to it. The Greek word translated “earthquake” (*seismos*) occurs ten times in the New Covenant scriptures, five of them in prophetic passages. Of the remainder, four describe historical earthquakes. No surprise there. But the last says, **“And suddenly a great tempest [*seismos*] arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’ But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, ‘Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’”** (Matthew 8:24-27) So high winds and rough seas also qualify as *seismos* events. This makes every hurricane, tornado, typhoon and cyclone a potential fulfillment of Yahshua’s prophecy. In 2005, America suffered so many of these, they ran out of names.

And don’t forget tsunamis, earthquake-driven ocean “storms.” They too fit the profile of *seismos*. A 9.0 earthquake off the coast of Sumatra on December 26, 2004 generated a hundred-foot high wave that killed 230,000 people in fourteen

countries surrounding the Indian Ocean. And on March 11, 2011, another Richter-scale 9-plus undersea megathrust quake set off a tsunami that devastated Japan's economy, killed almost sixteen thousand people, and took out the seemingly "impregnable" Fukushima nuclear reactor. I'd say the "earthquakes in various places" prophecy—even in its "ocean storm" permutation—is a *fait accompli*.

Luke also reports "fearful sights and great signs from heaven," (Luke 21:11) though in his account, these are listed separately from the signs that Matthew and Mark identify as "the beginning of sorrows," so they might occur only later, during the Tribulation proper. "Fearful sights" is *phobetron*, a word used only once in the Bible. It means "that which strikes terror" or something that causes fear, apprehension, fright, or panic—anything that scares you so much you want to run away screaming. It wouldn't be a stretch to expect purposeful acts of terrorism, especially Islamic terrorism, based on this prophecy.

"Great signs from heaven" means pretty much what it sounds like: unusual and unmistakable omens appearing in the sky, visible portents of extraordinary events that transcend the common course of nature. These could take the form of unprecedented meteor showers, unexpected comets, or perhaps aurora borealis style phenomena in latitudes farther south than usual, due to a rapidly deteriorating magnetic field—a precursor to a reversal of the earth's magnetic poles (something that has happened before during the planet's history). With the advent of space-based telescopes like the Hubble, we are also privy to "signs in the heavens" never before seen by man. Astronomers recently discovered a single galactic structure, composed of 73 quasars, deemed to be the "biggest thing in the universe"—four *billion* light years across—demonstrating, if nothing else, the awesome power of Yahweh and the relative insignificance of man. Whatever these "great signs from heaven" turn out to be, it should be noted that of all the signs heralding the Last Days, this is the *only one* that isn't already here in any obvious, in-your-face sort of way.

Yahshua next told his disciples about the persecution they would suffer "before all these things" (i.e., during the course of the Church age) and how to comport themselves, assuring them that before the end comes, "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) Notwithstanding the fact that angelic preaching during the Tribulation will reach every human ear (cf. Revelation 14:6), the Gospel has *already* been preached "in (virtually) all the world." All that are left unreached are tiny pockets of indigenous tribespeople, mostly in India or Southeast Asia. At the end of the 19th century, the Bible had been translated into 522 languages. By the close of the 20th, 2,200 people groups possessed the Word of God in their native tongues. That's 99.95 percent of the world's population, a statistic that's bolstered by the ubiquitous availability of electronic media today—radio, television, and the

Internet. Wycliffe Bible Translators reports that with the help of computer technology, they now expect to have the Word of God translated into every language spoken on earth—even those “pre-literate” groups currently without their own written alphabet—by 2025. (And the third decade of the twenty-first century looks like it’s going to be *really* interesting, from a prophetic point of view.) At any rate, if people haven’t heard the Gospel at this late date, chances are it’s because of one of two reasons: either they’re purposely avoiding it—willful ignorance—or they’re being intentionally kept in the dark by those who rule over them—as in the world of Islam today.

Yahshua’s teaching at this point spilled over into events that are yet future to our study: we’ll get to them in order of their appearance. But there’s a principle we need to be familiar with at the outset—the sign of the fig tree: **“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it [the kingdom of God] is near—at the doors!”** (Matthew 24:32-33, cf. Mark 13:28-29, Luke 21:29-31) He is saying that we can know when His Kingdom’s coming is near by paying attention to the signs of the times.

Of course, we, being human, can’t resist trying to pin down the exact time of Yahshua’s coming for His people. Admit it: deep down inside, our attitude is often, “If He’s not coming back until Friday and it’s only Tuesday, I can live like the Devil today, try to clean up my act on Wednesday, and repent on Thursday, just in time to look golden on the big day. I’ll sow my wild oats now and then pray for a crop failure.” None of this is a new phenomenon. The same mindset has been in play for millennia: **“Son of man, look, the house of Israel is saying, ‘The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.’ Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says Yahweh: None of My words will be postponed any more, but the word which I speak will be done,’ says Yahweh.”** (Ezekiel 12:26-28) Some things never change. Yahshua knows our weaknesses. I imagine that’s one of the reasons why He didn’t plainly delineate the chronology of His coming for all to see. Rather, the clues are scattered throughout scripture: you have to dig deep to figure it out—you have to *want* to know. God has told us far more about His schedule than most Christians realize. (See my appendix on chronology entitled “No Man Knows: What God Has (and Hasn’t) Told Us About The Chronology Of The Last Days.”) But a casual reading of any single passage of scripture will leave us with the feeling that it’s all a little vague.

Vague or not, though, we can and should define our terms. What did He mean by “the Kingdom of God?” The general answer (since He was speaking in generalized terms) is the time when Yahshua will personally, physically reign on the earth. This Kingdom will commence at the end of a period of time called the Tribulation. You probably already knew that. But we’re also told that the

Tribulation will begin with a specific sign, and that it will last for a specific period of time. Therefore, the people who witness the event that begins the Tribulation would need only a calendar to figure out—to the very day—when the end will be. Why, then, do we need signs as general as the budding of the fig tree?

It's because "the Day of Yahweh" is a process, one that begins with a singular event: the rapture of the Church. As we shall see, the rapture is the only future event that is imminent; there is nothing in the prophetic timetable that must be accomplished before Yahshua's Ekklesia is taken out of the world. There are, however, many prophetic puzzle pieces—including the sign that will begin the Tribulation—that *cannot* fall into place until after the rapture has come to pass. For this reason, when Yahshua says, "**When you see all these things, know that it is near,**" we can safely assume that the "it" He's talking about is the *rapture*—the one specific event that launches the Last Days.

And when will that take place? Ah, that's the best kept secret in all of scripture. "**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven.**" (Mark 13:32, cf. Matthew 24:36) Yahshua opted not to communicate that information (though, as we saw in the previous chapter, the idiom Yahshua used actually *did* identify the rapture's day of the year as the convocation of *Teruah*, the Feast of Trumpets; He just didn't tell us the year). Why did Yahweh choose to conceal the time? I think (SF2) it's because He knew that to Satan this could be the second most useful piece of information in all of history. (The first was the plan to let him crucify the Messiah: if Satan had realized that Yahweh would use Yahshua's death and resurrection to redeem mankind from the curse of sin, I believe he would have done his level best to make Him into the first-century version of a rock star. Fame, fortune, following—*anything* but the death of the cross. The devil's not stupid, but he's a long way from being omniscient.) As it is, even with the timing a well-guarded secret, our Adversary has been able to use the doctrine of Christ's coming to divide believers and pry their focus off of what really matters—living godly lives in the time we're given. Imagine the damage Satan could do if everyone knew the date God had planned for the rapture.

The risen Christ hadn't even ascended back to heaven before the storm began. In an effort to get Peter's mind off the other disciples and onto the task at hand, "**Jesus said to him, 'If I will that [John] remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.' Then this saying went out among the brethren that [John] would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?'"** (John 21:22-23) Every believer of every age has a job to do. We aren't to be preoccupied with the role given to other believers any more than we are to be wrapped up in the world. Name a crisis, name a distraction, and Yahshua says, "**What's that to you? You follow Me!**"

The biggest distraction, of course, is the passage of time. That's why Yahshua gave us this parable: **"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."** (Matthew 24:42-44) Remember what I said about the date being kept a secret? The "master of the house" here is not God, but Satan, the "ruler of this world." (John 12:31) Yahshua is about to break into his house and take back what's His, and like a "thief in the night," He's not telling anybody when He's coming. Makes perfect sense when you look at it that way.

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 24:45-51; cf. Luke 12:41-48) For the unfaithful servant, the master's return will come as a total surprise. Faithful servants, on the other hand, know their master well enough to be able to discern, at least approximately, when He will return. They pay attention to the fig trees.

Being "cut in two" needn't be taken literally—i.e., in a physical sense. Having one's reward and blessing halved is reason enough for "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here again, I think we can safely equate the "blessed servants" with the church at Philadelphia, and the evil servant with the Laodicean assembly. At first glance, the difference seems to be what they're doing, but their behaviors are the direct result of their beliefs—or their unbelief. The Laodiceans *will* come to a saving knowledge of their Master's intentions, but only after it's too late to avoid being "cut in two."

On a similar tack, Yahshua commanded his disciples to **"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"** (Mark 13:33-37) Here again, Yahshua is talking to His own servants—not to those of another man's household—in other words, the Church, His called-out assembly. In the space of four sentences, He told us four times to *watch*. Therefore, I think He wants us to watch. Just a guess.

And again, **“Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.... Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”** (Luke 12:35-40) Like the parable of the ten virgins, this one uses the wedding metaphor. This time the Master plays the role of a wedding guest. The servants know that these little soirées might be over in a couple of days, but they can go on for weeks. All they can do is do what they’re supposed to be doing while the Master is away: not only run his household properly, but keep a vigilant eye out for His return. It’s not optional; it’s their job.

Through their prophets, the Jews were given signs that would signal the coming of Messiah. Isaiah, for example, had told them, **“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing.”** (Isaiah 35:5-6) The prophets hadn’t been sent for their health. Yahshua had a right to expect the people to recognize these signs when He performed them. **“Then He also said to the multitudes, ‘Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?’”** (Luke 12:54-56) We have far more detailed prophecies describing what’s coming in our day than the people of first-century Israel did. Does Yahshua expect any less discernment of us today? I think not.

Paul pointed out that the perceptions of God’s people and those of everyone else would be (or at least should be) completely different. Believers were to be expectantly watching, while non-believers would be blithely ignorant. **“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape....”** Several times in scripture this graphic metaphor of a woman in labor is used of the Last Days. The lessons are clear. First there’s no stopping birth pangs—you can’t negotiate with the baby to stay in there and cook for another month. Second, the whole process hurts like you wouldn’t believe (or so my wife tells me). And third, once you’re pregnant—and make no mistake: the world *is*—it’s only a matter of time before the baby comes; the bigger the tummy, the closer the time. God’s idea of the “water breaking” is the rapture of the Church. How close is it? Look at the world around you. People are starting to ask if it’s twins.

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.” (I Thessalonians 5:1-8) Did you notice the shifting pronouns? *You* know that Christ’s coming will catch the world by surprise. *You* are not in the dark. But *they* will be caught unawares—*they* will not escape. There is a clear differentiation here between those who should be terrified about the coming Day of Yahweh (but aren’t) and those who needn’t be. Paul’s admonition is to be vigilant, sober minded, and equipped with faith, love, and hope. We who are “sons of light” have nothing to worry about.

Why? Because **“God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”** (I Thessalonians 5:9-11) If the rapture were on God’s schedule for any time other than preceding the Tribulation, then these verses would be a lie. For the Tribulation is nothing if not a time of wrath upon the world. And for those who would insist that the Church, like Noah of old, will be kept from harm as it rides out this seven-year period of hell on earth (willfully forgetting about the multitudes of Tribulation martyrs mentioned in Revelation 6 and 7), then why in the world did Paul tell us we could comfort each other with the news? We were never given one word of instruction as to how to live through the Time of Jacob’s trouble, but a boatload of teaching on how to miss it all together.

“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (James 5:7-9) Farmers don’t dread the coming harvest—they look forward to it. In fact, they work very hard toward that goal. Likewise, we are to be patiently expectant concerning Yahshua’s coming, treating our brothers and sisters with love and kindness until His return.

I need to back up for a moment and define some terminology I’ve been using. Although my goal with this book is to explore all of the yet-to-be-fulfilled scripture in the Bible in chronological order, I’ve had to refer to some future events that we haven’t gotten to yet. (I know, I know. I haven’t gotten to *anything*

future yet except for the rapture and some generalized signs of the times.) Two terms that need to be introduced ahead of time are the “Tribulation” and the “Antichrist.”

If you’ll recall from chapter 7, Daniel received a prophecy that revealed that Yahweh would deal with the nation of Israel for only “seventy weeks,” or 490 years, starting with a specific event named in the prophecy. **“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”** (Daniel 9:24) The first-century advent of Yahshua accomplished some of these objectives—precisely on schedule. However, a quick look around you will reveal that “everlasting righteousness” has yet to be “brought in,” “transgressions” are continuing, and “sins” have apparently not “ended.” And the reason you’re reading this book is that “vision and prophecy” have yet to be “sealed up.” In other words, we aren’t completely there yet.

A gap of undetermined length, you’ll recall, was prophesied to come after the 69th week, that is, the 483rd year. The 70th week, the last seven-year period, was described like this: **“Then he [‘the prince who is to come’] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”** (Daniel 9:27)

This final “week,” or seven-year period, is elsewhere called the Tribulation, the Time of Jacob’s trouble, the Day of the Lord, the Indignation, and the Hour of Temptation. The second half is called the “*Great* Tribulation,” for reasons that will become clear when we get there. Much of the Biblical prophecy yet to be fulfilled is concerned with this period of time, for Yahweh will use it **“to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy,”** in other words, to complete his program for the nation of Israel.

This “prince who is to come,” the “one who makes desolate,” is commonly known as the Antichrist—a word which comes from John’s description: **“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.... Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in**

the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." (I John 2:18-23, 4:3) The apostle points out that just as there are many who are "anti"-Christ, i.e., against Him, there will be one Antichrist—with a capital A—who will personify the lie claiming that Yahshua is not Messiah—not God in the flesh. He will do this by assuming Messianic status for himself. Paul calls him the "man of sin," and in the book of Revelation, John describes him as a "beast rising up out of the sea." We'll look at him in detail later, for he is one of the central characters of the last days. For now, suffice it to say that he will be a real person, who will with Satan's help gather for himself more power than any man has ever known.

Because the hints revealing God's chronology are spread out all over the Bible, it's not surprising to find that even serious students of eschatology often find themselves disagreeing as to what will happen when. It was worse in the apostolic age, when the "Bible" was only the Old Testament; hence prophecies concerning the Church were hard to come by. God was in the process of revealing His truth through His apostles, but Peter, Paul, and John couldn't just put up a website on the Internet and call it a day. Rather, they had to go somewhere in person, teach the believers what had been revealed to them, and later write letters reminding them of what they'd said, correcting any misconceptions they might have picked up. It's those letters, of course, that form the bulk of the New Testament.

In the early church, the final advent of Christ was a hot topic, though it was destined to be neglected for sixteen or seventeen centuries. I'm thankful for the controversy they dealt with then, for the apostles' corrective teaching survives to this very day. For example, Paul wrote to Timothy, "[**Hymenaeus and Philetus**] **strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.**" (II Timothy 2:18) Getting things out of order *can* "overthrow the faith of some," because God's order, God's plan, is a reflection of His love. These two guys had been teaching that the resurrection—including the rapture—had already taken place. And people were saying, "Wait a minute! I trusted Yahshua with my soul. Now you're saying He's forgotten all about me?"

Paul wanted to assure them that He most definitely had not. "**But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.**" (I Corinthians 15:23-24) Notice the order here: first is Christ's resurrection, then the resurrection/rapture of the of the Church-age saints,

then Christ “delivers the kingdom,” ending our inept and corrupt human governance once and for all. That’s why Yahshua warned his disciples (and us) not to believe any rumor they heard about the coming of Christ: He knew that by the time He appeared to the world, we’d be long gone!

Paul gave more information to the believers in another town: **“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed....”** (II Thessalonians 2:1-3) That’s a mouthful, so let’s analyze it, bit by bit. The Thessalonians were concerned about the **“coming of our Master, Yahshua the Messiah”** and their **“gathering together to Him.”** That’s two different things. Although it isn’t specifically stated here, we needn’t presume that they will both happen at exactly the same time.

Paul then tells them that before the coming of the Day of Christ (in contrast to the “gathering together”), two things will happen. First, there will be a “falling away,” and second, the “man of sin” will be revealed. The Day of Christ can be taken to mean the whole Tribulation scenario, or it can focus on the climax, when Yahshua returns in glory to rule the earth. Both of these things will take place before that Day is fully accomplished. The “man of sin” is clearly the Antichrist, Satan’s counterfeit Messiah. But what in the world does the “falling away” mean?

The Greek word for “falling away” is *apostasia*, meaning a state of defection—or falling away—from truth, in a word, apostasy. I’ve heard expositors say it means “departure,” implying the rapture is in view. As much as I’d like that definition to be true, it’s not. Paul is talking about good old-fashioned apostasy, a forsaking of the truth. The church at Laodicea—condemned so roundly in Revelation 3, is the perfect picture of end-times apostasy, having a form of godliness but denying its power. The unrepentant church of Laodicea is here with us today. One could say that it began “officially” with the birth of the ecumenical movement in 1948, though it has in truth been around since John’s day. That leaves only the man of sin to be unveiled before the Day of Christ.

But Paul wasn’t through. He next revealed that the Holy Spirit, the One who now restrains evil in the world—partially through the agency of the Church—will be “taken out of the way” before the “lawless one,” a.k.a. the Antichrist, is unveiled. **“And now you know what is restraining, that he [the Antichrist] may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed....”** (II Thessalonians 2:6-8) Here Paul has addressed the Thessalonians’ concerns about the timing of the **“gathering together to Him”** (i.e., to Yahshua). The Antichrist will not be revealed in his true nature until after the Holy Spirit is

“taken out of the way.” And as we’ve seen, that can’t happen as long as the Church is on the earth, for the Holy Spirit lives within us. Therefore the rapture—the “gathering together” about which Paul was trying to calm their shaken minds—must precede the unveiling of the Antichrist, which in turn must precede the Day of Christ. The chronology is beginning to emerge.

Helping us narrow down the timing is Yahshua’s Olivet discourse bombshell: **“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”** (Matthew 24:34-35, cf. Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32-33) In context, Yahshua spoke these words as he concluded the parable of the fig tree, right before He announced that nobody perceived the day or the hour of His coming. Therefore it clearly wasn’t intended to be a means by which we could calculate its date. Rather, it is an indication that when “all these things” start happening, they will take place within a relatively short span of time—one generation. In other words, the Day of Yahweh won’t be spread out over a couple of millennia, like the Church age was.

There are two questions just begging to be asked at this point. First, what precisely is “this generation?” The Greek word is *genea*, and according to Thayer the primary meaning is “fathered, birth, nativity.” It can also mean “that which has been begotten, men of the same stock, a family, the several ranks of natural descent, the successive members of a genealogy,” or “metaphorically a group of men very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character—especially in a bad sense, a perverse nation.” It can even mean “the whole multitude of men living at the same time,” or “an age (i.e. the time ordinarily occupied by each successive generation).” In other words, the word is so general, it could mean any number of things. The immediate context has nothing to do with family relationships, though; it seems to indicate that the “generation” or group of people who see the initial signs that the end is near will also see “all these things.”

The second obvious question, therefore, is what is included in “all these things?” The “budding of the fig tree,” is more than a metaphor for the changing of the seasons: it is a euphemism for the return of Israel to the land of promise. But the passage up to this point has discussed everything from “the beginning of sorrows”—described as the appearance of false messiahs, wars, famines, disease, seismic and weather disasters, persecution of the faithful, and the worldwide availability of God’s Word—through the end of the Tribulation when, as Matthew records it in 24:30, **“They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”** Those alive on the earth when the signs start to appear will not have all died before this climactic event occurs. This is *so* clear, in fact, that it calls into question the opinion voiced so often from American pulpits—that we shouldn’t bother trying to identify the date of Yahshua’s coming, because “no

man knows the day or the hour.” Taking half a verse out of context and stripping it of its cultural significance is a flimsy excuse for willful ignorance.

When did the signs begin? It could be as early as 1933 with the rise of the prototypical false christ Adolph Hitler and the worldwide war he precipitated. And many expositors can’t help but notice the convergence of prophetic signs in the year 1948: the statehood of Israel, the rise of the ecumenical movement, and the signing of the Benelux agreement—the precursor to today’s European Union. (We’ll explore the significance of these harbingers of the Last Days in due time.) I’ll admit that prophetically, ’48 was a very good year. But the Olivet discourse doesn’t blatantly predict specific events that relate to the Messiah’s return. Rather, Yahshua talks primarily about how to behave when the signs occur: don’t let anyone deceive you... don’t be troubled... if you see the abomination of desolation, head for the hills...and don’t follow anyone in those days who claims to be the Christ, even if he’s got really cool signs and wonders.

For all I know, 1933 or 1948 just might be the watershed years they seem to be. And there are other indications that point toward the sooner—rather than later—return of Christ. In fact, we have been provided with enough information (given a few baseline doctrinal assumptions) to pin down not just the generation, but *the very day*, of Yahshua’s return to the Mount of Olives and most every other major event during the Tribulation—everything except the year of the rapture. But it is pointless, even counterproductive, to fixate on the dates upon which things are going to happen, to the exclusion of weightier matters. It’s not what we were called to do. We were called to love Yahweh our God with our whole being, and love our neighbors as we love ourselves, remember? The information was given to us to help keep us watchful and alert—working out the dates should merely awaken us to the lateness of the hour. Of course, this knowledge could prove to be a matter of life or death to those saved after the rapture.

God has His own timetable, as Peter reminds us: **“Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with Yahweh one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Yahweh is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”** (II Peter 3:8-9) The Methuselah factor is in operation today. I believe that Yahweh in His mercy may have delayed the great flood many years beyond the point when mankind reached utter depravity, ultimately tying its timing to the life of Methuselah, who consequently lived longer than any other man. (Methuselah’s name could be translated “when he dies, it—i.e., the flood—shall be sent.”) In the same way, God is giving mankind today every opportunity to repent—now, before He brings His long-overdue wrath upon the earth. But we should not be ignorant of the fact that Yahweh’s “one day equals a thousand years” equation is *not* merely a metaphor. He clearly established a pattern in His description of our

origins: six “days” of creation followed by a seventh day upon which God “rested,” codified in the Torah’s six-day work week plus a Sabbath rest, and in the cycle of convocations—six feasts and one fast. All of this, I am convinced, corresponds to seven thousand-year periods of time in which the entire story of Yahweh’s redemption of man will be told: six thousand years of fallen man’s dominion followed by one Millennium of King Yahshua’s perfect reign. And any way you slice it, we are rapidly approaching the beginning of the seventh millennium.

Don’t feel bad if you’ve got a burning curiosity about Yahshua’s coming and can’t help wondering how close it might be. You’re in good company. The disciples, even before Christ’s ascension, felt exactly the same way. **“Being assembled together with them, [Yahshua] commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’”** (Acts 1:4-8)

The same mandate applies to us today. We are indwelt with the same Spirit, and we have the same job to do—be witnesses of Yahshua’s glory and grace both at home and abroad. On the other hand, we have also been given reams of information about His plans for our future, plans that appear to be coming to fruition before our very eyes. It was appropriate for Yahshua to tell His Apostles, **“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.”** After all, the subject wasn’t particularly relevant to them, for the age of the Ekklesia had two millennia yet to run. In the same vein, Yahweh’s angel had told Daniel, **“Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.... None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.”** (Daniel 12:9-10) And Jeremiah was told, **“The anger of Yahweh will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.”** (Jeremiah 23:20) I can only conclude that we who are living “in the latter days,” at the “time of the end,” shall be given the light to see what our fathers could not: the very timetable of God’s prophetic program. It is we—if we’re willing to open our eyes—who shall “understand it perfectly.”

Yahshua knew what we were going to face, and how we’d react: **“The Master said, ‘Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom**

his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, “My master is delaying his coming,” and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers....” Religious people who masquerade as “God’s servants” in order to attain power and wealth will share the fate of “unbelievers,” for that is what they are.

“And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:42-48, cf. Matthew 24:45-51) We’ve already looked at the parallel passage in Matthew, but Luke reports a bit more. Our responsibility, Yahshua says, is proportional to our enlightenment. We’re responsible to know that Yahshua is coming, for He told us He would, but even more, to be doing what He wants us to do until He gets here. Christ’s glorious return is approaching—precisely on schedule—whether we know it or not, and whether we know *when* or we don’t. It’s Philadelphia versus Laodicea once again. The Philadelphians live in anticipation of their Master’s return, while the Laodiceans don’t even know who the Master is—yet. In Yahshua’s illustration, they were all servants of the same master. Some were found doing His will at His coming (that is, His coming *for them*, the rapture) and some were not. There’s no getting around it: our behavior reflects our beliefs. If we really believed He could come for us at any time, would we be acting the way we do?

The Messiah’s coming is only anticipated by those who know that God has something wonderful planned for them. Everyone else either ignores it, denies it, or lives in blithe ignorance. Yahshua knew that only His children would be looking forward to His return. “**But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.**” (Luke 21:34-35)

Paul was keenly attuned to the fact of Yahshua’s coming. He was thankful for the abundance of spiritual gifts the Corinthian believers had received, because these, he saw, were a confirmation of the faith they so eagerly held in the promise of Christ’s return. “**I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in Him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will**

keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 1:4-8 NIV)

But he also warned them that because Christ’s return for His called-out assembly was imminent, they needed to adopt a pilgrim mentality, avoid becoming wrapped up in the things of the world. As Yahshua had said so many times, our lives should be characterized by watchful service and motivated by purposeful anticipation. **“The time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away... that you may serve the Master without distraction.”** (I Corinthians 7:29-31, 35) To those who would suggest that Paul erred when he said (almost two thousand years ago), that “the time is short,” I would remind them that the only time that matters is the time we as individual mortals have left on this earth. The time is *always* short between now and death or rapture, whichever comes first. Who among us is ever given more than seventy years or so in which to get our spiritual act together? Paul was right: for us, the time *is* short.

Nor should we neglect our relationship with our brothers and sisters. It’s interesting that the writer of Hebrews saw our need for fellowship increasing as the Day of Yahweh got closer. **“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”** (Hebrews 10:24-25) Because of the apostasy and lawlessness that will characterize the times, we believers will need to stick together—especially as we approach the end—for the influence of the world will be pervasive and sinister. If we don’t make a point of spending significant amounts of time with our fellow believers, we might conclude that evil is not only ubiquitous, it’s normal. As in the days of Noah...

But even more important than fellowship is the maintenance of our relationship with Yahshua. John put it like this: **“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”** (I John 2:28) *Strong’s* defines “abide,” the Greek *meno*, as: “to stay in a given place, state, relation or expectancy, to continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, or tarry.” If we’re all wrapped up in the world’s affairs, abiding in Christ is going to be really hard to do. We can’t have it both ways. I don’t know why we’d want to.

Chapter 10

The Next-to-Last Days

Let's check our bearings. At this point in our story, the rapture is past—the *ekklesia* is gone from the earth. Many will beg to differ, of course; there still exists a wealthy and powerful religion that calls itself “Christianity,” and people are flocking to its churches and cathedrals in droves, looking for answers. Well they should. Multiplied millions of Bible-believing Christians—often whole families—from all over the earth have disappeared into thin air, leaving the world puzzled, grieving, and not a little frightened.

Humanity, however, is demonstrating once again why it's at the top of the food chain. Life is gradually beginning to regain it's normal patterns. The carnage that accompanied “the Event”—car and airplane crashes, infrastructure failures, rioting in the streets—is well on its way toward being cleaned up. Most people have their electricity and phone service back on and have discovered who among their circle of acquaintances is gone. Mankind is finding out the hard way just how resilient the species is. Life goes on.

The West was hardest hit, of course, for more Christians lived there than anywhere else. Indeed, in some countries, were it not for the news stories, life would go on unchanged. But as it is, all over the world a vague mood emerges that life will never really be the same. Even in places that were relatively unscathed, a foreboding descends—a feeling of dread and pessimism that won't go away. *If “they” can come in anytime they want and take people out, we'll never be safe again.* The only remotely plausible answers are not reassuring. Alien invasion, superweapons in the hands of technologically sophisticated (and as yet unnamed) rogue governments, even the retribution of Allah against the infidels (though Muhammad never envisioned such a thing)—none of the emerging theories have a shred of evidence to support them.

But a small group of people—mostly Americans—remember hearing wild tales about Biblical prophecies describing this very thing. Never believed them, of course. But now they're searching for answers. Much of what they remember comes from the spooky and speculative pop-documentaries they used to see on cable TV. They're being gleefully rerun with great frequency these days, but since they didn't have their facts straight in the first place, they're of little value now—except to the commercial sponsors.

The Bible itself doesn't seem to make much sense at first, so these new searchers begin to scour the country for books about eschatology, though they don't know that word. They look in bookstores, in public libraries, on the Internet.

Some bright fellow gets the idea to break in and rummage through the private libraries of the missing people—and he hits pay dirt. The Event was described—precisely as it happened—something like two thousand years before. It was called the “rapture.” Armed with this information, these researchers go back to the Bible, as the books suggested, and sure enough, there are the predictions. (They never do find the word “rapture,” but everything else is there, hints and innuendoes scattered all over the place in scripture.)

And slowly, one by one, these men and women come to realize the good news *and* the bad news: there *is* an all-powerful, holy, and loving God. We have fallen short of His standards and therefore cannot exist in His presence, 'cause that's what holiness is all about—separation from evil. But He has provided a means whereby we can regain a position of fellowship with Him—we can actually *live forever*. This God came and lived among us as a man, and in a process of self-sacrifice that we'll never fully understand, He gave His life so that we might live. All we have to do is accept His gift of life, acknowledging Him as our Savior. These folks, having seen the power of God first hand, become the first post-rapture believers—charter members of the Fellowship of Repentant Laodicea—lukewarm no longer.

That, believe it or not, is all “the good news,” though it's kind of like coming home and announcing, “Good news: the airbags in the car work!” The bad news comes when the researchers get into the “judgment” passages, especially the book of Revelation, and discover that the chances of them getting out of this alive are slim to the point of anorexia. The end is very near indeed, they find, and they learn that many of them will not live to see how it all turns out. But the chips are down. These new believers suck up their courage and pray to a God they barely know (one whose name, Yahweh, many of them will never learn because it has been systematically suppressed—edited out of virtually every English Bible translation, replaced with a misleading title, “the Lord.”) They pray: *God, I have blown all my chances before today. I know that now. But with Your help, I want to serve you during whatever time I've got left. I pray that I will make it through to the end, but if it means martyrdom for me, I'll accept that. Help me, Jesus!*

The next few weeks bring excitement and personal peace, along with ridicule and confusion, to these new believers. One of the sources of their confusion is a pervasive myth among Biblical expositors that the Tribulation will begin immediately after the rapture. *But where is the Antichrist? Who is Mystery Babylon? Nobody's asked me to take the Mark of the Beast. I don't get it!* The fact is that nowhere in scripture is the timing of the rapture directly tied to the Tribulation, or any other event. *It could* begin almost right away, but there could just as easily be a gap of years between one event and the other. For that matter,

the rapture, it seems, has been imminent ever since the Day of Pentecost: God could have come for His church at any time, but didn't. Until now.

I believe the reason they're not overtly connected chronologically is that God didn't want *Satan* knowing when the rapture would be—He was protecting us from the devil's head games. The Tribulation, as we have seen, will be a seven-year period, beginning with a specifically prophesied event—a “covenant with many” with a plethora of prophetic ramifications. If you know what this event is, if you recognize it when you see it, you can calculate exactly—to the day—when the Tribulation will end. But if the Tribulation's commencement is not tied to the rapture, it will *still* come upon an unbelieving world “like a thief in the night.” Remember, Satan has been around since the beginning of our time. He knows Yahweh's seven-millennium plan far better than we do—and he has no doubt figured out when Yahshua will return in glory. The one thing he doesn't know is when Yahshua will come back to keep His people out of the “hour of trial that is to come upon the whole earth.” No one does.

Unfortunately, if a lifetime of study is insufficient for a guy like me to get to the bottom of all the mysteries, then a couple of weeks of research by these new brothers and sisters will probably not reveal to them much more than the bare-bones structure of the last days. They will have to do most of their Bible study “in the saddle,” like Abraham and Moses did.

That being said, my sense is that once the rapture is history, things will move rapidly toward their final consummation. If “**This generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place**” (Matthew 24:34) means what it seems to mean, then the pieces will have to fall into place quickly indeed. As a matter of fact, the sudden disappearance of all of people in the world who trust in God's saving grace will *in itself* bring a certain element of destabilization to the places where they lived. Their salvation compels them to behave as if they're responsible for their actions before God (and not merely afraid they'll be discovered by men). They habitually do the right thing *because* it's the right thing to do, displaying love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—the fruit of Spirit—because of the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. And in places where Christians were rare, the presence of Yahweh's Spirit *still* exerted a restraining influence on the worst (or at least most destructive) impulses of man.

Furthermore, there are underlying conditions that must be met in order for the prophecies to come to pass. And other conditions are *suggested* by scripture,

though not overtly predicted, that will play a part in the fulfillment of the body of end-times prophecy. But whether overtly prophesied or merely hinted at through circumstances, all of these things take time to develop. So it's not surprising that some of them have already begun to make themselves evident.

Easily the most fundamental of these conditions is the presence of Israel in the land—the “budding of the fig tree” as it were. Everything hinges upon the Jews’ occupation of Canaan—anything approaching the literal fulfillment of prophecy is impossible without it. Of course, before World War I, the chances of Israel’s return looked somewhere between vanishingly remote and nonexistent. But then a British Jew named Chaim Weizmann invented synthetic acetone—used in the manufacture of explosives—helping his nation defeat the Germans and their allies. A grateful Parliament asked him what he’d like as a token of their thanks. He could have asked for almost anything, I suppose, but Weizmann—knowing the British had wrested control of Palestine from the defeated Ottoman Turks—asked for a homeland there for his people. The resulting Balfour Declaration, a November 1917 letter *from Arthur James Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild, represents the first political recognition of the Zionist cause by any major world power.* It stated Britain’s willingness—in principle—to comply with Weizmann’s request. But then they dragged their feet for thirty years. After the Nazi Holocaust of World War II, however, the British—and the world—could no longer ignore the plight of the Jews. In November, 1947, the United Nations, itself only two years old, partitioned Palestine into Jewish and Arab sections. (The British, if you can believe it, abstained from the voting.) And on May 14, 1948 the Jews declared Israel to be a sovereign state.

The world should not have been so surprised. The prophet Ezekiel, writing in the 6th century B.C., saw it coming: **“The hand of Yahweh came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of Yahweh, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ So I answered, ‘O Lord Yahweh, You know.’ Again He said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh! Thus says Yahweh to these bones: Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh....”** This was the state of Israel between A.D. 135 (when Rome under Hadrian finished what Vespasian and Titus had started, expelling the Jews from Judea and renaming it Palestine) and 1948. Nationally, they were nothing but dead, dry bones, scattered to the four winds. But God had plans for them.

“So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the

sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them....” Since the “sudden” rebirth of the nation of Israel, they have been in this state—physically alive but spiritually dead. They will remain in this condition until they turn to Yahweh in repentance and faith, recognizing Yahshua as their Messiah. I’m not guessing here, by the way. The following two chapters in Ezekiel describe precisely how this will happen—but we’ll have to save that discussion for later.

“Also He said to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says Yahweh: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army....” We’re getting a glimpse into the future here. The nation of Israel will be brought back to life *spiritually* as they were physically: wind and breath (both are the same Hebrew word: *ruach*) are indicative of the Holy Spirit. Now, in case you think that applying this odd prophecy to Israel is unwarranted, read on....

“Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says Yahweh: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, Yahweh, have spoken it and performed it,’ says Yahweh.” (Ezekiel 37:1-14) God gave the prophet a whole list of things that will happen—the “graves” of Israel’s captivity will be opened, they will come to their own land, they will be made alive by God’s Spirit, and they will recognize that it is Yahweh, and not coincidence, who has performed all of this. Today they’re halfway there.

God hadn’t exhausted the subject. Ezekiel continues: **“Again the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ‘As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: “For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.” Then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.” Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand....”** At this time in Israel’s history, the kingdom was divided. The northern ten tribes had broken off from Judah and Benjamin in 930 B.C., three hundred years before Ezekiel’s day. The break was apparently total and permanent. Yahweh didn’t care; they would be one nation again.

“And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, ‘Will you not show us what you mean by these?’—say to them, ‘Thus says Yahweh: Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My

hand.' And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. Then say to them, 'Thus says Yahweh: Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king [ultimately, the Messiah] shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.'" (Ezekiel 37:15-22)

This is a work in process. It began in the mid 19th century and it continues to this day. Those in Israel (and Washington) who would trade land for the promise of peace (historically the most foolish of bargains—remember Czechoslovakia?) should note that the prophecy specified “on the mountains of Israel.” This area is within the West Bank, the land that the historically challenged politicians want to give to the Palestinian Arabs. And remember: in Numbers 34 and elsewhere Yahweh specified that the Jordan River would be Israel’s eastern border. God’s prophecy is written. What makes the politicians think they can unwrite it?

But we’re not talking about Israeli/Arab squabbles here. Ezekiel is speaking of healing rifts between Jews. Forget for the moment that you can’t get ten Israelis together in a room without having eleven opinions represented. A divergence of political viewpoint is not the same as civil war. Yahweh is saying that the divided kingdom of Ephraim and Judah is to be a thing of the past.

That’s saying a mouthful, however. The northern kingdom, which came to be known by the name of its capital, Samaria, was hated and scorned by the southern Jews because those who had not been scattered to the four winds by their Assyrian conquerors had intermarried with the gentile peoples living around them. They were no longer racially pure. So diluted was the bloodline, in fact, that after the Assyrian captivity they became commonly known as “the ten lost tribes of Israel,” although that’s not a Biblical concept. They’re not lost to Yahweh. “Israel” consists of both “Judah” and “Ephraim,” regardless of whether or not they are aware of their Israelite lineage. Yahweh not only knows who’s a Jew/Israelite and who isn’t, He even knows which of the twelve tribes each individual belongs to. More to the point, I believe the Jews themselves will know before the Tribulation is over. How? I’ll tell you later in this chapter.

The *why* of it is much more important anyway—why do the Jews (most of them) still find themselves in a position of exile and ignorance at this late date? It’s because at almost every juncture in their long and checkered history they did precisely what Yahweh told them not to do. It’s not like they hadn’t been warned. **“When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of Yahweh your God to provoke Him to anger, I [Moses] call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And**

Yahweh will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where Yahweh will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell." That much is history. But there is reason for hope. Yahweh is ever eager to respond to true repentance with mercy and restoration. **"But from there you will seek Yahweh your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to Yahweh your God and obey His voice (for Yahweh your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them."** (Deuteronomy 4:25-31)

Yahweh spoke through the prophet Nathan to remind David that He *wants* the Jews to have a secure homeland. It gives Him no pleasure to have to discipline His chosen people by removing them from the Land. **"I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies."** (II Samuel 7:10-11, cf. I Chronicles 17:9-10)

For his part, David was only too aware of his God's desire to bless His people: **"Oh, give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. And say, 'Save us, O God of our salvation; gather us together, and deliver us from the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise.' Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!"** (I Chronicles 16:34-36, cf. Psalm 106:47) The Jews were enjoying an unprecedented period of blessing under David's reign. They had yet to be scattered under the Gentile lash. So his requests to "gather us" and "deliver us from the gentiles" were prophetic, as was this Psalm in which he looks forward to Israel's final restoration: **"Lord, You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger."** (Psalm 85:1-3)

Jeremiah, on the other hand, saw the destruction and deportation of his people with his own eyes—after preaching to deaf Jewish ears for forty years. If anyone had a right to be bitter, it was this "weeping prophet," and yet he spoke again and again about Israel's bright future. **"But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase."** (Jeremiah 23:3) Or, **"Behold, the days are coming,"** says Yahweh, **"that they shall no longer say, 'As Yahweh lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'As Yahweh lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.' And they shall dwell in their own land."** (Jeremiah 23:7-8) That's an interesting description of their place of exile: "the north country." Babylon—where they

were being carted off to at the time—was more east than north. But where did the vast majority of immigrants to modern Israel come from? Eastern Europe and Russia—the “north country.”

As if he hadn’t made himself clear yet, Jeremiah kept going. **“For behold, the days are coming,’ says Yahweh, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah. And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.”** (Jeremiah 30:3) Notice that the Jews (not just Judah, but all of Israel) won’t return on their own, but Yahweh will “bring” them, will “cause them to return.” Why? Because of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The prophet continued: **“Thus says Yahweh: ‘Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded,’ says Yahweh, ‘and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future,’ says Yahweh, ‘that your children shall come back to their own border. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: “You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained bull. Restore me, and I will return, for You are Yahweh my God. Surely, after my turning, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, because I bore the reproach of my youth.” Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him,’ says Yahweh.”** (Jeremiah 31:16-20) Though he was primarily a prophet to Judah, Jeremiah has just delivered a message of hope and comfort to Ephraim (a.k.a. Samaria, the Northern Kingdom, or “Israel”)—who had been conquered, dispersed, and assimilated—diluted and polluted—by Assyria 130 years before! Yahweh knows who His people are—*all* of them.

Next, Yahweh chides the future Israel for taking their sweet time returning. **“Set up signposts, make landmarks. Set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities. How long will you gad about, O you backsliding daughter? For Yahweh has created a new thing in the earth—a woman shall encompass a man.”** (Jeremiah 31:21-22) It’s kind of a dare: *How long are you going to fool around, you silly girl of a nation, just because it’s “impossible?” I, Yahweh, have given you—a weak, defenseless “woman,”—the strength to overcome a fierce, strong “man,” the weight of the whole world’s animosity and opposition.* Even today, only about half of the world’s known Jews live in the Promised Land.

“Thus says Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “They shall again use this speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I bring back their captivity: ‘Yahweh bless you, O home of justice, and mountain of holiness!’ And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all its cities together, farmers and those going out with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul....Behold, the days are coming,’ says Yahweh, ‘that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that as I have watched over

them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,' says Yahweh." (Jeremiah 31:23-28) When the Zionist movement started picking up steam in the late 19th century, Palestine (the name the Romans had given the land) was a desolate, sparsely populated province of Syria. Despite all the Muslim rhetoric of recent days, nobody seemed to want the place. Long before their statehood was granted to them, Jews came in and bought (*bought*, not conquered, seized, or "occupied") large tracts of present-day Israel from Arabs who considered the land worthless. It was these Jews who began to "build and plant" the prosperous nation that exists today, under the watchful eye of Yahweh.

And what was that about "speech?" Although the Hebrew tongue had never "died" in the sense that it was totally unused, few Jews other than scholars and rabbis knew the language. Three quarters of the world's Jews spoke Yiddish, and most of the rest were confined to their local tongues, mostly European languages. The Zionists showed foresight and courage when they determined early in the 20th century—long before statehood—that Hebrew, not Yiddish, German, or Arabic, would be the official language of Eretz Israel. I'm told that even today, the Israelis don't normally assimilate new words from other languages. Rather, when a new thing appears that needs naming—"space satellite," for example—they simply coin a new Hebrew-sounding word instead of borrowing from English or some other language.

Why? The prophet Zephaniah explains it: **"For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of Yahweh, to serve Him with one accord...."** It is significant that the languages that were used to spread the news of God's salvation to the gentile world after Yahshua's advent—notably Greek and Latin—were not capable of accurately transmitting the names of Yahweh or His Messiah, Yahshua. Neither *lingua franca* had a consonant "y" sound or a "sh" diphthong, so the divine names could only be approximated. The standard Anglicized forms, "Jehovah" and "Jesus" are no closer. So the restoration of God's "pure language," Hebrew, was one crucial step in re-introducing Yahweh's chosen people to the One who had chosen them in the first place.

"From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia [*Cush*] My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering." (Zephaniah 3:9-10) Where did the lion's share of seed money for the rebuilding of Israel come from? Not from the same lands that provided the immigrants, but from America—its Jews, but also its people in general through foreign aid (Israel is usually the biggest item in the budget) and Christian charity. And how is this land described by the prophet? "Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia." That sounds like it ought to be in Africa, but if we reverse-engineer the prophecy, noting who turned out to be the "daughters of My dispersed ones," and who "brought My offering," It can only mean the United

States of America. Remember that phrase, **“Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,”** and what it means, for it helps to explain one of the great mysteries of Biblical prophecy. (But alas, as much as I’d like to chase this rabbit, I’m going to have to save it for a later chapter.)

That’s not the only sideways reference to Christians in regard to the Jews’ return to the Land. Consider this fascinating gem from Jeremiah: **“Yahweh has appeared of old to me [Israel], saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice. You shall yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria [again, this is in the West Bank]; the planters shall plant and eat them as ordinary food. For there shall be a day when the watchmen will cry on Mount Ephraim, ‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to Yahweh our God.’”**” (Jeremiah 31:3-6) Who are these “watchmen?” The Hebrew word is *natsar*, described in *Strong’s* as “To guard, in a good sense (protect, maintain, etc.) or a bad one (to conceal, etc.), to keep, observe, preserve, or watch.” *So what? Natsar* was the root of the name Nazareth, the town where Yahshua grew up. *Again, so what?* Acts 24:5 points out that the early Christians were called the sect of the Nazarenes. To this day, Christians in Israel are referred to in Hebrew as *natsar*—the watchmen of Jeremiah 31, who say, **“Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to Yahweh our God.”** In other words, the Christians’ lead in calling on Yahweh will light the way for the Jews in Zion.

It seems God never gets tired of calling his people home. **“Up, up! Flee from the land of the north,’ says Yahweh, ‘for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven. Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.... Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.”** (Zechariah 2:6-7, 8:7-8) I guess Yahweh isn’t impressed with Islamic claims on Jerusalem—He says *His* people are going to live there. And where will they come from? From **“abroad like the four winds of heaven,”** i.e., all over the place, but primarily from the east, the west, and the north. That is reality today. They have been “dwelling in the midst of Jerusalem” for over a century now, but especially since their stunning—dare I say *miraculous*—defeat of Muslim forces in 1967’s Six-Day War. Living there in peace and security, however, is another matter.

In all of that, there’s lots of talk about *what*—the Jews’ returning—and very little reference to *when*. You could conclude that it’s a moot point, since Israel has already returned to the Land, physically, if not spiritually. Forget for a moment

that the Muslims have been trying to drive the Jews into the Mediterranean since 1947. Forget that the underlying agenda of the recent resurgence of Islamist dominance in Africa and the Middle East is to (in Muhammad's words) "kill every Jew." Forget that the weight of world opinion is demanding that Israel commit political (if not physical) suicide by creating a Palestinian State within its borders. Forget the pressure to split Jerusalem in two, giving the eastern half (the part with the Temple Mount in it) to the Muslims—or failing that, to take it out of Israeli hands altogether and make it an "international city of prayer," whatever that means. The fact is, within the next quarter century or so, the Israeli Arab population—at its present rate of growth—will have grown large enough to *vote* Israel out of existence in the Knesset. Left to the devices of man, the Jews in Israel *will* eventually be driven back out of the Land. But Yahweh has other ideas. And remember, He delights in doing the impossible—which is about what Israel's long-term survival looks like these days.

I can assure you, however, that the Jews' presence—and even a certain level of prosperity—in Palestine is assured until well after the commencement of the Tribulation. How can I make such an unlikely prediction? It's because the Jewish Temple must exist in Jerusalem—with its traditional Levitical liturgy in full operation—in order for the prophecies concerning the Antichrist to be literally fulfilled.

Daniel prophesied that the Temple would be the setting for some major events during the last days. That was a fairly remarkable statement for him to make, since Solomon's Temple had been destroyed by his boss Nebuchadnezzar years before he received his vision. The prophecy is fairly complicated, involving near and far fulfillments (which were *all* future to the prophet, though not to us). The second-century B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes morphs into the Antichrist in the middle of the prediction, but it's clear that the final fulfillment is reserved for the last days. We pick up the story in the 8th chapter: **"And out of one of them [Alexander's four generals] came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, 'How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?' And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.'" (Daniel 8:9-14)** Up to this point, all of this is fulfilled prophecy, though some of it may have future ramifications as well. The Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes began his

persecution of the Jews (here called the “host of heaven”) in 171 B.C., slaughtering a pig on the altar of the second temple. 2,300 days later (in December, 165 B.C., now celebrated as Hanukkah) Judas Maccabeus finally succeeded in restoring the temple for its proper service.

If it’s already fulfilled, why am I even bringing it up? It’s because of what came next: **“Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, ‘Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.’ So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, ‘Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end.’ Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. And he said, ‘Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be.”** (Daniel 8:15-19) In other words, the Antiochus IV incident was just going to be a dress rehearsal for the real performance, a hint as to what it means to defile the sanctuary. The time in which this brutal scumbag lived could hardly be called “the time of the end.” In the very next chapter (a prophecy given thirteen years later) Daniel was told that the Messiah would come almost 200 years after Antiochus (not in so many words, you understand; you have to do the math). So “the latter time of the indignation” had to refer to something even later.

Note, too, the telling phrase, **“At the appointed time the end shall be.”** Yahweh is telling us in no uncertain terms that He does have a timetable—that He will bring about His purposes as He promised, on His own schedule. That being said, what do you think are the chances of Him *not* revealing that schedule to us somewhere in scripture? I believe He has. In fact, much of the specific and detailed chronological information he revealed about the “appointed time of the end” was transmitted to us through this very prophet, Daniel. The times aren’t “appointed” for God anyway—He lives outside of time’s constraints—they’re for us.

In his next prophecy, Daniel again alluded to the Temple: **“Then he [the prince who will come, i.e., Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.”** (Daniel 9:27) Sacrifices and offerings to Yahweh could not be made anywhere but the Temple (see Leviticus 17:3-4). And in order for them to be “brought to an end,” they had to be in operation in the first place, which in turn means the Temple had to be there. The Temple didn’t exist in Daniel’s day. It would be rebuilt under Ezra and Zerubbabel, completed in 515 B.C., and extensively remodeled by Herod a generation before Christ’s first-century advent, only to be destroyed again by the Romans in 70 A.D. Since that time, there has been no Temple, no place where Jews could go to make the offerings prescribed in Leviticus to atone for their sins.

Fifty generations of Jews have come and gone, dying in their sins for all they knew, because there was no Temple.

A handful of insightful Jews, unable to deal with this paradox but unwilling to believe that Yahweh would leave them in limbo for two thousand years, have followed the trail of prophecy to the cross of Christ. They have learned that the Temple is no longer necessary for the atonement of our sins, because Yahshua became the ultimate sacrifice, the final fulfillment of the Law of Moses. The rest of the Jews either ignore the problem all together, try to explain the conundrum away, or long for the day when the Temple can be rebuilt.

And rebuilt it shall be—just in time to be usurped and misused by the Antichrist himself. Though most Jews today couldn't care less if the Temple ever gets rebuilt, there are several organizations in Israel today whose aim is to bring "the Third Temple" into existence, going so far as to train men as priests and build furnishings and utensils for the Temple they hope will arise. This is not surprising, considering what Paul wrote concerning the Day of Yahweh, **"That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."** (II Thessalonians 2:3-4) This is the same event we saw in Daniel 9:27, above. In the middle of the seven-year Tribulation, this world leader will call a halt to the recently reinstated Temple sacrifices and declare himself to be God. This will answer the question many Jews will be asking themselves at the time: *who does this guy think he is?* But I'm getting just slightly ahead of myself.

To recap then, two conditions that must exist during the Tribulation are the presence of the Jews in Israel (a present, though endangered, reality) and the existence of a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (a deeply suppressed dream for orthodox Jews the world over). A third condition is the existence of a ten-nation confederacy, the Antichrist's power base. Daniel described it like this: **"I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words."** (Daniel 7:7-8) The prophet's vision of the "fourth beast" begins with a picture of Rome—the equivalent of his earlier encounter with the legs and feet of Nebuchadnezzar's big

statue. But before the words are past his lips, the scene jumps forward to something yet in our future. It's still related to the Roman empire, but there are now ten nations (the ten toes of the statue) within it. As Daniel watches, a "little horn"—an eleventh nation or, more properly, its leader—rises to power. And somehow, three of the first ten nations are destroyed before him. It would seem, based on the language, that these three are merged into the little horn's political empire, for they are "plucked out by the roots." Sounds painful.

Daniel then gets some clarification: **"I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.... The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom, and another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings."** (Daniel 7:19-20, 23-24)

It's tempting to take a quick look at the map (and an equally quick glance at scripture) and equate today's newly-confederated Europe—the EU, or European Union—with the ten horns in Daniel's vision. But that group already has well over ten member nations, so it would seem that some significant shuffling, consolidating, or splitting would be required if the EU is to become this "new Roman empire." That's not impossible, of course. Treaties and realignments can happen with blinding speed if the "right" man is in power. If you don't believe me, go back and look at how quickly Adolph Hitler swallowed up Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938. But careful attention to the requirements of scripture will lead us in a slightly different direction. Note that this ten-nation confederacy doesn't necessarily have to be in place for decades before the Tribulation begins—it needn't even be a reality before the rapture.

Some people think that these "ten horns" are *already* historical fact, which only proves that the prophecies are so esoteric, all kinds of theories sound plausible. In the next chapter, we'll discuss in more detail how the death of the old Roman empire sowed the seeds of a new one—one yet to assume its final form. There, I'll present my own educated guess as to how the Antichrist's kingdom will take shape, taking *all* the salient scriptures into account (not just Daniel 7). For now, suffice it to say that a new "kingdom" will emerge, and that it will have some relationship with the historical Roman empire, whether cultural or geographical. It will include ten original political forces (three of whom will probably be *history* by the time the Tribulation begins). The man who will rise to lead it to prominence is the Antichrist himself.

One last condition must be in place before the Day of Yahweh. This one is easy to see coming, for as with Israel's presence in the Land, it's already here for all practical purposes. This condition is worldwide apostasy—a “falling away” from the truth.

Human history is like a locomotive, if I may use a metaphor. A hundred years ago, most people, even Christians, thought the best thing you could do was get on the train. It was apparently heading toward a bright new tomorrow, a land of peace, prosperity, and promise. Destination: utopia! But for those who were paying attention, the 20th century revealed that something was wrong. The train derailed twice, had numerous smaller collisions, and destroyed everything that got near its path. Its billowing smokestack darkened the sky and its sparks set the prairie on fire. Someone loaded its boxcars with pestilence, filth, and high explosives.

The passengers now fall into four categories. Some are fast asleep, lulled into stupor by the pulsating rhythms of normalcy; some are back in the club car, trying to make a killing by cheating each other at poker. Some are glowering at their watches, wishing they were going faster, though they have no idea where the train is headed. And a few passengers—very few—have noticed that the train *has* increased its speed. They watch with growing alarm as the trees and telephone poles whiz past their windows, and slowly come to the grim realization that the engineer is a madman—bent on destroying himself and everyone else on the train in a blaze of glory.

Christians are no longer riding the train. They debarked, if you will, at Philadelphia, opting to become pilgrim pedestrians. But they too are watching its progress with alarm, not for themselves but for the passengers who are still aboard. In the light of Biblical prophecy and common sense, we can see that the locomotive is out of control. It's doing a hundred miles an hour and picking up speed, approaching the end of the line with the hammer down. We are doing everything we can to get people to wake up, to jump off the train before it's too late. But we're no longer *on* the train—we're not “of the world”—and because of this, it's hard to get people who *are* to listen to us.

Making matters worse are the porters and stewards (our politicians, media, educators, and even some clergy) those whose job it is to make sure the passengers are well informed and well taken care of. The engineer—Satan—has assured them that he has everything under control, and they glibly pass his sentiments on to those few passengers who are beginning to show concern.

Whereas they should be running up and down the aisles, waking people up and warning them that they're about to crash, these servants of the crazy engineer instead issue assurances and explanations. They are the very picture of apostasy—a willful ignorance of the danger, a falling away from the truth.

Paul warned us about it. **“The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”** (II Timothy 4:3-4) That time is clearly here. We live in what's called the “information age.” Everybody, it seems, knows a little bit about most everything. They feel they have a right—even a duty—to keep themselves well enough informed to render an opinion on any subject. But it's also the age of specialization. We often understand our own narrow field to the exclusion of all others, for which we rely upon sound bites from self-appointed “experts.” The result is that we are the best-educated, most opinionated, and *shallowest* generation ever to inhabit this planet.

Our appalling lack of depth is our own fault. Truth shines a bright light onto our faults, and that's uncomfortable, so we avoid it. But at the same time, we have “itching ears,” a thirst for knowledge (or at least reassurance), so we listen to pundits, prognosticators, politicians—and preachers—who tell us what we want to hear. We can't stand to hear truth, so we settle for fact—information that is not so much lies as it is beside the point.

Some of it, of course, *is* lies. In America especially, we purposely “turn aside to fables.” In the interest of separating church from state (a concept that is neither in nor supported by our Constitution) we have for the last half-century systematically moved from recognition that we are all under God, to purposely ignoring Him in our public institutions, to being openly antagonistic toward anything that might imply that a Supreme Deity might even exist. The theory of evolution, taught as fact in our schools, is a perfect example. Though it's just a theory (and one that doesn't mesh very well with the actual scientific data), it is considered the only acceptable explanation for the origin of life because it doesn't factor God into it. In other words, it's a fable. (Scientists tend to drift toward it because since if the Creator can't be measured, He's beyond the bounds of science, hence He logically must not exist. This kind of reasoning is circular and self-serving.) Ironically, in making the theory of evolution part of our public policy, we have done exactly what we set out to avoid: we have inextricably joined “church” and state. The “church” here is not Christianity however, or any other recognized religious entity, but the insidious cult of atheistic secular humanism—a faith-based belief system, a *religion* in every sense of the word.

Another example of apostasy is the way we handle our finances. We no longer rely on Yahweh. Rather, we perceive “needs,” so we spend money trying to solve

the problems we see. Not surprisingly, our needs outweigh our ability to meet them (mostly because we've abandoned God—see Deuteronomy 28). So we borrow money we don't have (and can't pay back) in an attempt to achieve what we see as critical goals—but seldom are. On a personal level, we buy homes and cars, toys and diversions, that are far beyond our means—just because society has convinced us that “we deserve them.” On a national level, we fight ridiculously expensive wars trying to impose democracy on people who wallow in spiritual slavery—who therefore invariably vote themselves back into bondage the first chance they get. We support dictatorial regimes with arms and aid, and then we're surprised when they act in their own perceived self interests instead of ours. We impoverish half our populace in a vain attempt to make life better for the other half—all in the name of “fairness.” We borrow the lion's share of every dollar we spend, only to waste most of it through foolish policies and bureaucratic bungling. In short, whether personally or nationally, we Americans refuse to live within our means. What ever happened to, **“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”** (Romans 13:8)

Peter also spoke of the apostates of the last days, in his own meek and soft-spoken fashion: **“But these [false teachers], like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray.... These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”** (II Peter 2:12-15, 17) Don't hold back, Pete. Tell us what you *really* think. Here is a clear warning to those who would bad-mouth Godly principles: don't “speak evil of things you don't understand.” Factor in the reality that God's Word is spiritually discerned—and therefore *can't* be fully understood by those who reject the Holy Spirit—and you end up with a classic catch-22. There's no way to attack God's people without attacking God Himself. I can't help but reflect that as bad as things will be for the “unstable souls” left behind at the rapture, it will be worse for those who had a hand in leading them astray.

Peter went on to say, **“Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”** (II Peter 3:3-5) In the days following the rapture, the world's populace will have seen with their own eyes “the promise of His coming,” though most won't recognize it as such. Amid the perplexity and fear that follow the event, the underlying assumption of evolutionary theory, that “the past is the key to the future, and we will continue to

evolve into more and more wonderful beings until we become like gods, conquering the universe,” will sound hollow indeed.

None of this institutionalized falsehood has taken Yahweh by surprise, of course. His prophet Jeremiah spoke of it six centuries before Christ. **“Everyone take heed to his neighbor, and do not trust any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanderers. Everyone will deceive his neighbor, and will not speak the truth. They have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity. Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know Me,’ says Yahweh.”** (Jeremiah 9:4-6) It’s like he just saw one of our newspapers or spent a few hours watching our television programs. Who can deny it? Our “dwelling place *is* in the midst of deceit.”

Another Old Testament prophet saw where this “refusal to know Yahweh” would lead. Micah wrote: **“Woe is me! For I am like those who gather summer fruits, like those who glean vintage grapes. There is no cluster to eat of the first-ripe fruit which my soul desires. The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; Every man hunts his brother with a net. That they may successfully do evil with both hands—the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they scheme together. The best of them is like a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge....”** I believe that the prophet is ultimately describing the world immediately after the rapture—from the point of view of those left behind. He begins by observing that everything left is rotten, and the reason is that all of the good people are gone. From this point on, he says, it’s every man for himself. The Hebrew word for “perished” is *abad*, meaning to wander away, to lose oneself—a perfect description of the uncertainty, the bewilderment, concerning the missing millions: *The faithful people have wandered away—they’re lost to us. Everyone who’s left is violent and greedy, even the best of them.*

“The day of your watchman and your punishment comes; Now shall be their perplexity.” “Watchman” this time does not connote Christians (as it did in Jeremiah 31, above). Here the word is *tsaphah*, meaning to look out, spy, observe, or keep watch. After the rapture, everybody is going to be under surveillance, and those who step out of line will be punished. We can clearly see the seeds of this mentality being sown already in our world, with GPS chips in cell phones, vehicle tracking, surveillance cameras everywhere, and Internet monitoring. So Micah offers some good advice for those left behind. **“Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion. Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom. For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own household. Therefore I will look to Yahweh; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.”** (Micah 7:1-7) Now that the Holy Spirit is gone, taking the ekklesia with Him, you can’t

trust anybody, not even your spouse or your best friend. There are hints of a “Big-Brother-is-watching” paranoid mentality here, a spirit that will only intensify as Yahshua’s ultimate return approaches. There’s nothing left to do but repent and wait on Yahweh.

The apostasy that characterizes the last days will be seen most clearly in the religious organizations that are left behind. I can’t stress strongly enough that no one in the “Church of Laodicea” will be truly saved at the time of the rapture. This last “Church,” rather, is comprised exclusively of those who subsequently repent, those who after that day heed the rebuke of the risen Christ: **“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. You say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked....”** This was their condition up to the day of the rapture—lost, apostate, having a religious façade but no spiritual substance—as they’d say in Texas, they’re all hat and no cattle. Yahshua finds their pretensions sickening.

But as with any lost sheep, He doesn’t give up looking for them, even after He’s taken the rest of the flock home to safety. Yahshua now tells them what to do, and why they should do it. **“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”** (Revelation 3:15-21) At its heart, Christ’s counsel is to stop concentrating on worldly religious trappings, distractions, and side issues, no matter how benign or worthy, and turn instead to Him alone. If they will accept His discipline in a spirit of humbleness and repentance, He will bless them. In other words, they have pretty much the same deal as any of us have, with the exception of our being able to look forward to meeting Him in the air before all the unpleasantness starts.

This end-time apostasy won’t confine itself to “religious” circles, of course. The world at the end of the age will be “as it was in the days of Noah,” or “in the days of Lot.” In other words, society as a whole won’t be concerned with the things of God at all; they’ll be so consumed with trivia they won’t have time for Truth.

The book of Judges closes with what is obviously supposed to be an indictment, an indication of just how out of whack things had gotten: **“Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** I’ve always found it curious that Yahweh considered this a bad thing. At least they weren’t doing what they thought was *wrong*. But

that's precisely the point. They—like this last generation—had forgotten God and His laws, making up their own rules, their own definitions of “right” and “wrong.” *If it feels good, do it*, is now the order of the day. The two “great commandments” are now “You shall love *yourself* with all your time, resources, and energy,” and “Love your neighbor, but don't let her husband catch you.” At one time you could argue that societal pressures kept a lid on the worst of our behaviors. But what happens when society itself falls apart, when the lawfully mandated norm is what Yahweh calls sin?

Paul gave us the answer, and it isn't pretty. **“And even as [homosexuals] did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them [i.e., ‘men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness’ (v.18)] over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”** (Romans 1:28-32) Does any of this look familiar, or do you live in a cave in a remote Tibetan mountain somewhere? As I said before, these things do not occasionally raise their ugly heads in our present world; they are *characteristic* of the society we live in. They have become the norm.

Christians today are getting a feeling for what Lot experienced as he tried to live his life in Sodom. It's not easy to avoid smelling like garbage when you live in a dumpster. But Lot's story isn't just history. It's also a warning: **“Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”** (Jude 7) As one insightful wag put it, if God doesn't come back here and punish our nation, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah a big apology.

My point is not that we should try to change other people's behavior to suit our own idea of right and wrong. My point is that this apostasy, this falling away from the Truth, is an indication that the world is ripe for judgment—that we are nearing the end, that we are in the “next-to-last” days. Externally suppressing bad behavior is like giving a cancer sufferer an aspirin—it may mask the symptoms temporarily, but without removing the tumor—the curse of sin—the patient is still going to die.

We are not called to be judgmental of the world's “sinners,” for we all fall into that category. Rather, we are to warn them that God's judgment is coming. I know, the two things sound quite similar. Yahweh doesn't want anyone to perish, but there is a limit to His patience. He has clearly stated that He has a timetable.

(It's not *His*, you understand. He lives outside of time—It was designed for us.) Paul asked these people, **“Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil.”** (Romans 2:4-9) I don't know how he could make it any clearer. It's the same kind of choice Moses presented to the children of Israel, but the stakes are even higher this time. They're not national; they're personal. And they're not temporal; they're eternal.

It seems Paul had the same warning for everyone he talked to. What he wrote to the Romans, he also said to the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, and the Colossians: people whose lives are characterized by sin **“will not inherit the kingdom of God.”** **“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”** (I Corinthians 6:9-11) These are the behaviors we were saved *from*, the filth that the blood of Yahshua has washed off. There is no place for them in God's kingdom. But notice something else. He's talking to people who **“were justified,”** as in, **“this has *already* happened in your life—you are *now* counted as being **“righteous”** in God's eyes, and you *will* inherit the kingdom of God.”** But in the same breath, he's admonishing them to sin no more. Why? Because being redeemed does not automatically make us paragons of virtue: it is still possible to sin, and it will be as long as we're mortal human beings. But sins—especially ones like those on his list—can inhibit our fellowship with the God who bought us. They don't hurt God, but they can definitely hurt us.

But we Christians are, as far as God is concerned, spiritual beings. That is, we have been made alive through God's Spirit living within us. Therefore the **“works of the flesh,”** those things that we see in the world around us, don't belong in our lives. **“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”** (Galatians 5:19-21) The works of the flesh can't be performed if we're no longer living in bodies of flesh, thank God. That's what the rapture and the subsequent harvests are all about:

providing God's children with incorruptible, immortal, spiritual bodies. But until that happens, we're vulnerable: we must remain vigilant.

Paul wasn't through. **"For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."** (Ephesians 5:5-6) Looking at these verses in isolation like this, you might get the impression that God's mercy is in short supply. I can assure you, it's not. But light and darkness cannot coexist, nor can sin and holiness. A son of Yahweh cannot at the same time be a "son of disobedience." Yes, we have all fallen into sin. The question is, "Does Yahweh see your sin, or Christ's atoning blood?" Make no mistake, if our sins aren't covered by His blood, then God has nothing by which to judge us other than our works. And on His scale of good and bad works, the least little sin is a ton of lead, and the greatest of our good works is a helium balloon. You can't win this one on your own. **"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience."** (Colossians 3:5-6)

Besides these things that the Bible requires as conditions that will exist during the last days, there are also some things that are suggested in various prophetic passages, things that until the present generation were either glossed over, assumed to be miraculous, or denied because they were "obviously impossible." These things now appear to be neither miraculous nor impossible, but merely the byproducts of recently developed technology.

Even this should not be surprising to us, for it too was prophesied. At the end of his long and productive life, Daniel was as confused as ever by the things he had seen and recorded. As an angel (apparently Gabriel, though he isn't identified here) delivered one last vision, he said, **"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."** (Daniel 12:4) He was telling him, in so many words, "Don't worry about it, Dan. This information isn't for you, but for the people who will be living at the end of the age. They will understand it, even if you don't." It's interesting that the angel's prediction specified transportation and information—the two areas in which mankind has made quantum leaps during the last century or so—and continues to develop at an ever increasing pace. Too bad he didn't say "mercy" and "wisdom."

As usual, Yahweh didn't leave His word on the subject in the hands of only one prophet. Jeremiah reported it thus: **"For who has stood in the counsel of Yahweh, and has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it? Behold, a whirlwind of Yahweh has gone forth in fury—a violent whirlwind! It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The anger of Yahweh will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly."** (Jeremiah 23:18-20) What probably sounded like hysterical gibberish to the very men who delivered the prophecies will be comprehended so well by those who see their fulfillment that many of them will at first refuse to see the hand of God in any of it, even though He warned them about it several millennia earlier. But in the end, they will understand all too well: **"The anger of Yahweh will not turn back until He has executed the thoughts of His heart."**

I don't want to get too far into the specifics of the technology-dependent prophecies now, for we'll cover them in detail as we get to them. For now, I merely wish to point out that we have never before been in a position to see the fulfillment of these things without the heavy hand of God being involved—in effect *proving* His presence to those who don't wish to accept His love, or even His reality. Until the very end of the Tribulation, when the Messiah returns in personal glory, Yahweh will require faith from those who seek Him. Remember, if love is forced, it is not love at all, but something else. It therefore makes sense that when the world starts to fall apart, many will see it not as God's judgment upon the earth, but as the result of man's own political, fiscal, or environmental folly—or worse, bad luck. (And of course, there's only one way to fix that: blame it all on the Jews!)

The most obvious recent development portrayed in prophetic scripture is nuclear warfare. The first "trumpet judgment" in Revelation describes it: **"The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up."** (Revelation 8:7) Or how about this scene from the Old Testament: **"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of Yahweh."** (Joel 2:30-31) Note: the prophet intimates that nuclear weapons will be widely used *before* Yahweh (in the person of Yahshua the Messiah) will come in glory.

Considering that neither of these prophets had ever seen an explosion of any kind, these—and scores of other prophetic passages—are remarkably accurate descriptions of nuclear blasts. Ironically, because American atmospheric testing of atomic weapons was halted in 1963, we have a dearth of information about what actually might transpire in a real nuclear war. Could we expect "hail and fire, mingled with blood?" Fire we understand, of course, and "pillars of smoke,"

turning “the sun into darkness.” The familiar “mushroom cloud” is typical of nuclear detonations, and in the kind of war being described, many such weapons would be deployed more or less simultaneously, darkening the sky. And from the early tests, we know that nuclear blasts can set up their own small weather systems, like man-made tornadoes. Detonated over population centers, they could be expected to generate not only tornado-like hail, but also to rain down the blood of its victims over a wide area. After an atmospheric test in Nevada in 1957, irate ranchers in South Dakota reported that radioactive debris was carried by a weather system 850 miles from the test site, precipitating pink hail on their ranches and killing their cattle. *Pink hail!*

Let’s look at another bit of end-time technology: **“And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.”** (Revelation 6:8) This doesn’t necessarily mean they were going out with packs of trained man-eating Rottweilers. “Beast” here is the Greek *therion*, a diminutive form of *thera*, a wild, dangerous animal. If I recall correctly, Robert Hooke, upon first viewing bacteria in a microscope in 1665, called them “cavorting beasties.” Yep. Biological warfare. Coming soon to a world near you. Making matters worse is mankind’s proven inability to develop vaccines and antibiotics that can effectively deal with biowarfare attacks. The problem? Once loose, the “beasties” can mutate at the drop of a hat. Once Pandora’s box has been opened, it may be impossible to close again.

How about, **“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”** (Revelation 13:16-17) The “mark of the beast” has caused unending speculation over the centuries. But three technological developments from the late twentieth century make the logistics of it eminently doable. First, a universal debit/credit system is a technical possibility today. All it would take to record and manage the identities and financial profiles of virtually every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth is the will (and political clout) to do it. The latest high-speed computers are easily fast enough to handle the load—after all, there are only about seven billion of us on the planet (a number that, as we will see, will be considerably diminished by the time this program is introduced). Moving the information back and forth is a non-issue as well: whether you know it or not, you do it all the time now, every time you use a credit or debit card. The data moves on the Internet, a fast, reliable, and relatively secure conduit of information. That’s puzzle piece number two. One to go.

Cash is more or less obsolete. It can be lost, stolen, and counterfeited, it wears out, and it’s expensive to manufacture. And it’s useless, at least in theory, if you leave your own country. So as we move inexorably toward a one-world

government, cash will become a less and less desirable form of money. But credit and debit cards can be stolen as well (and don't kid yourself: your pin number is never more than a swish of the switchblade away from being divulged). So what's the universal personal financial solution? Something you take with you wherever you go, something that can't be lost, stolen, forgotten, faked, or destroyed.

Back in the 1970s, retail store chains started experimenting with something called the Universal Product Code—that little mark with the lines on it you see on most everything you buy. (As a young packaging designer, I was involved in implementing some of the very first UPC barcodes on grocery items, though they're now ubiquitous.) It's read by scanning it with a red laser light beam (which is why you never see them printed in red ink) and can be applied onto any relatively smooth surface. There is no technical reason that a laser-readable eleven- or twelve-digit bar code couldn't be permanently applied onto human skin, tattooed perhaps, preferably somewhere where hair doesn't grow, like the palm of the hand. It could serve the owner as an identification card, passport, credit/debit card, voting permit, parking pass, and house key. More recently, tiny RFID (radio frequency identification) chips have been developed to fill roughly the same needs less obtrusively. They can be applied to products or implanted subdermally to identify individual animals (pets or livestock) or even humans. I don't know for sure what kind of technology will end up being used by the Antichrist's government to implement the "mark of the Beast," but it's clear that with the technology existing today, he would have his pick of methods.

Of course, once you've got the "Mark," its privileges could be cut off in a heartbeat by the people who control the database, if they decide you're out of line with their agenda. (Oops.) On the other hand, if you refuse to take the Mark in the first place, you'll be a non-person, ostracized and shut out of society. Maybe it's not such a hot idea after all. But that doesn't mean it won't happen.

Let's look at another end-time event that couldn't have happened without a miracle more than a few years ago: **"Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see [the two messengers] dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth."** (Revelation 11:9-10) Forget for the moment what they're looking at and why. Consider *how*. Before the age of either satellite television or the Internet, (neither of which is, in any practical sense, more than a couple of decades old as I write these words) the capability of people all over the

earth seeing two guys lying dead on the streets of Jerusalem—in real time—was impossible. But if they happen to be at the wailing wall when they're killed—which is a distinct possibility—people will be able to see them from their computer terminals anywhere on earth. I just checked the web cam: it's 11:25 PM in Jerusalem, and I counted nine black hats in the big square in front of the wall. No bodies lying on the ground. Yet.

Even if they're not considerate enough to die where somebody has a 24-hour Internet camera set up, these two witnesses will be so unpopular that their unsung and unburied corpses will be still be making the TV news three days after they're killed. And the whole world will be able to watch it all live (if you'll pardon the expression) thanks to a technology that got off the ground on July 10, 1962. That's when Telstar I, the world's first commercial communications satellite, was launched. But world-wide real-time television didn't become a practical reality until the first DSS satellite was launched in December, 1993. Today, of course, we can't seem to remember a time when we didn't have it.

While we're on the subject of these two witnesses, note that they will **“have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”** (Revelation 11:6) Remember back in Exodus, when Moses was demonstrating Yahweh's power to Pharaoh? His court magicians showed up and duplicated some of the signs (or at least convinced their boss that they had). I foresee a similar scenario happening with these two witnesses, with similar results. Whereas their signs are given by God as a warning to repent, the world's powers will come forward and explain that they have technology to do that too. No, its worse than that. They have *already* come forward....

A feasibility study, presented to the United States Air Force back in 1996, was prepared “to examine the concepts, capabilities, and technologies the United States will require to remain the dominant air and space force in the future.” The authors confidently predicted that by the year 2025, they would be able to manipulate the weather to their advantage in the battlefield. The title of the study was *Weather as a Force Multiplier: Owning the Weather in 2025*.

Their stated goals were developing the ability to degrade opposing military forces by doing things like flooding enemy-held territory to reduce their communication effectiveness and comfort level, in turn lowering morale, or conversely, inducing drought conditions, restricting access to badly needed local fresh water sources. They might remove fog and clouds, denying the enemy the cover of weather conditions, or conversely, they could generate fog or clouds to conceal themselves when the strategy demanded it. But normally, they would make the weather nice in their own territory, removing fog to keep their airfields open, keeping visibility levels good and comfort and morale high.

The “weather” in space was considered as well, with the goal of disrupting or enhancing radar and communications, intercepting enemy transmissions and destroying their satellites. And here’s the kicker: part of the program is detecting and defending against our *enemies’* weather-manipulation technologies. What? You didn’t think *we* were the only ones crazy enough to ponder madness like this, did you?

Did I say “ponder”? Silly me. Our military geniuses (and theirs) are actually building the technology to make this a reality. The Air Force report says, “Current technologies that will mature over the next 30 years will offer anyone who has the necessary resources the ability to modify weather patterns and their corresponding effects, at least on the local scale. Current demographic, economic, and environmental trends will create global stresses that provide the impetus necessary for many countries or groups to turn this weather-modification ability into a capability.”

It goes on to say, “In the United States, weather-modification will likely become a part of national security policy with both domestic and international applications. Our government will pursue such a policy, depending on its interests, at various levels. These levels could include unilateral actions, participation in a security framework such as NATO, membership in an international organization such as the UN, or participation in a coalition. Assuming that in 2025 our national security strategy includes weather-modification, its use in our national military strategy will naturally follow. Besides the significant benefits an operational capability would provide, another motivation to pursue weather-modification is to deter and counter potential adversaries.”

You can just see these guys drooling over their shiny new weapon: “Appropriate application of weather-modification can provide battlespace dominance to a degree never before imagined. In the future, such operations will enhance air and space superiority and provide new options for battlespace shaping and battlespace awareness. The technology is there, waiting for us to pull it all together....”

The technology is *already there*? Of course it is. These military guru types don’t risk their careers on wishful thinking and blue-sky speculation. On the contrary, the military leaders of both our nation and our potential adversaries are usually conservative to a fault. They wouldn’t promise the end of life on earth as we know it—excuse me, “battlespace dominance”—by 2025 unless they were pretty sure they could deliver (given adequate funding, of course, which was the whole point of the report). Our scientists are so clever they have already deployed an electromagnetic weather altering system called HAARP (“High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program”—part of SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative)

in Alaska, ostensibly to do wonderful things like attacking air pollution, especially chlorofluorocarbons, and altering upper atmospheric ozone levels. Not to be outdone, the Russians are fooling around with something called “Woodpecker,” their version of a weather engineering system that uses electromagnetic radio waves to redirect high altitude wind patterns. The idea, apparently proven to be workable, is to “steer the jet stream.” But they’ve discovered that it could also be used to disrupt electronic communication worldwide. Cool, huh? Can you imagine the U.S. and Russia duking it out with these systems? Before long, other nations would be feverishly working on their own versions: Iran, North Korea, *France!* (Actually, rumor has it that Israel already has one.)

These technologies are the outgrowth of the work of Nikola Tesla (1856-1943), the Serbian-American inventor whose discoveries in the field of alternating polyphase current electricity were foundational to our whole electricity-dependent way of life. His 700 patents covered such breakthroughs as fluorescent light, the wireless transmission of electrical energy, radio, and electronic remote control. Tesla discovered that the earth behaves as a global electrical grid, pulsing at an extremely low frequency (ELF), very precise and very constant. By artificially generating ELF waves at the same frequency, scientists could, he hypothesized, control all of the weather and tectonic functions of the earth. It’s all a matter of harnessing the immense energy that’s already there.

Tectonic functions? Yes, that too. HAARP ELF transmissions have the potential ability to create earthquakes on demand, anywhere we want. (This HAARP capability was the premise of the 2003 sci-fi blockbuster movie *The Core*.) In fact, the paranoid lunatic fringe of our scientific community believes it’s already happened. They also see evidence that HAARP and Woodpecker signals have changed our weather patterns, creating unprecedented rainfall or droughts in various places. These same scientists fear that ELF technology is capable of magnifying and focusing sunlight (they call it “skybusting”), burning holes through the earth’s protective ozone layer—hey, what a nifty weapon *that* would be. They say it might even be capable of controlling the thoughts or emotions of people, by adjusting the ELF bombardment to the frequencies the human brain employs. These scientists may be paranoid, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they’re wrong.

The holy grail of Tesla technology, however, would be to create nuclear-sized explosions without generating any radiation. It’s a military man’s dream: no missiles, warheads, or fallout. Just redirect the earth’s energy to someplace you don’t like very much, push the button, and poof! No more Tehran, New York, Beijing, or Paris. Impossible? If you say so. But you should be aware that this very process is now protected under HAARP’s U.S. Patent number 4,873,928.

My point is not that we are in the hands of mad scientists who will soon have the capability—not to mention the arrogance—to destroy the earth while attempting to gain a military advantage. (This may be true, but it's not my point.) I just want you to understand that the divine judgments that are prophesied to come upon the earth are not necessarily all miraculously God-generated, like thunderbolts from Zeus being thrown down from Mount Olympus. Rather, the “wrath of God” may in large measure be nothing more than Yahweh stepping out of the picture and letting us run the world ourselves for a few years (something He has never done since He created it), giving the human race enough rope with which to hang itself. Yahshua himself said that **“unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”** (Matthew 24:22) If Yahweh were “throwing all the thunderbolts,” I suspect He wouldn’t have to make adjustments in the schedule to save His elect remnant.

But even if Yahweh *were* pulling the strings of judgment Himself, there will still be the plausible deniability factor. In other words, if unrepentant man can imagine “natural causes” for all the torment he’s going through, he will still be able to talk himself out of believing that there is a God. Delusion dies hard.

I’d like to pose a riddle. In the following four passages (among hundreds I could have quoted), what late 20th century technology is being suggested as a condition for future prophetic fulfillment?

“It shall come to pass in that day that Yahweh shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, And Judah shall not harass Ephraim.” (Isaiah 11:11-13)

“Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not keep them back!’ Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 43:5-6)

“Thus says Yahweh, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (Yahweh is His name): ‘If those ordinances depart from before Me,’ says Yahweh, ‘then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever... If heaven above can be measured,

and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done,' says Yahweh.” (Jeremiah 31:35-37)

“For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.” (Amos 9:9)

Stumped? I'll give you a hint. It's a language, one we have just recently begun to understand—the very language that Yahweh used when He spoke life into being (Genesis 1:11, 20, 24). It's DNA—the genetic structure of life itself.

You may be wondering, “What on earth does the science of genetics have to do with the Jews' return to their promised land?” Ask yourself this: what *is* a Jew (or more properly, an Israelite)? Who is God talking about when He says, **“I will bring your descendants...from the ends of the earth”**? The simple answer is “all of the descendants of Jacob/Israel.” That's a fine definition in theory, but it gets a bit more complicated in the real world. Most people today can say with some degree of confidence, “I am a Jew,” or “I am a gentile—a non-Jew.” But the actual genealogical records that could prove it are gone, and have been since 70 A.D. All they have to go by is family traditions and histories. And then there's the Diaspora factor: *every* “Jewish” family was, at one time or another in Israel's history, evicted from the Land. How many of them lost track of their cultural heritage? The vast majority, I'd guess. There's a reason everybody other than Judah and Benjamin are referred to as “the ten lost tribes.”

Complicating the search for the true Israel is the fact that the culture and/or religion of the Jews has become inextricably intertwined with their genetic identity. Thus one whose maternal grandmother was a gentile woman who married a Jewish man and adopted his culture and religion could easily believe he's a son of Israel when he's not. And one whose Jewish great grandparents six times removed converted to Islam to keep themselves alive back in the days of the Ottoman Turks may be totally unaware of his Jewish bloodline. The only reason most of us know whether or not we're Jewish is because of our heritage, our personal family knowledge, our oral traditions if you will. Not usually the most reliable of evidence.

Yahweh, of course, being the inventor of the language of DNA (and still the only One who knows how to read and write this extremely complex dialect) knows which of us are among his chosen people Israel and which are not. But I have reason to believe that God's not the only one who's interested. We talked briefly about the Temple being restored sometime during the last days. The Torah explicitly states that among the Jews, only the tribe of Levi are given the privilege of performing certain worship-related duties, and among Levites, only the descendants of Aaron may serve in the Temple as priests (Exodus 40:15, etc.). Who are these people?

Amazingly, today's Jews seem to know. They call them Cohanim—the plural of Cohen. These people are presumed to be of Israel's priestly family, that of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi. The line of the Cohanim is patrilineal, i.e., it's passed from father to son. Jewish tradition insists that the line has gone on without interruption for over three millennia, for over a hundred generations. In other words, today's Jews are pretty sure they still know who their priests are. But are their oral traditions accurate? DNA analysis can go a long way toward answering that question.

An organism's complete set of DNA is called its genome. The smallest known genome for a free-living organism (a bacterium) contains about 600,000 DNA base pairs, whereas human genomes have something like 3 billion. All human cells (except for mature red blood cells) contain a complete genome. Human DNA is arranged into 24 distinct chromosomes, large molecules that range from about 50 million to 250 million base pairs. Each chromosome contains many genes, the building blocks of our heredity—specific sequences of bases that encode instructions on how to make proteins. Only about 2% of the human genome is made up of genes; the rest is non-coding DNA. The human genome is estimated to contain between 30,000 and 40,000 genes.

Genetic markers are variations in the nucleotide sequence of DNA—in other words, mutations. When mutations occur within genes, they usually cause a malfunction or disease and are therefore weeded out in succeeding generations. But non-lethal mutations found in the so-called “non-coding regions” of the DNA tend to remain and build up in the genome. Therefore, since the Y chromosome (that which makes men males) consists mostly of non-coding DNA, it tends to accumulate genetic markers. A combination of these neutral mutations, known as a haplotype, can serve as a genetic signature of a man's male ancestry. The Y chromosome is passed from father to son without recombination, so the genetic information within the Y chromosome of a man living today can be expected to be pretty much the same as that of his ancient male ancestors.

Just as Y chromosome genetic markers are indicative of a male's ancestry, maternal genealogies can be traced by means of m-DNA, or mitochondrial DNA, which is inherited only from the mother. This is important because according to Talmudic tradition, a person's Jewish status is determined by the mother, but tribal membership follows the father's line. That is, a Jew is someone who is born of a Jewish Mother, even if the father is not Jewish, but not vice-versa. Thus (according to the theory) there is no such thing as being part Jewish. A Jew's tribe, clan, or family is determined by the father's heritage, but obviously, a baseline requirement must be that he's a real Jew, i.e., that his mother was Jewish. (I don't know if God agrees with the Talmud on this point, but it's worth noting that by this definition, Yahshua was a Jew even though he had no human

biological father, since His mother was Jewish. And He was of the tribe of Judah, of the royal line of David and Solomon because Joseph, his legal father, was.)

Genetic studies of diverse present-day Jewish communities show a remarkable degree of genetic cohesiveness. Jews from Iran, Iraq, Yemen, North Africa and Europe cluster together with other Semitic groups, and they all have a common geographical origin in the Middle East. Even more significant, a collection of genetic markers known as the Cohen Modal Haplotype (CMH) has been recognized by researchers as the standard DNA signature of what they presume to be the Jewish priestly family. Significantly, there is a good correlation between the CMH profile and the family traditions of the Cohanim, identifying certain Jewish males as “priest material.”

Admittedly, there are no legal ramifications surrounding the Cohen Modal Haplotype—yet. Nobody today is being certified or disqualified because of their Y chromosome markers. But the Temple doesn’t exist, either; the Levitical sacrifices are nothing more than dimly remembered and half-understood rituals. On the other hand, the day is yet young.

The Jews living after the rapture will not be the only ones interested in their Jewishness. What is today a mere exercise in “genetic archaeology” could easily become something far more sinister in the near future. Today, 1.7 billion people—about 23% of the world’s total population—follow (at least nominally) a doctrine whose manifesto demands that they kill every Jew on the planet (while enslaving everybody else). As the first Islamic historian, al-Tabari, reported, “The morning after the murder of Ashraf, the Prophet declared, ‘Kill any Jew who falls under your power.’” Or as Bukhari, another early chronicler of Islam, writes, Muhammad said, “Just issue orders to kill every Jew in the country.” But as Hitler and Stalin so convincingly demonstrated, one needn’t be a follower of Islam to hate Jews for no apparent reason. So ask yourself: what are the world’s fourteen million Jews going to do when they wake up one morning and find all of the real Christians gone? Will life go on as usual? I think not. Evangelical Christians—defined more accurately as the Ekklesia of Philadelphia (see Revelation 3:7-13)—living mostly in America, are the only real ally Israel has today. When we are gone—and we *are* going—support for Israel, and for Jews worldwide, will evaporate.

Consider this scenario: the Antichrist, having gained a position of power and influence in Europe, proposes a humanitarian solution to the worldwide anti-Semitic rage that has emerged following the rapture. He can’t protect the Jews if they’re scattered all over the world, he says, but if they were all together in their own land—Israel—then he could, and would, guarantee their safety and sovereignty. Most of the world agrees at once, liking the idea of ridding of the Jews from their midst once and for all without having blood on their hands. The

house of Islam—after the shock has worn off—announces that they too are in favor of this formula for world peace. Of course, what they’re really thinking is, “If we can get them all together in one place, we can destroy them in one shot with nukes, bio-chemical superweapons, or the biggest invasion the world has ever seen.” They’ll vote yes, but only because Muhammad told them it was acceptable for them to lie if it helped them kill the enemies of Allah and his Prophet (peace be unto him). A few texts from the Islamic scriptures will confirm this. *The Hadith of al Bukhari*: “The Prophet said, ‘If I take an oath and later find something else better than that, then I do what is better and expiate my oath.’” *Qur’an 9:3* “Allah and His Messenger dissolve obligations.” *Qur’an 66:1* “Allah has already sanctioned for you the dissolution of your vows.” *Bukhari*: “Allah’s Apostle said, ‘War is deceit.’” *Qur’an 4:142* “Surely the hypocrites strive to deceive Allah. He shall retaliate by deceiving them.” Muhammad assured his followers that they were not bound to honor treaties they’d made with infidels. How convenient.

Okay, so in our hypothetical scenario, how can all the world’s Jews be brought back to Israel? Step one is verifying their identity. As we’ve seen, just saying (or even *thinking*) you’re a Jew or gentile doesn’t necessarily make it so. The Jews themselves say that “Jewishness” is dependent upon your mother’s identity—if she was a Jew, you are too. The key, then, is in the DNA—and if the Rabbis are correct, specifically in mitochondrial DNA, the part passed from mother to daughter.

All it would take is the will to do it. Of course, profiling the whole population looking for racial characteristics would be politically incorrect—even liberals could smell the genocidal overtones in that one—so it’s more likely the operation would proceed under the guise of a universal DNA database, a way of establishing every person’s “genetic fingerprint” from the moment of birth. If you think about it, what better tool could law enforcement agencies have with which to fight crime—everything from solving murders to preventing fraud. Not surprisingly, this very thing is now being proposed in some scientific circles.

I’m not saying the Bible predicts that DNA profiling will be used to round up the Jews and herd them all to Israel. But you’ve got to admit, the scenario fits the prophesied facts like a glove. At the very least, we now have the technology to confirm what God’s word predicted three thousand years ago: *all* of Israel will, sooner or later, return to their promised land from the nations to which they’ve been scattered.

If you look closely, there's another unprecedented development suggested in last-days Biblical prophecy. All through history, nations have, quite naturally, done what was in their own self-perceived interests. When they've formed alliances, they've invariably been temporary, fragile, and limited in scope. As often as not, such alliances have ended with one nation gobbling up its weaker ally (as in Persia assimilating Media, Nazi Germany engulfing Austria, or Imperial Rome woofing down everybody who was anywhere near the Mediterranean).

So the United Nations, at first glance, comes as a bit of a surprise. After almost six thousand years of looking out for number one, the world has finally decided that it's in its own collective self-interest to try to get along. It took one false start (the ill-fated League of Nations), two world wars, the advent of atomic holocaust, and the unrelenting labor of the Prince of Darkness for a couple of centuries to make it happen, but the United Nations was born on October 24, 1945. We shouldn't be terribly surprised at this development. Remember Yahshua's prophecy of the budding of the fig tree, prophesying Israel's national rebirth? It's worth noting that Luke's version (21:29-31) also tells us to look at the budding of *all the trees* as a sign that the Kingdom of God is near. That is, the emergence of the United Nations is in itself a sign heralding the end.

The Bible speaks often of "the nations," as if they were one entity, i.e., everybody but Israel. (The Hebrew word translated "nation" is usually *goy* (plural: *goyim*), which means a gentile, heathen, nation, or people.) For instance, **"When Yahweh brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, 'Yahweh has done great things for them.'"** (Psalm 126:1-2) This very thing happened on the floor of the United Nations on November 29, 1947, when they authorized a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Or at least, it should have: the nations have yet to give Yahweh any credit. We're still waiting for that.

Some would say that the reason the U.N. prevailed when the League of Nations flopped was its provision for making war (invariably called "peace keeping" these days—go figure.) The prophets saw that coming, too: **"The noise of a multitude in the mountains, Like that of many people! A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together! Yahweh of hosts, musters the army for battle."** (Isaiah 13:4) That's right. Yahweh Himself has made it possible for the whole world to get together and fight Him and His chosen people if they want to.

And the time is coming when they *will* want to. The Psalmist paints this pathetic picture for us: **"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Yahweh and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.'" God, of course, is not impressed with their pitiful rantings. "He who sits in**

the heavens shall laugh; Yahweh shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: 'Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.' I will declare the decree: Yahweh has said to Me [i.e., to His Messiah], 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel....'"

The Psalmist finishes with some good advice to the nations: "Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve Yahweh with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." (Psalm 2) This is the first hint we have that all the world's nations will try to join forces to defeat Yahweh. It won't work.

The United Nations is just a symptom, of course, an expression of a naïve but almost universal desire that mankind might finally stop fighting itself and instead work together for the common good—*without* the inconvenient and discomfoting presence of a holy God. The premise of globalism, the "New World Order," is based on the erroneous notion that man is basically good—that sin doesn't really exist because God (in any personal sense) doesn't exist. In other words, it's utter nonsense. The idea is that if man is basically good, then he needs only to be encourage to look beyond his own backyard in his approach to solving problems. Hence self interest, patriotism, and national defense are outmoded concepts. But if our agenda were imposed on a global scale by a wise and beneficent ruling elite, the world would live in harmony, prosperity, and equality. Or at least, that's what the brochure says.

Sociologist James Hughes of Trinity College, in an interview with George Dvorsky, opines, "We need world government for the same reason that we need government in general." And the more of it, the better, is the globalist's goal, because *obviously*, people are incompetent to perceive what's in their best interests. "There are a number of things—what we can agree are collective goods—that individuals, markets, voluntary organizations, and local governments aren't able to produce—and which can only be provided through the collective action of states.... There are a number of things that only a world government is capable of doing—like ending nuclear proliferation, ensuring global security, intervening to end genocide, and defending human rights.... It will take a global regime to finally deal with climate change, and that it's the best chance we have to launch civilization-scale projects, including the peaceful and controlled colonization of the solar system." He intimates that "if this century doesn't create new economic, cultural and communication forces for political globalization," then new catastrophic threats (such as the ongoing perils of climate change,

terrorism, and emerging technologies) would conspire to “make the need for global governance inescapable.”

It’s fascinating how globalists can perceive the perils brought on by human nature so clearly, and yet fail to recognize that it is our fallen, sinful state—and not our freedom and independence—that’s the root of the problem. I’ve said until I’m blue in the face that choice—free will—is Yahweh’s primary gift to the human race. Yet because individuals and nations so often use their free will to advance their own perceived self interests at the expense of their neighbors (in direct defiance of Yahweh’s Instructions), the only solution the globalist seems to be able to devise is to enslave himself (or at least, enslave everybody else—after all, *somebody* has to run the place). Their theory is that the safest place one can be is in prison—i.e., free from the risks, pressures, and responsibilities of exercising your own free will. (Freedom is *so* untidy in the hands of amateurs.) The problem with prison isn’t the walls; it’s the warden, the guards, and the other prisoners.

No sane government, of course, would voluntarily turn its sovereignty over to a group like the United Nations, which on its best day is merely a forum for working out international disputes without resorting to warfare. That being said, the U.N. could end up being the framework or matrix within which the globalization of world government could be brought about. But you’d have to start regionally, by joining like minded (or merely geographically contiguous) states in larger, more monolithic political formats. If you think about it, the United States showed the world how such a thing could be done. Before the Civil War, we thought of ourselves as citizens of one state or another: Virginians, Floridians, and New Yorkers. Afterwards, we called ourselves “Americans.” We used to say “the United States *are*...” ; now we say “the United States *is*...” It took a century to reveal the danger inherent in this sort of centralization of power—something our founding fathers never intended to happen. The problem (as always) is that power corrupts, and absolute power (such as it is) turns even the most altruistic and well meaning public servant into an arrogant despot. I love Abraham Lincoln, but upon reflection, perhaps preserving the Union wasn’t the best idea after all.

But the trend toward the consolidation of states (and the gathering of power) continues unabated. The European Union is another notable example, but these alliances are proliferating like rabbits. Nations are organized according to either regional, political, racial, or economic interests: OPEC, NATO, the OAS, NAFTA, EFTA, COE, and the list goes on. Latin America hosts the Central American Parliament, the Andean Community, CARICOM, and MERCOSUR. Africa (most of whose states are members of the African Union) is home to the Arab Maghreb Union, the Arab League, ECOWAR, CEMAC, IGAD, SADC and the GCC. Asia boasts SAARC, ASEAN, the Pacific Islands Forum, the Asian Cooperation Dialog, and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Middle-Eastern Muslims are a prophetically significant case, one we will explore in detail in a future chapter. Since the death of Muhammad in 632, there have been a series of “caliphates,” Islamic empires or super-states formed from many smaller nation-states or sheikdoms. A caliphate, in theory, unifies the entire *ummah*, or community of the faithful, under a single ecclesiastical ruler—the Caliph. (A *khilafa* or Caliph is literally a “successor”—that is, to Muhammad.) The last such Caliphate—the Ottoman Empire—was dissolved at the end of World War I, paving the way for the current political realities in the Middle East today, including the existence of the state of Israel. Both Biblical prophecy and Islamic eschatology suggest that in the last days a new caliphate will arise—one in which Iran and Turkey will play major roles. It’s Caliph, who can be expected to unify the greater Muslim world in resurgent Islamist fervor, will be known as the Twelfth Imam or the Mahdi (the Guided One)—the one the prophet Ezekiel calls “Gog of the land of Magog.” It should be noted that globalization, Muslim-style, isn’t exactly what the socialists are working toward. It involves the enslavement, conversion, or death of every non-Muslim on the planet.

Anyway, even though global governance by a small ruling elite class is a terrible idea, both current events and scripture agree that we’re headed that way. The nations will band together to face a common foe—Almighty God. Isaiah saw it coming. **“Woe to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the roar of the seas, and to the rushing of nations that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! ...But God will rebuke them and they will flee far away, and be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.”** (Isaiah 17:12-13) For all the noise they make, Yahweh is apparently not impressed with the combined military might of the United Nations. Though they flow against Him like a mighty river, they will be dammed (or is that *damned*?)

David prophesied concerning their rebellion as well. **“The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made; In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught....”** And then he prayed, **“Arise, O Yahweh; do not let man prevail. Let the nations be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O Yahweh, that the nations may know themselves to be but men.”** (Psalm 9:15, 19-20) Men are finite and fallen. You can’t improve human nature by encouraging them to be even more human.

Could it be that the Battle of Armageddon will be a United Nations affair? It sure sounds likely. **“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there.”** (Joel 3:1-2) We’re going to have to defer the subject of Armageddon until our timeline catches up, of course. Right now, we’re just looking at the setup—the unprecedented gathering of “all nations” for war.

Not convinced that the United Nations is being prophesied? Let's consult another prophet. **"Wait for Me,' says Yahweh, 'until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.'" (Zephaniah 3:8)** Where's that Security Council veto when you need it? Where are all those diplomats who consistently maintain that all war is bad. This time there are no dissenting voices. *Let's all go to Israel and teach those warmongering Jews a lesson once and for all. How dare they exist!*

As long as we're already so far ahead of our story, let's take a peek at what happens to the U.N. *after* the Battle of Armageddon. The nations have changed their tune, it appears. Their armies are now buzzard bait, but Israel still stands tall. In fact, they are now the world's only superpower! **"You have delivered me [Israel] from the strivings of the people; You have made me the head of the nations; A people I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me they obey me; the foreigners submit to me. The foreigners fade away, and come frightened from their hideouts."** (Psalm 18:43-45)

It is only then, after all the battles have been fought, that the last of the world's Jews will be brought to their promised land—in love and honor this time, and not, as before, as a deceitful prelude to intended genocide. They will be relocated as **"an offering to Yahweh."** **"It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to Yahweh out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,"** says Yahweh, **"as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of Yahweh."** (Isaiah 66:18-20) God's purpose, however, is not so much to punish the nations as it is to draw them to Himself. Once He has reestablished a repentant Israel, it is Yahweh's wish (and prediction) that all nations (whatever's left of them) will honor the true and living God for a thousand years in the hills of Jerusalem. That's right: there *is* a "global government" in our planet's future—run not by the Antichrist through a global elite ruling class who's agenda is to keep a lid on the untidy and unprofitable proclivities of man, but by God Himself with a scepter of iron. This will, ironically enough, give mortal man more freedom than he has enjoyed since the day he left the Garden of Eden.

In the chapters to come, we will trace the details of how Yahweh will accomplish all this—the complete upending of the world's established order and the establishment in its place of Israel as the center of world power under their Eternal King, Yahshua. We will see how technology, apostasy, the rise of Islam,

nuclear and bio-chemical warfare, famine, plague, political upheaval, and “natural” disaster will all play their parts in God’s eventual restoration of the earth to a state of pristine peace. Through these events, Yahweh will achieve nothing less than the renewed holiness of planet earth—the separation and removal of all things evil, and the setting apart and establishment of all that is good. The government will at last rest upon the shoulders of the Prince of Peace.

Yahshua told His disciples to look for the signs heralding the Last Days, signs that, like the inevitable budding of fig leaves as summer approaches, will tell us that the day of His coming is drawing near. We have done as He said: we have examined the fig tree. And there can be no doubt. Summer is almost here.

Chapter 11

The Gap

The rapture and the Tribulation are never chronologically linked in scripture, and yet many Bible expositors teach that the Tribulation will begin immediately after the Church is translated. Why is that? Why not a gap of a thousand years? For that matter, why do they think the rapture will come before, not during or after, the Tribulation? (Actually, some do.) We need to look more closely at the scriptural evidence.

First, we must realize that the rapture concerns only the Church, the called-out assembly of Yahshua. **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.”** (I Corinthians 15:22-23) (Technically, however, the rapture will most likely include the believing dead of the past ages, who “are Christ’s” even if they never knew who He would be or precisely what He’d do.) The Tribulation, on the other hand, concerns only the nation of Israel: **“Seventy weeks are determined for your [Daniel’s] people [i.e., Israel] and for your holy city [Jerusalem]....”** (Daniel 9:24) The Church did not exist during the first sixty-nine of Israel’s allotted seventy seven-year “weeks,” but was born fifty-four days after Christ fulfilled the required signs—on the Day of Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, 33 A.D. Yahweh has not been “officially” dealing with the Jews for all these years during the Church age, since their divine program is contained entirely within the prophesied 490 years—of which only seven (revealingly identified as “the Time of Jacob’s Trouble”) are yet future. Would it not, therefore, be reasonable to conclude that God will remove the Church (as He has clearly promised to do, up through the age of Philadelphia, anyway) *before* He resumes his program with Israel? He has never before run two dispensations concurrently; there’s no reason to believe He will start now.

The resumption of God’s dealings with Israel will be signaled by a treaty: **“Then he [the prince who is to come—i.e., the Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [specifically, the last one of the seventy]; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”** (Daniel 9:27) I realize most of that looks pretty esoteric. For now, let’s just concentrate on the timing. The last of the seventy “weeks” will begin when the Antichrist “confirms a covenant with many,” a treaty—probably a U.N. resolution—which somehow enables Israel to reinstitute their Levitical program of “sacrifice and offering” (since you can’t bring something to an end if it hasn’t started).

In order for the Antichrist to have the clout and influence necessary to engineer such a treaty—which in light of Muslim antagonism looks impossible to us today—he must already be in power as a national leader of some sort (since nobody pays much attention to ordinary individuals, no matter how charismatic they are). But the Church, or more specifically the Holy Spirit who resides within its people, will have been removed from the scene *before* this influential diplomat can be made known to the world, for we read: **“He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed...”** (II Thessalonians 2:7-8) So the order of events has been established. First the Holy Spirit is “taken out,” then the “lawless one is revealed,” and then the “covenant is confirmed,” an event which by definition inaugurates the last seven-year period of Yahweh’s plan for Israel. If you’ll recall, this final septade pretty much wraps up the course of human history as we’ve known it: **“...to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”** (Daniel 9:24). Therefore, one of two things must happen: either the rapture will precede the Tribulation, or the Holy Spirit will leave the Church behind when He goes. But option number two would make Yahshua a liar, for He said, **“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”** (John 14:16-17) Forever isn’t over yet.

Because the Antichrist won’t be revealed as the “lawless one” until after the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, there is an implied time gap between the rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation. Even if he is already around—even if he is the President or Prime Minister of some existing nation—he won’t be “revealed” until he starts doing things that were prophesied in scripture. The catch-22 here is that when he does, there won’t be anybody left on earth who believes the prophecies, so they won’t understand what’s coming. The “man of sin” will come upon the world like a thief in the night, even though his moves were predicted in detail thousands of years ago.

And how long can we expect this gap to be? It could have been the better part of two millennia, because Christ could have returned for His Church at any time between the Day of Pentecost, 33 A.D., and today. But since Yahshua said that **“this generation [the one that sees the signs signaling the end] will by no means pass away till all these things take place,”** (Matthew 24:34) it’s obvious we have run out of the time that would have been necessary for a long gap. We are watching the “fig tree” sprout its buds. Israel is back as a national entity. World events, technology, and prophecy are all starting to converge. Summer is upon us, and it looks like it’s going to be a hot one.

But there *must* be a gap of some duration. As already mentioned, it will take time—at least a couple of months—for the Antichrist to solidify his political power base. And this must happen after the rapture, because if a “little horn”—the leader of a small nation or a previously unheralded political figure—were to suddenly emerge as the undisputed leader of Europe (or a new super-state within Europe), touting a Mid-East peace plan that included a new Jewish temple in its blueprint, every halfway-educated Bible-believing Christian in the world would know exactly what had happened. The Man of Sin would be as good as “revealed.”

Also, let’s be realistic. Treaties of the type described in Daniel 9 don’t happen overnight. Though the problem that precipitates the covenant—a deadly and historic animosity between Muslims and Jews that threatens to drag us all into another global war—is clearly here already, no solution, however reasonable, would be accepted without debate. There are some thirty Islamic nations spread out between Morocco and Pakistan, all of whom would have something to say about a covenant that guaranteed Israel’s right to exist—much less their right to rebuild their Temple on their Temple mount. (*Why can’t they build it someplace else?* they’ll whine. *Our third-holiest shrine is there.*) And even though this treaty will look like the only possible hope for Israel’s long-term survival, even *they* will debate it. After all, there are more than three Jews in the country, and that pretty much *guarantees* an argument. Of course, the Americans, Brits, Germans, Russians, Chinese, and French will feel they have to get their two bits in as well. All this debating will take time.

My best guess for the duration of the gap? Three years, minimum. But it could be anywhere from two months to thirteen years from when I’m writing this. (That is, there’s a two month gap between the last possible Feast of Trumpets and seven schematic years—2,520 days—prior to the definitive Feast of Tabernacles that will commence the Millennial reign of the Messiah in the fall of 2033, if my observations are correct.) There isn’t enough sand left in the world’s hourglass for any more time than that. Every shred of secular evidence, by the way, is conspiring to confirm my thoughts on God’s timetable.

It’s entirely possible, in fact, that the rapture itself will play a major part in the rise of the Antichrist. Because the Event is so unprecedented and inexplicable, many will conclude that the whole world is facing a common enemy—as yet unidentified, which makes it even scarier. Sun Tzu put it this way in *The Art of War*: “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” (He was wrong, by the way, but let’s not go there.) The conventional wisdom is that if we face a common foe, we must all pull together to defeat him. The earth will be far more ready to accept a one-world government than it has ever been before. This mood (at first) will not be motivated by concerns about conquest or military threats, nor by economic

uncertainty, nor by new-age fuzzy thinking, but by a widespread fear of a powerful and unknown common enemy—maybe even one who is “not of this world.” But the odd notion that this “enemy” could actually turn out to be the Creator-God of the universe will occur to very few. After all, there are still dozens of major religions represented, and hundreds of spin-off cults. They can’t *all* be wrong, can they?

What we need now, they’ll be thinking, is a strong leader, one who can pull us all together and show us how to work as a team for our own survival. We need someone who can identify this mysterious adversary and negotiate a peace settlement with them—or failing that, lead us in a successful war against them. What we need is what the Jews would call a Messiah.

Our search for this leader begins, not surprisingly, in the writings of Daniel. **“I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.”** (Daniel 7:8) The prophet was mulling over the ten horns of the fourth beast (which we have positively identified as Rome and its successors—the last great gentile world power). Three of these “horns”—symbols of political power or authority—were **“plucked out by the roots.”** These “horns,” it seems, cease to exist as independent nations or peoples, becoming annexed or absorbed into the empire.

Whether or not the little horn represents a nation, he definitely represents a personality, for he is seen as having “eyes” and “a mouth speaking pompous words.” So we know he’s a politician, but an unusual one—one who has the ability to really perceive the world around him. Though a “little” horn, he struck Daniel in verse 20 as one **“whose appearance was greater than his fellows.”** Perhaps this means that his nation is small but his persona is large—like Hitler, who was born not in Germany but in Austria, or Napoleon, who came from Corsica, not France.

In his vision, Daniel asked for **“the truth of all this,”** to which an angel replied, **“The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings.”** (Daniel 7:24) Here we see that the ten nations were all to have been within the fourth kingdom (verse 23), the Roman empire, at one time or another. This confirms what we read in Daniel 9:26: **“The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.”** The people who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple marched under the auspices of Rome, led by Titus Vespasian. Therefore, it

behooves us to look at the map and review which modern nations fit that description—and which don't. The following descriptions are loose, of course. Roman provincial frontiers didn't always line up neatly with modern national boundaries. But we can still get a rough idea of the prophetic geography.

Rome made the Mediterranean their own private pond. They ended up controlling the entire perimeter. Italy was its heart, of course. Moving west, they conquered what is now Switzerland, France, Britain, Spain, and Portugal, reaching as far north as the Rhine, so Belgium, Luxembourg, and a portion of the Netherlands were in Roman hands. To their east, they took everything in Europe south of the Danube: what is now Austria, half of Hungary, the Balkans (we'll come back to that one), Greece, and Turkey. They never held much of Germany, nor what is now called the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Rome also controlled parts of all the nations lining the northern edge of the African continent—most significantly, Egypt. They occupied a small portion of western Syria and most of Lebanon and Israel. Their client states, i.e., those not strictly speaking possessions of the empire but under its sphere of influence, included what is now northern Morocco and Algeria, Bulgaria, the eastern third of Turkey (Cappadocia), and Jordan, reaching down to the Sinai. And for a short time, the empire stretched to include Romania, Hungary, and the area east of Turkey containing bits of Iran, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

The Balkan nations, that area stretching down the east side of the Adriatic Sea from Austria to Greece, are a moving target. You used to just be able to name Yugoslavia and Albania and call it a day, but the whole area has now been split up six ways from Sunday. You've got Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia, and none of them are particularly stable. A few years ago, what was left of Yugoslavia (itself less than a century old) went the way of the dodo, becoming Serbia-Montenegro, a nation which no one expects to endure in its present form. So let's just say, "Rome controlled the Balkans," and leave it at that.

The Balkans could be significant, though, for several reasons. First, that part of the world is where trouble traditionally goes to start: World War I began in Sarajevo, in today's Bosnia. And World War II? Forget Poland. The real war started a few miles north of the Balkans when Neville Chamberlain sold out Czechoslovakia for thirty pieces of silver (or something like that). The Balkans are a powder-keg mixture of cultures and religions all living in close proximity. (Islam plus *anybody* is a formula for trouble.) Also, Daniel's prophecy says the "little horn" is a power who "shall rise after them," that is, after the other ten nations. All of "Rome's" newest nations are in the Balkans. They bear watching.

And then there's the matter of the goat. If you'll recall, in our chapter on God's Timetable, we reviewed a vision Daniel had of a male goat that attacked a ram, something that turned out to be a remarkably accurate prophecy of Greece

under Alexander the Great subduing Media-Persia. The passage went on (in Daniel 8:21-22) to describe how Alexander's kingdom would be divided up among his four generals after his untimely death. Although much of the prophecy has already come to pass, some of it is yet future, for we read, **"And in the latter time of their kingdom, [that is, the divided kingdom of the post-Alexander Grecian empire] when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes."** (Daniel 8:23) Daniel goes on to describe the Antichrist in detail, something we'll do as well in due time. But take note: without actually *saying* so, Daniel has strongly implied here that the Antichrist will arise from the *Grecian* empire, although we have already seen that his ten-horned kingdom will be part of *Rome's* legacy. A contradiction? Not necessarily, for the two empires overlapped to some extent—primarily right here in the Balkans. We'll pursue this train of thought further in a moment.

In the interest of being thorough, we should explore the possibility that Daniel's ten-nation confederacy is comprised of the descendants—the grandchildren, if you will—of the old Roman empire. Because the text speaks of the "*people of the prince who is to come,*" we need to consider who those people are—or could be. From the standpoint of cultural heritage, language, and bloodline, the entire Western Hemisphere could be considered part of Rome (and to a lesser extent, Greece as well). Spain and Portugal settled (okay, *conquered*) the southern portion, while England and France dominated the north—Roman territories all. Also, by definition, these former colonies of European powers arose after their parent nations—another prophetic requirement. So why shouldn't the American nations be considered as candidates for members in the ten-nation Roman federation?

As tempting as this puzzle piece looks at first glance, I find it a less-than-perfect fit. The Antichrist is described as a "little horn," arising after all ten of the other nations. I can see no way to squeeze the United States or any potential leader into that description. Our presidents become larger than life on election day. Also, though the U.S. is newer than most European nations, it is one of the oldest in the Americas, and the chances are vanishingly remote that we would, or could, absorb three other nations, whether in the Americas or Europe. Of course, there's more to the Western Hemisphere than the U.S. But try the scenario out on Paraguay and it gets even sillier. No, I think we're stuck with an all-European scenario. And in the Balkans particularly, one nation "consolidating" three others into its borders is a perfectly plausible scenario.

So who are these "ten horns," these nations represented by the ten toes of the big statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? Some theorize that the ten horns can be found in history. They are, they say, the people-groups—mostly Germanic tribes—who overran the Roman empire during the fourth and fifth centuries. The

list, though variable, usually includes: the Alemanni (from the Black forest region of southwestern Germany, between the Rhine and Danube rivers); the Franks (who settled in Gaul—France—and western Germany); the Anglo-Saxons (who with the Jutes populated the eastern British Isles); the Burgundians (centered in today’s Switzerland); the Visigoths (who ended up in Spain); the Suevi (who landed in Portugal); and the Lombards (late-comers to Italy—forcing out the Ostrogoths). These seven are said to be the nations that were left after three other “horns” were ripped out by the roots. And who were *they*? The Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Heruli are said to have been so thoroughly defeated they’ve disappeared without a trace, thus fulfilling the prophecy.

I’ll admit, at first glance this explanation looked quite attractive to me. (It helped me bridge my nagging mental dichotomy between real Roman territory—virtually all of it south of the Rhine and Danube—and a modern Europe in which Germany is a varsity player.) But when I looked a little deeper, the whole thing fell apart like a house of cards. First, far more than ten tribes took part in the “re-distribution” of the old Roman empire. What about the Frisians? What about the Thuringians? The Alani, the Avars, Gepids, Rugians, and Bavarians? What about the *Huns*, for cryin’ out loud? And then there’s the little matter of national existence. The Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Heruli weren’t the only ones to completely fade off the scene. Met any Suevi lately? How about Alemanni, Jutes, or Visigoths? Fact is, among all these nations, only the Franks (French) and Anglo-Saxons (English) can trace anything approaching a direct line back to their barbarian ancestors. The others were all eventually swallowed by neighboring peoples, the Byzantines, or the encroaching Muslims. Most of these tribes moved around so much, pinning them down to a single modern nationality is a hopeless task.

So where did the theory come from? After a little digging, I discovered it was born of a religious agenda. Members of a certain quasi-Christian “denomination” (who shall remain nameless) formulated this clever but transparent scheme with one goal in mind: to pin the title of Antichrist on the Roman Catholic Church. You see, as the Germanic tribes one by one converted to Christianity from paganism, most of them embraced the “Arian,” or Celtic, form of the religion—not Roman Catholicism. Little is known of Arian theology, but it is evident that it depended upon a literal interpretation of the scriptures—something with which the Catholic Church would have had a serious problem (control and revenue issues aside). This turn of events hadn’t occurred because the barbarians had weighed the views of Arius against the Creed of Nicaea and chosen between the two, you understand, but merely because they had been reached first by German-speaking Arian missionaries. The opposition of the Catholics, by the way, was not completely groundless, for a doctrine had spread among the Arians that Yahshua—being the “Son”—though Creator, was also created, and therefore

couldn't be quite as divine as the Father. They were wrong about that, although admittedly, a real man possessing "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9) is a difficult concept to grasp.

Anyway, the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Heruli were the barbarian tribes that gave the most grief to the Church of Rome. Their defeat opened the door for unchallenged Papal supremacy after the middle of the sixth century. And this is where the theory gets completely out of hand. In March, 538, the Ostrogoths gave up their siege of Rome, having been on the losing end of the affair for over a year. The theorists seize upon that year as the beginning of the Great Tribulation—the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation. *Why?* you ask. Good question, but you're not going to believe the answer. By arbitrarily converting prophetic days into *years*, they make the "time, times, and half a time", "forty-two months," and "1,260 days" references in Daniel and Revelation come out to 1,260 *years*. Again, you ask, *why?* Because that year (1798) is when the Pope was taken captive during the French Revolution—the affront to papal power "proving" their contention that the Roman Catholic Church is the Antichrist—who had now been vanquished. I *told* you that you wouldn't believe it. All of the contrivance, calculation, and selective history was for one purpose only: to "prove" something that just isn't true. Don't get me wrong; I'm not suggesting that the Papacy is innocent—or ever was. But that doesn't make it the Antichrist. His reign is yet future—as is the Millennial reign of the Messiah that will follow.

I can't believe I fell for this theory, even for fifteen minutes. But I went through the exercise of explaining it because it points out a very important truth. We must take the *whole* counsel of God, not just the parts we like or the parts that can be made to fit our preconceived agenda. Yahweh seldom tells us something only once; if it's important, He's invariably hits it from several different angles, so there can be no mistaking His intentions. As I said in the first chapter, the reason I took on this project was that no one (to my knowledge) had ever tried to cover *every* unfulfilled prophetic scripture chronologically in a single book. The jigsaw puzzle can only be "worked" if you use all of the pieces.

So we're back where we started, wondering who the "ten horns" are. If we take all the scriptures that describe the ten horns and look at them side by side, we can at least weed out some of the obvious errors. **"The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom [the fourth kingdom, Rome—which destroys the "invading barbarians" theory on the face of it: the ten nations are *all* part of the old Roman empire]. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue [or "pluck out by the roots"—7:8] three kings."** (Daniel 7:24) The Antichrist will apparently take over and consolidate three "horns," and then lead all ten. Then factor in: **"And in the latter time of their kingdom [that is, the Grecian empire], when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise,**

having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes.” (Daniel 8:23) The king who was described above as “another [who] shall rise after them” will also apparently rise from within Alexander’s empire. Confused yet?

John tells us, **“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.... And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.”** (Revelation 12:3, 13:1) Both Satan and his Antichrist are thus directly associated with the ten horns. This is confirmed by the picture of the whore of Babylon—Satan’s system of false worship—riding upon the beast (Antichrist) who had the ten horns: **“And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.... The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.”** (Revelation 17:3, 9) The seven mountains, once again, seem to be indicating the legendary seven hills of Rome, confirming what was plainly stated in Daniel 7:24.

And finally, we see that these nations were still in the future from John’s perspective, and they would last but a short time: **“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.”** (Revelation 17:12). Here is corroboration that the ten horns form the Antichrist’s earthly power base. Therefore, it seems, they will be a ten-nation confederation within the old Roman empire’s territory, and probably Greece’s as well, within whom three nations will merge under the leadership of a single man (possibly from an eleventh nation, a small one which will rise after the others).

Comparing the prophetic picture with the reality of European politics today, we have what appears to be an unbridgeable chasm: Europe is consolidating alright, but not along the lines spelled out in scripture. At the moment, there are twenty-seven nations within the European Union—far beyond the ten specified in scripture. And even more significant (to me, at least) is the fact that Germany and the Scandinavian nations, varsity players in modern Europe, were never part of the Roman empire, nor were the old Soviet-block nations of Eastern Europe that are now, in our post-Cold-War era, starting to look toward the west—toward Europe—to redefine their destinies. Right now, it all looks impossible. But remember: as late as 1945, a Jewish state in Palestine, as required in scripture, looked impossible, too. Three years later, it was reality.

That being said, I have formulated a theory as to how this ten-nation empire of the Antichrist might come about. Please bear in mind that this is all somewhat speculative. First, let us quickly review the ground rules: The ten “horns” or nations of Daniel and Revelation (the Antichrist’s ten-nation kingdom) are defined as follows:

1. They must be part of the old Roman Empire, and include the city of Rome. (Daniel 7:7, 9:26, Revelation 17:9)
2. The final form of this nation (the “toes” of Nebuchadnezzar’s visionary statue) will be mixed, part strong, part weak; and its parts will not adhere to each other. Perhaps this implies a mixture of Orthodox/Catholic and Muslim cultures. (Daniel 2:40-44)
3. The Antichrist himself will apparently come from the Grecian empire, which under Alexander’s successor, Antigonos, did not extend west of Albania or north of the Danube River. (Daniel 8:21-24) It should be noted that, like Napoleon or Hitler, the Antichrist will not necessarily be born in the same nation in which he rises to power.
4. Three of the original ten nations will be absorbed into the Antichrist’s nation, perhaps an eleventh. (Daniel 7:8, 23-24, Revelation 13:1)
5. The Antichrist’s nation is “little” and will arise after the others. (Daniel 7:8, 23-24)
6. The Antichrist will (as we shall soon learn) conduct a war against an Islamic confederation that includes Turkey. Thus Turkey *won’t* be part of his ten-nation kingdom, however well it fits the profile in other ways. (Ezekiel 38:3-6, Daniel 11:40-43)

Therefore, I believe (SF4) the nations in the Antichrist’s ten-nation empire will be—drum roll, please—a Balkan-area superstate including the following nations: (1) Italy, the heart of the old Roman Empire and E.U. member; (2) Slovenia, E.U. member and northern anchor for the Balkan states; (3) Croatia, a current applicant for E.U. membership (a referendum on E.U. membership was approved by Croatian voters on January 22, 2012, but as of the time of this writing, the Croatian accession treaty is yet to be ratified by the E.U. member states); (4) Bosnia-Herzegovina (recognized by the EU as a potential candidate); (5) Serbia, which in 2003 joined itself tenuously to (6) Montenegro (The two nations have separate administrative functions and governmental leaders, but share economic and military ties. Together, they are known as “Serbia *and* Montenegro”—not Serbia-Montenegro—betraying a relationship that is every bit as separate as it is united. *Both* are candidates for E.U. membership.); (7) Albania (whose application for E.U. membership has been submitted); (8) Macedonia, E.U. candidate and Alexander’s original homeland (though much smaller than it was in his day); (9) Bulgaria, an E.U. member; and (10) Greece, E.U. member and Alexander’s power base.

Lands north of this block (i.e., north of the Danube) were never part of the Roman Empire, nor were they part of Antigonus' quarter of Alexander's kingdom. The Antichrist himself would (according to the theory) come from one of the newest nations in the group—definitely not Italy, because it was never a part of Alexander's empire. My own admittedly wild guess is that he hails from Macedonia, a recently independent fragment of the former Yugoslavia.

A quick look at a map reveals that the Balkans—the area just described—are geographically *destined* to become part of the European Union. They're totally surrounded by member nations—sort of like Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma once were to the United States. These territories weren't admitted to the Union until the twentieth century, but their geography among the other contiguous states made their eventual admittance as close to a “sure thing” as these things ever get.

Besides the scriptural requirements and ramifications, there are several good reasons for my “Balkan superstate” theory. First, most nations in Europe have relatively stable borders and identities, but the Balkans have been in a constant state of flux for the last century. Remember, Daniel 7:24 stated that the Antichrist's “horn” would “rise after” the others. All of Europe's youngest nations are in the Balkans.

In addition, both Italy and Greece would be incorporated into the ten-nation confederacy, making it a force to be reckoned with. The thought behind this is the “shopping mall” concept: a couple of dozen small shops scattered around town can't hope to generate much business, but if you put them all together in one place, with a Nordstrom's (Italy) at one end and Sears or Macy's (Greece) at the other, you've got something with the potential for real economic clout. I can see you rolling your eyes, having read about the financial woes of Greece. Yes, their profligate spending has become a morality play (or horror story) for the rest of the world (one whose lessons American politicians seem determined to ignore). But according to World Bank statistics for 2011, Greece still boasts the 34th (or 42nd, gauged by purchasing power) largest economy in the world, with a gross domestic product of about \$300 billion. Greece's tourism-centric economy is the largest in the Balkans, and their merchant marine is the largest in the world. So like a Sears or Macy's (whose names are often heard in the same sentences with terms like “bankruptcy” and “insolvency”) Greece is in no danger of disappearing altogether.

Another reason the Antichrist might set out to build a united Balkan area superstate: a Slovenia or Bulgaria alone couldn't hope to be heard over the voice of a Germany or France. But if ten regional neighbors joined forces—a sort of “United States of the Adriatic” *within the E.U.*—they could wield their collective clout with greater effectiveness. Indeed, it's not beyond comprehension that the

Antichrist could become the dominant individual spokesman and leader in the E.U. through just such an arrangement—making him *de facto* a world leader to be taken seriously. All he'd have to do is consolidate three (or is it four?) Balkan nations into one, perhaps recreating a neo-Yugoslavia out of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and maybe Macedonia. And then, with his reputation as diplomatic savant expanding, he'd convince the other nations to join in the powerful regional partnership of which I spoke. With the right guy (so to speak) at the helm, all of this could all be accomplished in a couple of years.

The theory has a few obstacles to overcome, but they're logistical, not scriptural. First, competing religions: the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches have been at enmity with each other since they officially split in 1054, and the Balkan nations also have a large Muslim contingent. But a spirit of ecumenical compromise, a general seeking for the lowest common spiritual denominator (can you spell *Laodicea*?) has been gaining momentum since the early days of Pope John Paul II. Maybe they'll all get together and decide to live in harmony—*Any god will do, as long nobody calls him Yahweh*. Second problem: of the ten, only Italy, Greece, Slovenia, and Bulgaria are now full members of the E.U. But all of the others are already official candidates or are recognized as potential candidates. If Italy and Greece put their diplomatic clout behind a scheme to recognize and admit the Balkans *as a unit*, I wouldn't be a bit surprised to find it welcomed in with open arms, especially with the wily Antichrist doing the negotiating. Conceivably, it might even be marketed as the solution to Greece's perennial financial turmoil—something of which Germany and Britain (among other E.U. giants) are growing weary.

Together, the Balkan nations would be able to sit at the table as equals with the likes of Britain, France, or Germany. From the viewpoint of landmass, they'd be on a par with France, Spain and Portugal, Germany and the Low Countries, the former Iron Curtain countries (Poland, Hungary, Romania, etc.) or Scandinavia; the British Isles don't even come close. Being a part of the E.U. isn't required in scripture, mind you, but this general scenario smoothes over some logistical rough spots—like NATO ties (read: access to nuclear weapons), close relationships with European central banks, and the Antichrist's unquestioned diplomatic status in the world community of nations.

This leader is the one identified by Daniel as the “little horn.” The prophet's description continues: **“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law.”** (Daniel

7:25) This is our first indication of whom this man considers his enemy: Yahweh himself. I believe that his words and deeds will, in the beginning anyway, be couched in terms calculated to avoid alienating any religious group still on earth after the rapture—whether apostate “Christians,” Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, or even secular humanists. As the Psalmist said, **“The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.”** (Psalm 55:21) His persecution of the saints—repentant Jews and “Laodicean” Christians—will pick up steam as his regime gains power. But as we shall see when we explore his relationship with “Babylon” in a later chapter, he will enter the world’s stage by being the world’s most tolerant diplomat—a champion of all religious heresies, come one, come all.

The enigmatic phrase **“shall intend to change times and law”** raises all sorts of questions and suggests all sorts of theories. Out of convention and convenience, the whole world uses the Gregorian calendar that starts with the (incorrect) birthday of Yahshua, although there are other systems in local operation. The Jewish calendar, for instance, supposedly begins with the first day of creation. The Islamic calendar, not to be outdone, dates time from when Muhammad beat it out of Mecca three steps ahead of a lynch mob (okay, they were trying to stab him to death, but who’s counting?)—622 A.D. became A.H. (“after *hijrah*”) 1. But once the pesky Christians are gone, what’s to keep the whole world from adopting a new religion-neutral dating system? Why should everyone have to be reminded of a God they don’t believe in every time they write the day’s date on a check? *It’s not fair.* But the phrase Daniel uses, “shall *intend* to,” suggests that there are some things even a guy who runs the whole world can’t quite accomplish. Imagine having to tweak the operating systems of every computer on earth. And you thought the furor surrounding the Y2K bug was ridiculous....

I’ve also heard a theory that the Satan-worshipping Antichrist “shall intend to change times and law” by making it illegal to gather for religious observance on any day but Sunday—the day honoring (it is presumed by some) the sun god, whether Ra, Apollo, Mithras, or Lucifer himself. The Muslims, not to be outdone, worship their moon god on Friday. Yahweh clearly set aside the Sabbath—the seventh day, Saturday—as His day of rest and reflection. Observant Jews follow this directive, but it’s something the Church has somehow managed to institutionally sabotage ever since the days of Constantine—another devotee of the sun god. Most of the older commentators, not surprisingly, see this “times and laws” indictment as an indicator that the Roman Catholic Church is the Antichrist, noting that not only Sunday worship, but a plethora of saints’ days, feasts, and fasts were instituted by the church, though they’re totally without foundation in the scriptures. Meanwhile, the festival calendar of Yahweh is studiously ignored—even suppressed. But based on established prophetic logistics, the “Sunday” theory couldn’t kick in until the mid-point of the Tribulation, when the

Antichrist has become unquestioned dictator of the earth, after the house of Islam has been quelled, and the reawakened Jews have been driven into hiding. These things *will* happen, but I'm getting *way* out ahead of our story.

Daniel's visions of the Antichrist weren't finished. Morphed into another description of Antiochus Epiphanes, we find these clues: **"And in the latter time of their [Alexander's successors'] kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes."** Here the Antichrist is seen as arising "in the latter time" from the Grecian kingdom, which, as we have seen, overlaps the Roman world primarily in the Balkans. **"His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power."** That is, he will be empowered by Satan. **"He shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive. He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes."** (Daniel 8:23-25)

Notice first that Yahweh waits, as usual, for things to get hopelessly rotten before He visits us in judgment. I can't help but think of Noah's generation, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Canaanites in Joshua's day. Every one of them had many years to repent—and didn't. Just like us today.

Next we see a bit more information about the Antichrist. He will be intense and brilliant, impossible to fool (unlike some presidents I could name). He won't be what you'd call "a fun guy." Rather, he will be ruthlessly successful at everything he turns his hand to, crafty, suave, and cunning. His power, hinted at here and spelled out in other passages, comes from Satan himself. He has two targets: the mighty (because they stand in the way of his domination of the world) and the holy people, Jews (because they are Yahweh's chosen people) and neoChristians (because they have been set apart by God and enjoy the love and forgiveness of Yahweh—something he and his devilish mentor will never experience).

We shouldn't gloss over the phrase **"He shall destroy the mighty."** That thought is fraught with portent. Daniel is not so much talking about individuals here as he is about nations. Who holds power today? Who is "mighty?" America, most certainly, but also Europe (which will fall under his domination before anyone else), Russia (always a threat, down and out or not), China (a military time-bomb) and *dar al-Islam*, the house of Islam, the wildest of wild cards. Antichrist will "destroy" them all, one way or another. Perhaps the "mightiest" of them all is the financial cartel that runs the whole world—irrespective of national affiliations—from behind the scenes (see chapters 14 and 20 of this book). They too will fall prey to the Antichrist's insatiable ambition.

In this age, we have a proverb: "Crime doesn't pay." But under Antichrist's reign, it apparently will. **"Deceit will prosper under his rule."** Those whose

consciences are still tempered by Judeo-Christian ethics will be considered sad relics of a bygone age, fair game for anybody smart enough to steal from them. It's evolutionary theory at its finest: survival of the most deceptive. Your money won't buy you shelter or security like it does now. But we're not talking about anarchy, exactly, at least not at first. It's state-supported crime, insidious, destructive, and impossible to fight (kind of like the IRS). It's the inevitable path for a world that has rejected its maker, and a world leader who "rises against the Prince of princes." There's no point in protesting against his policies or trying to reform his corrupt government: we've already been told what will happen—"deceit *will* prosper."

Eventually, this leader will show his true colors. No more diplomacy; no more politically correct peace process, no more Mr. Nice Guy. When he finds himself on top (the result—as we shall see—of nuclear carnage, global financial meltdown, and unrestrained anarchy), the mask will come off. **"Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done."** (Daniel 11:36) It's not unusual for godless rulers to "do according to their own will." What's unusual here is that no matter how much he blasphemes Yahweh, no matter how evil his empire becomes, he will prosper—right up until his horrible end. In fact, his prosperity is part of God's plan. If he looks like a winner to those willing to shut their eyes to the truth, he will present the clearest possible choice: Yahweh or Satan, Christ or Antichrist, God's way or Man's way. The Antichrist is to be given free reign for a time so God's overdue wrath may be accomplished on an unbelieving world. It's a question of permission, not volition. God won't have to lift a finger to effect wrath upon the earth, at least at first; all He has to do is stop protecting us from ourselves. The Antichrist will be everything the world thinks it wants—he will certainly be what the world deserves.

Yahshua saw it coming: **"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive."** (John 5:43) Because the Jews rejected the "good shepherd," they would be given a bad one. **"And Yahweh said to me [Zechariah], 'Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces.'"** (Zechariah 11:15-16) "Hooves" is the Hebrew: *parsa*—metaphorical of "the might of an enemy raised by God Himself against His people," according to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. The Antichrist will pose as the shepherd of Israel—their savior and Messiah, defending them against their mortal enemies (as we shall see). He will even occupy the Land (see Daniel 11:40). But his real agenda is personal power, and he doesn't care how many Jewish sheep he has to fleece to get it.

Daniel's next few verses explore the Antichrist's "religion." The picture is disturbing, for its roots go back to the very beginning of man's purposeful rebellion against Yahweh. **"He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all. But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain."** (Daniel 11:37-39) The prophet is saying that he will follow no traditional religion. If he's a European, the "God of his fathers" would most likely be the liturgy-encrusted caricature of Yahshua promulgated by the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches. It's also possible, considering the part of the world he comes from, that he will arise from Muslim stock, in which case the god he *doesn't* bow to would be Allah. (Few secular Muslim leaders really do, in point of fact.) Roman Europe has a steadily increasing Muslim population both in the east and the west.

And think about this: if Nebuchadnezzar's big statue, the one Daniel interpreted as four coming gentile empires, has ten toes made of "iron and clay," it stands to reason that five of them were seen on each foot. Is the right foot nominally "Christian" (i.e., Roman Catholic, Greek orthodox, and apostate Protestant, all living together but not adhering to each other) the left Islamic (Sunni and Shiite, who have been vying for power and booty since, like, ten minutes after Muhammad's death)? All of Rome's eastern component, Byzantium, is now in Muslim hands, so it's dangerous to dismiss the notion out of hand. What's clear from the passage at hand, though, is that no matter his cultural heritage, the Antichrist won't bow to anybody's god, not to the Christians' Jesus, the Muslims' Allah, or the Jews' *ha-Shem* (known to you and me by his real name, Yahweh). He won't worship any god in anybody's pantheon.

Instead, he will worship *himself*, following the tradition of the ancient Babylonian mystery religion of Nimrod. This cult is the original Satanic sun-god counterfeit of Yahweh's grand plan of salvation for all mankind, and it still exists today. It began within a few generations of the flood. Emulating what people would observe of the true God, this bogus religion presents a trinity of sorts. The "father" figure is Cush, Noah's grandson. As this false faith spread, he became known as Bel, Belus, or Ba'al, Hermes, Mercury, Nebo, Janus, Chaos, Vulcan, and Merodach, among others. The "son"—the false Christ—was Nimrod himself, who took the personae of Tammuz, Osiris, Jupiter, Pluto, Kronos (otherwise known as "the horned one," as was his Nordic counterpart with the transparently counterfeit name, Gesus), Bacchus, Cupid and others, depending on where you were and when you lived.

Rounding out the hellish trio was the “Madonna” figure. Satan apparently figured it would be easier to sell people on a tangible goddess than on an ethereal forgery of the Holy Spirit. So Semiramis, Nimrod’s wife, morphed into Astarte or Ishtar (where we get the name “Easter”), Isis, Cybele, Fortuna, Rhea, Ceres, Minerva, Athena, Venus, and Diana. But in a rare turn of fortune, we can learn something significant about the real thing from studying the counterfeit. Christians tend to perceive God as “three Persons” (as the Hymn puts it), a “Trinity” composed of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yahweh, on the other hand, presents Himself in scripture as One God, whose self revealed name is Yahweh—who *manifests* Himself among men in six (not two) diminished forms (since we, as mortals, cannot survive in the direct presence of the Almighty). These include theophanies, the Shekinah (corporeal though non-anthropomorphic appearances), visionary manifestations, the Son (Yahshua of Nazareth), the Holy Spirit, and the soon-to-appear glorified Messiah. So the “Trinity” is a somewhat inadequate description of the nature of God.

That being said, the real “Trinity’s” indwelling manifestation of Yahweh, the Holy Spirit (*Ruach Qodesh* in Hebrew) is actually a *feminine* noun in the original language. So in a very real (if not literal) sense, “She” is our “heavenly Mother,” and indeed, we find that the functions of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us are *maternal* in nature: comforting, nurturing, gently but firmly confronting us with our shortcomings. It all puts the fifth commandment, “**Honor your Father and your Mother,**” in a whole new light: Yahweh structured our families—going so far as to design our anatomies as male and female—to teach us what God is like.

By the time of Christ, the mystery religion started by Nimrod had, in one form or another, spread from the British Isles to China, from Africa to Scandinavia. Today, its rituals and superstitions subtly permeate most every culture on the face of the globe, and show up where you’d least expect them: Roman Catholicism, the form of “Christianity” practiced more extensively by far than any other, is to this day immersed in the trappings of Babylon. But as I said, the Antichrist won’t really practice *any* religion, in any form we’d recognize, anyway. His worship will be reserved for himself alone, giving Satan, ironically enough, unfettered access to his very soul—just as it did with Nimrod.

The key to the Antichrist’s beliefs is found in Daniel’s mention of “a god of fortresses.” This is more significant than merely saying he relies on the force of arms, like a thousand rulers before him. It is actually a sideways reference to Nimrod’s mystery religion. Many permutations of the Babylonian Madonna (Rhea, Cybele, and Diana, for example) were depicted wearing a crown resembling a tower or fortress. The root of the matter is that Semiramis was credited with building the first city fortifications in the post-flood world, making

her the *goddess* of fortifications, and her husband Ninus/Nimrod, by association, the god of fortresses.

You may be asking, “Why should I care about all this ancient mythology?” It’s because these myths have a basis in history—the history of a powerful ruler selling out to Satan and deceiving much of the earth into believing that God is something He’s not. History is about to repeat itself. Satan doesn’t much care what you believe, as long as it’s not the truth. The truth, after all, will set you free.

So just as Nimrod set himself up as god, the Antichrist will too. And just like the real God, he will honor those who follow him. How? **“He shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.”** That is, he will split up the spoils among his “worshippers.” Good grief; this is such a tired old tune. The Antichrist, in the end, is nothing but a thief; he’s in it for the money, for the power, for the glory. His cronies and sycophants will (at first, anyway) reap the spoils of unrestrained power. The only difference between him and a hundred other wannabes throughout history, from Alexander to Attila, from Hannibal to Hitler, from Muhammad to Mussolini, is that he will be very, *very* good at what he does.

It has been said that Daniel and Revelation are the bookends of prophecy. It certainly seems that way as we jump to John’s narrative without missing a beat: **“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.”** (Revelation 13:1) The imagery has shifted subtly here. The “beast” is seen coming from the sea—a consistent Biblical metaphor for the gentile nations. The political reality is that there are ten horns (national entities) but only seven heads (governments or national leaders). This is a refinement of what we read in Daniel: three of the original ten nations have ceased to have their own independent identities. Again in John’s vision we see the Antichrist’s kingdom united in blasphemy against Yahweh.

Now we get a more detailed picture of this beast: **“The beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.”** (Revelation 13:2) The symbols describing the Antichrist speak of his nature. Leopards are known for their ability to kill swiftly. The bear’s feet speak of brute strength. And the lion’s mouth is indicative of the beast’s verbal authority—his roar commands attention. But for all his ruthlessness, power, and charisma, the beast is nothing without the Dragon—Satan—the real source of his strength.

That’s why Paul calls him **“the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”** (II Thessalonians 2:3-4) Sounds like our old buddy Nimrod. The Greek word for “perdition” is *apoleia*, which means

destruction, perishing, ruin, or waste. In other words, the apostle begs to differ with Antichrist's self-assessment of his own wonderfulness.

God will too, when the time is right. **“Yahweh will consume [him] with the breath of His mouth and destroy [him] with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”** (II Thessalonians 2:8-12) A great many will eventually believe that this politician is God, or at least *a* god, because he will apparently be able to perform all kinds of miracles—including rising from the dead. After all, what would a false Christ be without signs and wonders? Of course, it's all Satan's sleight of hand—lies and trickery—but those who have rejected the real Messiah will swallow it whole.

This is not the first time God's role in man's condemnation has been addressed in scripture. Since some folks look at these passages and grumble, “How unfair of Him,” we need to clear the air. As far back as the Exodus, we see the same sort of thing. There it is said that God “hardened Pharaoh's heart.” In the first chapter of Romans, He is said to have given sinners up to “uncleanness,” to “vile passions,” and to a “debased mind.” Here He is seen “sending them strong delusion.” *What gives? I thought God loved sinners!* He does—so much that He set aside His glory, became a man, and sacrificed Himself to pay the penalty for their crimes. But when people purposely turn their hearts from God's mercy, there is a limit to how much time He'll give them to repent. Remember Noah? Sodom? God never closes the door on people who are looking for Him, but he sometimes locks doors that people have already slammed shut. There is a difference.

Without getting prematurely wrapped up in the things the Antichrist will do during the Tribulation, we have explored his appearing, his political situation, and his character. We know that he comes from somewhere within the old Roman *and* Greek empires, emerging as a world figure in the days following the rapture. He overcomes three nations on his way toward dominance of an influential ten-nation league (in the Balkans, if my observations are correct). We know that he's an oily-tongued politician whose solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict makes him the most respected diplomat on earth. And we know that he, empowered by Satan himself, has ambitions—concealed at first—to become a god on earth, worshipped as the promised one, the Messiah.

There is more to the geopolitical nature of earth in the days following the rapture of the Church than the rise to power of one man, of course. One of the most frequently asked questions concerning prophecy is “Where does America fit into the last days?” It’s a good question, considering how close we seem to be to the end and considering the current status of the United States as the last of the world’s superpowers. Is it possible that Yahweh didn’t know about us when he delivered His prophecies? In a word, no.

But there aren’t any *obvious* scripture passages referring to a great nation beyond the western sea. Why is that? Don’t we count? If the genealogy of the seven sons of Seir the Horite could be enumerated in such detail in Holy writ, why aren’t Washington, Lincoln, and Chester A. Arthur given equal billing? The answer, obviously, is that the Bible is not a book *about* important events, history, prophecy, religion, good people, or bad people *per se*. It is, rather, a record of how Yahweh is saving his creation, the unfolding of His plan of redemption through His Son, Yahshua. That’s why its narrative is restricted to stories and information that help explain who He is, what He accomplished, what is expected of us as a result, and what He has planned for our future. There are huge hunks of otherwise noteworthy human history that have absolutely nothing to do with any of that.

Thus the very nature of scripture dictates very good odds that when future events are prophesied, they’ll have something to do with the nation of Israel, the Church, or Christ Himself, for these are Yahweh’s chosen tools for achieving and communicating our redemption. In fact, people who have no contact with, or impact upon, the Jews—past or future—have little chance of being mentioned in the Bible, no matter how influential or infamous they are otherwise.

That being said, both Israel and Christians have played significant roles in the unfolding of U.S. history, such as it is. So it’s not surprising that we tend to see ourselves in a generalized way in passages like the great commission: we are thankful to comprise one of “the uttermost parts of the earth.” Or perhaps we picture ourselves in obscure passages like the Psalm we explored earlier predicting the Holocaust: **“This will be written for the generation to come [literally, ‘the last generation’], that a people yet to be created may praise Yahweh.”** (Psalm 102:18) The United States was instrumental in creating a homeland for the Jews after World War II, and we have been their staunchest ally (sometimes their only ally) for over half a century since then—even though we have often pressured them to do things contrary to their own national interests. Historically, we have supported them with our money, our munitions, and our prayers. Beyond that, the world’s largest concentrations of Bible-believing Christians live in America, though we’re a minority, and have been for a long time. Our founding fathers had the foresight to build religious freedom into our national structure, a concept that allowed

Christianity to flourish as it had nowhere else on earth, even though it also allowed scores of false religions to flourish right alongside us. It's the price we pay for the freedom to worship however and whomever we want.

Although there is no prophetic passage exclusively addressed to America, there is one—and only one—that is so striking in its descriptions that some expositors (like me) can't help but see the United States in every line. Isaiah 18's near-term application was to sub-Egyptian Africa (Cush, or Ethiopia) and their relationship to Assyria. But as we have seen, Yahweh often reveals prophecies with both near and far fulfillments in mind. It's entirely possible that though already fulfilled in history (in a pointless, historically obscure sort of way), this one still has some life left in it. In fact, it seems obvious to me that Cush was only a whispered hint of the prophecy's primary objective.

Isaiah wrote at a time when Assyria was emerging as the dominant world power. Egypt was at the time under the sway of its southern kingdom, Ethiopia—centered in today's southern Egypt and Northern Sudan, stretching up the Nile from Aswan to Khartoum. (Modern Ethiopia was then known as Abyssinia.) They watched with trepidation as Assyria gobbled up one country after another, and were relieved beyond words when Sennacherib's army was "pruned" by Yahweh at the gates of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (see Isaiah 37; II Kings 19). But Israel was warned not to enter into alliances with the anti-Assyrian government of Egypt, for they *would* be conquered by Assyria. (This happened in 671 B.C., by Esarhaddon.) Hence the "woe" in verse 1.

So the prophecy has seen an historical fulfillment already, as hard as it is for us to glean much of a life-lesson from it. But what about a secondary fulfillment? Is there one? I think there is. Let's take this thing apart and look at it. **"Woe to the land shadowed with buzzing wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, which sends ambassadors by sea, even in vessels of reed on the waters, saying, 'Go, swift messengers...'"** (Isaiah 18:1) This nation is identified as someone who sends ambassadors, or messengers (Hebrew *malak*—a word often used for angels). It is a land of "whirring wings," as it says in the KJV—the single Hebrew word (*tsalatsal*) rendered "shadowed with buzzing" here is the same as that used for locusts. These days it's hard to hear of whirring wings without thinking of helicopters—the quintessential American military machine. (Some commentators have taken the questionable translation of "shadowed" and seen America's national symbol, the spread-winged eagle. I don't buy it.) Another possible angle on this is the "locust" metaphor—suggesting that the land in question, like Ethiopia, is swarming with voracious parasites who devour the nation's resources. Alas, that is becoming the case with America, though we're hardly unique in that respect.

There is some confusion as to whether this nation is the sender of the following message (as it is rendered here in the New King James) or the recipient. The word “saying” isn’t actually there in the Hebrew, although supplying it is not necessarily incorrect. But since it makes more sense in the context of a secondary fulfillment, I’d like to suggest that this verse should read, **“Woe to the land of whirring wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, which sends ambassadors by sea, even in vessels of reed [papyrus—the same plant *paper* was made of, used to this day by ambassadors sent out to the world] on the waters. Go, swift messengers....”** In other words, the land with the whirring wings is (or can be) the same land as that described in the subsequent verses. The one against whom woe is pronounced is the same as that to whom the swift messengers (or is that angels?) are sent.

There’s another reason I think they may be the same. If you’ll recall, in the previous chapter I pointed out that Zephaniah 3:10, **“From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my worshippers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering,”** clearly fit America like a glove, although it may have been true in a limited sense of Egypt’s southern kingdom, “Ethiopia,” as well. But Yahweh’s “worshippers” in America are certainly (in theological terms) the “daughters” of His dispersed ones—the Diaspora of Israel. Christianity’s roots are anchored deeply in Israel—in her Torah, prophets, and Messiah. And we (America’s Christians) did indeed “bring an offering” in the form of the financial support it took to re-launch Israel as a modern nation-state. So it seems that the phrase “beyond the rivers of Ethiopia” has a double meaning, a near and far perspective. These are the only two occurrences of this geographical description in scripture, however, so it’s hard to be dogmatic. At any rate, “woe” is pronounced, so it’s clear God is unhappy with them—it could be rendered “alas!” It’s as if Yahweh is in agony over their fate.

“Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth of skin, to a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down, whose land the rivers divide....” If you look at several English translations here, you’ll notice a remarkable lack of unanimity. What the NKJV (and the NIV) renders as “tall and smooth of skin,” the KJV translates as “scattered and peeled.” What gives? *Mashak* means “to draw out,” hence either “tall” or “extended, stretched out, or scattered.” And *morat*, interestingly, means obstinate, in the sense of being independent. Somehow they also get “peeled” out of it. I would render the phrase **“a nation spread out and independent.”** Either way, it sounds like America to me. So does the rest of the description. America began its history by defeating the greatest military force on earth; Britain thought we were “terrible,” even if no one else did. We are definitely “powerful.” And what about “treading down?” The KJV renders it “meted out,” i.e. measured (which is primarily what *kavkav* means). No nation has *ever* been so thoroughly meted out.

And divided by rivers? Assyria, of course had both the Tigris and Euphrates running through it. But the description fits America as well. I once read a book called *River Horse* which chronicled the author's river journey across the entire North American continent from east to west in a small boat, portaging only short distances; the same sort of thing is possible going from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border.

The description continues: **"All inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth: when he lifts up a banner on the mountains, you see it..."** The whole world is commanded to take note of something, and only by sorting out the pronouns can we perceive what that is. I believe the "he" here should actually read "He," that is, Yahweh; and "you" refers to the subject nation being described. The key here is the word translated "banner." According to *Baker and Carpenter*, the Hebrew *nes* means "a banner, a standard. It refers to a symbol or sign representing a cause, a person, or God. It indicates a pole on which to display something, a tragedy that could serve as a warning or a sign, or a symbol to rally around." It's the same word used for the pole lifted up in the wilderness for the healing of Israel (Numbers 21:8-9), which is in turn a picture or symbol of the cross (Greek *stauros* = "pole") of Christ (cf. John 3:14).

What Isaiah is saying, then, is that the sacrifice of Yahshua will be "seen" (*ra'ah*: beheld, perceived, considered, approved, and taken heed of) by this nation, and "all inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth" will identify this nation with that banner or standard. Again, America is a perfect fit: never has a nation's history been shaped by its "taking heed" of the Cross as much as America's. And even though we have fallen from the pure faith, the rest of the world still identifies us with this same symbol. It's the very reason Muslims call America "the Great Satan." They perceive us as a Christian nation, thus infidels and enemies to the cause of Islam. If only it were that simple.

"And when He [Yahweh] blows a trumpet, you [America] hear it..." In other words, Isaiah's subject nation will hear and respond when Yahweh blows the trumpet. As we saw in chapter 8, God's *shofar* blown on the Feast of Trumpets is the signal for His saints to join Him in the air—I believe this is referring to the rapture! And if I'm right, America is being characterized as *the* nation who, more than any other, will "hear" (Hebrew *shama*: to hear intelligently with attention or obedience: to call or gather together, consent, consider, or give ear to) the trumpet calling Yahweh's people home.

"For so Yahweh said to me, 'I will take My rest, and I will look from My dwelling place like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest..." I love the way the New Living Translation puts this: **"I will watch quietly from My dwelling place—as quietly as the heat rises on a summer day, or as the dew forms on an autumn morning during the harvest..."** God will unfold His plan quietly and calmly, in His own good

time. He doesn't panic; He doesn't get excited. He knows exactly what He's doing, and why. He has His own timetable, and He's right on schedule. Significantly, He has also indicated that the rapture of His saints will occur "during the harvest," in the autumn of the year, at the Feast of Trumpets.

Okay, so what is He doing? First, ask yourself if you (like me) see America in these verses. You do? Then hang on to your hat. Here comes the bad news. **"For before the harvest, when the bud is perfect and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, He will both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks and take away and cut down the branches."** (Isaiah 18:2-5) That's right. Isaiah says America is going to get "pruned" like the unruly and diseased grapevine it has become. Yahweh is going to take some things away from us that we thought were promising. He'll do it for our own good, because He loves us, but that doesn't mean it won't hurt.

Why would the Vinedresser cut off sprigs that already have grapes budding out on them? Isn't any fruit good fruit? No, not if the branch is endangering the vine. If it's diseased, or even if it has merely grown so large the vine can't support it—can't bring nourishment to it without compromising the entire plant—then the vinedresser would be wise indeed to cut it back. In the previous chapter, Isaiah put it all into perspective: **"Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold, therefore you will plant pleasant plants and set out foreign seedlings; In the day you will make your plant to grow, and in the morning you will make your seed to flourish. But the harvest will be a heap of ruins in the day of grief and desperate sorrow."** (Isaiah 17:10-11)

Who among us is so blind that he can't see that America has picked up a nasty blight? Who would deny that we as a nation have "forgotten the God of our salvation?" If Isaiah 18 is talking about America, (and I firmly believe it is: SF1) then we shouldn't be surprised to see our nation getting pruned back—severely. To use a more familiar metaphor for us non-agricultural types, America has a cancer that's growing out of control and threatening to kill our entire nation. Yahweh has already tried all the standard non-invasive procedures, and nothing has worked. So now He must operate—surgically remove the tumors of sin from our land. It won't be pleasant, but if that's what it takes to save us, may God's will be done.

But unlike Isaiah, I can't honestly phrase my commentary in the future tense. These things have already begun to come to pass with horrifying alacrity. We needn't look far to find the problem, for it permeates our society like a cancer. We have, as a nation, turned our back on Yahweh—despite the efforts of God's people to avert this disaster. It has become "unfashionable" to defer to God in this country among our political and media elite class. The family structure as God ordained it is crumbling under the unrelenting onslaught of liberal dogma. Gender roles are being purposefully blurred, and homosexuality has been made a

“protected perversion.” We kill 1.2 million innocent children in the womb every year in the name of “women’s reproductive rights,” and over half of all births to women under thirty years of age in America are now outside of marriage. But anyone who notices a problem with any of these things is labeled a racist homophobe, a hysterical misogynistic reactionary impediment to progress. And if anybody mentions Yahweh, he’s labeled a religious terrorist. It’s no wonder He has decided to “cut us back to size.” It’s a wonder He hasn’t decided to simply obliterate us. Perhaps He would, but for the sizeable remnant here who still revere and rely upon Him. We may not have any power, but we still have a voice.

When does Isaiah say Yahweh is going to get out His pruning hook? **“Before the harvest.”** So we shouldn’t be surprised to see America being clipped back now—*before* the rapture (which is aptly described as a “harvest” of souls). Why *before*? Because “God is not willing that *any* should perish.” Yahweh wants to have the biggest harvest possible—a bumper crop. To do that, the vine needs to be healthy. A moment ago, I flippantly called this the “bad news.” It’s not, not really. God cares enough about us to attend to our needs, even if it’s painful. That’s *good* news. It could be worse; He could rip us out by the roots, like He did Sodom, or abandon us to our own fate, as He apparently has today’s Europeans who have abandoned Him. But no. The divine Vinedresser cares enough about America to snip and prune and cut away at the unhealthy growth until the nation that once “heeded His banner” regains her vitality.

So instead, as intimated here in Isaiah, Yahweh has opted to “prune us back.” What does that look like? What precisely do I mean by “pruning?” No, I don’t think we’re going to lose California and Arizona back to Mexico (although in a way, that very thing is happening through illegal immigration, swelling the welfare rolls to the breaking point in the process). September 11, 2001 showed us all what can happen when Yahweh removes his protection from us for one brief moment. We lost 3,000 of our best and brightest, along with a symbol of our financial preeminence and national pride, to irrational Islamic hatred. The experience reminded some Americans, at least temporarily, that there is a God, though Yahweh Himself had nothing to do with the attack except refusing to miraculously prevent it. Hurricanes like Katrina, Irene, and Sandy are other examples of what it might mean to get pruned. “Pruning” is painful surgery on a national scale that has the potential to make us stronger in the end by waking us up to the reality of our situation. It is the cutting off of that which is weakening us as a nation—from God’s perspective—things that distract us from reliance upon His provision and His standards (which are, after all, there for our benefit).

Such “pruning” needn’t be anything so sudden and drastic as terrorist acts and natural disasters. It could merely be the inevitable outcome of many years of accumulated ignorance and apostasy, of disastrously stupid decisions in the halls

of power, in academia, in our cultural mores, and even in our pulpits. What has happened to America since *Time Magazine* (in April, 1966) asked, “Is God dead?” Friedrich Nietzsche’s opinion notwithstanding, Yahweh is very much alive; indeed, He is Life itself. The problem, as I see it, is that dead men can’t perceive Him. In what is a virtual blow-by-blow replay of the warnings Yahweh issued to Israel in Deuteronomy 28, America has moved inexorably from misfortune to difficulty to tragedy, and we’re well on our way to utter catastrophe—all because we, as a nation, have turned our backs on the God who gave us life in the first place.

Our industrial base has shriveled, the result of corporate myopia, union greed, and misguided, agenda-driven, heavy-handed regulation. Our natural resources are still to be found in abundance, but a “green” agenda based on equal parts error and greed is making them harder and more expensive to utilize. Our convoluted tax code and socialist proclivities have become remarkably effective in stifling all but the most robust of entrepreneurial enterprises. Half of our population works to support the other half, and the welfare rolls are swelling to record levels while more and more families sink beneath the poverty line. A university education can take decades to pay for. Unemployment numbers hover for years around 8%, but only because our politicians have manipulated the data: the truth works out to more like 15%—and it’s far worse than that among minorities and the young. Personal debt is totally out of control: while our per capita income is about \$42,000 per year, our average credit card debt is over \$15,000, the average mortgage debt is \$150,000, and the average student loan debt is almost \$35,000! But these statistics pale in comparison to our national debt, which is growing so fast I can’t even put a number on it—it’s rising at the rate of 3.8 billion dollars *every day*. Forty percent of every dollar our government spends is *borrowed*. Worse, we have little to show for the trillions of dollars that have been thrown to the wind in support of green energy boondoggles, socialistic entitlements, a welfare-based nanny state, and long unwinnable wars in foreign lands.

Our historic national prosperity has arguably been one of the factors most responsible for America’s abandonment of its godly principles, so Yahweh is pruning it back in an effort to encourage us to rely upon Him as we once did. Our freedoms, guaranteed by our Constitution, have not been acknowledged to be the byproduct of Yahweh’s love, so He is allowing them to be smothered under a mountain of laws and regulations imposed by paranoid and narcissistic politicians interested only in holding onto power. We have failed to guard our Judeo-Christian culture of morality, family, and faith, so God has allowed it to be replaced under our very noses by a Darwinist-Marxist model promoting personal pride, pleasure, and prosperity at the expense of responsibility, altruism, and any semblance of real love. As the poet says, you don’t know what you’ve got ’til it’s gone. The question is: how many more branches will America have to lose before

we awaken to the reality of what's happening? We are being given every reason, every encouragement to repent. How long will it take before we do? Or will the rapture, like a thief in the night, catch our nation asleep and unaware?

Isaiah continues: **"They [these cut-off branches] will be left together for the mountain birds of prey and for the beasts of the earth. The birds of prey will summer on them...."** Birds in scripture are a common metaphor for evil (or more precisely, the consequences of our choices, but America has been choosing evil pretty consistently for some time now). And "mountains" speak of the strongholds of power. What Isaiah seems to be saying is that the powerful, evil influences among us will prosper at our expense, benefiting from our national misfortune, perhaps taking the opportunity to kick us while we're down or rob us blind while we remain oblivious to their true intentions. A maxim being followed religiously in the halls of power these days is, "Never let a crisis go to waste." That is, use every problem, tragedy, or crisis that arises (even if you have to create one yourself) as a springboard from which you can seize more power and further advance your own agenda. If a hurricane hits, pass a "relief bill" that's so laden with pork that little of the money will actually relieve anything, but your political supporters will reap a windfall anyway. If a madman uses a firearm to kill innocents in a public place, seize the opportunity to trash the Second Amendment and disarm the law abiding gun owners whose Constitutional rights give tyrants cold sweats (as they were designed to do). All of this and more could be construed as "mountain birds of prey" making hay (so to speak) while the sun shines, deriving personal profit from the misfortune of America.

But the "summer" won't last. The scene shifts as the winter approaches: **"And all the beasts of the earth will winter on them."** (Isaiah 18:6) These "beasts" are the Hebrew *behemah*, meaning mute: the word is therefore normally used of "dumb" animals like cattle. These *behemah* take over where the birds left off, surviving the "winter" on the "branches" Yahweh has pruned. This seems to mean (at least to me) that those who don't have a voice, those whose place in the world is quiet service, will somehow be nourished by the results of God's pruning. The prophetic Church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) is described just like this—as people "having little power," but who nevertheless guard, revere, and rely upon Yahweh's word.

So this is how it works: regarding our nation's "pruning" on 9/11, the cause of Islam—its irrational hatred for Christians and Jews—was "fed" for a while by this attack on our nation. But the time of the *behemah* is coming. I am one of those "beasts," these formerly "silent ones." The treachery of Islam started me on a quest for truth that has led me step by step to this present work. And I am not alone. Again: the response of God's people in the wake of natural disasters has been far more effective and timely than any government agency. This might prove

in the end to be another example of how the *behemah* will survive the “winter” (as the rapture approaches). The “birds of prey” would love to keep us silent, but our testimony of service, our outpourings of love when the times were bleak and needs were dire, will be remembered by those we helped during the dark days ahead. And God’s word, so easy to ignore in today’s world, will be remembered.

Even though the pruning of America has begun before the rapture, the *ultimate* “harvest” of which Isaiah speaks is surely inclusive of the final separation of God’s people from those who choose to reject Him, at the second coming of Yahshua—years *after* the rapture. Indeed, that very picture is used in one of Christ’s parables, where the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a field in which both good grain and weeds are growing. Yahshua explained: **“He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”** (Matthew 13:37-43) Notice that here, the “tares” are gathered and burned while the “good seeds, the sons of the kingdom” are still standing. Therefore, the raptured saints are not in view here, but rather the repentant souls of both Israel and the church of Laodicea. This is the separation of evil from good at the end of the Tribulation—called here “the end of this age.” It’s the same truth that was taught by the parable of the “separation of the sheep from the goats” in Matthew 25. (The raptured saints, in contrast, will have departed this world long before this. The rapture is not the “end of the age” because there is still one church left to go when “Philadelphia” is taken. The raptured saints will return to earth with the Messiah at His second coming—see Revelation 19:14. No punishment of the wicked is associated with the rapture.)

Therefore, America can *count on* getting “pruned back” anytime between now and the end of the Tribulation, and more vigorously as the Day approaches—though as we have seen, the process has already begun in earnest. America got used to the idea of having God’s blessing and protection 24/7 ’cause we held the world’s moral high ground (such as it is) for so long. But in case you didn’t notice, we left that place—of our own accord—when we took God out of our public life. In a nation that prides itself on freedom of speech, it has become practically *illegal* to say we’re “one nation under God.” (And sadly, these days you need to define who you mean, precisely—Yahweh or Allah.)

Before we leave the subject of America, I’d like to consider one more verse—the one immediately preceding the passage we’ve just explored. The context is

judgment upon the nations, but if the shoe fits.... **"Then behold, at eventide, trouble! And before the morning, he is no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us [that is, Israel], and the lot of those who rob us."** (Isaiah 17:14) Pop quiz. Who has plundered and robbed Israel in the last half century? *Oh, that's an easy one, you say. The Egyptians, the Syrians, the Jordanians, the Palestinians—in other words, the Muslims.*

Are you sure? Oh, they've tried, all right. But whenever they rain down their rockets on Israel, they rarely hit anything. And every time they've actually invaded, they've lost far more than they gained. Yahweh has seen to that. So why aren't Israel's borders any bigger than they are? After all, at one time they controlled all of the Sinai Peninsula and half of Lebanon. Why did they give these strategic buffers back so they could be used as launching pads for invasion? Out of the goodness of their hearts? No. It was because of political pressure from the one nation on earth in a position to bring it to bear: the United States of America. Sure, we're her staunchest ally, but at the same time, we've all too often asked—no, *demand*—that she not vigorously defend herself against Islamic aggression, threatening to take away with our left hand what we've given with our right, to cut them off without support, leaving them without a friend in the world, if they didn't give their war gains back to their attackers. And why would we apply this pressure? For the prospect of cheap Arab oil and hollow promises of peace from people who are commanded by their religion to kill every Jew who falls under their control. Did we forget that Yahweh promised to "bless those who bless you [the Jews], and...curse him who curses you?" Did we ever really believe it? Or are our elected leaders merely paying lip service to God?

A few years ago, George W. Bush, the most vocally "Christian" President to come along in many years, applied immense pressure on Israel to give up the West Bank to the Muslims, a move that without divine intervention would have eventually spelled certain death for the Nation of Israel. Israel did not comply (thank God), but Bush did succeed in persuading them to abandon the Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. And if you don't see the connection, remember this: Gush Katif was surrendered to the Muslims just hours before New Orleans was sacrificed to Hurricane Katrina. It didn't have to happen. It is *we* who are plundering and robbing the Jews, and we will reap the whirlwind. The travesty continues apace under our current president, Barack Hussein Obama, who treats Israel and its leaders with thinly veiled contempt, instead of recognizing and supporting their status as the only real democracy in the entire Middle East. At the same time, he bows (sometimes literally) to Muslim leaders who no longer bother hiding their loathing for Israel—and us. Sackcloth and ashes are in order here; it's time to repent. But then again, I'm preaching to the choir, am I not?

Is America *done*, then? As bad as things look now—and although things will get exponentially worse during the Tribulation—the answer, miraculously, is no. The prophet Isaiah finishes chapter 18 by reprising the description of the subject nation, but with a twist: all is *not* lost—we will *not* be utterly uprooted. America *will*, as a nation, turn around, repent, and honor both Israel and her God. This leads me to the conclusion that a large contingent of the belatedly repentant saints of the Church of Laodicea will hail from the United States. Note that Ryrie points out that both of the “froms” in this verse should be omitted—they’re not present in the Hebrew text: **“In that time a present will be brought to Yahweh of hosts: (From) a nation spread out and independent, and (from) a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down, whose land the rivers divide—to the place of the name of Yahweh of hosts, to Mount Zion.”** (Isaiah 18:7)

This nation, this judiciously pruned grapevine, will not just *send* a gift; they will *be* a gift, presented to Yahweh. Note that the “present” (Hebrew *shay*: a gift presented in homage)—this nation we’ve identified as America—will not only be given to Yahweh, it will be “brought to” Him. The Hebrew *yabal* means to bring, to bear or carry along, to lead or conduct. It can also connote deliverance. If I’m not mistaken, Isaiah is once again referring to both the rapture and the final gathering of Tribulation martyrs and survivors at the commencement of the Millennium—the times of the harvest. We have tons of information to cover before we get to that place in our study, however. So for now, just take note that the subject of the prophecy, America—as a nation—will comprise this gift presented in homage to Yahweh. But remember, the passage began with “woe.” We have a whole lot of repenting to do first. Through His pruning of our nation, the removal of the diseased and unruly parts of the vine, Yahweh is encouraging us to do that very thing. We will be fruitful, or we will find ourselves cut off. Yahweh has spoken.

Even if the U.S. wasn’t being trimmed back with Yahweh’s pruning shears before the rapture, it most certainly will be afterward—drastically. No nation can afford to lose such a large percentage of its most faithful citizens (whatever that percentage might be) and expect to pick up the pieces without missing a beat. I mean, if God were planning to rapture only repeat felons and their lawyers, it might be a different story. Nobody would miss them much. But the people who meet Yahshua in the air will be the backbone of American society. They aren’t necessarily the richest or most successful, the most powerful or influential, but they tend to be folks who are willing to show up for work every day intending to give a full day’s labor for a full day’s pay. They aren’t working the angles or

trying to figure out how to beat the system, but are rather content to serve their employers or clients with the same enthusiasm and dedication they would display if they were working for Yahshua Himself, because they know that in the end, they are.

There are people like that in other countries, of course, just as there are non-Christians in America who behave in more or less the same responsible way (though not for the same reasons). I'm obviously speaking in sweeping generalities. My point is that the United States will be affected more directly and more dramatically by the rapture than any other country. And when you're the world's only superpower (in decline or not), the ramifications of an event like the rapture will be serious—there's no way around it. The geopolitical balance of power will begin shifting away from America almost immediately after the rapture (if not before)—subtly at first, and more markedly as time goes on.

But shift to whom? Who is ready to fill America's role as the big dog on the block, for good or ill? Russia would like to fill the gap, and they'll always be a force to be reckoned with, but after enduring seventy years of Communist rule, they've lost the ability to think like world leaders. They're still susceptible to the spells of charismatic megalomaniacs, who, like the Communist demagogues of old, rely more on force of will than the rule of law to administer their nation. Rule the world? No. Nowadays they find it hard enough trying to run their own fragmented country. China? It's certainly large enough and belligerent enough, but the idea of dominating the world is foreign to them, at least for now. (But things change: stay tuned.) They have always been an introspective people, and their new brand of communo-capitalism has focused their attention on their own issues and opportunities more than ever. Ironically, America's prophesied decline will severely curtail China's ability to expand its influence, for its wealth is largely dependent on a robust American economy: when we go down, they'll get hurt as well. South America, even with economic powerhouses like Brazil and Argentina, can't seem to get its act together, as much as they might like to. Northern Africa is in a state of constant turmoil since the so-called "Arab Spring" of 2011 deposed anything remotely resembling stable governments—replacing their ruthless secular-Islamic dictators, who were dug in like Alabama ticks, with weak fundamentalist-leaning substitutes. Sub-Saharan Africa, between AIDS, greed, and genocidal wars (mostly perpetrated by Islamist factions these days), is seemingly bent on self-destruction.

The house of Islam, however, is a wild card in this discussion. The Islamic-dominated nations, stretching from Africa, across the Middle East, and into Southeast Asia, will play a unique and largely unforeseen part in the unfolding of the Last Days (though their role—Biblical prophecy aside—is becoming clearer by the day). They have both an historic agenda of world domination and a major

role to play in Biblical end-times prophecy. Before we're done, I expect to see a revived Islamic Caliphate arising in the Middle East, led by Iran and Turkey. But because Islam is so thoroughly misunderstood, even now, I would like to save the discussion of this whole subject for a future chapter.

That leaves but one candidate to consider: Europe. Although most Americans are blissfully unaware of the fact, Europe *is* a viable contender for the title of "future superpower." Several lines of inquiry lead us to this conclusion. Historically, and especially for the last half millennium, Europe has been the most expansionist region on the planet. World conquest is in their blood. Spain, France and Germany once held vast tracts of land outside their borders. Smaller nations like Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal extended their influence and dominance over far-flung empires. And we have already seen that part of Europe, specifically ten nations once within the Roman Empire, will comprise the Antichrist's seat of power when he appears.

How does all this square with present reality? Perfectly. Why? Ask the French. For some reason, they got tired of getting pummeled by Germany every thirty years or so. As early as 1929, their Prime Minister Aristide Briand proposed a political integration of Europe. After World War II, Winston Churchill (equally tired of having to bail the French out) said, "We must now build a kind of United States of Europe." He went on to say, "The first step must be a partnership between France and Germany." Actually, the first step would turn out to be the Benelux agreement—an economic union of sorts between three small western European monarchies—Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—implemented in 1947-48, a union that proved to be the precursor to today's 27-member European Union.

Europe was coming to the realization that unless they banded together—politically, economically, and even militarily—they would continue to find reasons to kill each other. In recent years the focus has shifted toward countering the growing dominance of the United States, a nation Europe has increasingly come to regard as its own willful child, grown too strong to be trusted and too independent to be reliable as an ally—"a nation spread out and independent, a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down," as Isaiah put it. Today, Europe sees America's penchant for acting unilaterally in its own interests as arrogance—a dangerous tendency that precipitates disillusionment and trepidation among its fellow nations. With the implosion of the old Soviet empire, Europe has come to feel that America needs to be countered by another superpower to keep our imperialist tendencies in check—how's *that* for hypocrisy?

It's ironic, really. If only they knew how much the average American citizen detests the foreign adventures in which we find ourselves embroiled, whether for

our own survival, the arrogance of our politicians, or because of our Judeo-Christian humanitarian ideals. Most of our wars in the past half century have begun innocently enough, attempts to right obvious wrongs or to protect strategic allies. But they invariably devolve into pointless and unfocused struggles. With very few exceptions, we have no clear concept of what “winning” might look like. They drag on so long, it’s like we forget why we’re there in the first place. (The one notable exception was the First Gulf War: we achieved our originally stated objective—driving the Iraqi invaders out of Kuwait—in one hundred days, after which we went home, though probably not soon enough. Our biggest mistake was failing to send the Kuwaitis a bill for our services.) But usually, we end up with no clear idea of what we’re doing, or why. Are we looking for terrorists? Trying to eradicate the Taliban or al Qaeda? Looking for weapons of mass destruction? Attempting to transform seventh-century Muslim tribal cultures into modern American-style democracies? Can’t we see that all of those endeavors are futile, fundamentally unachievable, and ultimately far more expensive (in both blood and coin) than they’re worth? Precisely how many heroic American lives was the apprehension of Osama bin Laden worth? Did we forget that vengeance belongs to Yahweh?

For our part, Americans have a hard time taking Europe seriously, finding it impossible to forget that we were forced to risk our life like a reluctant policeman *twice* during the last century in an effort to quell Europe’s self-inflicted turmoil. These days, Europe likes to see itself in the role of “peacemaker.” When they push treaties like the Oslo Accords, attempting to forcefully impose peace, or at least order, on implacable enemies in other parts of the world, we can’t help rolling our eyes. How can a region that has known little but war for the last two thousand years possibly presume to be the arbiters of peace?

The heart of Europe’s new-found “peace proclivity” is the fact that their individual nations, so often at each others’ throats in the past, have now come together in unity, although they’re still every bit as separate as they are joined together—they’re still far more “independent” than “states” in the U.S. are. This new “togetherness” is due in part to what I’d call the gang mentality—it’s the same reason inner city kids join street gangs, whether or not they like what goes on among the membership. It has to do with safety in numbers and a sense of belonging. In the same way that Alabama or Massachusetts couldn’t wield much international clout as independent states, neither could Sweden or Luxembourg. But as “states” in the European Union, they are a part of something larger, more significant. Suddenly, they wield power, if only vicariously.

The European Union isn’t quite “there” yet. They have not adopted a Europe-wide constitution, although polls indicate that two-thirds of the Union’s populace would favor such a move. Nor has every member nation switched to the Union’s

common currency, the Euro; Britain is conspicuously absent from the list of nations using it. But the EU has nevertheless become an economic powerhouse—their combined GDP ten years ago was 80% of that of the United States. Today, it's 116%. The U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Banks are poised to compete for control of the international monetary system. (That in itself is a truly scary thought.) But most people in the United States are oblivious to the challenge Europe poses to their position at the top of the geopolitical hill. We hear horror stories about European fiscal mismanagement and presume that they're going down the tubes. And they are, but not as fast as we are. It's a race to the bottom.

What would it take to tip the scales? A few more September 11 or Katrina-style events? A few more unwinnable military adventures? Another decade of a socialist nanny state that buys votes today with the money our children will have to earn tomorrow? *The sudden disappearance of every Christian in the country?* Yeah, *that* would do it. Especially if the “right” man were poised to take the reins in Europe, pull it all together, and rally the troops. America would not only slip into second place, I have a feeling many would feel relieved to be there. *It's lonely at the top. Maybe if we weren't the world's policeman, people wouldn't hate us so much.*

What started out as the Benelux Customs Union eventually became the European Common Market and then the European Economic Community. It is now called the European Union. Why the shift? Because their cooperation is now more than economic; it is becoming increasingly political—and military. The EU's own military force has been an operational reality since late 2001. Tasked with humanitarian and rescue missions, crisis management, and “peacekeeping,” the force was originally mandated to be capable of keeping 60,000 troops in the field for up to a year, which implies a standing army 180,000 strong. But today the E.U.'s military personnel, between active duty, reserves, and paramilitary forces numbers 5.3 million (compared to under three million in the U.S. military). Their budget is €200 billion (\$267 billion), 2% of their GDP, while the U.S. spends \$550 billion, a whopping 4.9% of our GDP. The E.U. has over 2,000 combat aircraft (plus another 500 military support aircraft) and 640 naval vessels of all sizes (including 5 aircraft carriers).

The EU's rapidly growing military is an outgrowth of a joint U.K.-French declaration signed at St. Malo in December 1998, which bluntly stated that the EU should have the capability for “autonomous action backed up by credible military forces.” But doesn't that already exist with NATO? Indeed. In fact, many of the resources mentioned are tasked to both the EU and NATO. But the stated European goal is to be able to project power without relying on support from the U.S. Although NATO and the ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy)

intend to work hand in hand, it remains to be seen what will happen if and when disagreements arise. What seems clear at this juncture is that the European Union is no longer willing to depend on the United States to defend them if it all goes sideways. Or should I say, *when*.

Europe has clearly made its first moves toward the kind of confederation required in Biblical prophecy. In the months following the rapture, expect their situation to quickly fall into line with what the prophets predicted: a ten-nation alliance will be formed from nations situated within the old Roman empire. My guess (SF2), based on the scriptural evidence, is that the Antichrist will engineer a Balkan Confederacy capable of functioning like a single large nation within the European Union. Within this confederacy, three of the original nations will cease to be independent political entities, but rather will be joined under one national flag. Leading this confederacy—and through it, all of Europe—will be a leader so charismatic and brilliant, the entire world will sit up and take notice. His proven and unprecedented ability to impose peace on traditionally hostile parties will thrust him to the forefront of international diplomacy. If I'm right, the Antichrist's Balkan superstate will serve as a model for solving the unprecedented problems of a new Europe that is now as fragmented as the Balkans had been, with large Muslim immigrant minorities that have consistently failed—or refused—to assimilate into the cultures of their host nations. The Antichrist's apparent successes on his home turf will make him Europe's Messiah figure *du jour*—and then the world's.

Meanwhile, America will have taken its first steps toward its new status as a second-tier world power. This, of course, will distress some Americans no end. Their politicians and military professionals will find it hard to take a back seat to anyone, especially the Europeans. But in the end, with its economy in shambles and its leadership in disarray, America will join Russia in the has-been section, biding its time and waiting for an opportunity to regain its former glory.

Shakespeare once said, "All the world's a stage." Once the rapture scene has been performed, the curtain will fall upon planet earth, the house lights will dim, and the stagehands—the politicians, the media stars, and the robe-wearing religious establishment—will quickly busy themselves setting the world's stage for the final act. Unfortunately, they don't really understand what the play is all about, for everybody who comprehended the script has exited stage right, and the Playwright is nowhere to be seen. But the show must go on. Cue the Antichrist....

Chapter 12

Peace and Safety

After John was given the letters to the seven Asian Churches outlining the status and future history of the Church age, he was shown what would follow that age—or more precisely, what would follow the sixth phase, the Church of Philadelphia, which was to be “kept out of the hour of trial that would test the whole earth” (a.k.a. the Tribulation). What he saw was not for the faint of heart.

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’” The imagery here is pointedly reminiscent of the rapture, with its trumpet sound and command to “come up” and enter a doorway in heaven. Thus John, in the subsequent passages, represents the church: we will be safe in the presence of God, witnesses of momentous events in both heaven and earth. **“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance.”** (Revelation 4:1-3) We’re not in Patmos anymore, Todo. John has been whisked directly into the throne room of Yahweh Himself. You’ve got to give him credit for holding himself together enough to record what he heard and saw—you or I would have fallen apart.

The One he saw sitting upon the throne was described as looking like “jasper” and “sardius” stone. It’s not entirely certain what precise minerals John meant to refer to (we’ll see them again in our final chapter), but it’s obvious they were both very precious and exceedingly beautiful. Sardius was the first stone used in the High Priest’s ephod (see Exodus 28:17) and the sixth stone used in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20). It was blood red in color, symbolic, I believe, of the sacrifice of Christ. Jasper was the first stone listed in the heavenly city’s foundation and the last in Aaron’s ephod—reminding us of the risen Christ’s self-description: **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,”** says Yahweh, **“who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”** (Revelation 1:8) The stone is again associated with the glory of God in Revelation 21:11, where it is described as being “clear as crystal.”

“And there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.” (Revelation 4:3-6) The central throne—obviously that of Yahweh—was bathed in the glow of an emerald-like rainbow. The emerald was the stone linked

in Aaron's ephod to Judah, whose name means "praise." The rainbow itself speaks of the covenant of God—His unbroken Word. The seven-fold spirit of God, you'll recall, is explained in Isaiah 11:2. I get the feeling our imaginations and John's vocabulary aren't quite up to the task of describing the beauty and majesty of God's throne, but the symbols tell us a great deal nevertheless.

The twenty-four thrones are occupied by twenty-four elders. Who are they? Two different lines of enquiry lead us to the same conclusion. First, they are reminiscent of the priesthood—those who minister in the presence of Yahweh, interceding between God and man. In I Chronicles 24, David divided the Aaronic priesthood into twenty-four groups, or courses, each of which was to serve for two weeks per year. But look at what the priest/elders are wearing: white robes (meaning their sins have been forgiven), and golden crowns (Greek: *stephanos*, Olympic-style wreaths of victory—but of gold, indicating royalty and symbolizing immutable purity). This in turn reminds us of what Peter wrote: **"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...."** (I Peter 2:9) "You?" Peter was talking to Christians—those who trust and rely on their relationship with Yahweh through Yahshua's sacrifice. I can only deduce that the twenty-four elders represent the redeemed of all ages—Old *and* New Testament saints, including the raptured Church.

A second, and admittedly simpler, theory brings us to the same place. Twelve of the elders represent the redeemed of Israel's twelve tribes, and twelve are the true ekklesia (represented by the apostles). Again, the white robes represent their redemption, and the crowns represent victory. Please note, by the way, that this scene is taking place in heaven. The Church is *already there* when the events "after these things," i.e., after the Church age, begin to happen.

Let's return to John's narrative. **"And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back."** "Creatures" is a truly unfortunate translation: these are not created entities, but are indicative of deity. The Greek word is *zoa*—living ones. **"The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!' Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.'" (Revelation 4:6-11)**

These four “living ones” are all representative of Yahshua. The four gospels present him in these same four character profiles: the lion is symbolic of power, or authority; so Matthew’s gospel presents Christ as King. The calf (or ox) speaks of service, and this is the emphasis in Mark. Luke presents Yahshua in his humanity; thus the third being had the face of a man. The eagle is master of the heavens, hence John emphasizes Christ’s deity. And notice one more thing. The four living beings are not only *around* the throne of God, they are also seen “in the midst” of it. In other words, Yahshua occupies the throne of Yahweh Almighty. So much for the “Jesus-was-a-great-teacher-but-he-wasn’t-God” myth.

“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it....” Yahweh presents a scroll to the assembled saints and angels. The scroll represents the just sentence of divine retribution upon a wicked earth. But the scroll is sealed; only One who is worthy—holy and perfect before God—can break the seals and execute righteous judgment. The sealed scroll was a common form of official communication in John’s day. The message was written on a large piece of parchment or papyrus and then rolled up. But it was sealed—that is, wax was melted onto the surface and the sender’s seal, the impression of his signet ring, was stamped into the hot wax. This was a warning that the document was not to be read by anyone without the proper authority. What you’d do was break the first seal, unroll the first part, and read what you could until you reached the next seal. Each seal required further authorization. We can surmise from what we’ve observed about the number seven that for anyone to lawfully open this entire scroll, He would have to be perfectly, completely, worthy before God.

No one among the redeemed saints is found worthy to open God’s scroll. None of the angels are qualified, either. And John, frustrated and grieved at the injustice he has seen in his time, bursts into tears. Can no one right the wrongs? Will the sin of Adam leave earth’s title deed in the hands of Satan forever? **“But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne....”**

Another being now appears: a Lamb, bearing the marks of its sacrificial slaying, symbolic of the risen, glorified Christ—which is why the angel referred to Him not as a Lamb (the function that was previously fulfilled) but as “the *Lion*

of the tribe of Judah.” He now speaks with authority—with teeth and claws to back up His words. Note that this Lamb, like the four living ones, is “in the midst of the throne,” where only Yahweh can be. His deity is further confirmed by His possession of the seven Spirits of God. Stuck here in our feeble, mortal bodies, it’s hard to comprehend this, but the picture we’re seeing is that of God appearing before God in the presence of God. Count ’em up: we’re seeing *seven* manifestations of Yahweh together in the same room. I’m supposed to come up with something eloquent to say here, but I’m speechless.

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.’” (Revelation 5:1-10) The elders know exactly what’s going on: Yahshua alone is worthy to judge the earth because He alone has redeemed mankind from the curse of sin. Naturally, they fall before Him in worship. And then they state a remarkable fact: because of what Yahshua has accomplished, they (i.e., *we*—the redeemed ones) will “reign on the earth” as kings and priests (or: a kingdom of priests) as part of Christ’s government. Wow! Who saw that one coming?

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.” (Revelation 5:11-14) John now gets a glimpse of eternity: every creature, from the lowliest virus to the mightiest angel, acknowledges that Yahshua the Messiah is in fact God Almighty. I have a feeling that man is the only part of God’s creation that hasn’t known this all along. But the day is coming when *every* knee shall bow. By the way, the word for “worshipped,” *proskynesis*, doesn’t fly in the face of the scriptural truth that God’s children are to walk upright, to be at ease and conversant with Yahweh in our daily lives—avoiding obsequious obeisance. As the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* points out, this concept is found in the Gospels and Revelation, but *not* the epistles. “*Proskynesis* demands visible majesty before which the worshipper bows. The Son of God was visible to all on earth (the Gospels) and the exalted Lord will again be visible to His own when faith gives way to sight (Revelation).”

I don't know if I'm reading too much into this, but it seems that we, the creatures, have the privilege of bringing, as our gifts to the Lamb, blessing (that is, happiness), honor, and glory. We find ourselves exercising His power as well, a concept that I admittedly have a hard time fully comprehending. The angels also list several things that the Lamb derives directly from the throne of God: riches, wisdom, and strength.

Anyway, this brings us back to where we were in our story. John's vision now intersects with our timeline: we are witnessing the beginning of the Tribulation, as seen from a heavenly perspective. (We'll see it from the earthly point of view in a moment.) **"I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."** (Revelation 6:1-2) *That doesn't sound so bad*, you say. No, it doesn't. The rider sounds like a winner—powerful, successful, and popular. The white horse was the ride of preference for conquering heroes returning to Rome. And we see this rider with a *stephanos*—a victor's crown. Could this be the Messiah?

Well, that's what he'd like the world to think. The rider on the white horse is actually none other than the Antichrist, Satan's counterfeit savior. He will enter the world's scene looking like the answer to everyone's problems. He has a bow, but he keeps his arrows hidden. After all, he's a "peacemaker" in the most politically correct sense of the word. Never mind the fact that he's just engineered the overthrow of three governments and has assumed control of the world's newest superpower. People everywhere are desperate for leadership, and this fellow looks like the very man who can give it to them.

"The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing [Yahshua] asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.'" (Matthew 16:1-3)

To my mind, one of the most obvious indicators that the Church will be taken out of the world before the beginning of the Tribulation is that hardly anyone who's still here will discern that the end is approaching. If they did, they would surely make some adjustments in their lives. Millions of Christians today are familiar with the broad outline of Biblical prophecy—familiar enough to "discern the signs of the times." At the very least, they have a vague feeling that we are

nearing the end, and if they've studied the subject carefully, the feeling isn't vague at all. So if a world leader emerged from a ten-nation European confederacy, one in which three nations have ceased to be viable entities, they'd know that this man matches the prophetic profile of the coming Antichrist. They'd realize that this man, whatever the world perceives him to be, is bad news. And if this charismatic diplomat engineered a seven-year treaty guaranteeing the security of the nation of Israel, they'd *know*—if they were still here—that the world was now a time bomb, that the clock was ticking on the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy.

That scenario, however, would be tantamount to calling Yahshua a liar, for He plainly stated that His called-out assembly, represented by the Church at Philadelphia, would be “kept out of the hour of trial which is to come upon the whole world,” a period of time that is defined by Daniel's final “week.” And as we have seen, you can set your watch (or at least your calendar) by the precision of God's prophecy fulfillments. It's pretty hard to sneak up on an unsuspecting world like “a thief in the night” if millions of Christians know when you're coming. Today, thousands of people like me are issuing warnings of the coming judgment to anyone who'll listen. But when the Christians are raptured, the world will be instantly plunged into a new dark ages—a sophisticated, high-tech, spiritual blackout.

By the time this 70th week (the Tribulation) starts, some of those left behind will have already discovered their error (and as mistakes go, that one's a doozy). Even though they know they're too late to avoid the coming storm, they'll turn to Yahshua for salvation—forming the fledgling fellowship of repentant Laodicea, trading in their tepid self-sufficient religiosity for God's righteousness, clear vision of their situation, and gold (symbolic of immutable purity) tried in the fires of persecution. But they won't be part of any organized religion. The apostate “church,” in fact—that powerful religious conglomerate Yahshua left behind when he caught up His people to be with Him in the clouds—will be first in line to persecute and harass this dangerous new heresy. The neo-Laodiceans will make the believers' troubles in the days of Nero and Diocletian look like a Sunday School picnic. *This hateful and intolerant new cult*, it will be said, *must be hunted down and eradicated—they're threatening world peace*. Yahshua, teaching in the context of these days, warned his disciples, “**The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.**” (Luke 17:22) There will be no Yahshua walking among them, no experienced believers to mentor them. Yes, the Holy Spirit will be dwelling within them providing comfort and guidance—after all, they *are* part of the ekklesia. But they will be few and scattered at first, powerless, ineffectual, and not a little confused.

Just as the beginning and ending points of Daniel's first sixty-nine weeks were clearly defined, the starting event of the final week is plainly stated: "Then [that is, *after* the first sixty-nine weeks, *after* Messiah has been cut off, and *after* the people from which the Antichrist will emerge has destroyed Jerusalem and the temple] **he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.**" (Daniel 9:27) This is the same thing John saw with the opening of the first Seal, the introduction of "the rider on the white horse" equipped with a bow (military might), a crown (political authority), and the ability to conquer his fellow man.

There's a lot implied in those few words. "He," in context, is the Antichrist, called here "the prince who is to come." The whole passage is about Daniel's people, the Jews, so it can be safely assumed the "covenant" (Hebrew *beriyth*: a blood oath or compact, hence a serious matter) is with or about the nation of Israel. "Many," however, means just that—more than just the Antichrist and Israel, but rather numerous nations. (It could mean many *people*, but a covenant made between a political leader of one country and many of the people of another one is pretty hard to imagine.)

My guess is that the "covenant with many" will be a United Nations resolution, one with teeth, a pledge to protect the nation of Israel with U.N. military forces for seven years, probably with an option for extensions. I'll provide some specifics in a moment. That theory is bolstered by looking at the Hebrew word for "confirm." *Gabar* means to strengthen, be great, to prevail, or be valiant. The U.N., by this logic, could see itself as Israel's champion, strengthening and confirming any of several previous resolutions upholding Israel's right to exist. For any normal country, of course, that would be a no-brainer. But the U.N. has been generally antagonistic to the plight of beleaguered Israel since their singular moment of sanity back on November 29, 1947, when they "partitioned" Palestine into Arab and Jewish sections (U.N. Resolution #181), paving the way for Israeli statehood a few months later. Remember, there are a billion Muslims living next door who believe they're commanded by god to "wipe the infidels out to the last," (Qur'an 8:7) starting with the Jews. So a U.N. resolution guaranteeing Israel's sovereignty would be the last thing one might expect. But Daniel's prophecy reveals that *he*—the "prince who is to come," a.k.a. the Antichrist—will confirm or strengthen the covenant. *He* will cause it to prevail; it won't just "happen."

This covenant, or treaty, *could* merely be brokered between Israel and the Muslim block, *dar al-Islam*, but that would leave no enforcement provision. That's why I foresee a U.N. peacekeeping force put in place to make sure the covenant sticks. One thing is clear, however. This covenant is not a compromise plan forced down the throat of one party by the other. In order for it to have a

prayer of success (which it doesn't, by the way) all of the primary participants must agree to its conditions—or at least pretend to. They must all perceive some benefit or advantage.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter made history when he brought Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat together to sign the Camp David Peace Accords—beginning a process that eventually won Carter the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. Let's forget for the moment that the price of the deal was over two billion dollars *every year* from the pockets of American taxpayers into the coffers of the Egyptian government. Ignore the fact that no less than \$1.3 billion of that goes to its *military*. Most published sources report that Egypt spends seven to ten percent of its GDP on its war machine—three times the world average. The reality, however, is much worse when you add it all up: a whopping *twenty-eight percent* of its GDP goes to armament—though this nation has no enemies other than its tiny neighbor Israel (which it is being paid handsomely not to attack, and who poses no threat whatsoever to Egypt). Does all that seem a bit odd to anyone but me? (In fairness, it should be noted that Israel spends a similar percentage on defense, but they are surrounded by enemies sworn to destroy them, enemies who have already tried to do just that on numerous occasions.) During the '90s, Muslim nations accounted for forty-two percent of the world's arms purchases—twenty times the global average! But like I said, forget all that for a moment and ponder this. What sort of accolades would be showered upon a world leader who got not *one* Muslim nation, but *all* of them, to agree to live with Israel in peace and harmony? He wouldn't have to wait any twenty-four years for his Nobel Peace Prize, I can tell you that.

That's the kind of diplomatic magic act I envision as the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27. What would it take to pull it off? Both sides want something the other isn't willing to give. For its part, Israel's needs are simple. They want to live their lives in peace and safety, free to worship their God—or no god—as they see fit. They want to go to bed each night secure in the knowledge that they won't awaken to Syrian tanks or Egyptian warplanes breaching their borders. It would be nice if they didn't have to deal with Iranian made Katyusha rockets raining down on them from Gaza or Lebanon. They want to be able to go to a restaurant or to a movie without worrying about Islamic suicide bombers ruining their whole evening. And they want their capital to be in the city of their greatest king—Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Muslims want a homeland of their own, but they insist that it must be within Israeli territory. (They're already a majority in Jordan, but that's apparently not good enough. Note that there is nothing unique or special about the "Palestinian" moniker: they are simply Arabs—racially and culturally indistinguishable from Jordanians, Lebanese, Egyptians, Saudis, or Syrians.) Now

that they've already been given control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank looks like a likely spot for expansion, though any dedicated Palestinian will tell you that in the end they'll settle for nothing less than the whole enchilada—every square inch of Israeli land. And they insist that their capital be the city allegedly visited by their prophet on his mythical night's journey—Jerusalem. Muhammad never came anywhere near Jerusalem, you understand. His wife reported that he never left his bed that night; it was all a dream. But delusions routinely pass for facts in *dar al-Islam*.

That Jerusalem issue is the tricky one. Neither side appears ready to budge. But I have no doubt that the Antichrist, clever lad that he is, will figure out a solution. Perhaps he'll slice it in two, Solomon-style. (Bear in mind that the temple mount is in east Jerusalem, on the Arab side.) Perhaps he'll get everyone to agree to make it an "international city," a "common house of prayer," or some such rubbish. I have a feeling politically correct rhetoric will commonly be mistaken for intelligent thought in these times. One thing I know for sure: Jerusalem will be ground zero for Satan's schemes until the very end: **"Behold, I [Yahweh] will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness [or trembling] to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it."** (Zechariah 12:2-3)

Neither the Jews, the Muslims, the U.N., nor the Antichrist will know that, of course. To them, it's all negotiable. But here's the rub. The Israelis have been lied to so often by their Muslim neighbors, they don't (or at least they *shouldn't*) feel they can take any of their promises of peace seriously. With the exception of Egypt and Jordan, none of the surrounding Muslim nations have even formally declared that Israel has a right to exist (and Anwar Sadat, you'll recall, got himself assassinated for doing that). The 1993 and 1995 Oslo accords were a dismal failure. *Jihad* raged unabated. In fact, during the "peace" years between Oslo I and Oslo II, the number of terrorist attacks rose 745% over the previous decade—a decade in which the first *intifada*, or organized Muslim uprising, was in force! And since the so-called "Arab Spring," the anti-Israel rhetoric has been stepped up a notch by Muslim spokesmen, apparently because, being weak, the leaders don't wish to *appear* weak to their constituencies. It's a strategic ploy: irrational hatred of the Jews is really the only thing they can all agree on, since it was commanded by the prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him—*not*).

Nor do the Jews feel they can trust the United Nations, or even the United States—not completely. Can't say I blame them. The Israelis, therefore, might welcome some little token of the Muslims' sincerity. For example, "*How about you let us rebuild our temple on Mount Moriah, right next to the Dome of the*

Rock. We'll all worship our own god in our own way. There's plenty of room up there. What do you say?" It's not that the Jews really *want* a temple. Most of them couldn't care less. But there is nothing—*nothing*—that would more convincingly demonstrate the Muslims' commitment to the peace process than voluntarily giving up their exclusive control of the temple mount. Of course, no one remembers that Muhammad declared, "War is deceit." The fact that Muhammad even agreed to abandon the exclusive worship of Allah in exchange for money, political power, and sex (in the incident popularly known as the "Satanic Verses" episode, chronicled in Islamic scripture by both Ibn Ishaq and al Tabari and memorialized in Qur'an 22:52) demonstrates the lengths Muslims are willing to go to get what they want. *Promise the Jews anything if it'll get 'em to give us their land and drop their guard.*

I'll admit I didn't think up the temple scenario all by myself. Look again at the end of Daniel 9:27: **"But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering."** For the Levitical sacrifices and offerings to be brought to an end, they have to be going in the first place, and for that to happen, there has to be a temple in Jerusalem. They can't simply set up a temple wherever they might find it convenient. Moses informed Israel of Yahweh's command shortly before they entered the Land for the first time: **"But you shall seek the place where Yahweh your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks."** (Deuteronomy 12:5-6; cf. Deuteronomy 16:6) That "place" has been Jerusalem ever since the reign of King David—over three thousand years ago now. Solomon's temple was built there, as was the second temple, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Note that the prophecy specifically speaks of "sacrifices" and "offerings." You can *worship* Yahweh anywhere you want; but you can only make *sacrifices* to Him in Jerusalem (because that's where He made His sacrifice for us—the Lamb of God, Yahshua, sacrificed to atone for our sins, on Passover, 33 A.D.). This in turn reveals the remarkable fact that during the Tribulation, the Temple *will* be rebuilt—in Jerusalem—and the Levitical service *will* be reinstated, for the first time in almost two millennia.

Needless to say, this doesn't look particularly likely as things stand now. Muslim control of the "Jewish" temple mount is the result of an historical fluke. At the end of the Six Day War in 1967, Israel took possession of Jerusalem, for the first time since Emperor Hadrian kicked them out in 135 A.D. The IDF's top general, Moshe Dayan (an atheist), turned over control of the mount to the Jordanian Muslims as a bribe to ensure their good behavior. So for the Jews to have access to their own temple mount would actually be a big step forward for them.

For most Jews, though, the temple is not the issue. They've gotten along without one for almost two thousand years now. The big issue, rather, is the "right of return." Since the birth of the nation of Israel in 1948, the displaced Palestinian Arabs have been the perennial bargaining chip for the surrounding Muslim nations. For over half a century, they have been demanding that Israel provide a homeland for the Arab refugees—within their two-tenths of one percent of the real estate in the Middle East, never mind the fact that a similar number of Jews were evicted from their homes in Muslim lands upon Israel's declaration of statehood. Right at the outset, we need to clear the air about this. The Arab "refugees" were created in 1948 by the *Muslim* armies invading the infant state of Israel when they ordered the Arabs to leave Palestine so they could do a more efficient job of killing Jews. They were told they could come back in a few weeks after the armies of Islam had driven the Israeli infidels into the sea. But the Jews, after offering full citizenship to any Arab who wanted to stay, won that war, and the next one, and the next one, and the next one. Now the Muslims insist that all they want is pre-1967 borders and restoration of the property the Arabs abandoned in 1948. But if that's so, they need to explain why they waged war on the Jews in 1967.

Truth be known, the surrounding Muslim nations have never really been interested in a "Palestinian homeland" for Arabs in Israel. What they want is a bone of contention, bargaining chip, a reason to attack Israel again and again, and that issue serves nicely. The Palestinian leadership has proven time after time that they have no interest in governing (except in the role of warlords). As a matter of fact, you can track the frequency of suicide bombings in Israel by looking at the times sanity threatened to break out. Every time a peace overture or political development promises to bring some stability to the Palestinian cause, Hamas or one of the other Islamic fundamentalist groups sends a pair of suicide bombers to the nearest bus stop or night club. Unlike the Israelis, peace is the last thing they want.

So what would possess the Muslims to sign a peace accord that gave Israel the legal right to exist on planet earth? One theory is that the Antichrist will get Israel to call their bluff: they will actually accept the land-for-the-promise-of-peace deal the Muslim nations have insisted for decades that they want for the Palestinians. The West Bank. The Gaza Strip (oops, that's gone already). The Golan Heights. All of it will be turned over to the Muslims in exchange for a spot on the temple mount and a solemn promise of peace. I know; it sounds suicidal. But factor in this. Remember what I said about the Arabs who stayed in Israel in '48 being offered full citizenship? Some of them did, of course, and they became the best-educated, most-prosperous Arabs in the entire Middle East, even though they were by any standards second-class citizens in Israel. What the Jews didn't count on was the Muslim birth rate. Even before the first *intifada* started in 1987, the

Muslim birth rate climbed to seven or eight children per household—four times that of the Israelis. Do the math. These Arab-Israeli citizens will be able to *vote* the Jewish state out of existence in the Knesset by perhaps 2030 or 2035 (even though the ratio of Arab to Israeli births has leveled out somewhat in recent years). So for the Jews, giving away through negotiation what they can't hope to keep anyway may seem to make perfect sense.

But if that's true, why would the Muslims make any concessions at all? Because a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. They know that if they have official U.N.-sanctioned control of the West Bank they are facing an enemy that is only nine miles wide at its narrowest point. Secure in the knowledge that they now have the overwhelming military superiority they lacked in 1967, they will make plans to drive to the sea straight through Tel-Aviv, where seventy percent of the Jews in Israel reside, splitting the nation in two: divide and conquer.

Conquer? Wait a minute! What about all the promises of peace? What about the "covenant with many"? Oh, didn't I tell you? The Islamic scriptures declare that it's alright for a Muslim to break any treaty he's made with an infidel if it's in his perceived advantage to do so. In breaking the treaty, they'll merely be following the example of their esteemed prophet Muhammad. The broken covenant of Hudaibiyah set the precedent. It was recorded in the Qur'an thus: "An announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the Great Pilgrimage is that Allah and His Messenger dissolve treaty obligations with the Pagans." (Qur'an 9:3) How convenient. It's no wonder Islamic nations aren't exactly known for their honesty or honor.

I'm not just guessing, by the way. As we shall see a few chapters down the road, the house of Islam *will* attack Israel. The ensuing madness will consume a significant part of the world and fulfill significant portions of Bible prophecy. The details are admittedly a matter of some conjecture, but the broad outline of this scenario is supported by both scripture and current events. I should emphasize, however, that this is only one of many possible ways it could all play out. Variations on the theme, any one of which could end up fulfilling the prophecies, are too numerous to count.

I don't really want to flog this horse to death, but allow me to demonstrate what I mean. Since a large percentage of the West Bank is already under the administrative, if not military, control of the Palestinian Authority, it's not beyond the realm of possibility that the Palestinians will be given the West Bank before—*years* before—the Antichrist starts having delusions of grandeur (and as I noted, the Gaza Strip is already in Muslim hands). What then? The scenario shifts.

Try this on for size: since the terrorist activity against Israel and the rest of the world hasn't abated as promised (surprise, surprise), the Antichrist comes in and negotiates the annexation, the absorption, of "Palestine," the new Arab state

carved out of Israel, into Egypt in the south and Syria and/or Jordan on the north and east. Makes perfect sense, since the Palestinians were never a separate people anyway, but merely Arabs living in the land that became Israel in 1948. The “covenant with many,” in exchange for parking a nation with the awesome military might and historic bad attitude of Syria five miles from downtown Tel-Aviv, gives Israel a world-sanctioned U.N. Peacekeeping force to ensure their security, and the right to rebuild their temple on its traditional site. The Syrian, Jordanian, and Egyptian governments could care less about that little detail (though their imams would probably have a fit). The deal lets the Antichrist’s U.N. forces swarm all over what’s left of Israel—precisely as they did several decades earlier in Lebanon, which suits Israel’s neighbors just fine, since there the U.N. forces served as little more than lackeys for Muslim interests anyway. Ironically, the Palestinians, like the Philistines of old, are history.

Well would you look at that—the horse is still quivering. So let’s beat it once more for old times’ sake. A third scenario: the “covenant with many” turns out to be either U.N. Security Council Resolution 181 or 242. 181, if you’ll recall, was the historic partition plan for Palestine that was voted in with a 2/3 majority on November 29, 1947, defining the borders of the soon-to-be sovereign Jewish state of Israel. It gave the Jews the Negev (a hunk of worthless desert south of the Dead Sea), a six or eight mile wide strip running up the coast from halfway between Gaza and Tel-Aviv to Haifa, and a similarly anorexic strip of land running down the west bank of the Jordan River near the Sea of Galilee. Jerusalem was supposed to be an “international city.”

Funny thing about U.N. 181. The Jewish leadership voted for it (on the theory that something is better than nothing), but it was rejected—unilaterally declared invalid—by every single Arab U.N. member state, who invaded Israel a few months later on the day the Jews declared their independence. That was when the “peace-loving” Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al Hussein (Yasser Arafat’s uncle and a close confidant of Nazi big shots Himmler and Eichmann, I’m told) stated to his followers (exactly as Muhammad had thirteen centuries previously), “I declare a holy war, my Moslem brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all!” Ironically, though the entire Muslim world rejected U.N. 181, it is to this day referred to by them as the only legitimate borderline for the state of Israel.

When the infant Israelis finished beating back the Arabs’ attack (against incredible odds and suffering incredible losses) their borders were considerably plumper. The armistice agreement of 1949 gave Israel the Gaza strip, the entire area between Galilee and the Mediterranean, a more robust buffer around Tel-Aviv in its midsection, including, most significantly, the southern outskirts of Jerusalem. These were the borders to which the U.N. demanded Israel withdraw

following the Six Day War in June 1967 (Resolution 242). The Israelis politely declined to do so.

So back to our prophetic scenario. The Antichrist gets the U.N. to “confirm” Resolution 181 (which was never abrogated, by the way) or perhaps 242, a scenario I find even more likely, since Muslim rhetoric of late has seemed to fixate on the terms of that resolution, which (unlike 181) the Israelis never agreed to. He shoehorns Israel back into their former skinny little country, and turns Jerusalem back into an international city. But to sweeten the poison for the Jews, he sees to it that they are given the go-ahead to rebuild their temple next to the Dome of the Rock on the temple mount.

I found it instructive indeed to examine the actual text of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. It seems to fit the Daniel 9:27 parameters like a glove. I have italicized the sections I found particularly interesting:

**U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242
NOVEMBER 22, 1967**

The Security Council,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,
Emphasizing the *inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war* and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security,

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

Affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of *both the following principles*:

Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;

Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

Affirms further the necessity

For guaranteeing *freedom of navigation* through international waterways in the area;

For achieving a just *settlement of the refugee problem*;

For guaranteeing the *territorial inviolability and political independence of every State* in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

Requests the Secretary General to designate a *Special Representative* to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;

Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

A few factors bear mentioning. First, no nation, *ever*, has achieved the “acquisition of territory” by any means *other than* war, except in those rare instances (like the Louisiana Purchase) where a nation *bought* territory from another who had in turn acquired it through usurpation or war waged upon its previous occupants. I really don’t know what the guys on the Security Council are smoking, but it seems to be doing the trick.

Second, the resolution calls for the Israelis to give back all their territory gained when they had to beat back the June, 1967 Islamic invasion. Most significantly, this would include the West Bank and the Golan Heights, which would presumably be pressed into service as a Palestinian refugee homeland, arbitrarily displacing hundreds of thousands of Jews who purchased the land with coin and blood. This is what passes in the U.N. as a “just settlement.”

Third, the Islamic nations in the area would all have to officially recognize Israel’s right to exist and observe their anorexic new borderline. But remember, the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, which Muhammad ratified with the Meccans, was violated dozens of times by the Muslims before they threw it out on a pretext and invaded the city. According to Sharia law, Muslims are not required to keep the terms of treaties they’ve signed with “infidels.” By their own definition, they can’t be trusted.

Fourth, the United Nations would take upon itself the responsibility for maintaining the “territorial inviolability and political independence” of Israel. In other words, Israel would for all intents and purposes be surrendering its sovereignty and defense to others.

Fifth, guaranteeing “freedom of navigation” would preclude the interception of arms-laden vessels like the *Karine A* by Israeli forces. In case you’ve forgotten about that incident, the Israeli Foreign Ministry reported, “On January 3, (2002)

the Israeli Navy seized control over the *Karine A*, a ship that was sailing in international waters on its way to the Suez Canal. The shipment included both 122 mm. and 107 mm. Katyusha rockets, which have ranges of 20 and 8 kilometers respectively. It also contained 80 mm. and 120 mm. mortar shells, various types of anti-tank missiles, anti-tank mines, sniper rifles, Kalashnikov rifles and ammunition.” Only God knows how many Israeli lives were saved by the interception of these weapons. U.N. 242 makes such intervention illegal.

The Muslims, being masters of media manipulation, used the incident to craft a whole new genre of public relations warfare. Now that the Palestinians control the Gaza Strip, their new tactic is to send highly publicized flotillas to “try” the Israeli naval blockade of Gaza-bound vessels. The Israelis routinely interdict such direct commerce in an effort to prevent “*Karine A*”-style arms shipments from reaching Hamas forces in Gaza, so they stop the ships, bring them to the port of Ashdod, unload them and truck into Gaza whatever cargoes are deemed harmless. If no weapons are found, the gullible world press presents Israel as paranoid bullies. The ploy might even have some success in turning the tide of world opinion against Israel if only the Palestinians were willing to exercise a little self control: they routinely send hundreds of rockets and mortars raining down on Israeli towns every year—over 2,200 attacks in 2012 alone.

Sixth, the resolution calls for a Special Representative to direct operations and report progress and problems to the Security Council. Who are they going to assign for this monumental task? If the “covenant with many” turns out to be a resurrection of U.N. Resolution 242, I can *guarantee* they’ll pick someone *very close* to the diplomatic genius who got the Muslims and Jews to consent to this solution in the first place—perhaps they’ll select the Antichrist himself for the auspicious post.

The bottom line, as far as Biblical prophecy is concerned, is exactly the same for all of these scenarios: the Jews get to build their temple, but they move inexorably toward a state of total national helplessness and dependence on foreign armies for their very survival. By now, any historian worth his reading glasses knows it’s only a matter of time before the Jews are once and for all driven into the sea by the peace-loving Muslims. But because of the solemn promises of the Muslims, the ironclad guarantees of security promised by the Antichrist, and the hordes of U.N. soldiers being stationed in the Land, the Jews suspend reason and make themselves believe they have negotiated a position assuring lasting security and “peace in our time” (a phrase I borrowed from Neville Chamberlain, spoken after he engineered a similarly disastrous land-for-peace deal with Adolph Hitler over Czechoslovakia in 1938. *That* “peace” lasted one year and precipitated the bloodiest war in history. Will this one be any different?)

The Tribulation, then, begins with a harbinger of a bright new tomorrow, a “rider on a white horse.” A peace treaty that promises to end the strife in the Middle East (at least as far as Israel is concerned) is brokered by the charismatic new European leader, and the whole world breathes a sigh of relief. Whereas the region had for years been a powder keg threatening to ignite the earth in another global war, now all of the parties insist they have agreed to compromise, to solve their differences amicably, to let bygones be bygones. And this time, everyone is convinced the peace will stick. Peace and safety are at hand.

The ripple effect is immediate. No longer worried by threats of Islamic terrorism, stock markets soar. Consumer confidence reaches the highest levels in years. A technology boom the likes of which the world has never seen promises to solve age-old problems—feeding the hungry masses, curing persistent diseases, breaking the world’s dependence on fossil fuels. Oil prices plummet as the leaders of OPEC rush to compete with clean, cheap new energy sources. Utopia is just around the corner.

A new spirit of cooperation begins to permeate all facets of society, not just in the west, but worldwide. Neighboring nations formerly at odds with each other spontaneously use the “Jerusalem model” as a starting point toward solving their own differences. Peace is breaking out everywhere. Memories of the rapture and its aftermath still send an uneasy shudder through people’s hearts, but since there haven’t been any subsequent events, they’ve begun to look on the bright side: with the Evangelical/Fundamentalist Christians gone and the Muslims appeased, the world’s religions suddenly find they have far more in common than they previously thought. A worldwide ecumenical council is convened in—*where else*—Jerusalem, where all of the world’s religions agree to respect and even support each other. A universal creed is drafted and enthusiastically signed by everyone in attendance, stating that *all roads lead to god; it doesn’t really matter what you believe or what your liturgy entails, for god is within each one of us—from the most dedicated Islamic Mullah to the most irreligious secular humanist. We should each do what feels right to us, for therein lies true worship!*

The charismatic new European leader, of course, is an active participant, and he is the first to point out that the religious differences that have been the root of so much strife in years past must now be set aside. Hostility between Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Sikhs—anybody and everybody—is set aside in the new realization that god can be whoever and whatever you want him (or her) to be.

As the summit progresses, another bright star rises: the host/moderator of the council is a secular Jew who emerges as the most respected religious thinker on earth. Through diplomacy and tact, this man teaches the world's top religious leaders how to think and act as one, how to appreciate their points of commonality and live in peace with their differences. The new mantra is "Tolerant Diversity." Even the Muslims find themselves nodding in agreement with him. Before the council is over, he is being hailed by all as a new prophet for a new age—the religious counterpart of the great political peacemaker, the hero from Europe....

Granted, all of that is speculation. But as a possible scenario, it fits the truth of scriptural prophecy like a glove. Not only does the breaking of the scroll's first seal reveal someone who looks like a hero, not a villain, but we also have this tantalizing hint from the apostle Paul: **"The day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."** (I Thessalonians 5:2-3) Just as the amillennialists of centuries past were wrong when they saw history marching inexorably toward a Christian utopia, so also are those wrong who predict a steady downhill slide until the bitter end. The fact is, the Tribulation is Satan's golden opportunity to show what he can do. He said he wanted to be "like God." This is his big chance. People desperately want "peace and safety." Satan thinks he can give it to them—living vicariously through the Antichrist. I give him six months—a year at the outside—before the fallacy of "good without God" comes crashing down around his ears like a house of cards.

Consider this: the rebuilding of the temple has never been a political demand of the modern state of Israel, though it is a recurring dream among small groups of Jewish faithful. (Orthodox Jews long ago created the "alternate reality" of the Mishnah and Talmud in order to avoid the painful paradox of a Torah without a temple or priesthood.) The government, however, has never even suggested rebuilding the temple. So why do I think they will make it an issue during the Tribulation? Actually, I don't. Rather, I see the *Antichrist* tossing this volatile chip into play. He will be the one to suggest, quite reasonably, that it's the only way the Muslims can prove to the world that they're serious about peace. But what is he really thinking? The answer can be found in Jewish Messianic expectations: **"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, saying: 'Behold, the Man whose name is the Branch! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of Yahweh. Yes, He shall build the temple of Yahweh. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne. So He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between**

them both.” (Zechariah 6:12-13) The “Branch” is understood to be the Anointed One (the “branch” of the root of Jesse, David’s father). Therefore, the Antichrist knows that if he can build the temple on Mt. Moriah, *he* will be hailed as the Messiah; he will be glorified; he will rule and be worshipped as God. And that’s all he really wants.

Everything he does contributes to this goal. He knows the Jews have hopes and expectations, so his actions will be designed to fulfill the prophetic picture they have of their Messiah, starting with giving them their temple. In a twisted sort of way, Adolph Hitler did more than any man in history to secure a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. The Antichrist will continue in that noble tradition, facilitating the return of persecuted Jews all over the world to their homeland. Why would he do this? Because the Jews expect it of Yahweh. How better to pass himself off as God’s Anointed than to do what the Messiah is expected to do? **“For thus says Yahweh: ‘Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations. Proclaim, give praise, and say, “O Yahweh, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!” Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn....”** If you look at the fine print, you’ll discover that this is a very tall order: He’s not just talking about gathering the “Jews,” i.e., the identifiable progeny of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; He’s specifically referring to what we call “the ten lost tribes” who were scattered and dispersed among the nations in the wake of the Assyrian captivity, some 2,700 years ago. Nobody on earth knows who they are—not even themselves.

But I have no doubt that these niggling details will be totally lost on the participants of the Antichrist’s grand repatriation scheme. **“Hear the word of Yahweh, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’ For Yahweh has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of Yahweh—for wheat and new wine and oil, for the young of the flock and the herd. Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden, and they shall sorrow no more at all....”** As I said, the “covenant with many” will be designed to make the Antichrist *look like* the Messiah to the world’s Jews. He will be perceived (as first) as their savior, the one who de-fanged the Muslim menace.

“Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together; for I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow. I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says Yahweh.” (Jeremiah 31:1-14) I wouldn’t be the least

bit surprised to see the Antichrist's people passing out brochures with this passage in it to all the Jewish refugees flowing into Tel-Aviv and Haifa—reminding them who their “real” savior is. It would be a clever move.

The words will sound so pious on his lying lips: **“For Yahweh [he’ll call him “the Lord,” of course] will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under one’s feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the justice due a man before the face of the Most High...”** (Lamentations 3:31-35)

I imagine he will do what he can to construct his own reputation upon the miraculous foundation God built for Israel in the twentieth century. **“Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children. Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?’ says Yahweh. ‘Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?’ says your God.”** (Isaiah 66:7-9) This, of course, is a perfect description of the birth of the modern state of Israel in 1948.

“Return, O backsliding children,’ says Yahweh; ‘for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jeremiah 3:14-15) The Antichrist will persuade many that he’s the chief shepherd. His words will be so smooth, so reasonable, it will be hard to doubt his honorable intentions. Those who see what he’s accomplishing day by day will say, as did the men of Yahshua’s day, **“When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than these which this man has done?”** (John 7:31)

Because they expect it, the Antichrist will counsel the returning Jews like a wise father, admonishing them to honor their Jewish heritage and religion. He knows full well that the closer they get to their religion, the farther they’ll be from their true God. **“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: “Return, backsliding Israel,” says Yahweh; ‘I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,’ says Yahweh; ‘I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against Yahweh your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,’ says Yahweh.”** (Jeremiah 3:12-13) If he can get them to disavow the old false worship practices that their ancestors indulged in (and replace them with all new false worship practices) the Antichrist figures he’ll be one step closer to successfully impersonating the Messiah.

The plan depends upon convincing the Jews that he’s operating in the power of Yahweh. He therefore must project himself into the role of deliverer. **“Your right hand, O Yahweh, has become glorious in power. Your right hand, O Yahweh, has dashed the enemy in pieces; and in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who**

rose against You. You sent forth Your wrath; it consumed them like stubble... Who is like You, O Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them. You in Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation. The people will hear and be afraid....” Those not familiar with the real thing are far more likely to be fooled by a counterfeit.

Of course, it means he will eventually have to stand up to the Muslims—something the Americans (to our shame) were never willing to do. **“Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them. By the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as a stone, till Your people pass over, O Yahweh, till the people pass over whom You have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Yahweh, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary... which Your hands have established. Yahweh shall reign forever and ever.”** (Exodus 15:6-7, 11-18) *A little political maneuvering, a little saber rattling, a little arm twisting, and the apple of Yahweh’s eye will fall right into my fruit basket, muses the man of the hour. This is too easy.*

The key to winning over Israel to “the dark side” is convincing them that God, in the person of the Antichrist, has regathered them and blessed them—so they by definition must be back in His good graces, just like Moses predicted: **“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where Yahweh your God drives you, and you return to Yahweh your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that Yahweh your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where Yahweh your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then Yahweh your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live....”** *All I’ll have to do, muses the Antichrist, is to bring a bunch of Jews back here to the Land and tell ’em they’re my chosen people, and maybe talk tough to the Muslims a little. Then they’ll love me with all their heart and soul. Passing for the Messiah should be a piece of cake.*

“Also Yahweh your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of Yahweh and do all His commandments which I command you today. Yahweh your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For Yahweh will again rejoice over you for good as He

rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul. For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:1-14) Of course, the last thing the self-proclaimed liberator wants is for the Jews to actually obey Yahweh. It's *him* he wants them to obey; if he has to betray his Islamic allies to get them to do that, then so be it. His plan requires that the Jews believe they're in God's blessing, so they must be okay. And for that to happen, they must feel secure: "peace and safety."

The Psalmist says: "Have mercy on me, O Yahweh! Consider my trouble from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death, that I may tell of all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. I will rejoice in Your salvation." (Psalm 9:13-14) The Antichrist is thinking, *They will see me as their savior, their Messiah, the one worthy of their praise.* "You shall keep them, O Yahweh. You shall preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked prowl on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men." (Psalm 12:7-8) *Okay, I'll preserve them—I'll keep the Muslims at bay. And when I do, the Jews will kiss my feet.*

"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity. There is none who does good. God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. Every one of them has turned aside. They have together become corrupt. There is none who does good, no, not one." *Sure, there's a God—he's whatever you want him to be, the spirit of peace living within each one of us—Boy, I can't believe we got them to swallow that.* "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon God? There they are in great fear where no fear was, for God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you. You have put them to shame, because God has despised them. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad." (Psalm 53) *They want their salvation to come out of Zion, do they? Then I'll set up my headquarters in Jerusalem and use my troops to "scatter the bones" of anybody dumb enough to attack me. I will make them worship me by bringing the rest of the world's Jews back to Israel—they'll come whether they want to or not.*

"But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Yahweh, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear me in the truth of Your salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; Let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; and let not the

pit shut its mouth on me.” (Psalm 69:13-15) *They’re expecting a deliverer—I’ll convince them I’m their deliverer. How hard could it be?*

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces.’ For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, ‘Peace be within you.’ Because of the house of Yahweh our God I will seek your good.” (Psalm 122:6-9) *These Jews don’t want much, do they? Antichrist will muse. Peace in Jerusalem? Okay. I can arrange that. I’ll even give ’em a new house for their God. Anything they want, as long as it gets them all to bow down to me as their Messiah. If they do that, then Yahweh is a liar, and my master Satan will have won!*

“Yahweh has done great things for us, and we are glad. Bring back our captivity, O Yahweh, as the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psalm 126:3-6) *I’ll bring you back from your captivity, all right. Having all you Jews in one place will make you easier to keep an eye on (and, if you refuse to worship me, easier to eliminate).*

“And it shall come to pass in that day that Yahweh will thresh, from the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day: the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship Yahweh in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 27:12-13) *Not if I have anything to say about it. The Jews will worship me—they’ll accept Me as their Messiah. ME!*

“Will Yahweh cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?” (Psalm 77:7-9) *The Antichrist breathes a heavy sigh. Grace? Mercy? Keeping promises? Good grief. This is getting to be too much like work. These stupid sheeple are going to have to settle for signs and wonders like everybody else.*

There’s one obvious question at this point. Why would the Antichrist care if the Jews worship him? Christians (even those saved after the rapture), Muslims, or Hindus I could understand—there are billions of them. But there are only thirteen or fourteen million Jews in the entire world—about two tenths of one percent of the global population. Statistically, they’re insignificant. There are more people living in Guatemala! Israel wouldn’t be worth a second glance if Yahweh hadn’t chosen them as His own people. And this points out a very important fact to us: the Antichrist is under the influence of Satan—doing his bidding, running his agenda. Face it: the only conceivable reason anybody would go out of their way to curse such an irrelevant population is Satan’s jealousy of their place in Yahweh’s heart. The devil used Hitler’s holocaust in an attempt to

eliminate them once and for all. That backfired, giving the few Jews who were left their own homeland. Next time, Satan will use the Antichrist to attempt to seduce them. That too will backfire.

The Jewish Messianic perceptions upon which the Antichrist will capitalize to gain their trust—and ultimately their worship—are based upon scriptures describing Yahweh’s eventual salvation of His people. But it’s painful for the Jews to look at the prophecies of events that will transpire between their fall and their restoration. So naturally, they ignore them. We won’t make the same mistake.

Though it will start off benignly enough—promising a new era of peace and prosperity—the Tribulation in reality will be exactly what its name implies. **“For thus says Yahweh: ‘We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child. So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.’”** (Jeremiah 30:5-7) After all the Jews have been through, calling a future seven-year period “the time of Jacob’s trouble” tells me this is going to be really rough—worse than the inquisition, the pogroms, and even the holocaust. And yet, right at the outset, Yahweh tells us that the Jews will come through it—not without severe losses, mind you, but the remnant of the nation of Israel *will* be saved. But as we shall see, that’s going to take some doing.

“For it shall come to pass in that day,’ Says Yahweh of Hosts, ‘That I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds. Foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve Yahweh their God, and David their king, Whom I will raise up for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says Yahweh, ‘nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,’ says Yahweh, ‘to save you. Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished...’” The prophet continues with a bird’s eye view of the whole thing: the Jews will finally become free; they will serve the true and living God and recognize their true Messiah. (His ancestor, David, is more than a Messianic symbol here, but we’ll have to save that discussion for later.) Then they’ll live at last in peace and safety—this time, the real thing. But here God gives them some back-handed encouragement: “I will not make a complete end of you.” *Gee, thanks, that’s swell.* However, I have a feeling that after finally

figuring out that their Messiah was Yahshua after all, they'll be ready for anything.

Jeremiah isn't done. **"For thus says Yahweh: 'Your affliction is incurable, your wound is severe. There is no one to plead your cause, that you may be bound up. You have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you; They do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased. Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable. Because of the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased, I have done these things to you. Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity. Those who plunder you shall become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will make a prey. For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds,' says Yahweh, 'because they called you an outcast saying: "This is Zion; no one seeks her."'"** (Jeremiah 30:8-17) Remember what I said about God waiting until things looked impossible before He acted? That's what He's saying here: *You're toast, Israel. Kiss your nation goodbye. You've been painted into a corner from which there is no escape—and because of your sins, I, Yahweh, have let this happen to you. Even your staunchest allies—like America—have betrayed you. There's no one left to turn to... except Me.*

God has a lot to say about His people in this "time of trouble." Jeremiah reports: **"Thus says Yahweh: 'They shall thoroughly glean as a vine the remnant of Israel; As a grape-gatherer, put your hand back into the branches.'"** So far, this doesn't sound too encouraging. When they harvest grapes, they try not to miss much. **"To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of Yahweh is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of Yahweh. I am weary of holding it in. I will pour it out on the children outside, and on the assembly of young men together...."** The prophet sounds frustrated. *Nobody's listening to me, but I'm going to give 'em both barrels anyway. Repent or die!*

"For even the husband shall be taken with the wife, the aged with him who is full of days. And their houses shall be turned over to others, fields and wives together; for I will stretch out My hand against the inhabitants of the land,' says Yahweh. 'Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace.'" (Jeremiah 6:9-14) God is angry because even those who are supposed to be pointing the way toward Him, the priests and prophets, the preachers and politicians, are only in it for what they can get out of it. So when the Antichrist pulls off his big diplomatic coup, they're all chanting, "peace, peace." But it's an illusion, just as it was in Jeremiah's day, right before the Babylonian conquest. God knows it, and they

ought to know it. It's their job to sound the alarm, but they don't. Instead, they're helping their brothers and sisters into the boxcars, reassuring them that the weather is lovely in Auschwitz this time of year.

Their houses and fields in the West Bank—otherwise known as Judea and Samaria—will be “turned over to others” Who? Muslims. But their *wives*? Surely their wives won't be taken by the Muslim hordes as well. Why not? Muhammad's behavior as recorded in the Hadith provided ample precedent. Listen to what *The National Review* reported about a telethon for Palestinian “martyrs” hosted by the Saudi ruling family. The sheik who they chose to promote this fund raiser, one al-Buraik, intoned, “O, Muslims, don't take the Jews and Christians as allies. Muslim brothers in Palestine, do not have any mercy, neither compassion, on the Jews, their blood, their money, their flesh. Their women are yours to take, legitimately. Allah made them yours. Why don't you enslave their women? Why don't you wage *jihad*? Why don't you pillage them?”

God never intended that the Jews should be put into this kind of pickle, you understand. What happened? Same old story. He let them choose between good and evil, and they chose poorly. Yahshua's earthly ministry was performed almost entirely among the Jews, and it was they who rejected him first. **“Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you [Jews] first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so Yahweh has commanded us: ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’”** (Acts 13:46-47; cf. Isaiah 42:6, 49:6) Bear in mind that any Jew who received Yahshua as his Messiah prior to the rapture is already gone from the earth at this point—with the rest of Yahshua's called-out assembly. Since the resurrection of Yahshua, there has been neither Jew nor gentile as far as Yahweh's program is concerned—only saved people and lost people.

Paul wrote, **“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction...that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”** (Romans 9:22-24) **“For if [the Jews] being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”** (Romans 11:15) I don't want to get sucked into the whole foreknowledge vs. predestination thing. Suffice it to say that God has known from the beginning which of us would accept His mercy, and has noted with sadness which would not. And He has foreseen that a significant remnant of the Jewish nation will, in the end, turn to Yahweh and His Messiah in repentance.

Lest we Christians become proud of ourselves for seeing the truth that the Jews did not, Paul offers this admonition: **“You will say then, ‘Branches were broken**

off that I might be grafted in.' Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'" (Romans 11:19-27) Yes, the Jews are blind today. But I know Someone who can open the eyes of the blind. Soon they will too.

Perhaps we should take a moment to discuss the difference between tribulation and *the* Tribulation. Webster defines tribulation as: "That which occasions affliction or distress; severe affliction, distress, trouble, trial." In other words, when bad stuff happens to you, that's tribulation. The Church was never told it would escape this ordinary garden-variety tribulation; in fact, Yahshua told us to expect it: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Luke reports how Paul and Barnabas became the personification of Yahshua's prediction. "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'" (Acts 14:21-22)

Indeed, it was Paul who pointed out that tribulation—even to death—was incapable of parting us from the love of God that we experience in our walk with Christ, for after all, for us to be absent from the body is to be present with Yahweh. It's a win-win situation. In other words, persecution may not be much fun, but it sure can be rewarding. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor

things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:33-39)

But *the* Tribulation, a.k.a. the time of Jacob’s trouble, is a specific, future, seven-year-long period in which “separation from the love of God” is the whole point. Last-days Man wants to live without God; he doesn’t like the idea of a supreme deity who’s got standards and moral absolutes—they’re *so* inconvenient. The intriguing fact, however, is that man’s very concept of what’s right and what’s wrong is merely a fuzzy picture of that which came to us from Yahweh—from Judeo-Christian traditions if not his own conscience. Is murder bad? Yes—that’s why folks try to hide the bodies and cover their tracks. Is adultery bad? If people didn’t know it was, deep down inside, they wouldn’t feel like they had to sneak around in order to do it.

Satan wants a shot at running the planet as if he were God. When he said “I will be like the Most High,” it wasn’t an idle daydream. So God is going to give man and devil what they both want—for a little while, anyway. When the time is right, Yahweh intends to take His hands off the levers and His foot off the brake pedal, and let Satan’s little choo-choo roll down the track without Him. And the same men who wanted the Engineer to get off the train will feel ill-used when it crashes. Go figure.

Descriptions of the Tribulation are scattered throughout scripture. It’s not like we weren’t warned. **“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ Says Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch.”** (Malachi 4:1) Who will get burned? “All the proud; all who do wickedly.”

And what places will be affected? **“Now therefore, do not be mockers, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard from Yahweh, the God of hosts, a destruction determined even upon the whole earth.”** (Isaiah 28:22) You want specifics? **“Behold, the days are coming,’ says Yahweh, ‘that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised—Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.”** (Jeremiah 9:25) Jews and gentiles alike, those who don’t pretend to keep the Law of God in their hearts, and those who *do* pretend, will all be punished. **“But Yahweh is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.”** (Jeremiah 10:10) Do you get the feeling that Yahweh isn’t too happy with us?

The description continues: **“The great day of Yahweh is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of Yahweh is bitter. There the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a**

day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Yahweh; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse.” There is a whole new subculture emerging today called “prepping.” Preppers assume they can weather the storm by arming themselves to the teeth, storing up food, and investing in gold. But they have no idea how bad it’s going to get: **“Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Yahweh’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land.”** (Zephaniah 1:14-18)

I’ve got to stop for a minute. Is any of this getting to you like it’s getting to me? What is it going to take to wake us up? How much clearer could God make it? Judgment is coming. It doesn’t matter whether you like the idea or not. It doesn’t matter how rich or powerful you are. It doesn’t matter if your dizzying intellect leads you to deduce that since Yahweh says He’s a loving God He would never punish people for their sins. Just because these scriptures have been lying there—mostly unread—for over 2,500 years, that doesn’t mean the judgment they predict is any less real. And even if you *have* read the signs of impending calamity (as many are beginning to do today) it doesn’t matter how well you prepare for doomsday. The *only* refuge to be found is in Yahweh.

Zephaniah talked about darkness and gloominess. Joel expands the thought: **“I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of Yahweh. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as Yahweh has said, among the remnant whom Yahweh calls.”** (Joel 2:30-32, cf. Acts 2:14-21) Here the prophet refers to the “day of Yahweh” as the climax of the Tribulation—the triumphal return of Christ to the earth. So we’re getting a glimpse of what’s to come as the seven years wear on. As the end approaches, the signs in the earth and heavens will make it increasingly hard to deny the reality of God’s presence—or his mood. But notice: His mercy will be offered to everyone—right up to the end.

God won’t just break rocks and make for weird weather during the Tribulation. He will rearrange the earth’s political landscape as well. **“I will shake heaven and earth. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.”** (Haggai 2:21-22) The prophet is predicting that Yahweh will bring down governments, but the tool He uses to do it will be man. Can you imagine civil war on a global scale? So much for “peace and safety.”

And lest you think the Tribulation is any less real because it's an "Old Testament" doctrine, and thus somehow out of date, think again. **"A great multitude of the people followed [Yahshua as He bore His cross to Golgotha], and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, "Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!" Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"**" (Luke 23:27-31) In other words, if man, after witnessing the perfect life of the Son of God walking among them, was arrogant enough to crucify Him, what will happen when Yahweh removes His Spirit from the earth altogether?

Okay, so we've established that the Tribulation will be a time of destruction, burning, earthquakes, blackened skies, and global war. Its benign beginning, then, is a ruse, the calm before the storm. It's obvious that God is angry with the earth. He has decreed that its time is up; its "iniquity is full." But what does He plan to accomplish with this seven-year Tribulation period? Actually, there are several objectives.

The first, as we saw in Daniel 9, is to finish up God's dealings with the Jews. They will be tested one last time, and this time—for the *first* time—they will pass the test. **"And it shall come to pass in all the land,' Says Yahweh, 'That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will 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, "This is My people," and each one will say, "Yahweh is my God."**" (Zechariah 13:8-9) Eight million Jews dead? That seems to be a heavy price to pay, doesn't it? But considering Satan's insanely jealous animosity toward the Jews and the fact that God's Spirit will have been removed from the earth, the real miracle is that any Jews at all will be left at the end. This is but one of many passages that predict the eventual repentance of the Jews as a nation.

Part of the reason for the Tribulation is good old-fashioned punishment. **"I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."** (Isaiah 13:11) Or how about, **"Come, my people [Israel], enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, Yahweh comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain."** (Isaiah 26:20-21) The

repentant Jewish remnant is instructed to hide out for a while. But that doesn't mean Yahweh's punishment is just for the gentiles. **"Hear this word that Yahweh has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.'" (Amos 3:1-2)** As Yahshua said, from he who is given much, much will be required. Yahweh will therefore hold the Jews to the highest standard of all, purging them of their rebels.

I know, I know. The world doesn't want to hear it. *How can a loving god punish people? It's not fair.* Actually, it's the *only* fair course of action. Point one: Yahweh created us; therefore He has the right to define our standards of right and wrong. Point two: we have all fallen short of the standards our maker has set for us (a condition known as "sin"). The penalty for our crimes is separation from Yahweh, for He is a holy God who cannot coexist with sin any more than light can coexist with darkness. Point three: He loves us in spite of our faults; therefore He paid our penalty so we could once again live in His presence. Point four: some of us have accepted this gracious gift, and some have not. For those who have not, the penalty of separation still remains. The "punishment" of God during the Tribulation is not some nasty new thing that's being inflicted upon us by some vindictive heavenly bully; it's merely a statement of the facts as they are, a revealing of the status quo. If those who reject God's grace think the world stinks during these seven years, they'll have no one to blame but themselves. Yahweh won't force anyone to choose Him.

And what are these standards that Yahweh has set? The Bible's pretty clear about it. Some things, however, He singles out because they're particularly destructive to us. (None of these things hurt Him in the least, you understand.) **"And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear [i.e., respect] Me," says Yahweh of hosts. 'For I am Yahweh; I do not change. Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.'" (Malachi 3:5-6)**

It could be argued, of course, that people who aren't familiar with the Bible couldn't possibly know what God wants them to do. (This line of reasoning is invariably promulgated by those who know exactly what it says and still don't like it.) Paul pointed out the fallacy of that argument: **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish**

hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts.” (Romans 1:18-24) Yahweh built every one of us with a *neshamah* (see Genesis 2:7), a “God-sense,” a conscience if you will, that tells us in a still, small voice that there is a God, that He loves us, and that we are to do right and not to do wrong. We can either listen to the voice or ignore it. The bottom line? **“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law... in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”** (Romans 2:12, 16)

I’ll admit that there are many places in scripture that speak of God’s judgment as a proactive thing, not just a passive leaving-a-guilty-world-to-its-fate sort of affair. But from our perspective, they’re exactly the same thing. What we often fail to realize is that the mercy of God is what holds the universe together. If and when He stops actively pouring out His love upon us, we are in hell. **“Your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure...[are] manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ....”**

And how does this “vengeance” manifest itself? What is the eternal retribution for refusing to obey the gospel? Is it being consigned to a nasty environment whose torments are arranged in nine increasingly demented punishment levels matched to your particular shortcomings in this life? No, that’s Dante’s imagination working overtime. Is it being slowly roasted over an open fire? Having boiling pitch poured down your throat? Being given thorns to eat? No, sorry. That’s the Muslim description of hell, in which Allah himself personally administers the unceasing torture to the people whom he himself gleefully predestined to go there. (Neither their choices nor their deeds have anything to do with it, and grace is a concept foreign to Islam.) It’s just the opposite of what the Bible teaches, that the only real punishment is being separated forever from Yahweh: **“These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of Yahweh and from the glory of His power.”** (II Thessalonians 1:4-9) Frankly, the Bible’s version is worse.

Chapter 13

Jerusalem, Jerusalem

We're several months into "the Tribulation" now, though almost nobody knows it yet. *Tribulation?* Actually, things are looking pretty rosy since the new European leader pushed through his historic peace plan for the Middle East. The world, it seems, has finally relaxed. They've decided to "give peace a chance."

And why not? The world's *real* troublemakers, the Christians (at least the intolerant, narrow-minded variety) disappeared some time back. But there have been no other incidents since then, and the world has finally stopped holding its breath. It looks like it was a one-time phenomenon. Understandably, there was widespread panic immediately after "the Event," but things have settled back down; everyone has had a chance to reflect. Now people are starting to openly admit that they're kind of glad "those people" are gone. The media's coverage of the aftermath has managed to subtly shift everyone's real recollection of the missing people toward a caricature of unbalanced religious fanaticism. *Who knew that a relative handful of lunatic-fringe religious radicals could cause so much divisiveness in the world? Their snooty "God-loves-me" pretensions turned out to be completely backward, didn't they? If their god was real, and if he really loved them, he would have protected them from whatever it was that killed them all. All that talk about sin, repentance and salvation—what a load of holy hogwash! We don't need to be saved from anything. We're just fine the way we are.*

Strangely, though, this "cult" is proving hard to kill. Here and there, little pockets of new believers are spontaneously springing up. Quite a few of them are Jews—surprising because of their previous animosity toward the Church's view of Yahshua of Nazareth (a.k.a. Jesus). But now that a *real* Church split has taken place, it's getting easier to separate the doctrine from the dogma—the core beliefs of Christianity from the liturgy and tradition that had made it so hard to see for so long. Christianity, they're discovering, was never about genuflecting, attending mass and reciting the rosary; it had nothing to do with catechisms, funny backward collars, and cathedrals with stained-glass windows. As it turns out, it wasn't all-inclusive, ecumenical, "seeker-friendly," or "purpose-driven." Rather, it had everything to do with what this Jesus guy did—or did not do—a long time ago. These Jews (and a fair number of equally insubordinate gentiles) are finding it hard to explain how a simple itinerant rabbi could still be causing such obvious discomfort among the ruling elite—two thousand years after he was executed as a common criminal—if there weren't something more to the story. Could it be true? Was Yahshua actually God in the flesh?

I'm admittedly speculating here, but I have reason to believe that many of the world's Jews will be driven to introspection during these days. Obscure passages from prophets like Hosea could begin to take on new meaning, if only they're willing to give them a fresh look: **"Then Yahweh said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of Yahweh for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.' So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. And I said to her, 'You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man—so, too, will I be toward you.' For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king. They shall fear Yahweh and His goodness in the latter days."** (Hosea 3:1-5) The prophet was told to buy a prostitute/slave and marry her, a picture of God's redemption of unfaithful Israel. Just as the woman would have to live in celibate seclusion for "many days," Israel would live without her "husband" Yahweh, bereft of the temple sacrifices and priestly intercession, until the "latter days." But at that time she would seek God and His Messiah once again. (We'll explore what drastic measures it will take to open Israel's eyes in a future chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that business as usual *won't* be the road to Israel's reawakening.) Thoughtful Jews can't help but wonder at the events that are shaping their lives, and they'll ponder the ramifications of prophecies like this. Some of them, few and scattered at first, follow the trail of their scriptures to the cross of Christ.

But becoming a worshiper of Yahshua in the New Age is not without its consequences. It's kind of like the days of the early Church under Roman persecution, only worse because Nero and Domitian didn't have sophisticated electronic eavesdropping capabilities, social media just begging to be data-mined, and closed circuit TV cameras on every street corner. Now, in every "civilized" country in the world, the dawning era of utopian "peace and safety" is so jealously guarded by the ruling elite that new believers in Christ are regarded with suspicion, if not outright hostility. They're soon dubbed "fundos" (short for fundamentalists) by the vituperative media—to keep them from being confused with the peace-loving and cooperative mainline Christian churches, the Catholics, Protestants, and "independents" (e.g., the Mormons, Scientologists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other quasi-Christian denominations). As the weeks turn into months since the signing of the European leader's historic Mid-East peace accords, nation after nation declares the fundos to be an illegal terrorist group, though they've never blown anything up or even threatened anyone. In the name of religious tolerance, these believers in the deity of Yahshua find themselves being feared and persecuted—even by their own families.

Yahshua had warned them what it would be like: **"When they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever**

is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Mark 13:11-13) It matters not that the neo-Christians and reawakened Jews pose no threat whatsoever to the new world order (being few in number, at least at first, and utterly powerless to effect change. The ruling elite will be terrified of them nevertheless, for they know that truth and love are contagious and uncontrollable. No, fear and intimidation, bribery and dependence are the tools best suited for keeping the populace in line and paying their taxes.

We should not be shocked by the lack of loyalty Yahshua predicted here. The Nazis during World War II taught us how it works: if you were caught harboring a "criminal"—in their case, a Jew or a member of the underground resistance—your whole family, or perhaps even your whole village, would be punished without mercy. As Muhammad once observed, "He who fears will mind." Betrayal will become one's civic duty. Ironically, the advent of Islamic terrorism has provided "democratic" governments, even now, with a perfect opportunity to build the infrastructure of oppression and surveillance that will be—or *is being*—used to control entire populations. Never let a crisis go to waste.

Another outgrowth of our present politically correct insanity may come to fruition by this time. As indicated by such recent books as Dr. Dean Hamer's *The God Gene: How Faith Is Hard-Wired Into Our Genes*, the current thought is that the propensity for "spirituality" is genetic. This follows the same line of reasoning that says that homosexuality or aggression (like cancer and heart disease) are a matter of genetic predisposition—thus there is no choice or responsibility involved. How convenient. But during the Tribulation, the shoe could be on the other foot: Christianity could eventually be considered a disease rather than an intellectual choice one makes based on logic, evidence, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Developing a trust in Yahweh for one's salvation will come to be classed as a mental illness, sort of like believing you're Santa Claus. *You'd have to be nuts to believe this stuff. You people need to be watched—closely!*

So people who come to faith after the rapture will be in for a hard time. The "fundos" (the epithet is my invention, you understand—I have no idea what the Tribulation saints will actually be called, but I'll bet it won't be pretty) will take comfort in Yahshua's words, "**He who endures to the end shall be saved.**" We can't expect them to have a very good handle on the nuances of eschatological chronology, of course, especially now that being found with a Bible in your possession can get you sent "downtown." Many won't even know that they'll need to hide out for the better part of seven years if they expect to "endure to the

end” of the Tribulation. Somehow, though, they’ll know that Yahshua can be trusted to keep His word. And they’ll hang on to that for dear life.

As we have seen, there are undeniable indications that the Jewish temple will stand once again on Mount Moriah during the Tribulation. And if my deductions are correct, the Antichrist himself will be the one who makes it happen; the Jews may (or may not) want it, but he *needs* it.

We saw the first indication of T3 (the third temple) in Daniel’s prophecy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the 2nd century B.C. type of the Antichrist: **“He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.”** (Daniel 8:11-12)

Although this is now history (it happened in 168 B.C.) we’re pretty sure that the temple and “abomination of desolation” references also apply to one coming after Antiochus because they were repeated in Daniel’s description of the yet-future 70th week: **“Then he [the prince who is to come, i.e., the Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [seven years]; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”** (Daniel 9:27) As I have pointed out before, you can’t bring an end to something that hasn’t begun. T3 is required if the prophecy is to be fulfilled as literally as those that have already come to pass.

We’ll discuss these “abominations” a few chapters hence. For now, just notice that Yahshua referred to this very prophecy during His Olivet discourse. **“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place”** (whoever reads, let him understand), **then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”** (Matthew 24:15-16) The “holy place” is a specific room within the temple. Thus the Messiah Himself is confirming that T3 must be in place in the last days. And when it is, be prepared to run for your life if you happen to be anywhere near Jerusalem. (At the risk of getting ahead of our story, I should note that when this happens, the Muslims will have been annihilated—He’s speaking primarily to Jews here. This is the point at which Jerusalem is once again “trampled by gentiles” for three and a half years. (See Luke 21:24, Daniel 12:7.)

One final confirmation comes from Paul, who tells us *why* the Antichrist needs the temple. **“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away [apostasy] comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of**

perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” (II

Thessalonians 2:3-4) That’s right. If you want to pass yourself off as Zeus, you’ve got to sit yourself down in the temple of Zeus. If you want people to believe you’re Aphrodite, you need to show up at her temple. But if you covet the adoration of those who would worship the true and living Creator of the universe, you’re going to have to convince everybody that you are Yahweh Himself, come in the flesh. And to do that, you’ll need to show yourself off in *His* temple, built where His word says it belongs, on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

Observant Jews know that a rebuilt temple is in their future, and they’re expecting the Messiah Himself to build it. **“And He [the ‘Branch,’ i.e., Messiah] shall build the temple of Yahweh.... He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne.”** (Zechariah 6:12-13) Moreover, they’re expecting this temple to be spectacular, even more so than Solomon’s: **“[The nations] shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says Yahweh, Lord of hosts. ‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’ says Yahweh. ‘The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former... and in this place I will give peace....”** (Haggai 2:7-9) This can’t be referring to the temple Herod remodeled (just in time to be visited by Yahshua), for no “peace” was forthcoming from the temple during His first-century advent.

None of this expectation will be lost on the Antichrist—who will (I’m sure) know the Jewish scriptures and what they promise better than they do. In fact, I believe (SF5) that in the wake of (or perhaps as a part of) his landmark treaty assuring peace between the Jews and Muslims, he will persuade the world to turn the temple mount into some kind of ecumenical worship center. The Dome of the Rock, the third-“holiest” site in Islam, is already there, of course, built in the late 7th century to commemorate Muhammad’s “night’s journey.” (This is the hallucination he had in which he went to the temple, which wasn’t there at the time, and from there to heaven, upon a mythical flying jackass called a burraq. Mind you, he was at the Ka’aba when he had the dream—his wife later confirmed that he never left his bed that night—effectively demonstrating that you can’t get to heaven from Mecca.)

The question of the hour will be: must the Dome be destroyed in order to make room for the Jewish temple? Many temple enthusiasts today insist it must, because (they say) it occupies the exact spot upon which Solomon’s (and Ezra’s) temples were built. It is reasonably certain that the Dome *was* built upon the foundation of the second-century Roman temple to Jupiter (read: Tammuz), right down to the octagonal footprint. A nearby Roman basilica on the southern end of the temple mount provided the foundation for the al-Aqsa Mosque. The traditional view is that both the Roman temple (which was retasked to “Christian” purposes after Constantine’s “conversion”) and the subsequent Muslim shrine were built at

the site of Herod's grandiose redo of the second temple. Two questions remain. Was it? And if so, did Herod build at precisely the same place Solomon had? There are at least two other theories that are clearly plausible.

Bear in mind that the temple mount is huge—it covers forty-five acres. (To help you get a clear picture of this, a football field is about one acre.) It is a roughly trapezoid-shaped platform surrounded by a retaining wall of massive stones. Its width is 910 feet on the south side and 1,025 feet on the north; the length is 1,520 feet on the east and 1,580 feet—about 3/10 of a mile—on the west. Considering the relatively small footprint of Solomon's temple (if you exclude the court of the gentiles) there would be plenty of room to put a new Jewish temple—*plus* a Christian cathedral, *plus* shrines for several other popular religions—up there without removing the Dome of the Rock, and without any serious overcrowding. I believe that this is precisely what the Antichrist will propose: a place where all of the world's great religions can come together in peace and harmony, a sort of equal-opportunity new-age Acropolis. If truth is relative and god is all in your mind, it makes perfect sense. For devout Jews, of course, it will be the ultimate good news-bad news scenario. They'll be gratified and mortified, all at the same time. But they will have little choice in the matter; by the time this happens, their very existence will be endangered by the Islamist menace. It will literally be a case of put up or shut up.

Mount Moriah is a ridge running roughly north to south through old Jerusalem. Its highest peak is actually a few hundred yards north of the temple mount—*outside* the old city wall—near the ancient limestone quarry once known as Golgotha, the place of the skull. The mount's bedrock base is relatively flat on the northern end; it peeks through the pavement inside the Dome of the Rock. But south of the shrine, the natural mountain terrain slopes downhill. The platform there is supported by pillars and arches—the southeast corner of the temple mount platform is a good 150 feet higher than the bedrock that supports it.

So where was the temple? Tuvia Sagiv, a prominent Israeli architect, has championed a site to the south of the Dome of the Rock. Though tradition places the Roman garrison, the Antonia Fortress, to the north and adjacent to the temple mount, Sagiv places it in the center of the temple mount, right where the Dome of the Rock stands now, with Solomon's temple at a lower elevation, down the hill to the south, closer to the City of David. Some background: ancient sources report that Herod's temple was the highest building in Jerusalem—that is, until he, in deference to his Roman masters, built the Fortress of Antonia even higher. Josephus says that the view of the temple from the north was blocked by the "Bizita Hill" (which is the summit of Moriah, just behind Golgotha). What view Moriah didn't block in Yahshua's day, the tower of Antonia would have.

I'm having trouble buying into Sagiv's southern theory for several reasons. First, David and Solomon, out of reverence for Yahweh, would have placed the temple on the highest bedrock they could find within the city walls (Golgotha/Bizita, though higher, is outside the old city). Second, the southern end of the temple mount was built up to a level platform only in the days of Herod (you can still see the signature Herodian beveled edges on the huge foundation stones of the western wall), so there would be no elevation differential to speak of over the whole 45-acre complex. Indeed, the place called "Solomon's stables" were *beneath* the arch-supported southern end of the mount. I can imagine that the high priests might have had something to say about placing the holy of holies over a stable. Remember, Herod was a practical man: the whole reason for remodeling the second temple in the first place was to bribe the Jewish establishment into accepting him (an Idumean, not a Jew) as their king. (And *that* scenario is starting to sound awfully familiar, isn't it?)

Sagiv has other reasons for suggesting a southern temple site, but most of them seem to me to be based on assumptions concerning present-day landmark elevations in Jerusalem. The modern city is built many feet above the actual historical locations. The rubble from being razed and rebuilt again and again over the last three millennia makes elevation calculations a highly speculative endeavor. And I can't get over the fact that ancient temples were *never* built halfway down a hillside when there was a convenient bedrock summit nearby: look at the Greeks' Parthenon.

That brings us to the second non-traditional site for the temple—the "northern conjecture." Dr. Asher Kaufman, former professor of physics at Hebrew University, has for several decades been advocating a location 330 feet *north* of the Dome of the Rock. (I *told you* the place was big). The bedrock of Mount Moriah's summit is just beneath the paving stones for that whole distance. Kaufman places the holy of holies at the small Muslim-built structure called the Dome of the Spirits (alternately called the Dome of the Tablets).

This octagonal shrine lines up precisely with the eastern, or "golden" gate facing the Mount of Olives, the one the Muslim warlord Suleiman the Magnificent filled in with stone in 1517. The eastern gate is a source of Muslim concern and Jewish hope because of the words of the Prophet Ezekiel: "**Afterward he [the angel] brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.... And the glory of Yahweh came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of Yahweh filled the temple.**" (Ezekiel 43:1-2, 4-5) This explains why, from time immemorial, the Jews have buried their dead

on the slopes of the Valley of Kidron right outside the eastern gate—they want to be the first to experience the returning Shekinah, the glory of Yahweh.

It also explains why Muslim graves crowd the opposite side of the valley, and why they've blocked the eastern gate with massive stones: they want to *stop* God from entering their city. I don't get it. If Allah and Yahweh are the same (which is what they'd like you to believe), then they're trying to stop their own God. If Yahweh isn't God, they've got nothing to worry about—there's no point in trying to prevent the arrival of Someone who doesn't exist. But if Yahweh really *is* God, how do they expect a bit of masonry and a few Muslim ghosts to stop Him? Logic has never been the Islamic strong suit.

The eastern gate *will* be shut, but not by Muslims. **“Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And Yahweh said to me, ‘This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because Yahweh, God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.’”** (Ezekiel 44:1-2) As we shall see in chapter 27, Millennial temple architecture, including its location, won't have a whole lot in common with what we see in historic Jerusalem. Ezekiel's eastern gate and Herod's are two different things, and the Millennial temple of Christ (though not the one the Antichrist will build—confused yet?) will be in an entirely different spot on Mount Moriah. But if you're interested in how the gates of Jerusalem figure into coming events, ponder this: **“Have mercy on me, O Yahweh! Consider my trouble from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death, that I may tell of all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. I will rejoice in Your salvation.”** (Psalm 9:13-14)

Besides the prophecy concerning the direction from which the Spirit of God will enter the temple is the fact that the door of the temple—all the way back to the wilderness tabernacle—was supposed to face the east. (The idea, I think, was that in order to enter Yahweh's temple, you'd have to turn your back on the rising sun—the prototypical false god personified by such bogus ancient deities as Ra, Mithras, Apollo, Helios, and Sol Invictus. Lining the temple up with the eastern entrance to the mount therefore makes perfect architectural sense. The fact that the Dome of the Spirits lines up with the eastern gate, then, is significant circumstantial evidence. (Is there an original concept *anywhere* in Muslim history? If there is, I haven't found it. All the “inventions” they're famous for, they stole from the peoples they conquered—notably the Jews and the Persians.)

It should be noted that the temple mount today is under the supervision of the Waqf, the Supreme Muslim Council or trust who have controlled the temple mount (known to the Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif) since 1187. (Due to a fluke of history, they were allowed to maintain their role when the Israelis retook Jerusalem in the 1967 Six Day War. If the Israelis had retaken the temple mount and destroyed the Dome of the Rock when they had the chance, Jerusalem's last

half century might have looked very different indeed.) The Waqf have consistently forbidden any systematic archaeological investigation of the site. But Yahweh, who is not particularly impressed with Muslim councils, has providentially (if not miraculously) opened some avenues of insight. A few years back, during a severe drought, four cisterns atop the temple mount began mysteriously filling with water. The Muslims, whose god doesn't *do* miracles, envisioned a massive plumbing leak in pipes beneath the platform. Panicked, they started pumping out water and tearing up paving stones, trying to find the problem. In their quest for the leak, the Muslim technicians inadvertently unearthed the south foundation wall of Solomon's temple—only a few meters north of the Dome of the Spirits. This confirmed Kaufman's hypothesis that the Dome of the Spirits marked the location of the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of Solomon's temple. (The water, by the way, was no miracle. It turned out that somebody had been overwatering the olive trees on the north end of the temple mount.)

Michael Rood, a self-described Messianic rabbi, happened to be in Jerusalem at the time, and heard about the strange goings on. Rood says that he, pretending to be an ignorant American tourist, went up onto the temple mount and examined the Dome of the Spirits, or more specifically, its floor. The Dome of the Spirits is an eight-sided structure, but a careful examination of the floor revealed that its base is actually one large square stone whose corners project out beyond the Dome's supporting pillars. In the center of each edge of the floor stone is a square keystone. Rood sensed that there was more to this pattern than mere aesthetics, since the whole floor of the temple would have been covered with cypress planks (I Kings 6:15). After being chased off the temple mount by angry Muslim watchmen (he actually had to be rescued by the Israeli police), Rood formed a hypothesis he hoped would unlock one of the greatest mysteries of all time: what ever became of the ark of the covenant?

The story of the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar's Captain of the Guard, Nebuzaradan, in 586 B.C. contains this record: **"The bronze pillars that were in the house of Yahweh, and the carts and the bronze Sea that were in the house of Yahweh, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried their bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, the shovels, the trimmers, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils with which the priests ministered. The firepans and the basins, the things of solid gold and solid silver, the captain of the guard took away. The two pillars, one Sea, and the carts, which Solomon had made for the house of Yahweh, the bronze of all these articles was beyond measure."** (II Kings 25:13-16) Sometimes lists are significant for what they *don't* contain. What's missing here? Only the most important stuff: the ark of the covenant (with the integral mercy seat), the solid gold lamp stand, the altar of incense, and the table of showbread—things that since the days of the wilderness wanderings had been crucial to Jewish ritual worship as outlined in the Torah.

You'd think that if Nebuzaradan had found these things, they would have been listed along with the spoons and shovels. Otherwise it's like reporting a burglary in the Smithsonian and somehow forgetting to mention that the thieves got away with the Hope diamond.

Shishak of Egypt and Sennacherib of Assyria had also taken booty from the temple, but the ark wasn't mentioned then, either. Actually, the last Biblical mention of the ark of the covenant is in II Chronicles 35, during the reign of Josiah (about 621 B.C.). That leaves only thirty-five years unaccounted for, increasing the likelihood that its disappearance had something to do with the final Babylonian siege. It is therefore with great interest that we read this tidbit from the Apocrypha:

“...The prophet [Jeremiah], having received an oracle, ordered that the tent and the ark should follow with him, and...he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God. Jeremiah came and found a cave-dwelling, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense; then he sealed up the entrance. Some of those who followed him came up intending to mark the way, but could not find it. When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: ‘The place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. Then Yahweh will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated.’” (II Maccabees 2:4-8)

It's not scripture, but it may provide us some clues. At first glance, it seems to be saying that Jeremiah took the ark to Mount Nebo, the place (in modern Jordan) from which Moses viewed the inheritance of Israel. But the countryside was crawling with Babylonians at the time. A siege wall had been built to prevent just such movements. So a journey like this seems highly unlikely. More probable is that Jeremiah's *oracle* is being described—he was seeing things that, as with Moses, you couldn't really see from where you were standing. Even more likely is that the II Maccabees passage has been mistranslated—that the actual meaning is, “He went out to the mountain which Moses had seen when he had gone up to view the inheritance of God,” i.e., Moriah, which is easily visible from Nebo on a clear day.

If that's the case, here's what's happening: Jeremiah got a revelation from Yahweh about how to protect the ark until “God gathers His people.” Solomon had provided a “specially consecrated” place, a “cave-dwelling,” where the ark and the other tabernacle furnishings could be hidden until God chose to disclose them. But where? And how? You didn't just move the ark on a whim; consecrated priests (like Jeremiah) had to cover it with porpoise skins and a special blue cloth, and then it took four Levites from the clan of Kohath to transport it (see Numbers

4:1-20). A great deal of care was required—people had died just by touching it. Further, it had been over four hundred years since Solomon had designed the temple. Any special arrangements he had made for the ark's safety had been long since forgotten. But Nebuzaradan and Company were beating down the door. That's why, as it says in II Maccabees, Jeremiah needed an "oracle" from God. Well, what's a prophet for, after all?

Lots of seemingly unrelated factors came together in Rood's mind to solve the puzzle (I'm presuming he figured this out—I know *I* didn't). Puzzle piece #1: Solomon's treaty with Pharaoh and subsequent marriage to his daughter. This apparently happened before Solomon's famous request for wisdom (I Kings 3:9). What did Pharaoh have that Solomon needed that was so proprietary it required a royal marriage alliance?

Puzzle piece #2: The two hollow bronze columns that stood outside the entrance to the Holy Place. They were mentioned above among the things that were hauled off to Babylon. They held nothing up, and had no apparent symbolic function. Worse, there are textual discrepancies concerning their height: are these contradictions or clues?

Puzzle piece #3: Geology. Jerusalem is built on limestone. Local quarries like the one near the top of Mount Moriah produced huge amounts of a beautiful off-white stone that lent a certain architectural continuity to the city—one that continues to this day. Limestone is not like granite: it is relatively easy to cut and excavate, and ground water can create natural tunnels and caverns through it. Moriah is riddled with underground passages, both natural and manmade.

Puzzle piece #4: Tectonics. Jerusalem sits upon a major fault system and it's situated only a few miles from the edge of a continental plate. It has seen many earthquakes in its history. Two in particular are important to our study, the one on Passover, A.D. 33, and a future one that will split the Mount of Olives.

Okay. Enough with the mystery. First, it's clear that Solomon didn't have a problem with asking for directions. If there was a technology or discipline he needed that the Jews hadn't mastered, he used consultants from neighboring nations, like Hiram of Tyre (not the King of the same name, but a craftsman whose mother was Jewish), who knew how to cast and fabricate the large bronze items Solomon needed for the temple. Second, whenever Pharaoh's daughter is mentioned in scripture, it's invariably in the context of building the temple. What ancient and esoteric art did the Egyptians hold the patent on? How about sand hydraulics?

Hold that thought for a moment while we look at the two bronze columns, or pillars, standing outside the front door of the temple. In I Kings 7:15-16 they are described as being hollow and eighteen cubits tall (somewhere between 27 and 31

feet, depending on the length of your standard cubit). The lily-shaped capitals were cast of solid bronze and were said to be five cubits tall. But in II Kings 25:17, where we're reviewing what the Babylonians hauled away, they're described as being *three* cubits tall. What gives?

Rood put two and two together and came up with this: the pillars and their capitals were part of an elaborate fulcrum and lever system that Solomon built beneath the temple. When sand was released from within a piston beneath the Holy of Holies, the lever began to move. The force was supplied by the weight of the solid bronze capitals as they began to sink into the hollow columns. That's where the two missing cubits went. The immense mass of the solid bronze capitals depressed the short end of the lever (requiring the fulcrum to be somewhere beneath the Holy Place). The long end raised a subterranean room (an elevator, if you will) about eight feet—right into the Holy of Holies. Jeremiah and four priests then placed the ark and the other pieces into the “elevator.” At this point, sand was released from within the pillars, allowing the lever to return to its original position, in turn lowering the elevator with the sacred furnishings inside. Obviously, this procedure could only be done once.

I may be reading too much into this, but when Solomon was dedicating the first temple, he announced, **“Yahweh said He would dwell in the dark cloud (Hebrew *araphel*, a gross, thick darkness). I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell in forever.”** (I Kings 8:12-13) The first statement could be construed (in hindsight) to mean that Yahweh knew the ark of the covenant would be hidden in a dark cave for thousands of years. And Hebrew poetic structure notwithstanding, the couplet that follows could actually mean what it seems to—that Solomon made *two* places for the Shekinah, the Holy of Holies and a secret hiding place. Bear in mind that “forever” in Hebrew doesn't necessarily mean “until the end of time,” but merely a very long, undetermined span of time.

If Michael Rood is correct, the square floor slab that he saw in the Dome of the Spirits is actually the roof of Solomon's elevator. He surmises that having four priests stand on the four keystones at the edges of the slab was the trigger mechanism that released the sand in the piston, starting the whole process. This is all only a theory, mind you. The Waqf isn't about to let a bunch of infidel archaeologists tear up the Dome of the Spirits so they can test their hypothesis. And frankly, if this is all we had to go on, I probably wouldn't have brought it up. But there's more to the story. Much more.

Back in 1978, amateur archaeologist Ron Wyatt and his two sons were in the Sinai Peninsula searching for the site where the nation of Israel crossed the Red Sea two steps ahead of the pursuing Egyptian armies. (He found it, by the way—right down to the 18th Dynasty chariot wheels strewn across the sea floor of the Gulf of Aqaba. It’s a fascinating story, but alas, beyond the scope of this book). Wyatt got severely sunburned and had to return to Jerusalem. There, he was strolling near the escarpment known as “Gordon’s Calvary” with a local authority, chatting about Roman antiquities, when he stopped, pointed, and said, “That’s Jeremiah’s grotto, and the ark of the covenant is in there.”

Wyatt later said he had no idea why he had blurted out such a ridiculous thing. He had never even contemplated a search for the ark. But his companion’s response was equally baffling. Rather than laughing in his face, he offered Wyatt the chance to dig for it, promising the permits, lodging, and even meals. Wyatt, an anesthetist by profession, went back to the U.S. with a head full of questions. After studying for a year, he returned to Israel. One fact that had intrigued him was his discovery that King Uzziah, a hundred years before the Babylonian onslaught, had built an armory of siege-defense weapons capable of wreaking havoc over a thousand feet out from the city walls. Therefore, it made sense that Nebuzaradan would have built his siege wall at least that far back from the city wall. The prophet Jeremiah had been warning the city populace for forty years about their impending doom—he *knew* the city would be totally destroyed. Therefore, the only safe place for the ark would be underground, in a cave or tunnel somewhere beneath no-man’s land—between the city wall and the siege wall. The location Wyatt had been led to spontaneously point out to his Israeli colleague fit that description.

He and his sons began the excavation uphill from, i.e. west of, the famous “skull face” that’s eroded into the limestone quarry wall behind what is now Jerusalem’s central bus station. As they dug down, they found the remains of an ancient building that had once covered the whole site, finally coming upon a platform-like shelf of bedrock sticking about eight feet out from the cliff face. In this shelf he found a squarish stone—too regular to be a natural feature. It turned out to be a cover for a hole that had been cut into the bedrock, twelve or thirteen inches square and twenty-three and a half inches deep. This hole had a large crack running off to one side, which Wyatt surmised to have been caused by an earthquake, since there were no tool marks on it. He could see that the crack extended far deeper than the two-foot hole.

It was pretty obvious what they had discovered: it was a place of Roman execution—crucifixion. The holes were there to hold the crosses upright. More holes were soon found, in front of and spread out to the left and right of the first one. There were three niches about fourteen feet above the central cross hole that

could have held large signs describing the crime of the “guest of honor.” The location was perfect: not too far from the Damascus Gate of the old city, on the main road leading north out of town. This execution site would have been at about street level at the time of Christ, though it was many feet underground now.

The building they found could well have been a church or shrine once erected over the site—long before Constantine’s mother came and declared another place to be where Christ’s crucifixion had happened. They found several Roman coins, but none was dated after the year 135—when Hadrian had finished what Titus had started in 70, squashing Bar Kochba’s rebellion, expelling all of the Jews from Jerusalem, and renaming Judea “Palestina” after the long-extinct Philistines. Team Wyatt found what appeared to be a stone-slab altar positioned above the center cross hole. They also discovered a huge round stone disk, almost two feet thick and some thirteen feet in diameter, which Ron speculated could have been the stone that had been rolled against the entrance of the tomb of Yahshua—which was only a short walk from the dig. (The groove in front of the tomb door, by the way, fits perfectly.) If it was, it would have been over twice the size of the biggest seal-stone they’d ever found, but then again, both Matthew and Mark had described the stone as being “*very large*.”

The dig was now approaching its third year. The team moved out beyond the bedrock platform with the cross receptacles and continued clearing rubble, meticulously sifting through tons of debris and cataloging numerous finds such as Roman coins and nine-inch nails. They dug until they hit bedrock, that is, the lowest level to which the old quarry had been mined. A word of explanation is in order here. Old Jerusalem was built on a hill, Moriah, surrounded by valleys on three sides, Kidron on the east, curving around to the south, meeting the valley of Hinnom (a.k.a. Gehenna) on the west. The Tyropean, or “Cheesemaker,” valley runs up the middle. (As an interesting aside, a map of the three valleys of Jerusalem forms the modern Hebrew letter shin (ש), representative of God Almighty—Hebrew: *El Shaddai*).

But on the north, Mount Moriah continues rising well beyond the city walls, making defense problematical. The solution was to quarry the limestone for the walls and buildings from near the summit of Moriah, forming a broad trench, or “dry moat,” across the north side of town, making what would have been a ten-foot-high wall into a sixty-foot barrier. This also made moving the quarried stones to their intended building sites a downhill proposition. It was the original win-win scenario.

At the bottom of their dig, team Wyatt had reached an impasse. They knew that the ark, if it were here at all, would have been hidden in a cave, though they hadn’t encountered one as they dug down through the rubble. Wyatt’s sons, Ronny and Danny, suggested chiseling directly into the limestone quarry face—

an arduous undertaking with a slim probability of success. After all, they weren't even sure there was a cave, much less one here in this spot. But with no other options, Ron finally agreed.

Their efforts were rewarded. Soon after they began tunneling into the rock face, they broke into an open space about fifteen feet high and equally wide. They had discovered the first of a series of natural caverns within Mount Moriah. It took over a year to open and explore what turned out to be an extensive labyrinth of caves and tunnels beneath the mountain. With 1981 drawing to a close, all three researchers were showing the strain of their labors. Ron's sons were both sent home to the U.S. with severe pneumonia-like symptoms, while he continued excavating with the help of an intrepid and trustworthy local man they called "James."

Ron continued exploring the caves with James, climbing up a natural chimney into a tunnel so tight he had to exhale to get through. Breaking off a sixteen-inch stalactite that blocked a small hole leading to another cave, he peered inside. It appeared to be a large chamber, filled to within eighteen inches of the top with rocks, softball-sized and larger. Wyatt enlarged the hole with a hammer and chisel enough for his slender assistant to slide himself in. The normally unflappable James didn't stay inside for long. Almost immediately, he scrambled back out of the hole trembling and shouting, "*What's in there? What's in there? I'm not going back in there!*" James insisted he had seen nothing, but he was nevertheless consumed with terror, a terror so real that he beat a hasty retreat from the entire cave system and refused to go back in—ever.

It was January 6, 1982. Ron Wyatt was now all alone in a cave that had just given his trusted assistant a terminal case of the willies. He reflected that without James' uncharacteristic reaction, he would never have given the chamber a second glance. His flashlight beam caught something shiny beneath the pile of stones, and he started removing them, one by one. It wasn't long before he encountered some wooden timbers, dry-rotted with age. Next he found animal skins, so old that they turned to powder when he touched them. Beneath the skins Wyatt saw what few archaeologists had seen since the days of Howard Carter: the glint of gold.

In the confined space, Ron examined what he could of the object, which wasn't much. The gold overlaid a wooden structure. It had a flat top and a raised molding down the side: a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate—the same pattern that had been prescribed for the robe of the High Priest's ephod in Exodus 28:33. This obviously wasn't the ark of the covenant, but could it be the table of showbread, one of the other original pieces of furniture from the wilderness tabernacle? Ron's heart raced.

Without removing the rocks, Wyatt couldn't be sure of what he was looking at. That would happen, of course, but on this day it was all he could manage to take a cursory survey of the situation. Sweeping his flashlight across the small gap between the rock pile and the top of the chamber, he noticed something else—not down among the rocks, but on the ceiling. There was a large crack in the limestone, reminiscent of one he had first seen many months before—the crevasse that had intersected the square hole the Romans had chiseled into the bedrock for their cross to rest in. Although it was hard to keep your bearings in the twisting maze of tunnels, it seemed to Wyatt that the cavern he was in was somewhere directly beneath the crucifixion site. This could well be the other end of that same earthquake crevasse.

Slowly, painfully, the archaeologist crawled over the top of the rocks toward the rear of the chamber to get a better look at the crack. But when he got there, something else caught his eye, a large flat stone, obviously man-tooled. It was broken in two pieces, the smaller of which had shifted slightly to one side. Though it was too close to the ceiling of the cavern to get a good look inside, it was immediately apparent to Wyatt what this was: the lid of the stone case that enclosed the ark of the covenant itself. He examined what he could from his cramped position, taking note of some black stains splashed onto where it had split apart. And then he remembered the crack in the ceiling, directly above it. Rolling over and shining his flashlight onto the crevasse, he noticed that its inner walls were coated with the same sort of blackish substance.

Before returning to Israel, Wyatt had studied the ark and its function for months. Basically, it was an acacia-wood box, covered with gold, with gold rings at the corners. If it had to be moved, four Levites used two poles placed through these rings. Atop the box was its golden “mercy seat” running its entire four-foot length. It featured two solid gold winged angels, standing at either end facing each other; the wings on the side facing the front of the ark rested at the angels' sides, while the wings toward the back reached out and touched each other, meeting in the center.

The Torah had described it like this: **“Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits was its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold all around it. And he cast for it four rings of gold to be set in its four corners: two rings on one side, and two rings on the other side of it. He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. And he put the poles into the rings at the sides of the ark, to bear the ark. He also made the mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits was its length and a cubit and a half its width. He made two cherubim [an order of angelic beings] of beaten gold; he made them of one piece at the two ends of the mercy seat: one cherub at one end on this side, and the other cherub at the other end on that side. He made the cherubim at the**

two ends of one piece with the mercy seat. The cherubim spread out their wings above, and covered the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat.” (Exodus 37:1-9)

One day each year (*Yom Kippurym*, the Day of Atonement), the blood of the sacrifice was to be physically applied to a particular spot on the mercy seat by the High Priest: **“He [Aaron] shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”** (Leviticus 16:14-16) Yahweh had provided this way for the sins of the people to be covered, albeit temporarily. The blood bulls and goats couldn’t atone for our sins perfectly, however. Perfect forgiveness would require a perfect sacrifice.

Suddenly, Wyatt saw it all. The cave, the crucifixions, the crevasse...the dark stains could be only one thing: *blood*. Sometime before his death in 1999, Wyatt had a lab in Israel test the blood (without telling them where it came from, of course). Bill Fry, of Anchor Stone International, explains what they found: “Even though the dried blood sample was 2,000 years old, when rehydrated and examined under a microscope, it contained living cells, including white blood cells.... The results of the chromosome test conclusively affirms the identity of this man as the Christ because it testifies that he was the product of a virgin birth! Under normal circumstances all human beings have 46 chromosomes, 23 from their mother and 23 from their father. There are 22 pairs of autosomes which determine things such as our height, hair and eye color, etc. The 23rd pair is the sex determinant pair. They consist of either X or Y chromosomes. The mother only has X chromosomes. The father has both X and Y chromosomes. If the sex-determinant pair is matched XX, the child is a female. If XY, the child is a male. Thus we see that the single chromosome provided by the father in this chromosome pair determines the gender of the child. When the blood sample Ron Wyatt took from the crack in the rock ceiling above the Mercy Seat was tested, it contained 24 chromosomes—23 from the mother and one Y chromosome from the father, 24 chromosomes. As Dr. Eugene Dunkley states in his article on the genetics of the blood of Christ, 24 chromosomes is exactly what would be expected if a man was born of a virgin.”

And the crack? Had not the gospel writers recorded an earthquake? Yes. That’s when the veil hiding the Holy of Holies had been ripped apart: **“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked,**

and the rocks were split.” (Matthew 27:51) Not just any rocks had fractured, but the bedrock outcropping supporting the cross of Christ—the very rocks the gospel witnesses were so intently watching. The lid of the stone sarcophagus that had contained the ark of the covenant for over six hundred years shattered. The blood of Yahweh’s perfect sacrifice had poured from Yahshua’s wounds, flowed through the heart of the earth, and one final time had been sprinkled by the ultimate High Priest upon the mercy seat. God had made His sacrifice. It was finished.

If he hadn’t already been lying on his back upon a bed of angular fist-sized stones with the ceiling of the chamber inches from his face, Ron Wyatt would have fallen to his knees. As it was, he merely fainted. Indiana Jones, he was not.

Wyatt was eventually able to explore the room and its contents more thoroughly. The chamber turned out to be twenty-two feet long and twelve feet wide at one end, narrowing somewhat at the other. It was obvious that the artifacts had not been brought in (nor could they be removed) the way he’d entered. Ron located the cavern’s original entrance and found that it opened onto a passageway, a large tunnel that was blocked with stones in both directions. There had to be an underground passage leading off in the direction of the city, because that’s where the artifacts had come from. (When Jeremiah had moved the ark, Jerusalem was under a state of siege—nobody was wandering around outside the walls.)

Later, using a colonoscope to look inside the stone case, Wyatt was able to see enough to convince him that this was indeed the resting place of the ark of the covenant. He was also able to positively identify the table of showbread, the golden altar of incense, the golden censer, the seven-branched menorah, a large sword, and an ephod, among a large collection of ancient Hebrew artifacts.

He also verified that the earthquake crevasse in the cross hole *was* the other end of the crack he saw in the ceiling of the chamber. By feeding a tape measure into the crack, he determined that the quake had split twenty feet of solid bedrock.

Even before the permit for his original dig was rescinded, Ron had established to his own satisfaction that the original tunnel to the cavern would have begun in Zedekiah’s Cave, an immense underground arm of the quarry that extends some 750 feet into the heart of Mount Moriah. He believed that the ark would have been disguised, carried through the streets from the temple mount (perhaps masquerading as a funeral procession), lowered down through a secret passage into Zedekiah’s cave, and taken to its hiding place from there. Rood’s hypothesis on the other hand would require a tunnel (presumably built under Solomon’s directive) from beneath the Holy of Holies to Zedekiah’s cave—a distance of some 1,500 feet—and from there to the place where Wyatt discovered it. Either way, the passageway from Zedekiah’s cave would have been carefully concealed to keep the Babylonians from finding it.

At this point you're asking, as I did, "Why didn't I see all of this announced on the evening news? Why is the greatest archeological find since King Tut's tomb still virtually unknown? Why haven't the ark of the covenant and the other pieces been brought out?" After all of Wyatt's years of labor, there isn't a shred of physical proof that the ark of the covenant has been found. The photographs that were taken were all mysteriously overexposed—blurred images of unidentifiable shapes (though the cave walls and ceiling in the pictures are perfectly clear). No one has actually seen it but Ron Wyatt himself, and Yahweh has now called him home. (And in case you're wondering if I let the storyteller in me run amok with the narrative, let me assure you that I had the entire account vetted in 2003 by Ron's widow, Mary Nell Wyatt, who was on the scene in Jerusalem during part of the excavation process.)

God impressed upon Wyatt in the years prior to his death that these things would be made public—and play their part in Yahweh's plan—in His good time and not before. Ron was content with that. Others were not—at least five people have mysteriously died while attempting to exploit the find. The Israeli authorities are naturally reluctant to pursue anything with the explosive emotional potential of the ark of the covenant. Wars have started over less. So for now, the site remains undisturbed; Wyatt's entrance to his discovery is hidden. Wyatt Archaeological Research, Inc. (www.wyattmuseum.com) is making plans to continue Ron's work, but they, like their founder, are content to wait upon Yahweh's timing.

And what is Yahweh waiting for? I think it can be safely assumed that He is not interested in having the ark of the covenant—*His* covenant—hailed off to some museum and displayed like a cheap trinket for people to gawk at. *Don't forget to pick up your gold-anodized plastic replica of the ark at the museum gift shop—Get 'em while they're hot.* No, I think he has something a bit more provocative in mind.

It was an eye-opener to me to discover that most Jews today could care less if the temple ever gets rebuilt. It's not so much that they're opposed to it, but they can't see that it would do anything for them. After all, many Jews are practicing atheists, and many of those who are not have devised clever ways to help them cope with the fact that without the temple, they've got no mechanism for atoning for their sins as the Torah prescribes. They couldn't keep the Law of Moses if they tried. Willingly unaware that Yahweh has already fulfilled the Law with the sacrifice of Yahshua, today's devout Jews must engage in a regimen of intense mental gymnastics in order to deal with the fatal conundrum: God has apparently made it impossible to do what He's required them to do. That's why they find it easier to merely follow the traditions that have been handed down to them; they observe their Passover Seders, wear canvas shoes on Yom Kippur, and refrain

from eating bacon cheeseburgers...but they don't dare to think too deeply about their sins.

Realistically, this has been the status-quo for Jews since long before the A.D. 70 sack of Jerusalem. It goes all the way back to their 586 B.C. deportation to Babylon. Without the ark of the covenant upon which to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices, they were just going through the motions, like playing soccer without a ball. How could they be sure their sins were being atoned? They weren't performing the rituals properly, and they knew it.

The rituals, though, were never more than symbols, pictures, rehearsals of something else Yahweh had planned. Their prophets had told them that Yahweh was never interested in the blood of bulls and goats, only their love, shown through their obedience. But they never really got it. **"With what shall I come before Yahweh, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"** (Micah 6:6-8) That being said, the letter of the Law still required the ark of the covenant to be there if the temple sacrifices were to be performed "for real." Without it, there's not much point.

But what if the ark were found? What if every Jew on earth suddenly *knew* that it was sitting in a safe place somewhere in Jerusalem, ready to resume its ancient role in the atonement for their sins? Would that change their attitude toward building the temple? I think it would. Instead of a mere handful of zealous enthusiasts like the Temple Faithful (who tried unsuccessfully to blow up the Dome of the Rock a few years back posing as National Geographic researchers) I think the majority of the world's Jews would now find themselves in favor of rebuilding their holy shrine. Even the atheists would have to think twice. Fundamentalist Muslims, of course, wouldn't like the idea very much.

To get the job done, it would take the greatest feat of diplomatic daring-do of all time. What kind of man could pull it off? The good news is that just such a man is prophesied in the Bible. The bad news is that he's Satan's answer to Yahshua: the Antichrist. Remember what the Antichrist wants to do? He wants to be accepted—worshipped—as the world's Messiah. And how will he do this? **"He sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."** (II Thessalonians 2:4) For that he needs a "temple of God," and something to sit upon that will show the world that he is God. What better than the ark of the covenant—the mercy seat? You can't say you weren't warned.

So we've established that the third temple will be built, a project instigated by the Antichrist, hailed by the Jews, and agreed to (perhaps grudgingly, and unquestionably with deceit) by the Muslims. The temple services and sacrifices will be reinstated. And between the time the temple is "opened for business" and the time that the Antichrist declares himself to be God, the temple will function much as it did during the days of Herod—lots of pomp, heavy on the pageantry. The new Jewish priesthood will be giving the Vatican a run for its money.

Will the ark Ron Wyatt found be a part of all that? I'm speculating, of course, but I doubt it seriously. I'm certain Yahweh won't allow the ark to be moved until and unless He's good and ready. After all, it has been sprinkled with the most precious substance on earth, the blood of Yahshua. Maybe it will never be moved. But it doesn't have to be for the Antichrist to capitalize on the situation. For him to achieve his purposes, all he has to do is make the world believe it's there in his new Holy of Holies. If he can't move the real thing, he'll simply have a replica made.

I imagine that some of the Jews will initially have a problem with gentile participation in the building of their holy shrine. But if they look back into their history they'll begin to realize that gentiles have always had a part to play. The tabernacle in the wilderness was "funded" by gentiles (Egyptians) who gave gifts to the departing Israelite slaves after the tenth plague took their firstborn sons; it was their way of encouraging the Jews to go away and never come back. The immense wealth that David poured into Solomon's temple was derived from the conquest of the surrounding pagan gentile nations. The second temple, though much humbler than Solomon's, was made possible by the good graces of the Persians, who had inherited the Jewish captives from the Babylonians. And Herod's magnificent remodeling of T2 was the transparent tactic of a gentile king who wanted to placate and impress his Jewish subjects.

The new temple will become the center ring of a huge media circus, of course. Its reopening will be the biggest "religious news" story since Constantine. But the world will take one look at the bloody animal sacrifices that have been reinstated and declare the whole thing primitive, cruel, and evil. A new wave of anti-Semitism will begin to feed upon the graphic carnage that's happening up there on the temple mount. The blood of bulls and goats will lubricate the hate machine, but its fuel will be the same thing that drives the persecution of the new Christians: the implied need for salvation, of atonement for sin. The very idea that there's a God who has standards of behavior, a God who wants his creation to live righteously, will be ridiculed. The editorials will rant: *Religious traditions are fine if you need them to feel good about yourself, if you need a crutch to get you*

through the day. But when you sacrifice an innocent lamb and say that it's atoning for your sins, you're calling us sinners, too. That's hateful and mean spirited, and it needs to be stopped....

One question remains. Is the temple sponsored by the Antichrist *The* temple, the one from which Yahshua will reign during the Millennium? (I know, I *know*. I haven't established any of that yet. Trust me; it's coming.) The answer is no.

T3, the Tribulation temple, is mentioned only once in Revelation: **"Then I [John] was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."** (Revelation 11:1-2) In John's vision, he was told to measure the temple proper, but to disregard the surrounding unsanctified courtyard. This development dovetails nicely with the hypothesis that the Antichrist will turn the temple mount into a multi-religion ecumenical center. Strangely, we are not told what dimensions John came up with. Why?

First, some background. In the final chapters of Ezekiel we're given a very detailed description of the temple and its environs—and indeed the whole geographical layout of Israel, a plan that is obviously Millennial, (that is, it clearly can't become a reality until Yahshua has returned). There we read, **"When you divide the land by lot into inheritance, you shall set apart a district for Yahweh, a holy section of the land; its length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits, and the width ten thousand. It shall be holy throughout its territory all around. Of this there shall be a square plot for the sanctuary, five hundred by five hundred rods, [The word "rods" is supplied; "cubits" is probably the correct meaning. Compare this with Ezekiel 42:20 if you don't believe me] with fifty cubits around it for an open space.... You shall appoint as the property of the city an area five thousand cubits wide and twenty-five thousand long, adjacent to the district of the holy section; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel."** (Ezekiel 45:1-2, 6) I'll get into the millennial temple later (*much* later), but for now, merely observe that Yahweh has set aside a territory roughly eight miles long and five wide, none of which was "given to the gentiles." Obviously, John and Ezekiel are talking about two different things. (In case you were wondering, the 500 by 500 cubit sanctuary plot *does* fit on the temple mount—barely—but the Dome of the Rock would have to go.)

So why didn't John give us the dimensions of T3? I believe Yahweh is saying, "As of now, this temple is mine; I will regard the sacrifices made there in the spirit in which they're offered. I won't lay claim to the surrounding area now—I'll be back for that in a few years." When John reports that **"They [the gentiles] will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months,"** (Revelation 11:2) we are being given a bit of intriguing information and a very significant clue as to the timeline. Remember, what we call the "Tribulation" is, according to the seventy-weeks

prophecy of Daniel 9, a seven-year period, in the middle of which the “covenant with many” is broken. In other words, forty-two months into it—the halfway point—is when the Antichrist will seize control of Jerusalem, leaving forty-two months left to go. This second half is referred to as the “Great Tribulation” (perhaps implying that as tribulations go, the first half may have been *good*, but it wasn’t *great*). We get this phrase from Matthew 24:21, where Yahshua says of this time, **“For then [i.e., after the abomination of desolation] there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”** Considering the tribulation the world has seen in the past, that’s a pretty scary thought.

So which forty-two month period was John talking about, the first or the second? In a very real sense, the holy city has been dominated by gentiles ever since the Babylonians invaded it. And just because the Israelis took it back in 1967, it doesn’t mean the city hasn’t continued being “trampled down by gentiles,” most significantly, Arab Muslims. I believe the phrase means, **“They will tread the holy city underfoot for [only] forty-two [more] months,”** after which time they will tread it down no longer. As we shall see, Jews in Judea will have to run for their lives when they witness the abomination of desolation, so we can assume the gentiles will still be there. Therefore, John is identifying the second half, or “Great” Tribulation—or at least a period of time that overlaps it to a great degree. (It will become apparent as we put the pieces together that Yahweh has given us a very precise timeline, far more detailed than mere first-half/second-half generalities.)

But I’m getting ahead of my story—about three years ahead. All I really want to do at this point is to establish that the temple *will* be rebuilt by the Antichrist (or under his protection) but this temple *won’t* be utilized by the reigning Messiah after His return in glory. A lot will happen between the time T3 is built and the middle of the Tribulation.

There’s another loose end that needs to be tied up, and this is as good a time as any. I’ve stated unequivocally that people will come to a saving knowledge of Yahshua after the rapture. It’s a good news-bad news story, for the primary evidence for this lies in the prophecy of their martyrdom: **“When He [Yahshua] opened the fifth seal, I [John] saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to**

them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”

(Revelation 6:9-11) I believe that “fellow servants” probably refers to the gentile martyrs, while “brethren” means Jews slain for their newfound belief and trust in Yahweh. We are within the last of Daniel’s seventy weeks here; Yahweh is dealing with the Jews separately from the Tribulation (or Laodicean) Church.

At some point, the last Tribulation martyr will have given his life. **“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’”** (Revelation 7:9-14)

The scene is in heaven, so it’s clear that we are witnessing the souls of those who have been killed for their faith. One detail should ring a loud bell. Remember what Christ said to the apostate church at Laodicea? **“I counsel you to buy from Me...white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.”** (Revelation 3:18) Here we meet those who took his advice, opting to sell what they could not keep in order to buy what they could never lose.

But where did this “great multitude” hear the truth? In a previous chapter, I described how the first post-rapture believers might have figured it out using logic and clues left behind by the missing Christians. But I can state with grim certainty that this method will be hit or miss at best, and won’t have a chance in places that didn’t host significant numbers of believers before the rapture. As time goes on, truth will be harder and harder to come by. Christian writings will come to be considered seditious and inflammatory. The Internet will no doubt be “cleansed” of seditious Christian heresies—like the truth. And the Bible itself will be suppressed, much as it was by the church herself in the middle ages. At best, it will be relegated to the ranks of quaint ancient lore and put on the shelf along with Homer and Plato. At worst, it will be burned in the streets.

But God is not without resources. If people can’t get to the Word, the Word will have to come to them: **“Then I [John] saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth,**

the sea and springs of water.” (Revelation 14:6-7) I have a hunch that angelic preaching will intensify as the Tribulation wears on. The reference to “springs of water,” though it may seem to us an odd thing to say, will hit especially hard in the later years, when the earth has become such an ecological disaster area that even getting a drink of clean fresh water is problematical.

It has been suggested that the “angel” (Greek *aggelos*, a messenger) flying through the sky is a communications satellite, broadcasting the gospel. Although that’s certainly possible, my opinion is that the angel is just that, a spirit sent from God to deliver His message. Yahweh has used this sort of messenger many times before, though never to the whole world. But the times call for the biggest guns in the arsenal. Yahshua described these dark days: **“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”** (Matthew 24:9-14) Some things never change. God is not willing that any should perish—even now, with lawlessness abounding—so He makes sure that the whole world hears the Good News, using His most reliable messenger (one, by the way, whose signal the Antichrist can’t jamb).

The angelic preacher isn’t the only way Yahweh intends to get the word out. At some point in the Tribulation, He sets aside 144,000 young Jewish men for His purposes, “sealing” them, that is, placing the mark of His ownership upon them. John witnessed their selection and sealing. After being shown a sweeping view of Tribulation torments—the first six “seal” judgments—he was shown this vignette:

“After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.’” (Revelation 7:1-3) I believe that John is being shown a flashback, or at least a parenthesis. “After these things I saw...” refers to the order in which he was shown things, not necessarily the order in which they will occur. The sixth seal, as we shall see, depicts the horrible realization, universal among men, that all the bad things that have been happening to the earth are actually the wrath of God. There is reason to believe mankind

doesn't figure that out until near the end. But I think what's happening here is that before the winds of God's judgment are released—before one blade of grass is damaged—something will be done to protect the “servants of God” from the calamity that will soon surround them.

Who are these people? **“And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.”** (Revelation 7:4-8) It's amazing how many groups have come out and declared that *they* were these 144,000 servants of God. *Never mind what scripture says; being singled out like that has a nice ring to it, don't you think?* But as long as you're sealed by God, you cannot die. When the first Jehovah's Witness died, he proved that their claim to this special prophetic anointing was a lie.

I don't know how Yahweh could have made it any clearer: these are all Jews (or more correctly, Israelites) 12,000 each from twelve tribes of Israel. It doesn't really matter if the participants know what tribe they're from, although at some level, the record is written in their DNA. God knows who they are.

The list of tribes is a little strange. If you recall, Jacob/Israel had twelve sons, but one of them, Joseph, received a double portion of the inheritance. Joseph's tribe was therefore split in two and named after his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. That made, for all intents and purposes, thirteen tribes; but then the tribe of Levi (Moses' tribe) was set apart as being Yahweh's (that is, God claimed all the firstborn of Israel, man and beast alike, but He chose to substitute the tribe of Levi for the firstborn of all the tribes—Numbers 3:12-13). So what do we see in John's list of twelve? There's no Ephraim, but there is a tribe of Joseph, so with Manasseh in the list their double portion remains. Levi is in the list. The tribe that's missing is Dan.

Are the Danites extinct by the time the prophecies of Revelation get fulfilled? No: we will learn from the millennial geography lessons of Ezekiel 48 that Dan is still around—all of the tribes are. So what heinous crime did the Danites commit that got them aced out of the list? Bad things can be traced back to virtually every tribe—even Judah, Yahshua's tribe. But if we look for what sets Dan apart from the other tribes, we soon discover a rebellious streak a mile wide. Perhaps the most famous Danite was Samson, who, like the 144,000, was gifted and set apart for God's purposes. But Samson wasn't known for his sensitivity to the leading of

Yahweh—he was known for his headstrong and self-centered misuse of God’s gifts, an insubordinate nature that killed him in the end. Dan was the one tribe who, after being allotted their territory in Canaan, along the coast just north of Judah, decided after a time that the competition was too tough for them. So they sent spies to the far north, found a poorly defended city (Laish), invaded it, and renamed it Dan. At the same time they showed a remarkable lack of loyalty to Yahweh, embracing the idolatry of the area as soon as they arrived—and holding on to it for centuries until they were swept away by the Assyrians. The whole sordid affair is recorded in Judges 18. The Danites proved that they couldn’t be trusted with the oracles of Yahweh. Perhaps that’s why He chose not to let them participate at the end, when refusal to compromise with the world would become the greatest of virtues. *My, what a long memory You have!*

We see the 144,000 again a bit later in John’s narrative, this time at their moment of triumph. **“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.”** (Revelation 14:1) Here we’re given more insight about their “sealing.” In this scene, Yahshua has returned in glory to the earth, and He’s seen standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. With Him are the 144,000; every last one of them made it through to the end of the Tribulation alive, and they’re all in town. That’s what it means to be sealed, to have Yahweh’s name written on one’s forehead—it means you’re His possession, and you’re under His protection. Is this writing visible? I have no idea. Many expositors insist that it is; I suspect that it’s not. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in Daniel 3, you don’t need a tattoo on your face for God to protect you.

“And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Revelation 14:2-5) This is admittedly a tough one to figure out. John was just looking at a scene on the earth; has it shifted to heaven? Not exactly. I think what we’re seeing here is a rare interplay between earth and heaven. Standing there on Mount Zion with Yahshua, the 144,000 hear the audible voice of God from heaven. This is followed by the sound of the heavenly praise band, singing a song that only they can comprehend.

In these verses, we’re given a bit more information about them. Because they are described as “virgins, not defiled with women,” we can deduce that all 144,000 are men, and that most of them are young—called to this service in their

teens (SF3). This is admittedly an extrapolation. The logic is that (1) because they're on the earth, they were unsaved (for whatever reason) at the time of the rapture. (2) The chances of men being both separated from God and remaining virgins (Greek: *parthenos*—a virgin, whether female or male; a chaste person; someone who has abstained from all uncleanness or idolatry) past the age of twenty or twenty-five in the world we live in are slim. (3) The rapture would be more of an epiphany for them if they were young and impressionable; it's an event likely to have a big impact on their spiritual outlook. (4) If there is a gap of a few years between the rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation, Jewish lads past their bar-Mitzvah but under about seventeen years old at the time of the rapture would make ideal candidates.

Interestingly, we aren't told much in Revelation about what these folks will do. There has been speculation about 144,000 "Jewish Billy Grahams" evangelizing the earth. I wish that were true, but I don't think it is, at least not in any organizational sense. These guys won't be filling stadiums and televising the gospel freely to millions of homes. To get closer to the truth, try to imagine what someone with the anointing of a Jonathan Edwards or D.L. Moody would do as an individual if he found himself in Iran or Saudi Arabia. He would share the love of Christ one-on-one, hiding out from the authorities when he had to, preaching boldly on the street corners when he could, and relying on God's grace and the shelter and supply of His people to keep him alive until tomorrow.

That's how it will start. But the 144,000 will discover through trial and error (their trial, their adversaries' error) that they are indeed under Yahweh's protection—they can't be touched. This knowledge will give them the boldness to speak out in situations that would (and will) get ordinary men killed. Some will receive their words with joy; others will reject the message. It bears mention that even though these people have Yahweh's hedge of protection around them, that's not necessarily true of the people who are in a position to shelter them. They will have to make a choice: to do what they know is right, despite the risks, or to play it safe.

Yahshua sent His twelve disciples out on just such a mission, giving them very clear instructions as to what to do and say. But before He was done, it was abundantly clear that His words were not just for the present group. They would apply to some extent throughout the church age, and then to the 144,000—*especially* to the 144,000.

"These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" Will the 144,000 likewise be sent only to the lost sheep of Israel? Considering the fact that Yahweh is once again dealing with them "officially" within this seven-year period (see Daniel 9), and noting that they will

all be in Jerusalem to meet Him, it seems likely that they are. If this is the case, it would work out to roughly one witness for every one hundred Jews alive on earth at the start of the tribulation. Don't forget, the angels have the gentiles covered. **"And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"** (Matthew 10:5-15)

On the other hand, their testimony will not be lost on the gentiles. Even if the 144,000 are sent only to the Jews, remember that (at least for now) half the world's Jews live outside of Israel—among gentiles. Here's what Yahshua said next: **"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes."** (Matthew 10:16-23) Clearly these will be dangerous times. Gestapo tactics will be the order of the day. These witnesses of Yahweh's can't be killed, it's true, but harboring one of them—even giving him a cup of cold water—can get you in big trouble with the authorities. And it won't require anything as sophisticated as NSA electronic surveillance to catch you. All it will take is your kids, your parents, your best friend. Many will be sent "downtown" to answer a few routine questions. Many won't come back. *Harboring religious terrorists is a Federal crime, you know.*

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:24-31) When the 144,000 start seeing their protectors getting hauled off, tried, and executed for taking them in, they might be tempted to lay low, to water down the message, to quit. *Everywhere I go, people die for supporting me. Is it worth it?* Yahshua is telling them to speak out boldly, regardless of the apparent consequences. This body is fragile and temporary; it matters not what happens to it. Of critical importance is the condition of the soul and the presence of the spirit. Don't endanger people's eternal destinies by refusing to speak out.

“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man's enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:32-39) Many twentieth-century Christians, especially in America, got very skilled at sitting on the fence, developing a knack for practicing a religion that didn't offend anyone (except Yahweh—see Revelation 3:16). With luck, you could go through your entire professional career without anyone at work finding out you were a follower of Christ. Church and “state” were strictly separated; our jobs were given Monday through Friday, we took Saturday for ourselves, and God got a couple of hours on Sunday morning (unless the weather was really bad—or really good).

Things have changed. Now you either *are* or you *aren't* a follower of Yahshua. (Of course, it was always that way in God's eyes). Don't take me wrong here, but the age of grace is past. Yes, Yahshua is still the only door to the Father, but now that the Tribulation has begun, what you *think* doesn't count for much any more. It's what you *do* that will identify you.

“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. “He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:40-42) The only commentary I can offer on this is something else Yahshua said. I'll revisit this when we reach the end of the Tribulation in our timeline, but for now, I'll give you the Reader's Digest version:

“When the Son of Man sits on His throne of glory, all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You in need like that and we took care of You?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

“Then He will say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was in need and you refused to help Me.’ Then they will say, ‘Lord, when did we neglect You?’ He will answer, ‘Inasmuch as you refused to help the least of these, you neglected Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:31-46, abridged)

It seems likely that the people Christ sees as His surrogates on the earth in these verses are none other than His 144,000 sealed witnesses. They have needs: food, water, shelter, clothing, medical aid, and encouragement—simple things that any decent human being would gladly give another if asked. Yet during these terrible days, many will deny the most basic courtesies to these young men in the name of prudence, political correctness, or self preservation. *I heard about you people on the TV news. They said you were dangerous hate-mongering religious terrorists, and I could get in big trouble just by talking to you. Now get off my front lawn before I call the cops. I’m late for church.*

Chapter 14

Mystery: Babylon

I really wanted to cover the last days chronologically. But there are a few subjects (like angelic preaching and the 144,000 witnesses) that must be handled topically because they develop over, or last throughout, much of the Tribulation period. (And then, of course, there's the fact that I have no earthly idea of precisely when some of these things show up.) I don't feel too bad about it, though; John faced the same problem when he penned the Revelation; apparently, he just wrote things down in the order in which they were shown to him. The book, as far as we can tell, has chronological aspects but is not strictly linear—it's peppered with parentheticals, detours, flashbacks and instant replays from other camera angles. I'll try to provide some sense of the timing as we proceed by correlating Revelation events with prophecies from elsewhere in scripture. In the meantime, forgive me if I skip around a little.

All that being said, note that we're well over halfway through the Revelation when we see one of the primary players for the very first time: **"And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'**" (Revelation 14:8) If we can figure out who or what Babylon is, we'll be well on our way toward understanding what angers Yahweh in this present world. Useful information indeed.

The angel here was referring to scripture: **"Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground."** (Isaiah 21:9) When Isaiah penned these words, Babylon's (i.e., the city's) glory days were still a hundred and fifty years in the future. But by the time John's angel repeated the refrain, Babylon as a political entity had been dead for half a millennium. So it's clear that neither messenger was talking about temporal military or political power. Rather, both passages speak of God's judgment upon idolatry. Fornication or adultery, as we saw in Hosea's prophecy, is invariably a picture of false worship—of giving to another "god" what rightfully belongs exclusively to Yahweh. Isaiah talks about the "carved images of her gods," but idolatry goes beyond the worship of "graven images." It is *anything* that takes the place of God in our lives.

I can't speak for the whole world, but I know Americans pretty well. We worship some very strange things. Of course, there are the big three (power, sex, and money), but we obsess over pointless fluff as well. The toys. The career (or worse, the work itself). The car, the house, the *lawn*, for cryin' out loud. Relationships, recreation, children, friends, health, political causes—even church. I have heard of fundamentalist Christians being accused of worshipping the Bible.

Intrinsically, there's nothing wrong with any of these things—not even power, sex, and money—but if these things obstruct or take the place of our personal relationship with Yahweh, they become wrong; they become our “carved images.” The good things in our lives are gifts from God—they're not supposed to be mistaken for gods themselves.

Babylon, then, is a code word for idolatry. But it's also a physical place (a few miles down the river from Baghdad), with a history that collided with that of God's people on occasion. Some Bible expositors teach that it will rise again as a world power in the last days. And at first glance, a few passages like this one seem to support that view: **“Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, ‘Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth.’ So I asked, ‘What is it?’ And he said, ‘It is a basket that is going forth.’ He also said, ‘This is their resemblance throughout the earth: here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket.’ Then he said, ‘This is Wickedness!’ And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth. Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven. So I said to the angel who talked with me, ‘Where are they carrying the basket?’ And he said to me, ‘To build a house for it in the land of Shinar [Babylon]; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base.”** (Zechariah 5:5-11) God is telling the prophet that he intends to “keep a lid on” the whore of Babylon until her “house” is ready. Is this a literal place, or only a metaphor for the form she will assume in the last days? Let's look carefully at the record.

We first see the city in Genesis, shortly after the flood. **“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another... ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’ But Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And Yahweh said, ‘Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.’ So Yahweh scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of all the earth; and from there Yahweh scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.”** (Genesis 11:1-9)

A cursory reading of this passage might lead you to think that Yahweh was a petty and vindictive God, afraid that people would get so smart they would accomplish great things. So in a jealous fit, He used his magical powers to squash their dreams like a bug, changing their language comprehension so they couldn't

communicate with each other. That picture couldn't be farther from the truth. What actually happened was that Noah's great grandson Nimrod, along with his wife, Semiramis, began a secret cult that deified its founders. It came to be called a "mystery religion" because its hidden doctrines were revealed little by little to its followers—the really nasty stuff remaining a secret until the devotee was too compromised to back out. Yahweh chose to divide the populace to slow this insidious false doctrine's spread among men.

Though the details have been muddled by time and a plethora of conflicting traditions, the religion seems to have been based upon the aggressive personality of Nimrod and the insatiable ambition of Semiramis. Nimrod was known as "a mighty hunter before the Lord," that is, a warrior, a conqueror, a despot—the first of his breed (after the flood, at least). His ruthlessness led to his being worshiped as a demi-god during his lifetime.

Semiramis may have been born of humble stock, but her beauty elevated her to the position of Nimrod's queen. Being the wife of a demi-god had its perks, as you might imagine. But Nimrod died unexpectedly. Faced with seeing her position of power evaporate for want of a male sitting on the throne beside her, Semiramis became pregnant—long after Nimrod's untimely demise (oops)—and bore a son, Tammuz, at the winter solstice. The boy, of course, was claimed to have been miraculously conceived, and he was marketed as the fulfillment of the Messiah prophecy of Genesis 3:15—the seed of the woman who would crush the head of Satan. Semiramis was positioned as the holy (if not quite virgin) mother, the queen of heaven, having been impregnated by her now-fully-deified late husband. This made Semiramis the prototype for the goddess of fertility. Because he was born near the winter solstice, on December 24th or 25th, Tammuz was worshiped as the Sun God, the conqueror of winter's darkness, celebrated by the burning of the "log of the son," or "yule" as it's called in the Chaldean tongue.

Alas, no good scam lasts forever. According to the legend, Tammuz was killed in his fortieth year by a wild boar. (By some accounts, it was Nimrod who was boared to death, but the legend stuck to Tammuz, who was supposedly the reincarnated Nimrod. Other accounts state that Nimrod was slain by Shem (Noah's son) for his idolatry and cut in pieces as a warning.) Satan needed a rebirth or resurrection miracle if he hoped to pass his boy off as the Messiah (remember, the Genesis 3 prophecy had said the serpent would only "bruise his heel"), so Tammuz was said to have been brought back to life as a miraculous egg that descended from heaven into the Euphrates River, from which hatched a rabbit. Tammuz' birth was celebrated every December 25th by hanging silver and gold-covered balls upon an evergreen tree. The phallic inference was lost on no one. It was a fertility cult, after all.

Every spring, the faithful would feign sorrow, “weeping for Tammuz,” for forty days (cf. Ezekiel 8:14), one day for every year of his life. At the end of the mourning period, though, there was a day of great rejoicing for the reincarnated “son of god.” That day they would ritually slay and eat the boar that had killed Tammuz. There was also a ritual in which the high priest of Babylon would impregnate a lucky “volunteer,” whose child could be expected to be born the following winter. Here’s where the thing got really demonic. The highlight of this annual spring festival of Semiramis (who was also known as Astarte by the Assyrians, Inanna by the Sumerians, Asthoreth by the Caananites, and Ishtar by the Akkadians) was when the priest would ritually kill the three-month-old baby who had been conceived during the previous year’s celebration, dyeing Ishtar eggs red in the innocent child’s blood.

I don’t know how to break it to you, but your “Christian” holiday traditions are a lie, right out of the pit of hell. It was not Yahshua who was born on the 25th of December; it was Tammuz and every subsequent permutation of the “sun god.” Evergreen trees hung with festive balls, holiday candles, mistletoe, yule logs—even the Christmas goose—all have pagan origins, and they’re all an abomination to Yahweh. (All of the historical evidence points to a birthday for Yahshua at the Feast of Tabernacles, in the autumn of 2 B.C.) And Easter? Forty-day Lenten fasts preceding the big day (and lascivious carnivals preceding Lent), colored eggs, and the traditional Easter ham were all instituted to honor not Christ, but Satan’s false redeemer, Tammuz. It’s no wonder Yahweh declared swine’s flesh unclean in the Torah.

All of this was Satan’s counterfeit of Yahweh’s plan for the redemption of mankind. The center of worship for Nimrod’s mystery religion was Babel, or Babylon, one of four cities he founded on the plain of Shinar, in the Euphrates river valley. Yahweh, of course, could have wiped out Nimrod’s little scheme on day one. But as we have seen time and again, God is (if you’ll pardon the expression) pro-choice. He won’t force anyone to love him, but rather lets us choose, for good or ill, and then usually gives us time to repent of our bad choices. That’s exactly what He did here. The earth’s languages were divided in the days of Peleg, who was six generations removed from Noah—two generations past the time of Nimrod (though on a different branch of the family tree). And why did Yahweh choose to split up the families of the world like this? It was primarily to separate—to keep holy—the people through whom He would someday provide the Messiah. We see this pattern of separation and isolation recurring in scripture, first here, then with Abraham, then with Moses at the Exodus, then with Joshua at the time of the conquest of Canaan. And what were the Canaanites doing that was so horrible they had to be wiped out? They were following the mystery religion of Babylon!

The city of Babylon went through its ups and downs (as city-states are wont to do), finally to reach its glory days under Nebuchadnezzar II in the sixth century B.C. At the very height of its power, as the Chaldeans were carting Yahweh's rebellious people off in chains, the prophet Jeremiah, "Mr. Diplomacy," declared concerning his nation's new masters, **"They shall not take from you a stone for a corner nor a stone for a foundation, but you shall be desolate forever," says Yahweh.** He gave the quartermaster of the captive Jewish King Zedekiah a message to take with him to his new home in exile. **"Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, 'When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words, then you shall say, 'O Yahweh, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.' Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates. Then you shall say, 'Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.'"**" (Jeremiah 51:26, 60-64) "Desolate forever," and "sink and not rise" sound to me like the *city* of Babylon is finished as a political entity. It will never rise from the sands of Iraq to be anything more than an archaeological dig, a tourist attraction. The *spirit* of Babylon however, the insidious fraud meant to replace Yahweh in the hearts of men, is a different story. That never left.

Let's rejoin John as he copes with information overload from one of the angels: **"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.'"** (Revelation 17:1-2) John's introduction to this "harlot" tells us several things. She exerts her seductive influence over both Israel and the gentile nations, but her "base of operations," her "seat of power," is among the gentiles. ("Waters," or the sea, invariably symbolizes gentiles in scripture, while "land" or "earth" represents Israel.) Then we see that political rulers and common citizens alike have been "committing fornication" with the harlot. That, as we have seen, is a picture of abandoning our proper relationship with Yahweh our God for a dead-end liaison with someone else—*anyone* else. It's hard to find appropriately evil-sounding words for this in English because we have trivialized the crime of adultery. We call it an "affair," or a "fling," or we try to whitewash the filth by using clinical terms like "marital infidelity." But it's betrayal, pure and simple—treason, treachery. The angel, however, tells John that the harlot is about to experience judgment.

And notice something else: Whereas the leaders were consciously and purposely cheating on God, the inhabitants of their lands had to be “put under the influence” first. They (that is, *we*) have been drugged, duped, lied to, and seduced by our politicians, our media, our cultural heroes, and even some of our clergy. They have put us into a drunken stupor with sweet sips of intoxicating fairy tales (e.g., “humans are the glorious end product of eons of evolution.... There’s no god directing our destiny.... Marriage may be a lifestyle you can choose to add convenience and gratification to your life, but homosexuality and ‘serial monogamy’ work just as well.... There is no real right or wrong way to live your life, because there is no such thing as absolute truth.... It doesn’t matter what god you believe in, so long as you are sincere in your beliefs....”). It’s no excuse, you understand; we are no less guilty. But when the whore of Babylon keeps trying to buy us drinks, woe to the bartender who keeps pouring them.

“So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” (Revelation 17:3-5) Now there’s something you don’t see every day. (Or do you?)

The symbolism is flying hot and heavy here, so let’s try to break down the scene into its component parts. The woman, the harlot, is seen sitting on a “scarlet beast.” This beast is doubtless the same thing we saw back a few chapters **“having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.”** (Revelation 13:1) In other words, it’s the Antichrist and his kingdom. The woman is seen riding the beast, so it’s clear they’re not one and the same. She’s in control, or at least that’s the way things appear. She’s probably got her sharpest spurs on. *Yee-haw!* This harlot has apparently been doing a land-office business, for she’s grown rich plying her trade, the *real* oldest profession, seducing people away from the God who loves them. She may be nothing but a two-bit spiritual whore, but her bag of quarters is full to the brim. And although she’s been a mystery, able to disguise her true identity and intentions since she turned her first trick in the Garden of Eden, John now sees the I.D. badge that’s tattooed on her forehead: “Hello. I’m a really bad person,” or words to that effect. This is the strongest language in the entire Bible. God apparently doesn’t like her very much.

And why, exactly, is that? **“I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”** (Revelation 17:6) Okay; that would explain it. Whomever she couldn’t seduce, she killed—or at least tried to. Sounds exactly like Potiphar’s wife back in Genesis 39. John probably recognized that the harlot represented

false religion, misplaced faith, but this scene didn't compute. How could a religious entity persecute the saints of God and still prosper? Remember, John was from a culture that more or less equated riches and success with blessings from God. He was having trouble figuring out how such a nasty woman could have gotten so far in life.

“But the angel said to me, ‘Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.’” (Revelation 17:7-8) It will transpire that the “mystery” that the angel promised to sort out had little to do with who the harlot was or how she got so successful, but rather how she would end up. Same thing for the beast. The messenger left the rest for us to ponder on our own. And ponder we should, for the only way to avoid the harlot's snare and the beast's rage is to know who they are and what they're up to. One thing is now made clear: the “beast” upon which the nasty woman “sits” (controls and dominates) is *demonic*. He will have been incarcerated in the abyss—which tells us he's not Satan *per se* (who has never been locked up—yet), but a particularly dangerous and destructive demon.

For the post-rapture world, the particulars won't be a mere academic exercise. The harlot by this time will have already achieved her goals; it'll be too late to stop her from getting “drunk on the blood of the saints” (something she has been doing since Nimrod's day). And although the true Church will have been removed from the earth by this time, the new believers who come to faith after the rapture, the Tribulation saints of Laodicea and Israel, will be powerless to effect change or protect themselves from her. All they'll be able to do is support each other and wait out the storm. What matters for us is that we understand that Yahweh *will* deal with both the harlot of Babylon and the beast she rides. This much is clear: the unsaved multitudes will “marvel” at the beast's wonderfulness (that is, the human form in which the demon will present himself—the Antichrist). Men will weep with joy in his presence and women will swoon at his feet. The newly redeemed will not be similarly impressed; they'll merely be afraid.

The bottomless pit, or abyss (Greek: *abussos*), from which the beast hails is mentioned four places in Revelation. In chapter 9 it's seen as a sort of holding tank for some rather interesting demonic beasties whom we'll discuss in due time. In chapter 11, it is identified, as it is here in 17, as the home town of the beast. It is seen one last time in chapter 20 as the place where Satan himself will be bound for a thousand years.

There's also a telling little incident recorded in Luke: **“Then [Yahshua and His disciples] sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He**

stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!' For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Legion,' because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss." (Luke 8:26-31)

And one more interesting reference presents itself. **"The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day..."** (Jude, v.6) Here it is made clear that demons are really fallen, rebellious angels—those who wanted what Yahweh had not given to them.

Apparently, then, the bottomless pit, or abyss, is a place where some—but not all—demonic spirits have been incarcerated, awaiting their final judgment in chains and darkness. Whether or not they're consigned to this place during the time of man seems to depend on how dangerous or destructive they are to us. Yahshua allowed Legion's demons to go into a herd of pigs (who were only good for Tammuz worship and making footballs anyway) instead of sending them directly to the bottomless pit. Thus they presumably weren't all that bad as demons go (although try convincing the poor guy whom they had possessed all that time). It is also terrifyingly obvious that these demons from the abyss can get out on parole from time to time, at Yahweh's discretion, of course.

Back in Revelation, the angel continues explaining to John what's going on. But he's not handing him the answers on a silver platter. The angel merely points out the puzzle pieces; he doesn't say where they fit in. There are almost as many theories about the meaning of this passage as there are expositors, so I can't be dogmatic about its interpretation. But what I've found is intriguing, to say the least. **"Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition."**

(Revelation 17:9-11) The angel says that the beast "was, and is not," and "will be" again as he makes his way out of the bottomless pit on his journey toward perdition. He is not, and yet is. Well, I'm certainly glad we've got *that* cleared up.

Okay, just kidding. We'll tackle this mess, though it doesn't look easy. When the beast is said to have been, but is not, and yet is, it is clear (at least to me) that he is a *demon* who has been released from the abyss in the past, has been sent back there for bad behavior, and will be released again during the Tribulation.

The reason he was consigned to the abyss in the first place would have been that he did great evil through a man he possessed and controlled sometime in the past. If you think about it, history often notes men with the same evil character profile showing up sporadically. Could it be that they were possessed by the same demon? This seems to be the case with “the beast.” As in the case with Legion, a demon takes over the persona of the man he inhabits.

Contrary to popular opinion, however, this demon cannot be Satan himself, for they have divergent destinies. For all practical purposes, the beast ceases to be harmful to anyone while he’s locked up (which Satan has never been). But he’s especially nasty, so God keeps him chained in the abyss most of the time. This more or less ends the debate about whether or not the Antichrist is demon possessed. He is, but not by Lucifer.

The beast’s seven heads are now identified, sort of. The angel says the seven heads are indicative of two separate things, though apparently related somehow. The first is a location, the place where the woman, the harlot who rides the beast, is enthroned. Thus the beast and the woman are connected here; it’s as if they’re perceived as being the same thing, though we’ll soon see that they most definitely are not. The place (or what it represents) is described as “sitting on seven mountains.” A religious system influential enough to control governments? One sitting on seven hills? This seems easy enough. The seven mountains most likely mean Rome, legendary for its seven hills, Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal. Maybe. You see, as Rome expanded, it annexed more territory, and more hills—Janiculum and Pincium, for example. But the moniker “the city of seven hills” stuck. I for one am willing to buy this theory; after all, the “windy city” is still Chicago, even on dead-calm days.

A blind man could see where this is heading. So it’s worth noting that although the Roman *empire* reigned supreme, the Roman Catholic Church as such did not exist in John’s day. The local body of believers there to which Paul had written his epistle was just one of many churches scattered throughout the empire at the time, no more influential than the assemblies at Antioch or Ephesus. John had no ax to grind here, no hidden Protestant agenda. He’s just reporting what he’s seen and heard. If the shoe fits....

The seven kings are a bit more problematical. Many expositors have tried to tie the kings to past and future gentile kingdoms: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the revived end-times Roman empire alluded to in Daniel. But a careful examination of this list reveals some apparent flaws. Yes, in John’s time, Rome “is,” and will come around again for another go—a short one. But the beast, who “is not,” is said to be the eighth, and is at the same time one of the seven. If Rome “is,” and the beast “is not,” (though he “was” previously) then the beast can’t be Rome. Besides, nations don’t go to “perdition,” in the sense of

being consigned to hell, which seems to be the meaning of the phrase. Demonic spirits (and people) do. I think we need to look for another explanation.

A theory that more directly illuminates the “Rome-on-seven-hills” idea is that the seven kings are seven emperors of Rome. Several sources I consulted named Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero as the five who had fallen; the sixth, the one who “is” is Domitian (who was reigning during the traditional date for the penning of the Revelation, about A.D. 90-95); and the Antichrist is the seventh, who after being slain and resurrected (we’ll get to that in a bit) is also the eighth. Although I think we’re getting warm, this hypothesis also has its flaws. According to Suetonius, there were not seven, but *twelve* Caesars from Julius to Domitian. Sure, you can discount several of them (four of ’em claimed the throne more or less simultaneously in A.D. 68/69), but you can hardly sweep Caesar Augustus under the rug. He reigned all the way from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14. You’d also have a hard time ignoring Vespasian and his son Titus (of let’s-go-sack-Jerusalem fame).

But like I said, I think we’re close. The first thing to note is that one of the seven Kings, the sixth, was said to be in power in John’s day. “One is.” That establishes beyond a doubt that Rome and/or its ruler(s) are in view. But where does the line of “kings” start? The first real emperor of Rome was not Julius Caesar (who technically led the empire under the auspices of the Republic), but his great-nephew and adopted son Octavian, who assumed the honorific title Augustus Caesar. Number two was Tiberius, in whose time Yahshua of Nazareth ministered in the Roman province of Judea. Next came Gaius, a.k.a. Caligula, followed by Claudius. Number five was Nero, whose life bears further study—he was the first Roman emperor to officially persecute the Church. Nero’s suicide in 68 left the empire in a chaotic leadership vacuum that took a year to fill. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius all got their shot but couldn’t manage to consolidate their grasp on power (which is admittedly hard to do after you’re dead), and thus couldn’t properly be called “kings.” The man who ended up on the throne was a soldier, a commoner: Vespasian, who ruled from 69 to 79—interrupting his invasion of Judea to seize the throne. If you’re keeping score, you’ve noticed that he’s in position number six, making him the one who “is,” that is, the king who was in charge when John had his vision. That would make number seven, the king who has “not yet come,” Titus, the destroyer of Jerusalem and its temple. Did he “continue for a short time,” as the prophecy said? He reigned from June 24, A.D. 79 to September 13, 81—less than two and a half years. I’d call that a big yes.

Bear in mind that Yahweh’s prophecies don’t deal with the world in general, no matter how significant certain episodes may seem to us. He only reveals events in the context of His plan of redemption. So even though Julius Caesar was a military genius pivotal in the history of Rome, even though the senile and

parsimonious Galba, the scheming bankrupt senator Otho, and the slothful epicurean Vitellius technically held the throne for a few months each, and even though Rome continued to seat “emperors” on its throne for hundreds of years after Titus, none of this is germane to prophecy.

But Yahshua was born during (1) Augustus Caesar’s reign. He ministered, died and rose again during that of (2) Tiberius. His Church gained a foothold among the Jews during the reign of (3) Caligula, and the first of millions of gentiles were reached under (4) Claudius. (5) Nero was the first to show God’s people what it was like to endure systematic unjust tribulation for the name of Christ. And (6) Vespasian, with his son (7) Titus, brought the curtain down on the generation of Jews who had rejected Yahshua their Messiah, leaving not one stone of their temple atop another, precisely as He had predicted. Thus every Roman emperor after Titus is beside the point, from God’s perspective. (Okay, Constantine counts, but not in this context.) So **“There are seven kings. Five [Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero] have fallen, one [Vespasian] is, and the other [Titus] has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.”**

If you’re sharp though, you’ve noticed that this scenario has its own little snag. Tradition suggests that John received his Patmos vision in the 90s, not the 70s. He was exiled to the Aegean island during a great persecution—presumably Domitian’s. But traditions get garbled. What if he were sent off under *Nero’s* purge instead, in the 60s, when Peter and Paul bought the farm? That would have put John on Patmos during Vespasian’s reign, a revered elder well into his seventies but not quite the ancient apostle of legend—yet. (Tertullian, by the way, agrees with me. And everyone concurs that he didn’t *die* on Patmos.) That, my friends, makes everything fit like a glove. Except for our precious traditions. Of course, those traditions came down to us from the same people who brought us Christmas, Easter, and Halloween. Enough said?

Anyway, I’m glad my salvation doesn’t depend on knowing what’s going on here. Once again, everybody in the parade is out of step but me. Well, almost everyone. Preterist theologians (those who insist that none of these prophecies have future fulfillments) have, in their desperate efforts to paint *Nero* as the Antichrist, pointed out the dearth of historical evidence placing John on Patmos in the 90s. I’m no preterist (as you may have noticed) but I’m grateful for the assistance. (I’m not suggesting, by the way, that John didn’t *live* well into his nineties, a beloved and respected elder of the Church at Ephesus. I’m only saying that his Patmos exile was a bit earlier in his life—and that the Revelation was written sometime between 69 and 79 A.D., during the reign of the sixth relevant Roman “king,” Vespasian.)

It's interesting that the preterists should home in on Nero, however. There is a connection—an important one. Remember Revelation 17:8? **“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition.”** And then verse 11? **“And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.”** The angel is clearly describing a demon, not a man, a demon who had already come and gone at least once in John's time but would return from the abyss to possess the beast, the Antichrist. In context, this spirit is connected with one of the seven kings of Rome, specifically one of the five who had “fallen” when John wrote the story. The logical candidate, of course, is Nero, the first imperial persecutor of the Christians (and don't forget; it was Nero who sent Vespasian and Titus to Judea to pummel the Jews). So what happens when we compare the historical life of Nero with the prophesied life of Antichrist? We hit pay dirt.

Let's begin with Nero's given name: Lucius (from the Latin *lucis*, light). Sound familiar? Right, Satan's anglicized name is Lucifer (Heylel or Halal, in Hebrew). Nero's father, Cnaeus Domitius, was said to have looked at his son's bloodline and remarked to his wife Agrippina, “No good man can possibly be born from us.” *Gee, thanks, dad.* Agrippina later dumped Cnaeus and married her uncle, the emperor Claudius (his fifth marriage). Then she engineering her teenage son's ascension to the throne by assassinating her hubby with poisoned mushrooms, assuring the senate's confirmation of Nero by leaning on her friend Burrus, who controlled the Praetorian Guard. She appointed the philosopher Seneca to teach her son literature and morals (but not philosophy, which she forbade, saying it would make Nero unfit for government).

From all indications, the Antichrist will begin his reign looking like a popular hero, a merciful peacemaker and forward-looking friend of the common man, a “rider on a white horse,” as he's described in Revelation 6:2. How does Nero stack up? Historian Will Durant writes, “Nero made the usual obeisance to the Senate, modestly excused his youth, and announced that of the powers heretofore taken by the prince he would keep only the command of the armies....” What was it that Daniel had said about honoring a “god of fortresses”? Durant continues, “When the Senate proposed that statues of gold and silver should be raised in his honor, the seventeen-year-old Emperor rejected the offer; when two men were indicted for favoring Britannicus [his elder step-brother and the rightful heir to the throne], he had the accusations withdrawn; and in a speech to the Senate he pledged himself to observe throughout his reign [the] virtue of mercy.... Asked to sign a death warrant for a condemned criminal, he sighed, ‘Would that I had never learned to write!’ He abolished or reduced oppressive taxes.... The empire prospered within and without.... Parthia signed a peace that endured for fifty years. Corruption was reduced in the courts and the provinces, bureaucratic personnel was improved, and the Treasury was managed with economy and

wisdom.... Nero made the far-reaching proposal to abolish all indirect taxes, especially the customs duties collected at frontiers and ports, and so establish free trade throughout the Empire.” So far, he sounds like the perfect politically-correct man (okay, *boy*) for the job.

What does Daniel 11 have to say about the coming prince? **“He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.”** (v.37) Nero, though a pagan by birth and upbringing, regarded no god but himself. Suetonius reports, “He despised all cults, and voided his bladder upon an image of the goddess whom he most respected, Cybele.” Cybele, or Rhea, was a permutation of the Babylonian Semiramis, depicted with a turreted crown as the goddess of fortresses. To finance his indulgences, Nero robbed many temples of their votive offerings and melted down their gold and silver idols. But by the age of twenty-five, Nero was himself being hailed as a god. Durant again: “When Tiridates came to receive the crown of Armenia he knelt and worshipped the Emperor as Mithras [the sun god, an incarnation of Babylon’s Tammuz]. When Nero built his golden house he prefaced it with a colossus 120 feet high, bearing the likeness of his head haloed with solar rays that identified him as Phoebus Apollo [ditto: it’s the sun-god Tammuz again].” This reminds us not only of Nebuchadnezzar’s big statue, but also of an image of the beast/Antichrist mentioned in Revelation—something we’ll get to later.

And what was that about not regarding the desire of women? It’s not like Nero was averse to the services they could render, but, well, let’s just say it wasn’t healthy to be a woman in Nero’s world. He ignored his wife, Octavia, in favor of an ex-slave, Claudia Acte, of whom he soon grew weary. Replacing her with the beautiful Poppaea Sabina was problematical, however, for they were both married, and Poppaea wouldn’t settle for merely being our boy’s mistress. Nero divorced Octavia on grounds of barrenness, forcing Poppaea’s husband to do the same. Meanwhile, Nero’s mother Agrippina came to the innocent Octavia’s defense, so the Emperor arranged for mommy to meet with a fatal accident—actually, it took poison, a contrived shipwreck, and finally the sword to “accidentally” kill her. Then the paranoid Poppaea imagined that the exiled twenty-two year old Octavia was plotting against her (that’s what *she* would have done in her shoes) so she goaded Nero into having her killed as well. Ironically, the pregnant Poppaea was herself done to death by a kick to the stomach, apparently administered by Nero in response to her nagging about his coming home late from the races. Suetonius reports that the grieving Emperor then found a young man named Sporus who closely resembled Poppaea, had him castrated, married him in a formal ceremony, and “used him in every way like a woman.” I think that’s about all that needs to be said about Nero’s lack of regard for “the desire of women.”

Then of course there's the little matter of burning Rome to the ground in July of 64. Nero made a great show of trying to control or contain the fire while it raged, and of providing relief for the hundreds of thousands of homeless Romans in its aftermath—not to mention placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Christians, whom everyone just *knew* were antisocial and bigoted enemies of the Roman way of life. This is just one more example in a long string of striking parallels between Nero and the prophesied Antichrist. Am I suggesting, with the preterists, that Nero fulfills the prophecies? No, though he is clearly a type of what is to come. What I am suggesting is that the same demon who possessed Nero will be released from the bottomless pit to take up residence in the sorry carcass of the Antichrist sometime during the last seven years. Remember John's words: **"The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition."** (Revelation 17:11)

But I digress. (I've been known to do that.) The angel isn't through explaining the scene to John: **"The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast."** The seven historical kings we looked at previously established the fact that the Roman Empire was to be the foundation of the beast's kingdom. But *these* ten horns (or kings—holders of political authority) are yet future. **"These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."** (Revelation 17:12-14) We are being given a bit of insight into the nature of the Antichrist's rise to power (not to mention his fall). Elsewhere we have seen that three of the ten kings are "ripped out by the roots," that is, they cease to exist as separate political entities. But here we see that Antichrist's kingdom is not assembled through military conquest but is rather handed over to him willingly by the governments of the ten nations because they believe he is the answer to their problems. They all agree: he's the Man. Then we're given a snapshot of the Antichrist's whole career: he and his followers fight against Yahshua. Yahshua wins. End of story. Note that the "Lamb," Yahshua, is not alone, but He nevertheless overcomes the Antichrist and his allies all by Himself. As we shall see later, "those who are with Him" are the raptured saints, now the Bride of Christ.

Then the angel sheds more light on the relationship between the harlot and the beast. **"The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues."** In other words, the whole gentile world. **"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh**

and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

(Revelation 17:15-18) The harlot dominates not just one gentile nation, culture, or religious tradition, but many—I would venture to say *all* of them. Here we have our first peek at her fate: she will be destroyed by the Antichrist and his new Roman confederacy. Talk about strange bedfellows: the Antichrist’s ten-nation kingdom ends up being the sword in Yahweh’s hand (just as Sennacherib’s Assyria and Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon were). Yahweh hates the whore of Babylon because she’s responsible for luring His people away from His love. The Antichrist hates her because she’s a rival for power—one who stands in the way of his insatiable ambitions. It’s worth noting that the Greek word for “city,” *polis*, means a place with walls around it; the root from which it’s taken means “battle, fight, or war.” Calling the woman a “city” implies her readiness to defend her position. The plot thickens.

Many people have been tempted to equate the whore of Babylon with the Roman Catholic Church and call it a day. They’re probably on the right track, though a little short sighted. I believe it goes far, far beyond that. Yes, the Catholic Church is today’s most obvious repository of the rites and rituals of the Babylonian mystery religion, but Babylon’s scarlet thread runs through the fabric of almost every religion on the face of the earth. At its heart is a turning away from the revealed will and plan of Yahweh, adopting instead an alternate path—*any* alternate path; Satan doesn’t particularly care which one you choose (at least not yet).

He’s happy, of course, with die-hard atheistic secular humanists who have convinced themselves that there is no God. But he’s just as happy with devout and pious Catholics (and Protestants and Orthodox Christians too, for that matter) who rely on good works and church tradition to earn merit with God on some grand cosmic scale of good deeds versus bad. I think Satan particularly enjoys the irony of Islam, because it holds a billion and a half adherents in slavery in spite of the fact that it’s an incredibly stupid excuse for a religion. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and a plethora of other “religious philosophies” serve his purposes quite nicely as well. So does ignoring God all together while trying to build a comfortable life for yourself and your family. Babylon, in the long run, is found in anything and everything we put between ourselves and our Creator. And it will be the Antichrist’s goal to destroy all of that and channel it into the worship of himself and the dragon (Satan) who empowers him.

I said that mystery Babylon permeates *almost* every religion. There are two—and only two—exceptions, and one of them isn’t really a religion at all. The first is Judaism, which today is little more than the strict observance of a set of

traditions handed down not from Nimrod, but from Moses—via a long line of scribes and rabbis who've added layer upon layer of obfuscating minutia. (Judaism, it must be noted, took a serious left turn early in the second century A.D., when Rabbi Akiba took control.) Its adherents, who are virtually all Jews racially, follow these traditions as faithfully as they can, but they don't know what they mean. They've lost sight of the fact that the Torah, the *Instructions*, are an elaborate rehearsal of Yahweh's plan for His redemption of all mankind. If the Jews understood this, they would already have become part of the second uncorrupted religion, which is not actually a "religion" at all in the technical sense, but merely a personal relationship with *their* God, Yahweh. Christianity at its core is nothing but Judaism fulfilled—Judaism purified. The shame is that few Christians understand the Law of Moses any more than the Jews do. It's *not* an onerous collection of 613 rules and regulations from which we were released by the risen Christ. He Himself said he had not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. The Torah is, rather, a beautiful picture of Yahweh's love for us. It's there to instruct us about God's intentions. It's the Owner's Manual for a successful life.

If you ask most people about the Ten Commandments, they'll tell you (if they know anything at all about them) that they prohibit bad things like lying, stealing, murder, and committing adultery. True enough, but that's not where they start. The heart of the Torah begins with a description of our proper relationship with the God who made us. **"I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."** (Exodus 20:2-7)

Recognizing that our English translations invariably start off poorly by getting the most important part—the name of God, Yahweh—wrong, substituting it with a mere title "The LORD," perhaps it would be to our benefit to paraphrase these first three commandments for modern American ears. "I am Yahweh, the *only* One whom you are to worship. I am He who delivered you from your chains of slavery. Therefore, don't worship, revere, or bow your heart to anything or anyone else. Don't let the work of your hands come between us, either—in other words, don't spend all your time and resources chasing after the things of this world. And don't equate Me with the things I've made for you to enjoy, for I made *you* for *My* enjoyment. I hate it when you turn your back on Me, though I've built you with the ability to do that. If you reject My love, it's not good for you—you'll die without My constant care; the harm you're doing to yourself will

have repercussions for generations to come. But if you reciprocate My love, I will delight in showering you with mercy and blessing. And be careful not to accept or advance anything that is false, deceptive, or destructive in My name, or associate these things with My character, or say that they're My word. They are not! I *can't* ignore it when you choose to worship counterfeit gods, for I am holy."

The very next commandment reminds us of Yahweh's plan of sevens: God said He worked for six "days" and rested on the seventh, revealing the pattern He has ordained for us. Man first did this through the observance of the weekly Sabbath, codified in the fourth commandment. The ultimate fulfillment of this principle will be our millennial "rest" after six thousand years of trying to get it right. Don't give up. We're almost there.

So if by far the largest segment of "Christianity" is the Roman Catholic Church, how does this institution correlate with the identity of the harlot of Babylon? At this point, it seems I've pointed out two mutually exclusive definitions: first that **"the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,"** which can only be Rome, and second, **"The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues... And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth,"** which is so far beyond Rome, it's silly. I've also hypothesized that false and errant religion is only part of the puzzle, that Babylon at its most basic is comprised of anything that takes the place of Yahweh in our affections, religious or not. And you're wishing, would you *please* make up your mind!

Okay, let me explain what I'm thinking. I'll preface my remarks by stating flatly that I've known nominal Roman Catholics who seemed to me (for what that's worth) to be true children of Yahshua. I can't bring myself to dismiss all Catholics out of hand, as so many have done, as mere "puppets of Popery." On the other hand, it is only insofar as they ignore (or deny) some of the teachings of their church that they are able to come to a knowledge of the truth. And don't look so smug. The same holds true for most Protestant denominations these days. At one time or another we have all blithely assumed we were doing God's will, when in fact we were merely following our own man-made traditions. We need to repent: stop being willingly ignorant, and start paying attention to what Yahweh has communicated to us in His word. Don't assume that just because you and your people have "always done it that way," it's what Yahweh wants.

That being said, the Roman connection with the harlot of Babylon is too blatant to ignore. I have to conclude that Catholicism has something (though not *everything*) to do with it. At first glance it seems that the prophecy about "reigning over the kings of the earth" is out of date; there was a time when the Roman Catholic Church did indeed extend its political authority over much of the world (at least the western world)—and wielded virtually uncontested power

within Europe. But those days are thankfully gone. Today the church wields influence, not power. The pope is respected, even honored, among the nations; he is not necessarily obeyed. Popes no longer threaten excommunication at the drop of a hat to achieve their personal agendas—that ploy doesn't work any more, for although captains and kings may still long for heaven, they no longer believe in hell.

If we honestly look at the world around us, we observe that manifestations of false doctrine (a.k.a. Babylon) are often *regional*. Europe (especially the Europe that fell within the old Roman empire) has been joined at the hip with the Roman Catholic church since the days of Constantine. Because of their conquest by Spain and Portugal, Latin America largely shares Europe's Roman Catholic leanings, albeit with some indigenous superstitions blended in. North America is a hodgepodge of religious heritage, most heavily influenced today by Protestantism, Catholicism, and secular humanism (and don't kid yourself; secular humanism, atheism if you will, is a "faith" or "religion" in every sense of the word). The Middle East is dominated by Islam, as Asia is by Hinduism and its many children. Communism (in its role as a religion) and its cousin secular humanism are most influential in Russia and China. And Africa is a strange, self-destructive mixture of Islam, Christianity, and Animism.

Obviously, I'm using an extremely broad brush here, missing spots and slopping outside the lines. My point is simply that Roman Catholicism is one of the primary manifestations of Babylon *within Antichrist's own kingdom*. In point of fact, it's not the only one. Islam is another; as we have seen, the entire eastern half of the old Roman empire—formerly known as Byzantium—is now enslaved under this particular curse. Outside of the neo-Roman empire, Babylon takes other forms—though she will ultimately meet the same fate. So at the very least, when **"the ten horns which you saw on the beast... hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire,"** we are seeing what the ten governments who give their power to the Antichrist will do to the Vatican, who rode Europe like a beast of burden for fifteen hundred years, and to Islam, which swallowed Byzantium whole. This is a metaphor, a picture, a *preview* of the judgment that will fall upon spiritual Babylon as a worldwide entity. It is a prophecy that will be fulfilled in a literal sense of all the world's religions—every last one of them. As we shall see, the Antichrist will ultimately absorb and usurp all "faiths" into the worship of himself and the dragon who empowers him—Satan. It's the only thing Satan really wants.

As much as Roman Catholicism has come to embody the spirit of Babylon in the western world, Islam is actually far closer to Satan's ideal religion. Our scriptures are full of subtle warnings against it, if only we knew what to look for. Islam is the truest modern permutation of the Ba'al worship that was so roundly

denounced throughout the Old Covenant scriptures. The reason we in the West don't recognize this is our abysmal lack of knowledge—our willful ignorance—of its roots and teachings. Ancient Israel was warned not to tolerate the practice of Ba'al worship in any of its forms. Their compromise brought them to ruin. Today, our politically correct tolerance of this poisonous doctrine will bring us down just as surely, for Islam is the child of Ba'al. You can't keep a dragon for a pet. When it grows big enough, it will devour you.

But there's more to the whore of Babylon than satanic religions. She has not only "spiritual" aspects but also a political and financial side. It is therefore a dangerous mistake to identify her exclusively with one thing or another. She is, rather, many things—but with one thing in common: a burning hatred for Yahweh, His people, and His precepts. The harlot is described in Revelation 18:10 as "that great city." I think we might come close to the heart of the matter if we mentally replace the word "city" with "system," a concept for which there was no direct equivalent in the Greek of John's day. If a system—ubiquitous, interlocking, interdependent, prepared to defend itself, and driven by self interest—was what Yahweh meant to convey, He couldn't have picked a better word than *polis*, translated "city."

I'm going to have to save the ultimate fate of Babylon for later discussion, for her ultimate destruction apparently happens quite suddenly and a bit later in the Tribulation than we are discussing here. Suffice it to say that it will be Yahweh, not the Antichrist, who will finally pour out His wrath on greater Babylon in all its guises. (If you can't stand the suspense, go read Revelation 18. I'll catch up.)

When you look at it this way, it's shockingly obvious that the whole world is already permeated with the poison of Babylon, the crime of systematically accepting and advancing in the name of Yahweh that which is not of Him. The third Commandment has been shattered beyond recognition (thanks in part to our woefully inadequate English translations). We dare not dismiss spiritual Babylon as a future phenomenon, or worse, a myth. While the *ekklesia* will be gone from the earth before God finally delivers His wrath upon the harlot, we would still do well to heed the warning of Jeremiah: **"Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of Yahweh's vengeance; He shall recompense her. Babylon was a golden cup in Yahweh's hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; Therefore the nations are deranged."** (Jeremiah 51:6-7) The problem is, if you don't know what Babylon is, you can't flee from it.

The harlot sitting on “**peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues**” speaks of something beyond “religion,” a pervasive, world-wide system united in the cause of controlling all of mankind through its influence “**over the kings of the earth.**” I can see you rolling your eyes, mumbling, *that doesn't exist, except in the minds of paranoid conspiracy theorists*. I don't know—maybe it *does* exist, but we've lived so close to it for so long, we can't see it. It's hard to observe the blindfold that covers one's own eyes.

Frankly, what I'm about to share with you is so weird I wouldn't have given it a second glance if not for the fact that it fits biblical prophecy so well. Having already observed that *religions* like the Roman Catholic Church or Islam are but two of many manifestations of the whore of Babylon, I went looking for other candidates who might fit her description. Since the story of Babylon's fall (which we'll cover in due time) makes it clear that false religion is only part of the puzzle, I was on the lookout for secular or quasi-secular organizations that wield inordinate control over commerce and money, who are dedicated to bringing about one-world government and/or religion, or that generally share Satan's pride, greed, or *modus operandi*. It would be a bonus if they had some connection with Roman Catholicism and Islam. And I found one—an octopus-like entity that fit *all* the criteria so well its scary. They're so nefarious it's hard to believe they even exist, yet their existence and activities are no particular secret—there are scores of websites and books that openly discuss and explain their program. Still, it's hard to talk about them without sounding hysterical and paranoid—even to myself.

That being said, myths are seldom baseless; legends get started *somewhere*. This one starts in Bavaria. Adam Weishaupt was a Catholic priest, a Jesuit-trained professor of Canon Law at Inglecot University. In 1770 he defected from the Church and, financed by several powerful international bankers, began an admittedly Satanic organization called the Illuminati. The name, according to Weishaupt's writings, is derived from “Lucifer” and means “holders of the light.” The ultimate goal? World domination under Luciferian ideology.

Weishaupt completed his “business plan” on May 1, 1776. Never one to shrink from a challenge, his stated objective was the destruction of all existing governments and religions, replacing them with one all-powerful government run by (and for) the elite ruling class under the banner of Lucifer. This would be accomplished, the manifesto said, by dividing the masses into opposing camps on whatever social, political, racial, or economic issues presented themselves, and then arming each side with weapons or rhetoric—the tools of conflict appropriate for each situation. (So much for “Blessed are the peacemakers.”) Pitting one side against the other would leave the Illuminati—the elite of society—with more power and influence after each successive conflict.

This would not happen overnight, of course. Weishaupt realized that it would take many generations to achieve his goal. But where Satan was concerned, he was a true believer. Building the Illuminati and positioning it for increasing influence would be achieved through a four-pronged plan of attack. First, in order to gain control over men already in high places within government or commerce, they would be compromised—either bribed with power, sex, or money, blackmailed with scandals Illuminati operatives had engineered, or threatened with financial ruin or physical harm. They would find the “soft spots” of influential men and simply squeeze. If they couldn’t turn the man, they would settle for taking his assets and ruining him professionally. If you want to know how it works in practice, check out my first book, co-authored with Craig Winn, *In the Company of Good and Evil* (CricketSong Books, 2001). It tells the true story of how the three-billion dollar publicly traded company Winn had built (with a little help from yours truly) was taken over through the maneuverings of a Washington-based “religious” power-broker organization called the International Fellowship (a name we disguised in the book). In the end, his company (and *mine*, by the way) was stolen and sucked dry.

Second, bright and gifted students from upper-class families were to be singled out for special training—with such means as the Rhodes Scholarship—preparing them for a future role in the Illuminati. (For example, George Stephanopoulos, Dean Rusk (Secretary of State under Lyndon Johnson), Cory Booker, and Bill Clinton were all Rhodes scholars.) They were to be encouraged in their internationalist leanings and taught that talented and high-born people (like them) had a right and a destiny to rule over the unwashed masses.

Third, the young people thus recruited would be placed behind the scenes in governments and businesses as “experts” and specialists. They were to be the power behind the throne—that is, until they could seize the throne for themselves. These are the people who write (for example) the regulations and rules “needed” to implement lawful legislation. Taking one egregious example to task, the *Washington Times* (in October, 2012) stated, “Obamacare takes 2,700 pages of ‘law’ and expands it (to date) to over 13,000 pages of regulations. By the time the Secretary of Health and Human Services and other government agencies are finished actually writing the ‘regulations’ to go with the law, the number of pages to the bill will be over 150,000 in total.” Who writes these regulations? Just as Weishaupt envisioned, it’s people who have been placed “behind the scenes in governments and businesses as ‘experts’ and specialists.” Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was more accurate than anybody could have dreamed when she said, “We have to pass the bill so you can find out what is in it.”

And fourth, Weishaupt knew that absolute control of the press—the media—was essential for indoctrinating and distracting the masses. It’s no secret that the

vast majority of reporters and journalists today share a liberal bias and support liberal causes—completely compatible with Luciferian doctrine, though they'd never admit it. Note that one doesn't have to blatantly *lie* to “bear false witness” any more. Subtle shifts in word choices, story selection or placement, and editorial innuendo are often all it takes to skew the public's perception toward Luciferian ideology. Islamic terrorists become “insurgents” or even “freedom fighters” (and heaven forbid that you should identify them as Muslims). Abortion becomes a “women's rights” or “women's health” issue—never mind the rights and health of the baby. What's favorable to Satan's point of view gets twelve minutes at the top of the hour (or above-the-fold front page coverage) while evidence damning to your cause is ignored, slanted, given thirty seconds right before a commercial break, or buried on page 27 along with the weather forecast. And when they feel they have to lie, they lie big—and then present an understated quickie retraction later. If it weren't for the Internet, some truths would never see the light of day, and some lies would never be caught.

Weishaupt watched the progress of the American revolution with great interest. There is evidence that several of our revolutionary “heroes,” Thomas Jefferson, for instance, were familiar with—and generally complimentary of—his writings. George Washington took note of the Illuminati and Jacobinism as well, and expressed distress at their apparent inroads. In Europe, Weishaupt decided his first order of business would be to foment a revolution in France modeled on America's. In 1784 he issued orders to his agent Maximilien Robespierre to begin preparations. The entire plan was put into book form by a German named Zwack, but the book fell into the hands of the authorities when the dispatch rider carrying it to France was struck by lightning. (You can't say God wasn't trying to help us figure it out.)

France's monarchy brushed off the warnings as being too preposterous to be believed (oops), but the Bavarian government *was* sufficiently alarmed. They raided the lodges of the Grand Orient (as they were then known) and outlawed the Illuminati in 1785, publishing the details of the conspiracy a year later. This document reached all the heads of state of Europe, who promptly dismissed it all as hysterical paranoia. Weishaupt, driven underground in Bavaria, began efforts to infiltrate secret societies like the Freemasons. A high-degree Mason in the Scottish Rite, John Robison, got far enough inside to learn the truth. When the French revolution broke out (on schedule) in 1789, Robison wrote his own exposé of the Illuminati, entitled, hysterically enough, *Proof of a Conspiracy to Destroy All Governments and Religions*. It too was ignored.

The Napoleonic wars offered the Illuminati their first large-scale chance to play one side against the other. International bankers controlled by the group bankrolled both Britain and France. An inventive twist was introduced when the

English press falsely reported that Napoleon had won the battle at Waterloo. The London stock market crashed, and the very bankers who were making so much money propping up the war effort were able to buy up vast holdings in English commerce for pennies on the pound. This move amply demonstrated the value of controlling the news media.

Weishaupt died in 1830. The reins of the Illuminati conspiracy were taken up by Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini, who ran the organization from 1834 until his death in 1872. Mazzini in turn had recruited an American General named Albert Pike who was fascinated by the concept of a one-world government, the *novus ordo seclorum*, or new world order (literally, “new order of the ages”), as it was known. He eventually rose to lead this insidious Luciferian society.

In the late 1840s, separate Illuminati factions sponsored and directed two competing philosophical theories, calculated to ultimately divide large segments of humanity into warring factions. The first was the Communist Manifesto, penned by Karl Marx. Its anti-thesis was written by another German, Professor Karl Ritter of Frankfurt University, whose ideas were further developed after his death by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Albert Pike used these source materials to formulate a military blueprint designed to bring the Illuminati’s goals to ultimate fruition. His plan, developed between 1859 and 1871, envisioned three worldwide wars, and in general his scenario has proved to be uncannily accurate. The first war would destroy Czarism in Russia, replacing it with Marx’s Communist doctrine that the Illuminati had promoted in 1848. (This was supposedly in retribution for a Czar’s interference in an early-nineteenth-century Illuminati plot.) The second war, Pike said, would pit Ritter’s and Nietzsche’s racist “superman” theories against International Zionists (which should be a big red flag signaling Satan’s involvement), hopefully elevating Communism in the process to the point where it could hold its own against the combined “Christian” nations. The whole thing transpired as if Hitler had read the script. Balance of power, of course, was considered essential for playing one side against the other—until the Illuminati, under Satan, was ready to assume its rightful place alone at the world’s helm.

Pike’s vision of the third and decisive war is fascinating. Still fixated on the destruction of the Jews, he imagined a war pitting Zionists against the Muslim world, dragging other nations into the fray—an unwinnable war that would leave the Illuminati’s money interests holding all the cards. This is intriguing for two reasons. First, considering when the scenario was conceived, it is amazing that he could identify the players, even in a general way. The Ottoman empire held Islam’s reins of power at the time, but the Zionist dreamers held nothing. No one in the 1860s could have foreseen today’s Israeli state or the unlikely way it came into being. Pike’s version of World War III is still future, of course, but as we

shall see, the prophecies of the Bible predict something very similar: Muslims against Jews, sucking in the rest of the world into the conflict. Who knows? Maybe Pike got into Ezekiel and Daniel and figured it out. But if so, he should also have figured out that his dream of a one-world government under Luciferian ideals, his new world order, would be a colossal bust.

The question remains as to whether or not the Illuminati's intricate and far-reaching plans had anything at all to do with what actually happened. Was Pike just a good guesser, or were the Illuminati actually able to foment the major wars of the twentieth century? And if they were powerful enough to do that, what else have they managed to do? Remember, at its heart, the goal of the Illuminati is to place Satan on the throne of God, an objective that identifies it as a cog in the wheel of Babylon. With Lucifer's demonic assistance, they could have accomplished a great deal toward that end. Without it, it's hard to envision them gaining control over a quilting bee. There is a maddening dearth of verifiable facts but the circumstantial evidence is plentiful that they have indeed, within the last two hundred and fifty years, grasped enormous power.

Space and time won't permit a complete study of the Illuminati in this book. But I feel that it offers us a revealing glimpse of what the organizational structure of the whore of Babylon might be like as we enter the last days. If the Illuminati isn't part of Babylon, I'd strongly suspect that some group who looks just like them is. I'll leave it up to you to figure out who they are. But please, don't take my word for any of this. Rather, I would encourage you to do your own research—anybody with a library card or a Web browser can figure this out. To whet your appetite, I would like to present a partial list of organizations compiled by Terry Melanson and published on the website www.ConspiracyArchive.com. We needn't draw all the same conclusions he did, of course, but we'd do well to avail ourselves of the research. Each of the names on this list has been linked directly to the Illuminati:

Religious groups: World Council of Churches; National Council of Churches; World Parliament of Religions; the Vatican; Unity Church; Unitarian Universalist Church; Baha'i; Knights of Malta; plus a plethora of new age groups and liberal protestant denominations....

Secret societies: Freemasonry (Satanic to its core—don't get me started); Skull and Bones (a member of which used to occupy the White House, after having defeated a fellow member in his reelection campaign); Grand Orient Lodge; Grand Alpina Lodge; Knights Templar; Royal Order of the Garter; Priory de Sion; Rosicrucians....

Financial institutions: World Bank; International Monetary Fund; International Bank of Settlements; World Conservation Bank; plus many central banks, multinational corporations, and foundations....

Educational groups: UNESCO; Planetary Congress; World Goodwill; World Union; Esalen Institute; Lucis Trust; World Federalist Association; World Constitution and Parliamentary Association; plus other global peace groups, environmental awareness organizations, and the media establishment....

Political groups: United Nations (surprise, surprise); Council on Foreign Relations; Trilateral commission; Club of Rome; Bohemian Grove; Aspen Institute; Communist Party; plus regional federations like NATO and the EEC, and international labor unions....

Intelligence groups: CIA, FBI, British Intelligence (MI6); Interpol; KGB; plus drug cartels and organized crime syndicates....

It's like the old joke: just because you're paranoid, it doesn't mean they *aren't* out to get you. As I said, I'm not going to take the time to explore every nook and cranny of the Illuminati. But two of these organizations bear further exploration, if only because they have been so pervasive and influential in America. I am fully aware, of course, that the unfolding of Biblical prophecy will not be confined within our borders. These are merely two examples among many of how the whore of Babylon can operate under our very noses without us being aware of it.

Any good detective will tell you to "follow the money" if you want to find out "who done it." So let's do that. Quiz: when did America achieve its all-time lowest national debt? Here's a hint. It was under the administration of a President who clearly saw the evils inherent in a central bank, a man who firmly believed that money should have something of actual value backing it up (something he called "specie"). Andrew Jackson, our seventh president, abolished the two-decade-old Bank of the United States, an early attempt at a central bank, stating, "The bold effort the present bank had made to control the government, the distress it had wantonly produced...are but premonitions of the fate that awaits the American people should they be deluded into a perpetuation of this institution or the establishment of another like it." By the middle of his second term, in 1835, the national debt had fallen to \$33,773—the price of a decent mid-sized car today—down from a previous high of \$127,334,934. (The debt had *never* fallen below \$45 million before Jackson's time; the average was almost \$80 million.)

Fast forward to 1913—a very good year for opponents of Jacksonian sanity. Woodrow Wilson, who favored Jackson's anathema, a central bank, was voted into office when the bankers of J.P. Morgan and Company threw their weight (and money) behind Teddy Roosevelt's Progressive Party, splitting the Republican vote and losing anti-bank William Taft his re-election bid. In that landmark year, two interrelated laws were passed. The first was the national income tax (which had been declared unconstitutional in 1895). Its proponents solemnly promised to the American people that it would cap out at one percent of all income under \$20,000, and that it would never increase (ouch!).

And why was an income tax needed? To pay for the crushing national debt that would soon be precipitated by the second law, the Federal Reserve Act (also unconstitutional—see Article I, section 8). This law instituted the very thing that Andy Jackson’s fiscal performance had proven was a bad idea—a central bank, with the power to buy and sell government securities as well as providing loans to member banks to enable them to buy them. This, of course, gave the bankers (read: Illuminati) a strong motive for finding ways to *increase* the national debt.

Note that there’s nothing “Federal” about the Federal Reserve system. It is privately owned by its member banks. And get this: seven of its top ten shareholders are based in Europe (the other three are in New York). Required reading on the subject is G. Edward Griffin’s *The Creature from Jekyll Island—A Second Look at the Federal Reserve* (1994-2004), American Media). It’s a cogent and scathing look at what we’ve allowed to happen to our financial well-being, a college level course in how money works. Of course, Griffin doesn’t see the prophetic ramifications. He thinks our money system can still be fixed. It can’t, and it won’t be.

Was it just a coincidence that World War I started in Europe the very year following the Federal Reserve Act? Was it coincidence that the U.S. national debt rose from under three billion dollars in 1914 to over twenty-seven billion—a nine-fold increase—by the end of the war? (A similar jump occurred during WWII—from forty-nine billion in 1941 to \$258 billion in ’45.) Was it a coincidence that the man who shepherded the Federal Reserve Act through Congress was the same man who authored the Covenant of the League of Nations? Wilson’s top aide (and Illuminati “minder”) throughout both terms, Colonel Edward M. House, was also the man who negotiated a secret pact with the British government ensuring U.S. participation in the European conflict—*before* Wilson ran for re-election in 1916 (and won) on the slogan “He kept us out of war.” Busy boy.

When it became apparent that the U.S. wasn’t going to buy into his one-world government scheme, the League of Nations, House and others formed the Institute for International Affairs with an eye toward shifting public opinion. The American branch of this Illuminati promotional agency was to be called the Council on Foreign Relations, which was begun on July 29, 1921. Its founding members included Colonel House, J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, Paul Warberg, Otto Kahn, and Jacob Schiff—the same group who had pushed through (and profited by) the Federal Reserve System.

Emerging from the 1929 stock market crash unscathed (apparently because they had engineered it) this same group was poised to put their man in the White House in 1932. Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s solution to the Depression was for America to borrow huge sums of money from the very men who had caused its fall in the first place. In 1934 he put the last nail in the coffin of Jacksonian fiscal

soundness by taking America off the gold standard—a move that opened the door to the unrestrained expansion of the money supply. Since any problem could now be “solved” by borrowing money, and since the supply of money could be expanded to fit any perceived need, the bankers who controlled the Fed could now create profits at will, like turning on a faucet. Instant money: just add trouble. The fox was not merely *in* the henhouse. He *held the mortgage* on it.

It is fitting, perhaps, that it was during the Depression that the Council on Foreign Relations gained control of the top echelons of government in this country. I mean, it certainly makes *me* depressed. Since 1934, almost every U.S. Secretary of State has belonged to the CFR. The CIA has been under the Council’s thumb almost continuously since its inception. And forget what you think you know about Democrats versus Republicans, liberals versus conservatives: virtually every twentieth century presidential candidate since Roosevelt—on both sides of the political fence—were members of the Council on Foreign Relations, dedicated to the new world order. (One notable exception, Harry Truman, was advised by an inner cadre of “wise men,” all six of whom were CFR members. Barack Obama says he “doesn’t know” if he’s a CFR member, but ten members of his original cabinet were.) The only real exception to the rule was Barry (“A choice, not an echo”) Goldwater, whose candidacy in ’64 was torpedoed by his own party’s CFR-led Rockefeller wing.

It almost goes without saying that the Council on Foreign Relations was instrumental in the formation of the United Nations. The central plank of their agenda is the surrender of America’s sovereignty and independence to a world governing body controlled by the elite ruling class. Part of the picture is the subjugation of our armed forces under the auspices of the U.N. The nagging question to all of this is *why*. Why do a bunch of elitist bankers and power-hungry politicians want the U.N. to control everything?

They don’t—not exactly. They aren’t particularly interested in world peace, or stopping hunger, eradicating disease, protecting the environment, or any of a hundred worthy causes that the U.N. would claim to support. But taking control of the world one nation at a time is like herding cats—just when you’ve got one cornered, another one slips out of your grasp. No, world domination is far easier to achieve if you can first get everybody to surrender their sovereignty and defense to one central organization, benevolent, democratic, easily corrupted, and relatively clueless.

That’s why they *think* they want a one-world government: so they can rule the world. The real solution to this puzzle is somewhat more sinister. Remember the Illuminati’s founder, Adam Weishaupt? He knew exactly what he was doing, and why: his ultimate goal was to put Lucifer, Satan, the devil, in the driver’s seat. In a way, he succeeded: Since the days of Albert Pike, no one could point to a single

man and say, “He’s the leader of the Illuminati.” Because of this, some say it no longer exists. But the truth is, Satan has taken the reins himself. And by now, he has everybody singing out of the same hymnal, even without a choir director.

So am I saying that Bill Clinton and George Bush get together with their other CFR buddies on the weekends to hold satanic rituals and maybe sacrifice a goat at the base of the Washington Monument? No. I can guarantee that ninety-plus percent of today’s CFR members have no idea who they’re working for. They think they’re in it for the money or the power (or in Clinton’s case, the sex). I’m sure some of them even have altruistic motives: they really *believe* that the poor, dumb sheeple of the world need gifted and enlightened shepherds like them. They are mistaken—about many things. In their arrogance, they have become the unwitting pawns of Satan. Paul warned Christians what they were facing: **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”** (Ephesians 6:12) The elite and powerful members of the Council on Foreign Relations have no idea what they’re doing, who they’re doing it for, or why.

When I began this soap-box rant a couple of pages back, I mentioned that there were *two* Illuminati-dominated organizations operating in America that could shed light on the nature (and perhaps the identity) of the whore of Babylon. The Council on Foreign Relations was pretty easy to spot. Treason in high places usually comes to light sooner or later. The other one, however, is in stealth mode, and not only because they style themselves a “secret society.”

At first glance, it’s hard to take the Freemasons seriously. To outsiders they come off, at best, like a civic-minded fraternal service organization, or at worst like harmless buffoons, no more (or less) dangerous than Rotarians, Elks, or the Loyal Order of Moose. They seem to be all about secret handshakes, funny hats, and esoteric rituals leading toward incomprehensible grades of achievement called “degrees.” High-degree Masons called Shriners support burn wards and hospitals for crippled children and drive their funny little cars in parades, delighting young and old. It’s hard to think of them as members of the Illuminati because Freemasonry is a much older society, one which traces its lineage back thousands of years (if you believe their press). Many of America’s founding fathers were Masons. Their public image is one of religious neutrality, welcoming Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Jews, Buddhists, Mormons, and Hindus—

members of any or no religion—to the fold (that is, if you’re a Caucasian male—otherwise, forget it).

Though they claim roots as far back as Solomon’s temple (or even farther—all the way back to the building of the tower of Babel, which is at least more poetic) it appears that Freemasonry as an organized entity was actually begun by John Dee, a self-styled sorcerer who achieved a position of power and influence in the court of Elizabeth I of England. (There is some evidence that a form of freemasonry was practiced by the Knights Templars, the original international bankers, after they were outlawed and driven underground by the Roman Catholic Church on Friday, October 13th, 1307—a ban engineered by Philip IV of France in an effort to avoid having to repay the vast sums he had borrowed from them—an act that might be reprised in the Last Days.) Blending the occult practices of Catholic heretics like Giordano Bruno and Pico della Mirandola with the Jewish mysticism of the Kabbalah and the black magic practiced by Rabbi Judah Lowe of Prague, Dee’s brand of Freemasonry was overtly satanic. But Lucifer prefers to work in the shadows. The group soon morphed into something that could be embraced—or at least tolerated—in polite society.

In its present form it was heavily influenced—some would say redefined—by our old friend and Illuminati leader Albert Pike, who was the “Sovereign Grand Commander” of the Southern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Masonry from 1859 until his death in 1891. His massive tome, *Morals and Dogma...*, is supposed to be read by Masons upon reaching the fourteenth degree. In practice, hardly anybody reads it, and *nobody* understands it. But Pike’s influence pervades the Scottish Rite just as much through his work in editing the rituals of the Masonic degrees. Ex-33rd degree Mason Jim Shaw, in his book *The Deadly Deception*, tells in detail how the rituals were administered. He says, “I had no idea of what I would be swearing to until I was actually hearing and repeating each line. Had I been able to hear or read the oath in advance, I might not have been able to say it. Even while I was taking it as I did, one might expect that the nature of parts of it would have made me hesitate; but I really wasn’t thinking of the nature of the oath....”

The “nature of the oath” was Pike’s satanic philosophy, wrapped up in a cloak of feel-good quasi-religious gibberish. Though Pike made a career out of obfuscating his nefarious agenda, he occasionally stated plainly what was on his mind, as he did on July 14, 1889 to the twenty-three Supreme Councils of the world: “That which we must say to the crowd is, we worship a God, but it is the God that one adores without superstition.” Like I said, clear as mud. “To you, Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, we say this, that you may repeat it to the Brethren of the 32nd, 31st, and 30th degrees—the Masonic Religion should be, by all of us initiates of the high degrees, maintained in the purity of the Luciferian

doctrine...” (Quoted by J. Edward Decker Jr. in *The Question of Freemasonry*). Remember this the next time you go to a Fourth of July parade in your hometown and applaud the Shriners in their fezzes and funny little cars. Those guys are *all* 32nd degree Masons—they have all taken blood-curdling oaths honoring Lucifer—disguised, of course, as Osiris, Allah, Shiva, Baal, or Thor—most of them without having the foggiest notion of what they were saying. *Yeah, I know it sounds silly, but you’ve got to say this stuff if you want to be in the club. Where’s the harm in it?*

If you tell the average Mason that he’s worshipping Satan, he’ll laugh in your face. Most never get beyond the third degree and don’t really understand what they’re a part of. To them, Freemasonry is just a fraternity. Most would be shocked to read what Manly P. Hall, a 33rd degree Mason, had to say about the source of enlightenment: “When the Mason learns that the Key to the warrior on the block is the proper application of the dynamo of living power, he has learned the Mystery of his Craft. The seething energies of Lucifer are in his hands, and before he may step onward and upward, he must prove his ability to properly apply [this] energy.”

To fully understand the relationship between Lucifer and Freemasonry, let’s return to the quote from Pike in the previous paragraph. He goes on to say, “Yes, Lucifer is God, and unfortunately, Adonay [the Hebrew word for “Lord,” supposedly descriptive of Yahweh in the Old Testament] is also god [note his lower case g]. For the eternal law is that there is no light without shade—no white without black, for the absolute can only exist as two gods: darkness being necessary for light to serve as its foil.... Thus the doctrine of Satanism is a heresy, and the pure philosophical religion is the belief in Lucifer, the equal of God of Light and God of good....” At first blush, this sounds contradictory: “Lucifer is God,” but “Satanism is a heresy.” But consider this: “Satan” is not a name; it’s a title, an epithet. It means “adversary.” Pike is actually saying something quite profound, that Lucifer is *not* his adversary; he’s his *deity!* The heresy, in his mind, is that someone would call Lucifer “the adversary.”

Okay, it’s time for a reality check: **“Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”** (II Corinthians 11:14-15) There is only one true light, and His name is Yahweh. Evil disguised as righteousness will receive evil’s reward.

I hope I've successfully conveyed the concept that the harlot of Babylon could have a whole range of manifestations. It's potentially anything and everything that Yahweh would consider a false system of worship—that is, something that would systematically violate any of the first three commandments: One, you shall have no other gods before Yahweh. Two, you shall not make, bow down to, nor serve an image of any created thing. And three, you shall not accept or advance anything that is false, deceptive, or destructive in Yahweh's name, or associate these things with His character (which is what the Hebrew that's translated "take the name...in vain" really means).

We commonly (and unwittingly, I hope) break these three commandments on our own. That's bad enough. But when people band together to worship false gods in groups, they are manifesting the spirit of Babylon. Satan knows how to use group dynamics to get us do things we wouldn't normally do—just because the crowd is doing them. That makes religion one of the most popular flavors of Babylon bouillabaisse. (Others, equally fishy, are politics and commerce.) The recipe for this evil brew is one part deception, one part pride, and a pinch of greed (substitute with lust if you like). Let it simmer over hell-fire until it's half-baked, and serve it up neither hot nor cold. It tastes terrible and it's horribly expensive, but people eat it because the critics say its wonderful, and they don't want their friends to think they can't afford it. Besides, it sure looks better than the Christian diet: all they get is the Bread of Life and Living Water.

Just as the world will come together as one politically during the Tribulation, it will also come together in matters of faith. Once the Christians are gone, religion will be more a matter of style than anything else. I have a feeling that the world's religions will begin to see themselves during this time not as separate entities, but merely as different "denominations" in one great faith, different ways to reach heavenly enlightenment. If this new/old super-faith is given a name, it will be called Babylon (or ought to be). Proselytizing will become the epitome of bad form, perhaps even illegal (it already is in many places), because it will be a universally accepted "*fact*" that there is no such thing as absolute truth; therefore there is no *wrong* way to reach god.

This, of course, will pit "Laodicean" Christians—gentiles saved after the rapture—and Jews looking for their Messiah against the whole rest of the world. Claiming to have a "savior" implies that (1) you needed to be saved (and by extension, it says your fellow man must need salvation too—that we are all creatures whose sins have separated us from God); and (2) there is something from which we need to be saved. Both of those propositions will be considered heresy against the universal Babylonian doctrine, constituting the crime of religious terrorism, sort of like "disturbing the peace" on steroids. And the *appearance* of keeping the peace is what it's all about in the post-rapture world.

No one may say, or even suggest, that they have a corner on truth. As Pontius Pilate once asked, “What *is* truth?” In these dark days, no one may imply that there is one God who defines righteousness.

There is, of course, one slight problem with this doctrine. It’s completely wrong. Shortly after the exodus, two of the elite of Israelite society, the Illuminati of their day so to speak, found out the hard way. **“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of [the high priest] Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before Yahweh, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from Yahweh and devoured them, and they died before Yahweh. And Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what Yahweh spoke, saying: “By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.””** (Leviticus 10:1-3) That statement reveals the false heart of the whore of Babylon. She makes a show of coming near to God, but she does not regard Him as holy. Instead, she gathers people together and glorifies herself.

If I had a lawyer, he would be quite alarmed by this point, so I’d better tell you what he would tell me. I am not advocating any pre-rapture course of action designed to thwart or hinder the whore of Babylon. Don’t go out and do rash things like letting the air out of the tires on the Shriners’ little cars or blowing up the U.N. building. Yahweh is perfectly capable of taking care of His own interests, and He doesn’t need your unsolicited assistance. He has told us to do only one thing: **“Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of Yahweh’s vengeance.”** (Jeremiah 51:6) Take a good, hard, look at your life. Are you a part of something that promotes a false image of Yahweh? Do your traditions carry more weight than the words of your God? If you find yourself living in Babylon, there’s only one thing to do: *flee!*

Chapter 15

The Muslim Connection

The *CIA World Factbook* provides us with the following statistics on the distribution of the world's religions: "Christian 33.35% (of which Roman Catholic 16.83%, Protestant 6.08%, Orthodox 4.03%, Anglican 1.26%), Muslim 22.43%, Hindu 13.78%, Buddhist 7.13%, Sikh 0.36%, Jewish 0.21%, Baha'i 0.11%, other religions 11.17%, non-religious 9.42%, atheists 2.04% (2009 est.). To put things in perspective, Christianity is down about a half a percentage point, Muslims are up about 2%, Hindus are up fractionally, and Buddhists are down about a point and a half over the last decade.

Christians tempted to exult in their "leading" position should be reminded of two sobering facts: First, Yahshua gave us a commission to preach the gospel to all the world; these statistics only demonstrate how miserably we have failed. Second, the world of "Christianity" is fragmented beyond recognition. Each of its three largest branches have serious reservations about the eternal destinies of the other two.

The second-place (and fastest growing) religion, Islam, is also split several ways. Its Sunni branch, though, comprises roughly 90% of the religion's adherents—putting it in a dead heat with Roman Catholicism for the world's number one splinter group. This fact makes it clear that if truth were a popularity contest, it would shift radically with the passage of time—yesterday paganism, today Catholicism, tomorrow Islam. But that's not the way it works. Truth is truth, regardless of how many (or how few) people believe it.

Indeed, the people through whom Yahweh has chosen to reveal his plan, the Jews, have never been anywhere close to being a significant numerical component of the world's population (today, about 0.2%). Yet God has promised to bless those who bless her, and curse him who curses her—not because He's impressed with Israel, but because He chose to demonstrate His own power and love through her relative insignificance. Throughout most of their history, the Jews have been surrounded by peoples who were bigger and stronger than she was, many of whom displayed open hostility toward her. The consequences of their actions are often recorded in scripture, so as we approach the last days we should not be surprised to find predictions about nations who will align themselves against her.

As we pick up our prophetic timeline, we find ourselves less than a year (SF2) into the “Tribulation.” Here’s the scenario as my admittedly overactive imagination envisions it: The charismatic European leader has pushed his peace plan through the U.N. and has apparently succeeded where so many others had failed. All of the participants have come to the table and laid down, in the interests of peace, what they swore they never would: the Jews have retreated to their pre-1967-war borders, leaving the rest of their nation to the “Palestinians.” Their nuclear arsenal has been placed in the hands of the occupying United Nations peacekeeping forces, and the IDF is being kept on a short leash. Jerusalem has been made an “international city,” ostensibly open to all but owned by none. The Muslims have swallowed hard and relinquished their exclusive control of the temple mount. And to a stunned and delighted world, the peace seems to be holding.

Jerusalem has become a boom-town. All faiths with over ten million adherents have been invited to build shrines or temples on or near the temple mount. The Jews, as sort of a consolation prize, have been given their pick of spots (the Dome of the Rock or *Qubbat As-Sakhrah*, and the Al Aqsa Mosque, of course, are off limits). They choose a site lined up with the Eastern Gate—placing the Holy of Holies right where the Dome of the Spirits had been. The Eastern (or Golden) Gate leading to the Kidron Valley and the Garden of Gethsemane (the one that had been walled in by the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in 1541) is promptly re-opened by Temple Mount Enthusiasts. They take great care not to disturb or desecrate the Muslim graveyard in the shadow of the eastern wall, not wishing to give the Islamists a pretext for treachery.

The Catholics and liberal Protestants decide to work together, and in a surprise move opt to enlarge and “enhance” the existing Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Christian quarter of the old city instead of building something new on the temple mount. (There aren’t enough fundamentalist Protestants or Evangelicals left to make the cut.) Hindus and Buddhists announce their plans to build small shrines on the south end of the mount, between the Dome and the Mosque. The Sikhs pick a spot on the far northern end. The various traditional, animist, and spiritist groups can’t come to a consensus, so even though their numbers have qualified them, they opt out of the project. The Baha’i don’t have quite enough members to qualify, but plan to build something nearby anyway—until they get a look at the skyrocketing real estate prices in Jerusalem.

The whole project is put under the auspices of a panel of internationally respected architects and engineers, promising to make the temple mount one of the architectural wonders of the modern world. Though height limits are imposed (as much because of earthquakes as to assuage delicate Muslim sensibilities), the inevitable atmosphere of friendly competition soon makes it apparent that no

expense will be spared—by anyone. The existing golden dome of the Muslim shrine (actually gold-anodized aluminum, rebuilt in 1920, refinished in 1965, and gilded in 1993) is seen as the opening ante. Nobody is willing to let the seventh-century Islamic icon upstage their new edifice. The building materials—priceless Italian marble, granite, steel, glass, bronze, silver, and gold leaf by the ton—begin to pour into Jerusalem and Tel Aviv warehouses. Not intending to be outdone, competitive Saudi princes donate millions to make improvements to the Dome.

The Jews were able to begin construction almost immediately, since their part of the project has been anticipated for years by temple enthusiast groups. And now, a year or so into the treaty, the magnificent new temple is almost ready to be dedicated. The priests (or “Cohanim”) have been identified and trained. Provision has been made for the sanitary disposal of the blood that will be spilled during the ritual sacrifices. Persistent rumors circulate concerning a hidden underground chamber containing the original ark of the covenant—somewhere near the temple mount. Most Jews brush them off as wishful thinking. *Still, can you imagine what it would mean if they found it? Our sins could be atoned just as Moses prescribed—properly—for the first time in 2,500 years! It would surely be a sign heralding the Messiah.*

But the new temple turns out to be a two-edged sword for thoughtful Jews. All their lives they had ignored or dismissed as allegory huge chunks of their scriptures. Now, in order to better understand their own religion in the context of the newly reinstated temple sacrifices, they begin to study. And they find some rather disturbing things, especially in their prophetic writings. The last ten chapters of the book of Ezekiel are particularly troubling. They contain a detailed description of what Messiah’s temple and its environs will look like, and the circus they see going up on the temple mount doesn’t remotely resemble it. Then, moving back a few chapters, they find the ominous prophetic account of a devastating war.

Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel; he had been deported to Babylon in the wake of Jehoiachin’s rebellion in 597 B.C. and received his prophetic commission there some years later. The war he describes in chapters 38 and 39 of his book could not have been historical when he wrote about it, for it speaks of the Jews’ *return* to the land—and they had just been exiled for the first time. But one will search in vain throughout subsequent history for a war that remotely fits the description of the participants and the outcome of this war, especially since it is prophesied to open the eyes of the Jews to the truth about their God—permanently. The prophet writes, **“So the house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God from that day forward.”** (Ezekiel 39:22)

Only two conclusions can be drawn. Either Ezekiel was wrong, or the war is yet future. The really disturbing part of the story is the identity of the target, the

intended victim: it is Israel, but she is described as dwelling “in safety” in a land of “unwalled villages” when she is attacked. That has *never* been the case—certainly not since the days of Solomon—*until* the new European leader arranged to have the world’s armies, under the U.N. banner, guarantee the integrity of Israel’s anorexic new borders.

The main protagonists in this coming war are described in the first few verses of the passage: “**Now the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, Son of man, set your face against Gog** [Gog literally means “mountain,” which is in turn a symbol denoting power and majesty], **of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, ‘Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you.’**” (Ezekiel 38:1-6) All of these nations will join forces to invade Israel, and Yahweh will use their ignominious defeat as the mechanism for bringing His chosen people to repentance and eventual acceptance of their Messiah.

There is quite a roster of players listed here, and there’s no shortage of controversy as to what these names mean in the world as we know it today. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya pop out from the list as place names we know. But who are the others? Ezekiel didn’t use the 21st century names of the nations involved, for obvious reasons. Instead, he referred to a document that was already ancient in his day, the Table of Nations, recorded in Genesis, chapter 10. We will find that most of these names represent people groups that date back to within a few generations of the great Flood. “**The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. From these the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations. The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.**” (Genesis 10:2-8)

So in broad strokes, the Japhethites settled the north—Europe and Asia. The Hamites went south and east, settling Africa, Arabia, and the Levant (i.e., the land of Canaan). And the Shemites (a.k.a. Semites) basically stayed put in the cradle of civilization—Mesopotamia—until and unless Yahweh moved them. Shem’s descendents include these names you may know: Eber (the Hebrews); Elam (pre-Persia); Asshur (Assyria—Iraq); and Aram (Syria). Job lived in the land of Uz, who was a son of Aram; and Abraham was described (in Deuteronomy 26:5) as “a wandering Aramean.”

Anyway, the key player in Ezekiel's narrative seems to be "Gog, of the land of Magog." Gog is apparently an honorific title of their leader (sort of like "Augustus"—from *augeo*, meaning increase, venerable, or majestic—was to Octavius), so let's concentrate on Magog for now. Genesis 10 lists Magog as the second son of Japheth, one of the three sons of Noah; Japheth was the father of the Indo-European races. Of Magog, we know almost nothing directly. Josephus identifies him as the progenitor of the Scythians: "Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians." Most modern commentators agree with him. (Another theory suggests that the Scythians are the descendents of Gomer's son Ashkenaz, which would make him Magog's nephew. Thus the Magogites, who are of the Japhetic line, may or may not be identified specifically with the Scythians. But either way, their ancestry is a close family matter, and their territorial boundaries can be expected to overlap to a great extent.

Presuming Josephus was correct, who (and where) were the Scythians? They flourished between the 8th and 4th centuries B.C. Their language was an Indo-Iranian dialect, but they, being a warlike and nomadic folk, had no form of writing. Jerome indicated that the Scythians were "fierce and innumerable, who live beyond the Caucasus and the Lake Maeotis (that smallish lake just north of the Black Sea), and near the Caspian Sea, and spread out even onward to India." These nomadic warriors eventually covered a huge territory stretching across southern Eurasia from the Danube River to the borders of China. Some settled in an area north and northeast of the Black Sea, just north of the Caucasus Mountains. (The word "Caucasus," in fact, means "Gog's fort.") Others ended up south of the Caspian Sea. So in modern terms, we're talking about the Ukraine, southern Russia, Azerbaijan, the Georgian Republic, and northern Iran.

Perhaps we can pin Magog down another way: Gog, its leader, is said (in this translation) to be the "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal." If he's the prince, it would be logical to assume he would be in close geographical proximity, so it should be helpful if we can figure out who these other nations were. Unfortunately, we can't even get past the first name without running into controversy.

When we say "Rosh," everyone in the modern world immediately thinks, "It's Russia!" But if you're reading in the King James Version (and most others), it simply says "the *chief* prince of Meshech and Tubal." What's up? The Hebrew word, *roshe*, meaning head, chief, ruler, or principal, is translated "chief" or "head" 423 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. (Ever hear of *Rosh Hashanah*, the "Jewish New Year"? Literally, it means "the *head* of the year.") *Roshe* is *never* translated "Russia," for good reason. The name "Russia" is derived from an 11th century Viking word, "Rus." Linguists tell us that although words morph

over time and usage, it is generally the vowels that change, not the consonants. Thus *rosh* (RŠ) might change into *rush*, but probably not into *ros* or *rus* (RS). This fact alone makes it extremely unlikely that *roshe* means Russia.

In any case, *roshe* is Hebrew, not a Norse word. So the text clearly means, “the *chief* or *head* prince of Meshech and Tubal.” It would therefore seem highly presumptive to suggest that “Rosh” is a proper name in this one case, just because we think we recognize it and can readily imagine how a big strong bear of a nation like Russia could think they could get away with invading somebody as small as Israel.

By the way, one reason for the relative stability of consonants when compared to vowels is that ancient languages that were written with phonetic alphabets (notably Paleo-Hebrew) often didn’t originally include vowels at all, though some consonants may have implied certain vowel sounds. But in the main, the pronunciation and meaning of a word—written as a string of consonants—were determined from the context. It was possible, therefore, to alter the meaning of a passage just by assigning, either accidentally or deliberately, incorrect vowel sounds to it—and there is strong evidence that the Masoretic scribes who transmitted our Hebrew scriptures to us (complete with vowel points added a couple of thousand years after the fact) did that very thing, *purposely* trying to obfuscate the Messianic impact of the Tanach. The consonants, however, are not nearly so susceptible to tampering.

But I digress. We were back in Ezekiel, trying to identify the tribal territories of the listed players in the coming Magog war. Some commentators, laboring under the “Rosh-equals-Russia” myth and expanding upon it, have noticed the vague similarity between Meshech and Moscow and between Tubal and Tobolsk, jumping to the hasty conclusion that the capitals of Russia and Siberia are meant. But there’s nothing quite so sinister as that afoot here. Referring back to Genesis 10, we see that both Meshech and Tubal were brothers of Magog—sons of Japheth, and grandsons of Noah. We can therefore expect their names to be echoed in location designations wherever their descendants settled.

Meshech, depending upon who you listen to, settled either north, south, or east of the Black Sea (the truth is probably: all of the above). Most commentators equate Meshech with Phrygia, in modern west-central Turkey. Linguistically, equating Meshech with Moscow runs into the same kind of difficulty Rosh did: MŠK would have to be changed to MSK, or worse yet, to the Russian variant, Moskva (MSKV). However, MŠK fits Mushki, the name by which the early Greeks would have known Phrygia, quite well indeed. Others place them slightly to the east, in the Caucasus Mountains. Assyrian inscriptions from the time of Sargon II (700 B.C.) refer to a people living in the Caucasus range as “Moschi.” So take your pick, east or west (or both). Bottom line: if Gog is the “chief prince”

of Meshech, he's going to have to somehow exercise authority over west-central Turkey or points east.

And what about Tubal? There aren't any linguistic problems in linking Tubal to Tobolsk, but that city is in the middle of Siberia, about 3000 miles away from anything else we've looked at so far. It's like saying that Gog is mayor of both Seattle and Acapulco. It therefore behooves us to look for more likely candidates. As it turns out, TBL is a perfect fit for Tabal, in eastern Asia minor—modern Georgia—just east of the Black Sea. Nor is it too much of a stretch to imagine that the name of the Georgian city of Tbilisi got its name from our old friend Tubal.

So what we have so far might be rendered, **“Set your face against Gog, from the people ‘near the Caspian Sea and spread out even onward to [India](#),’ the chief prince of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Georgian Republic, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Northern Iran....”** Gog could be either the leader of these lands or a leader who comes from this area—centering on the Caucasus region, between the Black and Caspian Seas. Bear in mind that a leader needn't be *born* in the nation he leads: Napoleon was born in Corsica; Hitler was born in Austria; Osama bin Laden made Afghanistan his base of operations though he was a Saudi national; and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the head of Iraq's al-Qaeda terrorists, actually hailed from Jordan. And the “land of Magog?” If I had to render a guess as to the identity of Magog (in the sense of “the nation in which Gog wields power”) as a modern political entity from clues in the Bible, Josephus, and the morning paper, it would quickly boil down to a very short list: only one nation today fits all the criteria. Who? I'll tell you in a minute.

But first, let's look at the list of Magog's other allies, beginning with Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya. At last—somebody familiar. Well, maybe. You see, we need to take into consideration the time in which the prophet wrote, and we would be advised to take modern place names with a big grain of salt as well.

Let's start with Persia. Every schoolchild knows that Persia is Iran (or at least they used to when I was a kid—today, we're lucky if they know where *Iowa* is). But Ezekiel, who died about 560 B.C., lived in a very different world. Persia proper was in what is now the southern portion of Iran, primarily the area just east of the Persian Gulf. By the end of Ezekiel's life, however, Persia's borders (that is, its kingdom's) extended well beyond those of modern Iran. In the terms of his day, Persia (with her close ally, Media, whose lands she eventually absorbed) encompassed Urartu, Elam (Susiana), Parthia, Bactria, and Gandhara. In modern terminology, that equates roughly to Iran, northern Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and eastern Turkey. And within a few short decades, the list would include Pakistan in the East, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and a big chunk of southern Kazakhstan in the North, and Syria,

Jordan, Lebanon, the rest of Turkey, the rest of Iraq, Egypt, and Israel in the West. In case you missed it, that's pretty much the whole map of the Middle East today. Note that with the exception of that little Massachusetts-sized sliver of ground hugging the Mediterranean's eastern coastline, almost all of it is Muslim-controlled territory. What's hard to say is how much of these lands were meant to be included in Ezekiel's simple description, "Persia." Of particular interest on another level is how many of the modern nations on the list have nuclear arsenals—in other words, is Pakistan in or out, and will Iran have them by the time this all unfolds? In Ezekiel's lifetime, what is now Pakistan was not yet a part of the Persian empire. I'm afraid there's only one way to find out for sure: miss the rapture.

Ethiopia seems simple enough, but it's not. The Genesis 10 name is Cush, who was the eldest son of Ham (i.e., brother of Japheth and Shem, and son of Noah). From the point of view of the Table of Nations, Cush is the father of those who settled in eastern Africa, south of Egypt. Today, that would include the Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea. (Egypt, by the way, was originally named Mizraim, after one of Cush's brothers. Egypt/Mizraim is not specifically named in the Ezekiel 38 prophecy, but stay tuned.)

The word translated "Libya" was another son of Ham, a man named Put (or Phut). His descendents have spread from the border of Egypt/Mizraim all the way across Northern Africa: Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. All of these nations have been in the news a lot in recent days—and not in a good way. (In case you missed it, the so-called "Arab Spring" did touch Morocco, but since it didn't get too bloody and the monarchy still holds power, it didn't make the evening news.)

The next nation on the list of Magog's allies is Gomer. For some reason, many (still fixated on the non-existent Russian connection) have tried valiantly to identify Gomer with Germany, perhaps seeing a linguistic link between Gomer's consonants GMR and Deutschland's derived initials GRM. It won't work: the R and M are out of order; the similarity is superficial at best. But again, we find a perfect match right where we've come to expect it. GMR was well known to the ancients as Cimmeria (the gutturals often shift from G to C). And where is Cimmeria? Its other name is Cappadocia, located in—you guessed it—Asia Minor, as in Eastern Turkey.

There's only one ally left on the list. Togarmah was the third son of Gomer. As early as the 14th century B.C. its territory was described as lying "between Carchemish and Harran," on a main trade route through southwest Armenia. It was called Til-garimanu by the Assyrians, and bordered Tabal (Tubal) on the south. In other words, Togarmah was located in modern Armenia, Azerbaijan and

northern Iran—the land lying between Turkey and the Caspian Sea—an area that’s beginning to look *real* suspicious.

Once again, careful exegesis and a little research have put me in hot water. Among premillennial expositors, the vast majority of them insist that Magog is Russia, Gog is some kind of crazed Commie throwback like Vladimir Putin, Meshech is Moscow, and Tubal is Tobolsk. I’m sorry. I just can’t buy it.

It’s not just the ethnological and geographical evidence above, although that’s compelling enough. It’s that Russia has no motive for attacking Israel. Nothing rational, anyway. At the turn of the century, it could be safely said that “Israel has no natural resources to speak of—no strategic mineral deposits (although the Dead Sea—which it shares with Jordan—has some pretty interesting stuff in it), no vast reserves of oil—at least none that anyone has found yet.” The intriguing possibilities latent in verses like, **“Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains”** (Genesis 14:10) had not been explored by the geologists.

Now, all of that has changed. With the advent of fracking technology, it has now become intriguingly apparent that Israel is sitting on enormous quantities of oil. *The Jerusalem Post* (12/17/12) reported, “Israel Energy Initiatives (IEI), which has already completed an exploratory pre-pilot drilling phase in Israel’s Adullam region near Beit Shemesh, has claimed that the area—also called the Shfela Basin—contains approximately 250 billion barrels of shale oil, amounts that could be competitive to the amount of crude oil in Saudi Arabia.” But wait: there’s more. Tobias Buck of *FT Magazine* (August 31, 2012) speaks of immense reserves of Israeli natural gas: “With reserves of almost 10 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, the Tamar field is a hugely valuable asset for the Israeli economy. Discovered in January 2009, it was the biggest gas find in the world that year, and by far the biggest ever made in Israeli waters. But the record held for barely two years. In December 2010, Tamar was dwarfed by the discovery of the Leviathan gasfield some 20 miles farther east—the largest deepwater gas reservoir found anywhere in the world over the past decade. The two fields, together with a string of smaller discoveries, will cover Israel’s domestic demand for gas for at least the next 25 years, and still leave hundreds of billions of cubic feet for sale abroad.”

But even though Israel has found significant quantities of oil under the sands of the Negev and natural gas offshore in the Mediterranean, that in itself is still not a significant incentive for the Russians to invade—they themselves have the seventh largest oil reserves of any nation on earth, not to mention the fact that their own state-run energy company, Gazprom, is partnering with Israel to develop their newly found resources. Besides, if you’re going to attack someone in hopes of stealing their shale oil reserves, why not go after America, whose recently discovered shale deposits are estimated to top *three trillion* recoverable

barrels—more than all of the OPEC nations combined? (Of course, these deposits will likely remain untouched until—or unless—the politically driven pseudo-science feeding Washington’s environmental hysteria runs its course, and the pendulum swings back toward sanity.)

Historically, whatever prosperity Israel has enjoyed has been the direct result of the industry of its people and the blessing of Yahweh. Until very recently, the only way to attack Israel’s wealth was to destroy its people: they had nothing to steal. And the truth remains: nations like Russia (that is, sane and self-interested) do not unilaterally attack foreign powers—especially those with nuclear capability—without extremely good reasons.

But I’ll admit, as long as Russia was merely the largest province in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the whole Ezekiel 38 scenario made very little sense. Now that the “republics” are independent once again, however, the pieces are starting to come together. We’re looking for a motive here. Who wants Israel dead, no matter the cost, no matter the consequences? Sure, people have persecuted the Jews for millennia, but never against their own perceived self interests. But today there exists one nation whose hatred for the Jews regularly boils over into suicidal rage, a nation whose sole point of unity and purpose is their often-stated goal of ridding themselves—and the world—of the Jews. Forever.

Who is this nation? You won’t find their name on any map, but they boast a population of over 1.4 billion people. They possess some of the world’s greatest mineral resources, and yet their people are among the world’s poorest. They have been around for fourteen hundred years, but they’ve never learned how to transfer power peacefully from one generation to the next. They are deeply religious, and yet their scriptures declare that salvation from their sins is impossible, that good works do no good, that God is not interested in their welfare, and that the very best thing they can do in this life is to get themselves killed fighting against anyone who does not agree with their founder. This nation calls itself *dar al-Islam*, the house of Islam. It is comprised of every Muslim-controlled state in the world, as well as “colonies” and enclaves within nations they don’t control, in which immigrant Muslim minorities band together to perpetuate the same sort of evil and oppression from which they had fled. Our analysis of Ezekiel’s prophecy has just taken a look at the heart of this darkness—the geographic core of *dar al-Islam*.

As evil as they were, the old Soviet Union kept a lid on the insanity of the Muslim component in their southern territory for seventy years during the 20th century. (Or is it merely that Yahweh’s timing wasn’t yet right?) These former Soviet “Republics” include Turkmenistan, Kirgызstan, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan (mostly Sunni Muslims), Uzbekistan (mostly Shi’ite), and Khazakstan (a mixture

of Sunni Muslims, Russian Orthodox Christian, and Atheists). But now that the Soviet empire is no more, the lid is off and the pot is on full boil. Suddenly, Ezekiel 38 and 39 make perfect sense: much of this territory was dominated by the Scythians of old—in other words, it's part of Magog, the land from which "Gog" will come. It's becoming clear: Gog needs no motive to attack Israel other than religious hatred, pure and simple. Muhammad told his followers to "wipe the infidels out to the last," and to "kill every Jew who falls under your control." The people of Magog and their allies are merely following the Prophet's orders. The only surprise is that anyone is surprised about this.

Gog, then, is a leader of Muslims from the northern (i.e., Japhethite) component of *dar al-Islam*, although he will count as allies African and Middle Eastern (i.e., Hamite and Shemite) constituents as well. As we have seen, Magog (in the historical-geographical sense) covers a vast swath of territory stretching from the Black Sea region through Turkey, the Caucasus states, Iran, the "Stans," and on into Western China. But for our purposes, let us define "Magog" as Gog's national power base (realizing that technically, he could hail from anywhere in the old Scythian empire).

So who is "Magog," exactly (in this limited sense)? Well, let's see. Who is located in the heart of the Scythian empire, with a capital city within fifty miles of the Caspian Sea? Who is wealthy enough to single-handedly equip a modern multi-national army, is influential enough to lead like-minded countries into battle, and has proven its willingness to defy international law? What nation has become famous for its leaders' outrageously vituperative statements against Israel, denying its history, its achievements, and its very right to exist? Whose land is floating on an ocean of oil, yet is spending vast sums of money building *nuclear* power plants to produce their electricity (or so they insist)—power plants whose byproducts have no purpose except for the manufacture of atomic weapons? Who is the only Middle Eastern nation (at the moment) ruled not by a secular government of some sort (however Islamist their policies might be) but by fundamentalist clerics of Islam, the fastest growing, most aggressive religion in the world? Who carries the spiritual torch of this militant doctrine whose founder commanded his followers to kill every Jew they could? What nation's leadership blatantly and publicly anticipates the coming of a leader whose description fits the Biblical Gog to a tee?

The answer's pretty obvious, at least to me: Magog is Iran.

Consider this passage from Isaiah. It's one of the few in which the noble prophet seems genuinely terrified at what he's seen. **"The burden against the Wilderness of the Sea. [That this is the Caspian Sea will become clear in a moment.] As whirlwinds in the South pass through, so it comes from the desert, from a terrible land. A distressing vision is declared to me. The treacherous dealer deals treacherously, and the**

plunderer plunders. Go up, O Elam! Besiege, O Media! All its sighing I have made to cease. Therefore my loins are filled with pain; Pangs have taken hold of me, like the pangs of a woman in labor. I was distressed when I heard it; I was dismayed when I saw it. My heart wavered, fearfulness frightened me; the night for which I longed He turned into fear for me. Prepare the table, set a watchman in the tower, eat and drink. Arise, you princes, anoint the shield!" (Isaiah 21:1-5)

At its height, Babylon controlled most of Elam (Susiana), but it never controlled Media. Where were these nations? Elam and its northern neighbor Media straddled the territory between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea: the prophet has defined modern-day *Iran*. (Persia was Elam's neighbor to the east and south.) Israel is admonished to get up and oil its shield, that is, prepare its defenses. Of course, she's just put her defense into the hands of the Antichrist's U.N. peacekeepers when this happens; the timing couldn't be worse. On the other hand, this very surrender of Israel's military sovereignty is what's driving the timing: it's the heart of Gog's battle strategy. As we shall see, Israel will rise to the challenge anyway.

Because this is the passage where Isaiah later relates that the watchman reports, "Babylon has fallen, has fallen..." everyone naturally assumes it's all about Babylon. But it's not—not about *historical* Babylon, anyway. Spiritual Babylon is another matter: the house of Islam is a major component of the religious side of symbolic Babylon's evils. When John heard the angel use exactly the same phrase, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," (Revelation 14:8) it was no coincidence. The angel was referring to the same event Isaiah had—the final downfall of the world's system of false worship. When God warns us to "Flee from Babylon," Islam is included within the metaphor (though it is by no means alone). The event that triggers "Babylon's" impending demise is the invasion of Israel by "Elam" and "Media," a.k.a. Magog, a.k.a. Iran.

At the time of this writing, Iran is the only nation within *dar al-Islam* whose leaders consider the Muslim scriptures their primary law ("Sharia"), but through revolution and intrigue, the trend is leaning in that direction throughout the Muslim world. (The wisdom-impaired American politicians did everything possible to turn *Iraq*, Iran's western neighbor, into an Islamic fundamentalist state, and our incompetent meddling in such places as Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, and Syria didn't help matters.)

Turkey—mentioned every time you turn around in reference to Magog (as Meshech, Tubal, Togarmah, and Gomer)—is also leaning more and more strongly toward a fundamentalist form of Islam these days, and their leadership is proving increasingly belligerent toward Israel, despite their traditionally moderate stance. So it's possible that *they* will take up the mantle of Iran as the day approaches. Other factors supporting the "Turkey is Magog" theory: Having few natural

resources of their own, they could well cast a covetous eye toward Israel's newfound mineral wealth (see Ezekiel 38:12); they are *directly* north of Israel—a factor that's mentioned often in the salient scriptures; and Turkey is the seat of the most recent and most deeply entrenched Islamic caliphate—the Ottoman Empire. Also, Turkey is primarily Sunni, not Shiite, in makeup—making them (not Iran) a better *religious* fit for the leader of the Islamic hordes. So who knows?

The “inspired” Islamic scriptures consist principally of four ancient works: the Qur'an (supposedly the very word of Allah), the Hadith (or “Sayings of the Prophet”) recorded by al-Bukhari (supported by the Hadith of Imam Muslim, though it runs a distant second in credibility), and the biographies, or Sunnah (i.e., “example”) of the Prophet Muhammad. The earliest of these was written by Ibn Ishaq (of which only the version edited many years later by Ibn Hisham survives). A later biography by al-Tabari borrows heavily from Ibn Ishaq. (It's particularly valuable—and damning—because it retains much of what Ibn Hisham edited out.) The Hadith and Sunnah are essential to Islam because the Qur'an is virtually incomprehensible without the background, commentary, and timeline they provide. In fact, Islamic Sharia law has no basis in the Qur'an without the support it derives from Muhammad's recorded words and deeds. If “the Prophet” said it or did it, it is deemed acceptable, or even mandatory. This fact should send a shudder down the spine of any “law”-abiding Muslim: in the final analysis, his “god” said nothing that could be construed as a code of conduct. Sharia law, by Islam's own admission, is only the product of man's imagination and desires. In fact, the only real code of law in mankind's history that was even *purported* to be “handed down from God” is the Torah—Yahweh's instructions to Israel.

Anyway, let's take another look at the opening verse of the account of this future war. **“The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog’... and say, ‘Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I am against you, O Gog.’”** (Ezekiel 38:1) Yahweh tells the prophet that he is “against” the leader, “Gog,” not merely his nation or the coalition he has cobbled together. Political leaders good and bad, from Nimrod to Caesar, are mentioned in their historical context throughout the Bible, but the only ones taken to task are the ones who purposely attempt to lead people away from God's truth: for example, Balak, Jeroboam, Ahab, etc. We are admonished to obey (insofar as scripture allows it) the other leaders, even the less-than-perfect ones, observing the laws of the land and even paying our taxes to them. That means that Gog is more than just another dictator out to line his own pockets, like Saddam Hussein or Moammar Gadhafi were. He is deliberately keeping his people in spiritual bondage, enforcing with the machine of government his own religious views and convictions. Could there be a better description of the man who bears the title of Ayatollah, Imam, Mullah or Caliph?

And what about Russia? Am I saying Russia won't be a part of this? Actually, I'm not. I believe—for reasons I'll explain later—that they *will* be dragged into the fray, as will America. But they won't be the instigators. They aren't "Magog," and Russia's leader, Communist or not, is not Gog. The Russians will merely be protecting their own interests. After all, the Muslim nations are their biggest trading partners, their primary source of hard currency (due in great measure to the money we Americans have paid for their oil). But Russia isn't going to unilaterally attack Israel any more than the tail of an undisciplined dog will chase a car down the street. They may come along for the ride, but the driving force in this insane war of Gog and Magog—World War III—will be Islam.

You've probably noticed my annoying tendency to take pot-shots at Islam every few pages. Please forgive me; I can't help myself. You see, on September 11, 2001, as the rest of the country watched in horror as the hijacked airliners plunged into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Craig Winn and I were finishing up the production details on our first book. As the first reports of al-Qaeda's role came trickling in, Craig told me sadly, "I know *exactly* what's going to happen here. Our reaction is going to be all wrong. We'll send troops into harms way, fire off a bunch of cruise missiles and blow up some mud huts. But going after al-Qaeda will be attacking symptoms, not causes. I'll bet the real problem has something to do with Islam—these terrorists have somehow twisted their religion and made it violent."

Craig was right that day, *and* wrong. Yes, America pursued only the symptom, Al-Qaeda. We went hunting for Osama bin Laden, blindly refusing to consider any deeper cause (even though Osama himself told us plainly what his motivation was). When we discovered that the Taliban in Afghanistan had harbored this terrorist boys' club while dragging the country back to the seventh century, we set out on a crusade to right a wrong—one that had little or nothing to do with 9/11. But when Craig went looking for the root causes of Muslim violence, he discovered that the problem wasn't *in* Islam—the problem *was* Islam. The terrorists hadn't twisted Islam to their own purposes; they were merely doing what their holy books commanded them to do. (Why don't more Christians do that?) As Winn began to analyze the Muslim scriptures, he realized that the life and words of Muhammad were a recipe for terror—that the closer you modeled your life on Muhammad, the more you'd look like Osama bin Laden.

The research resulted in our second book together, this time a novel (easier to assimilate than non-fiction), entitled *Tea With Terrorists* (CricketSong Books,

2002). Real Islam is totally unlike the picture our politicians and media have been painting for the last fifty years. But incredibly, because Muslims don't study their own scriptures (they're actually instructed *not* to), the majority of them don't understand it either. They just do and think what their imams tell them—after all, *Islam* means “submit.” Winn and I discovered that the gap between truth and perception was truly cavernous, especially here in America. Once again, we had as a nation proven ourselves willingly ignorant of something that could kill us.

Because it's been said so often, most Americans believe that Islam is a peaceful religion. *It is not*, at least, not as any non-Muslim would describe peace. The Islamic scriptures define “peace” as the state of affairs that will exist only when the entire world submits to Allah and His Messenger and pays their taxes to them. In reality, Islam is peaceful only insofar as its practitioners ignore or deny the teachings and example of its founder, Muhammad (who their own histories depict as an acquisitive, bloodthirsty pedophile). But even then the definition is deceptive, for those Muslims who refuse to “fight in Allah's cause with full force and weaponry” are labeled by their own scriptures as “hypocrites” for whom are reserved the hell fire. That is, according to Islamic doctrine, they're *not really Muslims*. (I would use that same criteria—strict adherence to and belief in one's scriptures—to define *any* “religion,” including Christianity. Not the church, or tradition, or one's cultural history, but *Scripture*. Of course, that would probably place “Christianity” somewhere south of Buddhism in the CIA's population estimates, were it not for the fact that very few among *any* religion really live by their scriptures.)

The fact is, from its beginning, Islam has been far less a religion than a political doctrine designed to enrich and satiate the carnal cravings of its founder and his followers. The “religious” part, the five pillars of Islam, aren't even specified in the Qur'an (the collection of “revelations” supposedly handed down from Allah). The “pillars” have to be gleaned from the Hadith. Muhammad invented (or more correctly, adopted from earlier local pagan custom) these rites and rituals for one purpose only: to keep his followers in a posture and mindset of blind, unthinking obedience. The very word Islam means submission.

And who is Allah? Many Christians, duped by a gullible press (who have in turn been duped by Muslim propagandists), have imagined that Allah is the Arabic word for God, which would make him the same as Yahweh, the Judeo-Christian deity. Our pundits and politicians—right up to the President of the United States—insist that we're all worshipping the same God. Nothing could be further from the truth. When the Qur'an says, “There is no god but God,” it uses two different words. It says: “There is no *ilah* (a word related to the Hebrew *Eloah*) but Allah.” As much as they'd like you to believe that “Allah” simply means “god,” it doesn't. It is, rather, the *name* of Islam's deity. Actually, the

name Allah is linguistically linked to Halal, the name translated “Lucifer” in Isaiah 14:12. Allah, to put it bluntly, is Satan.

According to Muslim scriptures, Allah cares nothing for the welfare of people. While there are a hell and a paradise in Islamic theology to which men will go after death, there is no way to choose between them or even influence one’s eternal destiny. Yes, a paradise populated with big-eyed sex-starved virgins and rivers flowing with wine is offered to jihad fighters who come up short in the booty department as a perverse bribe (sick, considering such things are strictly forbidden in this life). But Islamic teachings as a whole are quite clear: everyone is *predestined* to one fate or the other—the vast majority to hell, by the way. Good works avail nothing, and Christian-style grace is a concept foreign to Islam. According to Muhammad’s words recorded in the Hadith of al-Bukhari, the total capacity of paradise is 70,000 souls. Since there have been perhaps three billion Muslims on earth throughout history (half of whom are alive today), the odds are about 43,000 to one that you won’t make it—*and that’s if you’re a Muslim!*

Where will Allah be throughout eternity? In paradise with the chosen few? No. In heaven? (It’s a separate place in Muslim theology.) No. He’ll be in hell, tormenting the infidels whom *he* decided—long before they were even born—to send there. Muhammad assures us that Allah likes to turn the spit upon which Jews, Christians, and other “infidels” (including those pesky peaceful Muslims—the “hypocrites”) are to be roasted alive. That’s but one of many fundamental differences between Christianity and Islam: in Christianity, hell is being separated from God, but in Islam, hell is being in his presence—being tortured personally by him. That should tell you something about who Muslims are *really* worshiping.

Why can’t Muslims see the folly of their religion? You don’t have to scratch too far beneath the surface to discover that there’s no hope there. Why don’t they leave, quit, rebel? It’s not that simple, I’m afraid. Islam is structured to systematically persecute any who leave the fold—they are ostracized by family, shut out of society, sometimes killed. Moreover, Muslims are discouraged—in their own scriptures—from looking too closely at the nature of Islam. Those who do, it is said, are apt to “lose their faith.” Rather, they are told merely to obey, to submit, to do what they’re told. Memorize; don’t analyze. Thinking is bad; blind obedience is good.

When Muhammad received his first (and only) “revelation,” a being whom he was convinced was a demon demanded that he read. But Muhammad, who was illiterate, could not comply. So the spirit molested him until he couldn’t breathe, then told him to read again. This is all hauntingly reminiscent of what Isaiah had written thirteen hundred years previously: **“The whole vision has become to you [the enemies of Israel] like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, ‘Read this, please.’ And he says, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed.’ Then the book is**

delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, 'Read this, please.' And he says, 'I am not literate....'"

Neither the "literate" enemies of Israel, like the Babylonians and the Romans, nor their "illiterate" adversaries, the Muslims, would have a clue that by oppressing the Jews they were inviting the wrath of God. **"Therefore Yahweh said: 'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.'**" (Isaiah 29:11-14) This is a pungent warning to all man-made religious constructs. Although written to and about apostate Israel, it's hard to imagine a more fitting description of Islam than this.

But Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are all monotheistic religions, you protest. Surely there must be points upon which you can agree. Who ever said Islam was monotheistic? Oh yeah, *they* did. Sorry; it's just not true. Muhammad started off in Mecca, supposedly receiving his "revelations" from a god he simply called "Lord," even though there were over three hundred local gods and goddesses from which to choose in the local shrine known as the Ka'aba. Allah was there, and three of his "daughters," al-Lat, Manat, and al-Uzza, were close by, but the prophet didn't call upon any of them. As time went on, Muhammad began invoking a god named Ar-Rahman instead of the generic "Lord." Ar-Rahman (whose name means "the Merciful") was a bloodthirsty pagan deity worshipped not in Mecca, but far to the south in Yemen. It wasn't until Muhammad was run out of town as a public nuisance, finding shelter among the gullible Arabs in Yathrib (Medina), that he began calling upon the name of Allah.

Why? It's simple. As backward as the Meccans were, they knew that the Christian and Jewish God had prophets who performed miracles in His name. If Muhammad invoked a local god (like Allah) he would be hard pressed to explain why he couldn't do any signs or wonders. If he were a great prophet as he claimed, he would be expected to be the vehicle for God's power, like Moses, Elijah or Yahshua had been. At the very least, the black rock that represented Allah in the Ka'aba would have been expected to give a sign authenticating his prophet—roll over, or change colors, or something. But that wasn't going to happen, and Muhammad knew it. No, the deity *du jour* would have to be somebody from out of town, somebody who couldn't be put to the test. In Mecca, of course, they saw right through Muhammad's ploy. They *knew* him.

In Yathrib, the city to which Muhammad ignominiously fled in 622, three of its five tribes were Jewish. There, true to form, Muhammad picked up just enough information to be dangerous from the Jews' recitations from the Talmud and other

sources, apocryphal and otherwise. Reshaping these quasi-Biblical stories into Muslim propaganda, Muhammad once again found himself the target of ridicule—it was like Mecca all over again. In his versions, “prophets” like Lot and Moses were sent to the men of Sodom and to Pharaoh, and judgment was visited upon anyone who rejected them—in other words, everybody. The moral of the story was always the same: obey the prophet or suffer disastrous consequences. When Muhammad’s Messianic aspirations became apparent, the derision meter redlined. Muhammad was losing his taste for Jews.

You see, Muhammad apparently got wind of Moses’ prophecy concerning a coming prophet, the Messiah, and tried to convince the Jews of Yathrib that he was the fulfillment of that promise: **“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.”** Of course, Muhammad conveniently ignored the rest of the prophecy: **“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which Yahweh has not spoken?’—when a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which Yahweh has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”** (Deuteronomy 18:18-22)

For their part, the Yathrib Jews may have been thinking about another Mosaic passage: **“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for Yahweh your God is testing you to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after Yahweh your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which Yahweh your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.”**

(Deuteronomy 13:1-5) This upped the ante. Even if Muhammad had been able to perform miracles or produce signs of his authenticity (which he could not) the very fact that he advocated the worship of another god, Allah, was enough to disqualify him. Actually, it was worse than that: the Jews were under instructions—from both passages—to *kill* him. They did not, however, and Muhammad went on to exile, enslave, or murder every one of them.

The Muslim emigrants from Mecca were living off the charity of the Arabs of Yathrib. Rather than assimilate into society and go to work for a living, they

decided that it would be easier to rob caravans—a practice that was unheard of in that place and time. After nine unsuccessful attempts, they finally succeeded. Muhammad had morphed from prophet to profiteer. After a few subsequent skirmishes were disappointing in the booty department, the next logical step was to attack the Jewish tribes in Yathrib/Medina. The Muslims wanted some booty in the worst way, and the Jews were easy targets, relatively wealthy, and had proved their impertinence by scoffing at Muhammad’s Messianic claims. The Beni Qainuqa were the first tribe to go—exiled from their own city, forced to leave everything behind but their lives. Then the Beni al Nadheer were surrounded, starved out, and sent packing. The third Jewish tribe didn’t fare so well. The Beni Quraidha were captured, but rather than being merely robbed and forced out into the desert, the men were blindfolded, brought out in small groups to a large trench the Muslims had dug, and beheaded. Their wives and children were sold into slavery. Hitler had nothing on Muhammad except greater population density and German technology.

This is nowhere near the whole story, you understand. But it helps to explain things like Palestinian suicide bombers and the events of September 11—and even the fact that Muslim immigrants to this very day characteristically resist assimilation into the culture of their adopted lands. True followers of Muhammad (a phrase that describes a growing minority of Muslims) are in it for what they can get out of it—either booty in this world or paradise in the next. The prophet Joel was apparently given a glimpse of the Muslim mindset: **“On account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink. Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head.”** (Joel 3:2-4) Paradise is promised to young Palestinian Muslims willing to blow themselves up in public places, taking as many Jews as possible with them. But what is paradise? It is described in the Hadith as a place of unending sex with perpetual virgins, a land of low-hanging fruit and free-flowing wine. **“They have...given a boy as payment for a harlot”** is a pretty good description of an Islamic suicide bomber. The very things Muhammad forbade in this life were promised in the next. All you had to do to attain these goals, he said, was to die fighting people Muhammad hated: Jews and Christians. Incredibly, many bought into his scheme. Allah’s goals and Satan’s goals are identical.

If you’d like to get a better handle on the connection between Islam and terrorism, read our novel *Tea With Terrorists*, or better yet, if you’ve got the fortitude for it, read Craig Winn’s subsequent non-fiction masterwork on Islam called *Prophet of Doom* (CricketSong Books, 2003; free online at

www.ProphetOfDoom.net), a comprehensive and scathing indictment of Islam using only their own scriptures as evidence.

In *Tea With Terrorists*, we sort of implied that Islam couldn't be Satanic because it was *soooo* stupid. But alas, Winn's research for *Prophet of Doom* has proved otherwise. A few isolated examples:

Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet's earliest biographer, reported the following comments concerning Muhammad's *faux pas* of adding three pagan goddesses to the Islamic "monotheistic" pantheon (an incident revealed in the Qur'an as the "Satanic Verses"). *"The Messenger was grieved and feared Allah greatly. So Allah sent a revelation to him, consoling him and making light of the affair. He informed him that there had never been a prophet or messenger before who desired as he desired and wished as he wished but that Satan had cast words into his recitation, as he had interjected them on Muhammad's tongue and into his desires."* So The Islamic scriptures freely admit that Muhammad couldn't tell if his revelations were coming from Allah or Satan. Worse, Allah didn't seem to mind. *"Then Allah annulled what Satan had cast, and established his verses by telling him that he was like other prophets and messengers. Muhammad's lord revealed: 'Every messenger or prophet before you recited the Message Satan cast into his recitation. Allah abrogates what Satan casts.' Then Allah established his verses. God is knower, wise."* This is backed up in the Qur'an, in surah 22:52. Allah is saying, in effect, "Don't sweat it, Muhammad. All the prophets before you were Satan's stooges too." Maybe they are in Islam. Judeo-Christianity has a slightly higher standard.

According to the Qur'an (59:16), Satan worships Allah. *"When (man) denies, Satan says, 'I have nothing to do with you. I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!'"* Elsewhere, we are told that the jinn (demons) find the Qur'an a fascinating and wonderful book. What's the old proverb about being known by the company you keep? In the Hadith of Muslim, we find: *"Allah's Messenger said [to his child-wife Aisha]: 'It is your devil who has come to you.' I [Aisha] said: 'Allah's Messenger, is there a devil with me?' He said: 'Yes.' I said: 'Is there a devil attached to everyone?' He said: 'Yes.' I said: 'Allah's Messenger, is there a devil attached to you also?' He said: 'Yes.'"* When Muhammad had his first terrifying "revelation" in a cave outside Mecca, he had come to the conclusion that he had been possessed by a demon. Here, over twenty years later, he has apparently grown quite comfortable with his resident devil.

A thousand little details point toward the conclusion that Islam is Satanic, but none quite so obviously as Muhammad's irrational hatred of the Jews. From the very beginning, Lucifer has done everything he could to thwart Yahweh's plan of redemption, and for most of our history, that plan has played out through the

Jews. The curtain is about to go up on the final act in the play—the Jews’ own reconciliation with Yahweh. Satan will stop it if he can. It’s his last chance.

In case you still think I’m off my rocker for identifying Gog and Magog with Muslim hordes (instead of Russia), maybe you’ll take Satan’s, I mean *Allah’s*, word for it. The Qur’an is supposed to be the very words of god—i.e., Allah (or was it ar-Rahman?). In point of fact, it’s clearly just a series of situational justifications for Muhammad’s short-term agenda, interspersed with plagiarized and twisted Jewish stories—also told to advance Muhammad’s plan to attain power, sex, and money. The Yathrib Jews apparently told Muhammad about Ezekiel 38. He thought the invasion-of-the-Jews part sounded swell, so he built it into his version of “god’s word.” Little did he realize that he was chronicling the eventual downfall of the very doctrine he was in the process of inventing. Qur’an 21:95-97: *“But there is a ban on any population which We have destroyed: [which means that once the Muslims control a place, they think it’s theirs forever] that they shall not return until Gog and Magog are let loose and they swoop down, swarming from every hill, letting loose and breaking forth from every elevated place. Then will the true promise of Doom draw nigh. Behold, the disbelieving Infidels will be terrorized, staring in horror. ‘Woe to us! Alas! We made a state heedless of this. We did wrong!’”* In a way, of course, Allah/Muhammad was perfectly correct. As long as you understand that the “disbelieving infidels” are really the Muslims, it all makes sense. I’ll bet the devil’s chuckling over that one.

But wait: it gets better. Muslims are actually taught to *expect* a powerful Islamic-style Messianic figure to arise. He is known as the Mahdi (which means “the obliterator”) and he fits the Biblical description of Gog to a tee. We read in the Muqqadima, from the fourteenth century Islamic historian Ibn Khaldun: *“It has been accepted by all the Muslims in every epoch that at the end of time a man from the family of the Prophet will, without fail, make his appearance, one who will strengthen Islam and make justice triumph. Muslims will follow him, and he will gain domination over the Muslim realm. He will be called the Mahdi....”* (Take note: the Mahdi—like Gog—is prophesied to come “at the end of time.”) Lest you conclude that this belief is an ancient and all-but-forgotten bit of Muslim trivia, let me quote from the October 11, 1976 fatwa issued by the General Secretariat of the World Muslim League. After confirming the reliability of the scriptural tradition from which the doctrine of the Mahdi is derived, he said, “The belief in the appearance of the Mahdi is obligatory.... None denies it except those

who are ignorant of the Sunnah and innovators in doctrine [in other words, heretics].”

Ibn Khaldun continues: *There will come forth a man from my nation who will talk according to my Sunnah. God will send upon him rain from heaven, and the earth will sprout forth for him its blessing. The earth will be filled through him with equity and justice, as it has been filled with injustice and crime. He will direct the affairs of this nation for seven years, and he will settle in Jerusalem.*” Seven years, is it? Jerusalem, is it? The “covenant with many” described by Daniel, is supposed to last precisely that long, and will focus on the same city.

Look at the logistics of the thing. It’s essential that Gog backs the Antichrist’s “covenant with many,” for without his blessing, it hasn’t got a prayer. But it will not be lost on him that this very backing will qualify him as the highly esteemed Imam Mahdi in the eyes of a billion Muslims—*“The earth will be filled through him with equity and justice.”* His support of the treaty will be a politically astute move calculated to instantly elevate him from a local imam or ayatollah to the promised “Guided One,” a.k.a. the “twelfth Imam,” revered and expected throughout the Muslim world—especially in lands (like Iran) dominated by Shi’ite theology. *Jumpin’ jihad!*

But the Sunnah also states that he will “settle in Jerusalem.” *That* expectation will inevitably precipitate the Battle of Magog—the post-treaty invasion of Israel. Gog is quite aware that if he doesn’t “settle in Jerusalem” (a phrase he’ll surely interpret as “conquer Jerusalem”) he’ll eventually be rejected as the Mahdi. And Muslim megalomaniacs never just get to quietly retire: if they lose their grasp on power, they tend to go down hard. His destiny, and the fate of his vast army, is thus sealed: once Pandora’s box is open, it will be impossible to shut. Just as Muhammad tried to sell himself as the Jews’ Messiah by equating himself with the coming “Prophet” Moses had promised (Deuteronomy 18:15-19), Gog will do whatever it takes to reverse engineer a passable fulfillment of the Mahdi prophecy, casting himself in the title role. The rest of the world, as usual, will be clueless.

The legend says the Mahdi will be tall and fair, a direct descendant of Muhammad, one whose father and mother share the “Prophet’s” names (Abdullah and Amina). He will appear in Mecca, and in the month of Ramadan prior to his ascension (at the age of forty), eclipses of the both the sun and moon will occur. For what it’s worth, just such a phenomenon took place, visible in Arabia, during Ramadan, 2005. Is the Mahdi, then, the Muslim Messiah? Sort of. Actually, they say they’re also expecting the return of the Muslim prophet “Jesus,” if you can believe that. Sayyid Rizvi relates that “Jesus will descend to the earth soon after the appearance of the Mahdi; he will join the Mahdi in establishing the Kingdom of God [i.e., Allah] on earth; and he will pray behind Imam al-Mahdi. The true

Christians will follow Jesus in accepting Imam Mahdi as the leader at the time and become Muslims.”

Jesus? Not likely. As usual in Islam, you can't tell the players without a scorecard. The “Jesus” being referred to here is not the same as the risen Yahshua of Nazareth whom Christians worship. You probably figured that out on your own. He is the one referred to quite often in Muslim scriptures as “Isa, son of Maryam.” Though invariably translated “Jesus” in an attempt to fool the gullible, Isa actually means “Esau,” as in the godless twin brother of Jacob—the one whom Yahweh said He “hated” (cf. Romans 9:13, Malachi 1:2). So who, *really*, is this one who will “pray behind [in support of] Imam Mahdi”? His profile fits the Antichrist perfectly. It's pretty obvious that our esteemed European diplomat will have to suck up to—excuse me, conciliate, mollify, and appease—the Muslim leadership in order to get his Middle East peace plan accepted. According to Muslim lore (not to mention political reality), that will apparently include assuming the “brown nose” position in ritual Islamic prayer. How ecumenical of him. Barack Obama will serve nicely as the prototype for this type of behavior, doing whatever he thinks is necessary, no matter how humiliating (or disingenuous), to secure the favor of Islamic world. I'm sure it will be gratifying to the Antichrist to know that he has at least some of the world fooled this early in the game: the Muslims think he's Jesus! Good grief.

Actually, there are *three* prominent players in Islamic folklore who correspond (roughly) to three major Last Days characters described in the Bible—though the Muslim versions are inside-out and backwards. As we have seen, the messiah-like Mahdi is actually Gog. And the one the Muslims will recognize as “Jesus” is really the Antichrist. Confused yet? So are they. The obvious question is, do they foresee an “Antichrist” figure?

You bet your burqa they do. Islam teaches its followers to expect someone called Dajjal. According to the hadith of Imam Muslim, he is the epitome of evil, a Jew (naturally) who has been the cause of much distress to his parents. His most ardent followers will be the Yahudis (Jews) of Isfahaan (Israel?), though people of many nations will unite under his banner—against Islam. His emergence “will become known when he is in Isfahaan at a place called Yahudea [Judea].” Dajjal will, it is said, lay claim to prophethood, and then to divinity. He will have the power to perform unusual feats, such as sending rain, and blessing those who follow him with bountiful crops and fat cattle—all things, ironically, that Allah himself has historically been unable to achieve—while causing drought, hardship, and starvation to those who disbelieve in him (things that, not coincidentally, have all too commonly afflicted people who worship Allah).

Both Isa, son of Maryam (the Muslim “Jesus”) and Dajjal are called *al-Maseeh* (the Messiah) in the Islamic scriptures, as is the Mahdi. Actually, this

Dajjal is a passable match for the *real* Messiah, Yahshua, though we'll have to wait a bit to see precisely how and when. Just to keep things confusing, Dajjal is said to be blind in his right eye—a trait that may actually come to describe the real Antichrist. But remember: this is *Islamic* eschatology: you can't trust it to do anything but deceive Muslims.

Muhammad Sâlih al-Munajjid writes, “The root *dajala* means to mix. The word *dajala* is used to mean deliberately confusing matters and being vague and ambiguous. The Dajjal is the one who speaks in vagaries, who tells many lies and deceives many people.” If you remember that spiritual truth is spiritually discerned, and that to a Muslim, up is down, black is white, lies are truth, and truth is confusing and deceptive, this all makes perfect sense. But if you take their prophecies at face value, not so much. As if to confirm this observation, Imam Muslim writes (in hadith #5222) “The Dajjal... will have with him a paradise and a hell, but his hell will be a paradise and his paradise will be a hell.” Again, if your idea of “hell” is being blessed in the presence of Yahweh for all eternity, then it all makes perfect sense.

The Islamic scriptures assure Muslims, of course, that Dajjal will not prevail, that they will overcome him in the end under the leadership of the Mahdi, and that he will be slain in the end by Isa, son of Maryam, at Lydda, a.k.a. Lod, in Israel, near Tel Aviv. (In a fascinating twist, Lydda is famous for being home base of Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph, who was single-handedly responsible for the final separation of Christianity from Judaism, about 133 A.D., by backing Bar Kochba as the promised Messiah.) The battle lines, then, are drawn: Yahweh's prophets versus Allah's.

As bewildering as this is already, it's worth noting that the (real) Antichrist won't likely remain such an exalted figure among Muslims for very long after his vaunted “covenant with many” is implemented. His satanic agenda—to rob Yahweh of the affections of His chosen people, the Jews—will force him to defend them against the hordes of Magog in hopes of bolstering his own messianic credentials—something Gog, misreading the Antichrist's agenda, will characterize as betrayal.

It's quite possible, in fact, that the Muslims will eventually conclude that *he's* Dajjal, or at least in league with him. We'll soon meet a character known as the “False Prophet” who's more or less joined at the hip with the Antichrist, performing signs and wonders on his behalf. And being a Jew (he's described as “the beast from the *Land*,” which typically refers to Israel, as the “sea” does to the gentile nations), he will be a lightning rod for Muslim expectations concerning the despised Dajjal. History will prove him to be a poor fit. (Neither the Christ nor the Antichrist will kill him at Lydda while the Muslims inherit the earth, as they predict.) But that won't stop the armies of Magog from focusing on him in a

desperate attempt to vindicate their woefully errant eschatology. In truth, the fine points of Islamic theology have never been a very substantial guide for predicting Muslim behavior anyway, since they're specifically told *not* to ponder their own scriptures. So this shift shouldn't be completely unexpected. The Qur'an, Hadith, and Sunnah are confusing, contradictory, and open to a wide variety of interpretations—just what you'd expect from the father of lies.

By the way, in case you were wondering, as I was, how Gog, a self-aggrandizing Muslim cleric operating in Iran (thus presumably Shiite), could possibly hope to unify a more moderate and dominantly Sunni Turkey and the former Soviet Islamic “republics” in holy war, the answer once again lies in Muslim expectations. Bear in mind that differences between Sunnis and Shiites are primarily historical and political, not religious. It all has to do with who were (or were not) entitled to serve as Muhammad's successors—or caliphs—back in the seventh century. There are also minor differences in the two sects' beliefs concerning the Mahdi, “the rightly-guided one” whose role is universally understood to bring a just global caliphate (itself something of an oxymoron) into being. Historian Timothy Furnish explains: “The major difference is that for Shiites he has already been here, and will return from hiding; for Sunnis he has yet to emerge into history: a comeback vs. a coming out, if you will.” (It's sort of like the dichotomy between Jews and Christians concerning the Messiah: the Jews await Him, while Christians await *His return*.) In practical terms, the *real* differences between Sunnis and Shiites aren't insurmountable at all (never mind the fact that they've been killing each other for centuries, without a clue as to why). The doctrinal chasm between them is not so much like Christians vs. Hindus (for example), as it is between, say, Catholics and Episcopalians. In all honesty, they have much more in common than they have dividing them.

So what do commonly held Muslim expectations have to do with it? Listen to what Abdul Rahman al-Wahabi predicts in *The Day of Wrath*. “*The final battle will be waged by Muslim faithful coming on the backs of horses from the stans, carrying black banners. They will stand on the east side of the Jordan River and will wage war that the earth has never seen before. The true Messiah, who is the Islamic Mehdi [or Mahdi], who will kill the pig [Jews] and will break the cross [Christians] and will defeat Europe...will lead this army of Seljuks.*” The Seljuks were pre-Ottoman Turks, ranging throughout northern Iran, Iraq, Syria, the southern Caucasus region, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. These areas are a pretty fair match for Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Togarmah, specified by Ezekiel as allies of Magog. So although the Mahdi (Gog) will most likely rise to power in Shiite Iran, he will (according to Muslim thought) lead an army of Seljuks—Sunnis—among a long list of Islamic allies.

And please note whom the Mahdi is expected to rally his forces against: Jews (duh), Christians (read: westerners—Middle Eastern Muslims don't know the difference) and Europe—home base of the Antichrist, who has built his own reputation negotiating peace in Israel. Islamic expectations will lead them to their destiny like moths to a flame.

Neither Muhammad nor later Islamic scholars realized, of course, that Gog and Magog would be *Islamic* armies. Actually, Muhammad thought they were extraterrestrial creatures that lived near the muddy spring into which the sun descended every night. (Hey, I'm not making this stuff up, I swear.) He (channeling Allah) told a demented tale of the mighty Muslim prophet Dhu'l-Qarnain (a.k.a. Alexander the Great, if you can believe *that*) building a great iron wall between two mountains to keep the hordes of Magog out. Qur'an 18:99-102 says, "*On that day [the day when Gog and Magog will come out] We shall leave them to surge like waves on one another: the trumpet will be blown, and We shall collect them [the creatures] all together in one gathering in conflict. And We shall present Hell that day for disbelievers to see, all spread out in plain view.... Verily We have prepared Hell for the hospitality of the Infidels; Hell is for the disbeliever's entertainment.*" As before, if you understand who the "infidels" really are, Muhammad's not that far off—but only because of the background provided by Ezekiel. One gets the feeling that the Rabbis of Yathrib set him up, and he took the bait and ran with it.

Another nagging question: why would a loving God allow so many nations, those comprising the armies of Magog, to fall into the clutches of Islam—a prison from which escape is next to impossible? Read carefully the following explanation offered through the Prophet Joel. He's speaking of Phoenicia and Philistia, but the principle can be seen to extend throughout the Middle East. **"Swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head, because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My prized possessions. Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem you have sold to the Greeks, that you may remove them far from their borders. Behold, I will raise them out of the place to which you have sold them, and will return your retaliation upon your own head. I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans [from Sheba, i.e., Arabs], to a people far off. For Yahweh has spoken."** (Joel 3:4-8) Those nations who robbed Israel and sold her people into slavery ranged from North Africa to Iran, and *all* of them have in turn been "sold" to Islam, whose origins are—you guessed it—in the land of the Sabeans—today's Saudi Arabia. But what was that enigmatic bit about Jewish middlemen? The Jews of Yathrib were the unwitting (and unwilling) stepping stone Muhammad needed to launch Islam into a going concern. First they sold him scripture-based lies from the Talmud and other apocryphal sources, many of which found their way into the Hadith and Qur'an. Then they served as the initial host for the Islamic parasite to

feed upon. And feed it did, gaining strength until it could successfully infect pagans and Christians alike. Within a hundred years, the entire Middle East had fallen. Now you know why.

Muhammad tried his best to reshape a plethora of historic and Bible characters into his own twisted image—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Joseph, Solomon, Yahshua, even Alexander the Great—the list goes on and on. Whereas the parallels between the founder of Islam and the heroes of the Bible are contrived at best (and non-existent at worse), there is one historical figure who bears a striking resemblance to the Madman of Medina: the lives and missions of Muhammad and Adolph Hitler are stunningly similar; the parallels are too obvious to ignore. In a previous chapter, we explored how the same demonic spirit who controlled Nero is prophesied to inhabit the Antichrist during the last days. I believe (SF3) the same thing could be true of Muhammad and Hitler—that they were both possessed by the same demon. And I wouldn't be surprised to find the same evil spirit taking up residence in the Mahdi, Gog of the Land of Magog (i.e., the Imam in charge of Iran when Ezekiel's World War III begins). He definitely has the same agenda: in Muhammad's words, "Kill every Jew...."

Ezekiel's list of the Islamic nations to be aligned against Israel, interestingly, didn't specifically include the Arab nations within *dar al-Islam* (Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt). Are they not to be participants in this war? I believe they are, but not as part of the Magog Federation.

That is probably more surprising than it should be. Way back in Genesis, we were warned about the nature of the Arabs—or at least their patriarch: **"Then the Angel of Yahweh said to [Hagar], 'I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.' And the Angel of Yahweh said to her: 'Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because Yahweh has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.'"** (Genesis 16:10-12) If you're looking for the root of the madness of Islam, you need look no farther than the Torah. Even before he was born, Ishmael, the father of the Arabs (note: his children were racially three-quarters Egyptian) was predicted to be a belligerent loner, literally an onager (Hebrew *pere'*, a wild ass) of a man. But because he was the son of Abraham, Yahweh promised to bless him: **"And as for Ishmael, I have heard you [Abraham]. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I**

will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.” (Genesis 17:19-21)

As Isaac grew, Ishmael’s predicted animosity began to show itself. So Yahweh did something we would do well to heed today: he separated the warring children—*physically* making Isaac “holy,” setting him apart for God’s divine purpose. He supplied and blessed Ishmael, but he made it clear that Isaac was to be the child of promise—they were not to live in the same land. **“But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed [singular—He’s referring to the Messiah] shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed.’ So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away.”** (Genesis 21:12-14)

A few chapters later, we get this interesting insight: **“[Isaac] began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.”** (Genesis 26:13-14) I’m not suggesting that there’s a genetic tie between the Philistines and the Palestinians, but since the Arabs within Israel insist on using that name, I find it fascinating that the source of “Palestinian” hatred for the Jews was identified as far back as the middle of Genesis. It’s envy. God chose Isaac; Ishmael and the Philistines felt that the blessing should have been theirs. And for his part, Ishmael’s envy led to a hatred of the Jews that’s still alive today.

Under Muhammad, the sons of Ishmael finally found their voice—and their sword. They conquered a swath of territory extending from southern France across northern Africa, through the Middle East, and into India before Islam was a hundred years old. Considering the prophecy about Ishmael, it should not be surprising that Arab nations would be players—even instigators—in the last great war, but would find themselves allied with no one but themselves.

The key to their participation is found not in Ezekiel’s prophecy, but in Daniel’s. But before we go there, let’s look at a bit more of Ezekiel’s forecast. **“Prepare yourself and be ready, you [Gog] and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for [or, take command of] them. After many days you will be visited [i.e., called to arms]. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.”** (Ezekiel 38:7-9) Here Gog’s intended victim is identified, and the time frame in which they live. It can be no one other than modern day Israel, for they are (1) gathered from many nations, (2) brought back from the sword—an apt metaphor for the holocaust, (3) to the land Ezekiel would have

known as Israel, (4) which had long been desolate—uncultivated and underpopulated—and (5) in which they are now dwelling in apparent safety (with a large United Nations peacekeeping force watching their back). Further, Gog’s timing is specifically called “the latter years.”

“Thus says Yahweh Almighty: ‘On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you [Gog] will make an evil plan: You will say, “I will go up against a land of unwallled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,” to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.’” (Ezekiel 38:10-12) Only a Muslim leader who was inspired by Muhammad’s greedy annihilation of the Jewish Beni Qainuqa, Beni al-Nadheer, and Beni Quraidha tribes would see the invasion of the newly toothless Israel as a noble endeavor. In the context of *jihad*, however, the expedition makes perfect sense. From a religious standpoint, driving the Jews into the sea once and for all would qualify as the greatest of Islamic dreams.

Anyone who’s been to Israel lately, however, knows that it’s not exactly a “land of unwallled villages” at the moment. The settlements that have been built in the “occupied territories” (I just choke on that phrase—it means the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—oops, we blinked and Gaza’s gone) typically have sturdy fences surrounding them—and they’re *not* there to keep the Israeli settlers in. This is another indication that Israel will have by this time bargained away these lands for the promise of peace—a suicidal move but one they’ll have no choice but to accept.

In recent years, the Israelis have actually been trying to make the entire country a “walled village” in order to keep the terrorists out. That is, they have spent millions of dollars building an “exclusion barrier” between the West Bank and the rest of Israeli territory, to restrict the movement of Palestinian terrorists within the land—even though the West Bank is Israeli territory, liberated from the Arab aggressors in the June 1967 Six-Day War. (It used to be Jordanian territory; it was *never* “Palestinian” land.) The barrier when finished will snake 430 miles through the heart of Israel (though the nation itself is only about 263 miles long from north to south). 90% of the barrier is a fence with vehicle-barrier trenches surrounded by a 200 foot wide exclusion area, and the remainder consists of a formidable 26 foot tall concrete wall. Ironically, much of the “wall” is built along the 1949 Armistice line, or “Green Line” between Israel and the West Bank.

America, to our shame, has been insisting (with the rest of the world) that Israel cease trying to defend themselves in this way. The barrier admittedly makes things harder for Israeli Arabs who have family or interests on both sides. But one must remember why the Jews felt the need to build it in the first place: to defend

their nation against suicide bombings and other attacks. And by that metric, the wall has been a spectacular success. At any rate, I infer from these references to **“a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,”** that the barrier will indeed be torn down or otherwise be rendered useless *before* the War of Magog. Whatever territory Israel will be reduced to by the “covenant with many” (Daniel 9:27) will be aptly described as a land of unwallled villages. In fact, the “covenant” itself will probably be the shotgun that blows it full of holes.

And the defending U.N. “peacekeeping” armies? Any student of warfare knows that soldiers don’t fight for political causes like they’ll fight for their own homeland. Gog would much rather face U.N. troops than the IDF. Everyone with a decent grasp of recent history knows what happens when Israelis fight for their own land—they win.

Besides, just as Muhammad himself never fought for “religion,” but only for money, sex, and power, there is now something (besides land and bragging rights) worth stealing in Israel. Even if it were not for the billions of barrels of oil locked in the shale under the Negev and the newly discovered natural gas deposits offshore, there is now enough gold and silver stored up by the world’s religions for their temple mount building projects to pay for the expedition several times over. The prosperity the Antichrist’s false peace has brought to Israel means there is plenty here worth stealing—it’s a target-rich environment. Iran may sit on ten percent of the world’s oil reserves (mocking the poverty of its people), but many of its allies (notably, Turkey) are not so fortunate. They’ll need some incentive. To quote a hadith from Imam Muslim: “Oh, the booty!”

“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it? Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land.’” (Ezekiel 38:14-16) The “far north” reference, of course, was one of the factors that suggested Russia as the identity of Magog. But Tehran is almost as far north of Jerusalem as it is east, and several of Magog’s allies (Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Togarmah) have been identified with Turkey or the Caucasus region—land directly to the “far north” of Israel. “Far” or “remote parts” is the Hebrew noun *yerekah*, meaning flank, side, rear, extreme or uttermost parts, depths, or recesses. *TWOT* notes, “The remotest parts, particularly the distant north, are conceived of as those away from God. All countries, except Egypt, had to approach Jerusalem from the north, because of desert and sea.” And actually, there may be a symbolic component to this: “far” may be a reference to the *spiritual* distance between Magog (or Iran) and Israel. You can hardly get

farther away from Yahweh than in Islam, and you'd be hard pressed to find a more rabidly Islamist state than Iran.

The rhetorical question, "Will you not know that Israel is dwelling in safety," implies a level of communications unheard of in Ezekiel's day. How could the events surrounding the Antichrist's peace deal be hidden—from *anyone*? It's certain that they'll know Israel is a sitting duck. But wait a minute. Did I say "peace" deal? How could Gog even dream about invading Israel? His nation is among those who solemnly swore that they would abide by the terms of the peace treaty. Indeed, it is apparently Gog's (i.e. the Mahdi's) prestige that sold the deal to *dar al-Islam* in the first place. We're only a year into the accord's term (admittedly a guess, but it *can't* be very far off) and there are no indications that Israel has done anything to breach the peace. What gives?

You must remember the Islamic mindset when it comes to treaties. According to Muhammad's teaching and practice, any treaty with an infidel power may be broken if it is in the Muslims' perceived advantage to do so. Deals with non-Muslims are not binding—on the Muslims, that is. Americans, and in fact most of the western world (laboring under the burden of their Judeo-Christian heritage), automatically assume that yes means yes and no means no, no matter who you're talking to. Sure, there's a whole sub-language of diplomatic double-speak, in which when it is said, "The talks were cordial but frank," it means, "The parties couldn't find a single thing they could agree on, but they stopped short of declaring war." But this kind of deception is in an entirely different league. Muhammad specifically instructed his followers to say "Peace" until it's too late for anyone to do anything about their plans for war.

One more thing: the passage mentions "horses." Does this mean that modern weaponry will be non-existent when this all takes place? No, I don't think so, though many expositors would disagree with me. My guess is that Ezekiel just didn't have the vocabulary to indicate a "Russian-built T-90C heavy tank with artillery and missile cannon capabilities." Even if Yahweh had shown him one, he wouldn't have known what to call it. "Chariot" doesn't quite do it justice. But Zeke did know the armored weapons platform of his day, the warhorse. State of the art.

"It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.' Thus says the Lord Yahweh: 'Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?'" (Ezekiel 38:16-17) Here we get our first hint as to what Yahweh intends to do with Gog and his Muslim hordes. He says He will be "made holy" (that is, shown to be unique and matchless) in the eyes of the world, and Gog's blunder will be the reason. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to do the math on this. Yahweh has

promised to preserve Israel. Gog and his gangsters want to rub her out. The fight of the century? Hardly. I must save the details of the actual “battle” for a future chapter, but suffice it to say that this won’t be quite as easy as Gog figured.

I mentioned that some of the likely players won’t be Gog’s overt allies. That is, there are major Muslim players in the Middle East who aren’t named as Gog’s allies. Some, like Egypt (Mizraim), are conspicuous by their absence in the Ezekiel 38 list; others are specifically said to be against the war.

Lets take a look at who will protest the War of Magog: **“Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, ‘Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?’”** (Ezekiel 38:13) As I hypothesized in our very first chapter, “the merchants of Tarshish” are probably the commercial and financial interests of the western world. “All their young lions” could include the governments and bureaucracies that feel like they can’t make it through the day without throwing money (*borrowed* money) at every problem, real and imagined. This makes perfect sense in light of what we have learned about the Illuminati: it seems the real power behind western governments lies in the banks and industries to whom they have sold their souls in the quest for power and influence.

But why would they protest the aggression? They’ve been making a fortune arming both sides for decades. Could it be that they’re afraid that this one might get out of control and burn them along with the primary antagonists? Or could it be that they just want to appear to be “peacemakers,” knowing that such pleas for restraint invariably fall on deaf ears as the requisitions for armaments come rolling in? Or are they merely playing the game they themselves invented: trying to keep all sides in every conflict as evenly matched as possible—assuring maximum destruction, which in turn precipitates maximum profits, when war inevitably engulfs their clueless pawns? (Of course, it’s possible that the strictly literal interpretation is the correct one: that the “merchants of Tarshish and their young lions” lodging diplomatic protests are Spain and its Latin American progeny—who realize that distant wars between Muslims and Jews can do them no possible good, but could conceivably spill over into global mayhem. But I’m having a hard time visualizing that scenario.)

Considering the force of arms brought to bear, these efforts to avert the invasion sound pretty lame, don’t they? I have a feeling Gog will think so too. He will no doubt protest his innocence and deny his warlike intentions at the U.N.

and in the world press, and then do pretty much as he pleases. Sound familiar? It's exactly what Iran does every day of the week, because it's exactly what Muhammad would have done.

Sheba and Dedan will also be among those who lodge diplomatic protests when Magog invades Israel. So who and where are they? Sheba was at the southern tip of the Arabian peninsula—today's Yemen. And Dedan was located in western Arabia—the modern equivalent is Saudi Arabia. This is fascinating: Saudi, the home of the two “holiest” Muslim sites (Mecca and Medina), the custodian of the world's largest proven oil reserves, the possessor of one of the best-equipped military organizations in the region, not to mention being the unrivaled source of financing for worldwide terrorism, is seen not fighting in Allah's cause, but protecting its own backside when the chips are down. Perhaps part of the reason is that the Saudis practice an extreme form of Islam known as Wahabism—a Sunni sect that hates Shiites (the majority in Iran) virtually as much as it does Jews and Christians. At any rate, the one Muslim nation whose heritage demands that it pick up the torch of Islam and lead the final *jihad* against the Jews—those despised infidels who have the temerity to occupy a fraction of one percent of the land the Muslims claim by right of conquest—are happy to let others with less to lose go in and risk their lives for the cause, opting instead to sponsor U.N. resolutions and debate the merits of sanctions against the aggressors.

How appropriate. Muhammad usually did exactly the same thing, sending in his thugs to do the dirty work while staying a safe distance from the battleground himself. The “prophet” stayed at home with his harem on at least fifty of the seventy-five raids he ordered. His platitudes and promises spurred his jihad warriors on to murder, mayhem, and mammon (of which he was all too pleased to take his twenty percent off the top). But he wouldn't do any “wet work” himself unless there was little or no personal risk. That didn't get in the way of his boasting, of course. He told his followers in effect that he'd love to go into battle and be killed (he used the term “martyred”), but his people couldn't get along without him. Yeah, right. So we see the Arabian peninsula, Islam's birthplace, sitting this one out, or at least intending to. (I find it ironic that Yemen was the home of Islam's *first* rock idol, ar-Rahman, the one Muhammad invoked before he switched to Allah.)

What about the other Arabic nations not specifically named in Ezekiel's list of Gog's allies? Egypt and Syria fit this profile (though Syria *could* be included in the “Persia” designation, for they were part of the Persian empire when the prophecy was written). In all of scripture, very little is prophesied of Syria. Damascus, the oldest continually occupied city in the world, has been judged in the past for her sins, and will be again. But I find little direct reference to Syria's

role (as a nation) in the events of the last days. Aram, or Syria, is mentioned often in the Tanach, but the references mostly seem to be historical accounts detailing the perpetual animosity between God's people and the Syrians.

The root cause of it all apparently goes all the way back to the time of the Judges: **"The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook Yahweh and did not serve Him. So the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel."** (Judges 10:6-7) The Syrians (a.k.a. Arameans), like virtually every nation in the region at that time, were practicing a form of Nimrod's Babylonian mystery religion—the same evil cult that precipitated God's ban on the seven nations of Canaan. The Arameans, however, were not singled out for destruction (nor were the other peripheral nations listed here) because they were not living within the Land that had been promised to Abraham. Israel was commanded to remain separate from them (and their false gods), but as we can see, they did not. So from before the time of David until the Babylonian conquest, Syria was a constant thorn in the side of God's chosen race. And even during those times when Syria allied themselves with the children of Israel, it was invariably with the ten apostate northern tribes—collectively known as Ephraim—*against* Judah.

But for all that, there is only one prophecy in the entire Bible that clearly speaks of Syria's ultimate destruction (and frankly, most English translations are still pretty cryptic). The New Living Translation puts it like this: **"Look, Damascus will disappear! It will become a heap of ruins. The cities of Aroer will be deserted. Sheep will graze in the streets and lie down unafraid. There will be no one to chase them away. The fortified cities of Israel will also be destroyed, and the power of Damascus will end. The few left in Aram will share the fate of Israel's departed glory,"** says Yahweh Almighty." (Isaiah 17:1-3 NLT) We'll revisit the fate of the city of Damascus in a later chapter, but for now, note that in the end, the nation of Syria is to be severely depopulated—just as Israel was for so long. Yahweh has a *very* long memory.

And what about Egypt? Today Egypt is a mere shell of its former self, rife with poverty and conflict despite the billions of dollars America has pumped into its economy (and its war machine). The birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood (back in 1928), Egypt is known as the center of Islamic scholarship (an oxymoron if ever there was one) in the entire Middle East. Well did Isaiah prophecy concerning Egypt, **"Surely the princes of Zoan are fools; Pharaoh's wise counselors give foolish counsel. How do you say to Pharaoh, 'I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?' Where are they? Where are your wise men? Let them tell you now, and let them know what Yahweh, Lord of hosts, has purposed against Egypt. The princes of Zoan have become fools; the princes of Noph are deceived; They have also deluded Egypt, those who are the mainstay of its tribes. Yahweh has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst; and they**

have caused Egypt to err in all her work, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit.” (Isaiah 19:11-14) Here, as in so many cases in scripture, we see Yahweh “hardening the heart” of the Egyptians. It bears repeating that Yahweh’s blinding of the eyes of sinners to the truth (or as it’s put here, mingling “a perverse spirit in her midst”) is *always* in response to a previous rejection of his Word. God will never force anyone to change his mind; but He will occasionally petrify a previously held attitude, effectively closing his enemy’s mind on the subject.

As in Isaiah’s day, the modern “princes” of Egypt have delivered the nation to folly, falling deeper and deeper into the morass of fundamentalist Islam. But Egypt is far from being alone in this regard: the entire Arab world has suddenly taken a sharp turn away from their historic “business as usual” to more chaotic, and far more Islamist (i.e., religiously driven and controlled) forms of government. At the turn of the century, the typical Arab state in the Middle East or North Africa was nominally democratic at some level, but invariably controlled by a secular Islamic despot (or an outright dictator) who held tightly to power through repression and intimidation, rendering only lip service to Islam. Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak and Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi were typical examples. Though nominally Muslims, they were motivated not by religious fervor or dogma, but rather by the quest for personal power. Ironically, as with the Soviets of the previous century, their oppressive regimes prevented the truly dangerous aspects of Islam from gaining much traction within their borders. Good and evil alike were kept on a very short leash.

But in late 2010, several things happened that conspired to begin toppling the dominoes of Arab stability (such as it was) in the region. In August, the American President Barack Hussein Obama made a major, but unannounced, foreign policy shift regarding America’s policy toward the nations of the Arab world. Instead of continuing to maintain the status quo, something that, though less than ideal, provided a measure of stability to the region, Mr. Obama, true to his socialistic “community organizer” roots, decided instead to promote “hope and change” in the Arab world. Understanding neither the insidious nature of Islam nor the uncanny similarity of pure democracy to mob rule, he assumed that “democratic” governments would prove to be more stable and secure than the oppressive quasi-dictatorships that had ruled the Arab world since the colonial age. His goal, ostensibly, was to enhance U.S. interests in the region. The effect was precisely the opposite, due to the overlooked fact that the Muslim scriptures (and the men who lived by them, who would fill the power vacuum created through toppling the despots) *demand* the enslavement and/or annihilation of the “Christian” world—that is, the infidel West, whether it’s actually Christian or not.

So in August 2010, Obama issued his secret Presidential Study Directive 11, asking U.S. agencies to prepare for the changes to come. The document cited

“evidence of growing citizen discontent with the region’s regimes”—*months* before the revolution of the so-called Arab Spring broke out. It warned that “the region is entering a critical period of transition” and it directed the Presidential advisers to “manage these risks by demonstrating to the people of the Middle East and North Africa the gradual but real prospect of greater political openness and improved governance.” It certainly makes one wonder if perhaps agents of the U.S. government were dispatched to the region to precipitate the “hope and change” so near and dear to the President’s heart—starting with toppling or destabilizing the existing governments of the Arab world. The mantra, as always, was “never let a crisis go to waste, even if you have to create one yourself.”

The tinder had been dry for years, and Mr. Obama had just thrown gasoline all over it. The match that set the whole thing on fire was a personal protest, borne of frustration and injustice: a Tunisian named Mohamed Bouazizi just wanted to feed his family. He was unable to find work, so he began selling fruit at a roadside stand. Enter the bureaucrats: on December, 2010, a government inspector named Faïda Hamdi, flexing her municipal muscles (as such people are wont to do) confiscated Bouazizi’s wares (apparently because he was too poor to pay the customary bribes), slapped him, spit upon him, and otherwise subjected the poor man to public humiliation (and remember, this is a Muslim society: the fact that a *woman* was abusing her power made Muhammad’s contempt for women seem almost justified). Driven to desperation by the bureaucracy’s lack of mercy, justice, or plain old common sense, Bouazizi doused himself with gasoline and set himself on fire, dying from his injuries a few weeks later—but not before uniting Tunisia’s unemployed masses, human rights activists, labor unions, academia, and lawyers in a common rage against the endemic oppression of the Tunisian status quo. Rioters took to the streets, eventually bringing down the whole government.

But Tunisia was merely the first domino in line. The citizens of the neighboring Arab nations, suddenly awakened to the reality of the repression under which they’d been living, took to the streets demanding reforms. Egypt, Libya, and Yemen all saw their rulers forced from power. Major uprisings ranging from street demonstrations to full blown civil war broke out in Syria, Bahrain, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and the Sudan. And Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Oman, and Western Sahara have all experienced protests as well.

At the time of this writing, the smoke has not yet cleared. Syria, in particular, is experiencing a particularly brutal and costly civil war. Across the region, each skirmish pits Muslim against Muslim—the forces of the status quo in their entrenched oppressive regimes, against the forces of emerging Islamic terror and anarchy, backed by influential Islamist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, and al-Qaeda. The majority of the populace, of course,

merely want to live their lives in peace and safety, but the times no longer allow that. Ironically, all this turmoil makes *Israel* the safest place in the region at the moment—even with the Islamic version of the sword of Damocles hanging over its head, even with the constant threat of Palestinian suicide bombers and rocket attacks from Gaza.

Where is it all headed? Is there a foreseeable outcome to all this turmoil? Biblical prophecy doesn't demand this, of course, but one scenario generally compatible with scripture suggests that when the dust settles, the nations of *dar al-Islam* (or at least some of them) will once again decide that they need to be ruled by an overall religious authority—a successor (or *caliph*) to Muhammad. If nothing else, it would follow the recent trend of nations to join together in common cause—like the United States, the European Union, and a plethora of similar associations entered into for commerce, common ground, or mere political clout—up to and including the United Nations.

Sunni Islam (the majority sect) views this “caliphate” concept as beginning with Muhammad's immediate successor, Abu Bakr (the father of the prophet's child-bride Aisha), and running through a succession of caliphate dynasties—the last one ending (as a result of the outcome of World War I) in 1924. Shiites, on the other hand, see the caliphate as a series of twelve imams, beginning with Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali. Ali was actually the fourth caliph of the Rashidun (or “Guided”) Caliphate that had begun with Abu Bakr, but he wasn't accepted by all Muslims: his ascension precipitated the first Muslim civil war—and the split of the Shiites from the Sunnis.

But as with so many “splits” between rival groups in this world, the *actual* issues are not insurmountable, or even fundamental. With the “right” set of circumstances, I see it as perfectly plausible that the long awaited “twelfth imam” of Shia Islam—the Mahdi (a.k.a. “the Guided One,” a.k.a. Gog of the land of Magog) could *also* be hailed among Sunnis as the progenitor of a new and glorious caliphate dynasty. Once again, Muslim expectations can be expected to play a major role in how things play out—it's the phenomenon of “self-fulfilling prophecies.” As *As-Silsilah As-Sahihah* writes (Volume 1, No. 5) “Prophethood will remain with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain, then Allah will raise it up wherever he wills to raise it up. Afterwards, there will be a Caliphate that follows the guidance of Prophethood remaining with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then, He will raise it up whenever He wills to raise it up. Afterwards, there will be a reign of violently oppressive rule and it will remain with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then, there will be a reign of tyrannical rule and it will remain for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then, Allah will raise it up whenever He wills to raise it up. *Then, there will be a Caliphate that follows the guidance of Prophethood.*” The “drift” here is that

whatever happens was (obviously) Allah's will; thus all Islamic prophecy is by its very nature unfalsifiable, and therefore unverifiable as well. How convenient. But note that the final caliphate is expected to "follow the *guidance* of prophethood." That is, this new caliph would seem to fit *both* Sunni and Shiite expectations. It's all a question of marketing (and a little satanic suggestion).

Daniel's prophecy of a war in the last days meshes quite nicely with Ezekiel's description of the invasion by Magog. Here, however, it's told not from Gog's point of view, but from that of the Antichrist, described here as "the king [who] shall do according to his own will." Without getting too involved with the details of the action, which I'll cover later, notice that Egypt (who, you'll recall, wasn't listed among Gog's coalition) plays the part of the aggressor. **"At the time of the end the king of the South [Egypt] shall attack him [Antichrist]; and the king of the North [probably Syria] shall come against him.... Many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his [Antichrist's] hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels."** (Daniel 11:40, 41-43)

As always, directions are given in relation to the Holy Land. Egypt is invariably described in scripture as the Kingdom of the South. The context reveals that the Antichrist is occupying Israel at the time (probably in the form of a United Nations peacekeeping force with a large European contingent—cf. Daniel 11:45). Egypt makes the first move, invading Israel in a pincer action with "the king of the North," but the Antichrist strikes back, putting Egypt, Cush, and Phut under his thumb. In other words, he ends up controlling all of northern and eastern Africa (which, by the way, makes his "kingdom" look a lot like that of Rome under Nero). Whether even more nations than these are included under the heading "many countries" is a matter of speculation, but I think that's a safe assumption. The first place to look for candidates for his conquest are the nations under the banner of the Magog federation, listed above. Muslim countries, one and all.

Interestingly, Jordan (called Edom, Moab, and Ammon in the Daniel passage), escapes his grasp (though we shall learn that their fate is sealed anyway). At the risk of getting ahead of our story (again), there will come a time when Israel will have to hurriedly flee from the Antichrist. Where will they go? Since Daniel

specifically says the beast will *not* control Jordan, that makes Israel's neighbor to the east a likely candidate. More on this later.

Further, there is no specific indication that Saudi Arabia or Yemen are taken. Nor do we know precisely what happens to the Muslims living in Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and so forth. A few hundred million Muslims live in India, and Indonesia and the Philippines are infected with the same plague. Of these and others, we have few Biblical insights, other than that they're lost like all the other Muslims in the world. The Islamic nations have but one thing in common: an irrational hatred for Yahweh's chosen people, Israel. It will be their downfall, their Achilles heel. Remember: Yahweh will use the Tribulation to right *all* the wrongs, to purge the world of *all* of its evil. Repent or die.

The psalmist Asaph had Islam pegged when he wrote these words: **"Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones. They have said, 'Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.' For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You."** (Psalm 83:1-5) A "confederacy?" As in a revived Islamic caliphate? We can't say we weren't warned. Note that the passage flatly declares that any enemy of Israel is an enemy of God.

Jeremiah's prophecy of the Babylonian invasion will look as fresh as tomorrow's news when the invasion begins. **"Out of the north calamity shall break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. For behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north,"** says Yahweh. **They shall come and each one set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around, and against all the cities of Judah. I will utter My judgments against them concerning all their wickedness, because they have forsaken Me, burned incense to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands."** (Jeremiah 1:14-16) It's interesting that Yahweh will not judge them for their idolatry *until* they attack Israel. Note also that these verses specify the direction from which Gog's invasion will come—from the north, the direction from which Iran, Turkey and the rest of the Asian contingent of the Magog Federation would have to invade due to the difficulty fording the Euphrates with a large army in the South.

Yahweh takes his oath to Israel seriously. The nation who helps itself to her land is in for a humiliating shock, for God will not allow it to be taken away from His people permanently: **"Thus says the Lord Yahweh: 'Because the enemy has said of you [the mountains of Israel], 'Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession' ...because they made you desolate and swallowed you up on every side, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you are taken up by the lips of talkers and slandered by the people...surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against**

the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with whole-hearted joy and spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country.... Because you have borne the shame of the nations... I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame.” (Ezekiel 36:2-3, 5-7) Since the seventh century, the sword of Islam has plundered and shamed the land of Israel as the Jews endured their exile among the nations. Edom (part of modern Jordan) is singled out as a lead perpetrator, reminding us that the West Bank was originally “given” to them by the United Nations (the “talkers” and “slanderers” of whom Ezekiel spoke). Will the U.N. assume control over the whole disputed territory again, making it the “possession of the rest of the nations?” Apparently, they’ll try. But Yahweh has other ideas.

And what of those “peace-loving” Muslims to which the media keeps referring? First, understand that those Muslims who preferred to live peaceably and avoid bloodshed were the first to earn the scathing condemnation of “Allah and his Prophet.” They were called hypocrites, assigned as prime targets in this life by Muhammad’s jihad fighters, and then consigned to the hottest fires of Allah’s hell. But the Bible has something to say about them as well: **“Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar! My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.”** (Psalm 120:5-7)

Will Islam have a role to play in the last days? Most certainly. They will be the very puff of wind that brings this house of cards we call human civilization crashing to the ground.

Chapter 16

The Mother of All Battles

I can hear the grumbling now. *Doggone it! It was all going so well. Everyone was getting along with each other, more or less. Religious intolerance was a thing of the past. There were no wars going on. We were on our way to utopia. And now this!*

“This” is a massive military buildup discovered to be underway in Iran (called Magog in Ezekiel’s prophecy) and its neighboring nations. Satellite imagery has caught the Iranians in a blatant breach of the European treaty, though their diplomats are vociferously denying any wrongdoing. Troop movements in Iran, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Azerbaijan are said to be NATO-style war games designed to sharpen the skills of their internal “peace-keeping” forces. But it all looks like preparations for an invasion to everyone else in the world.

The U.N. doesn’t really know what to think. The leaders of the western world had all been a bit surprised at the new Caliph’s sudden willingness to sign the Europe-sponsored peace initiative a year ago. The charismatic Muslim leader—who was now being hailed in the Middle East as “the Mahdi,” whatever *that* is—had shocked the world by agreeing to the European leader’s terms early in the negotiations, and Islamic states from Morocco to Pakistan had quickly fallen into line. It was almost too easy—it had seemed, as the expression goes, too good to be true.

For years, the Muslim nations in the Middle East had been spending upwards of twenty percent of their gross domestic products on “defense”—six or seven times the world average. That number had been reduced somewhat under the terms of the European treaty. But now it has been discovered that since the treaty was signed, several nations, notably Russia and China, have been selling the Muslims huge amounts of war materiel under the guise of “farm equipment” and “heavy construction machinery.” Complicating things is the fact that Iran had joined the nuclear club several years before the Antichrist took the reins of power in Europe (but since the Mahdi had not rattled his saber—or is that *scimitar*?—since then, the western nations had not pressed him about disarmament). In truth, they’d lost their taste for “preventative warfare” after watching the Americans “win” their fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, only to lose thousands of their brave soldiers one by one to Muslim terrorists (whom the press called “insurgents”) in the following frustrating years.

The foregoing scenario is admittedly speculative, but it does fit the requirements of the prophetic scriptures—as well as this morning’s newspaper.

All we can be sure of is what's written in the Bible: **"In the latter years you [Gog] will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you. Thus says Yahweh: 'On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, "I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates—to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.'"**" (Ezekiel 38:8-12) The *real* "mother of all battles" is about to begin. The objective: to drive Israel into the sea—after robbing them blind. The "livestock and goods" that the Muslims intend to "take as plunder and booty"—in other words, the incentive for invasion among Muslim nations (like Turkey and Jordan) not already swimming in oil riches—will be the shale oil and gas deposits recently discovered in Israel. There's nothing like good old fashioned greed to grease the wheels of religious and racial hatred.

The plan will not go unnoticed, of course: **"Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder?..."** Sheba and Dedan, as I mentioned previously, represent the Arabian peninsula—who would prefer to sit this one out, having little to gain and much to lose. And the "merchants of Tarshish and all their young lions" would seem to indicate the financial and commercial interests of the Western world—who don't want the boat rocked unless they're the ones doing the rocking. We'll meet them again when we discuss the demise of commercial Babylon. Their fate is sealed, as is that of Sheba and Dedan, but we'll have to defer the scriptural evidence for later.

"Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?" Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, 'Thus says Yahweh: "On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it?"'" (Ezekiel 38:13-14) Once again, we see that Muslim prophetic expectations will drive Gog's *modus operandi*. *Sahih Muslim*, in Tradition #6961, states that "Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: 'There would be a Caliph in the last period of my Ummah who would freely give handfuls of wealth to the people without counting it.' I said to Abu Nadra and Abu al-Ala: 'Do you mean Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz?' They said: 'No, he would be Imam Mahdi.'" Gog sees himself as a latter-day Muslim version of Robin Hood—buying support and popularity with every shekel he can steal—hopefully from Israel: Jews were Muhammad's favorite target. It will seem to him to be the perfect opportunity. The hated Jews are now living in a "land of unwalled villages." That is, though their defenses are pitifully anemic and their cities vulnerable to attack, they feel

“safe.” And why is that? Because they have swallowed the Antichrist’s promises of peace and protection, putting their own matchless defense force, the IDF, under the suzerainty of the United Nations. The multi-million dollar security fence they built during the first decade of the 21st century to keep terrorists out has been pulled down in some places and leaks like a sieve everywhere else. Israel’s only defense now is a solemn promise made by a world who (let’s face it) hates them to the core. (That is, unless you count the Living God.)

The general scenario rings a loud bell (or at least, it should): back when Sennacherib the Assyrian was besieging Hezekiah’s Jerusalem, his Rabshakeh (chief negotiator/hoodlum) chided the Jews for relying on help from Egypt, a **“broken reed...on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt [or the Antichrist, as the case may be] to all who trust in him.”** (Isaiah 36:6) True enough. But then the Rabshakeh told Hezekiah that he couldn’t rely on Yahweh, either. Big mistake. God replied through his prophet, **“Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? The Holy One of Israel.”** (Isaiah 37:23) And then He proceeded to mysteriously kill, in one night, the 185,000 Assyrian troops encamped outside the city walls. Gog’s army will be big and scary too. Will Yahweh once again deliver His people? I wouldn’t bet against it. Stay tuned.

Gog, of course, never read Isaiah. Nor does he know of Ezekiel, who reports, **“Then you [Gog] will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.’ Thus says Yahweh: ‘Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?’”** (Ezekiel 38:15-17) Here we are given a bit more information. First, as we saw in Jeremiah 1, Gog’s attack will come from the north. Second, his army will be very large, numerous enough to “cover the land like a cloud.” And third, other prophets are said to have talked about him (though only Ezekiel calls him by his name or title—Gog). As we shall see presently, the Bible has a great deal to say about Gog’s war and the devastation it precipitates upon the earth.

In the previous chapter we saw that Daniel was given insight into the same campaign, but from the point of view of the Antichrist, not Gog. As we pick up the narrative, the Antichrist’s U.N. troops are stationed in Israel, ostensibly to keep the peace. Daniel gives us a bird’s eye view of the entire Middle-Eastern phase of the war: **“At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him [the Antichrist—called here (v. 36) “the king who shall do according to his own will”]; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots,**

horsemen, and with many ships; and he [the Antichrist] shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land [Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon [together comprising modern Jordan].” As we shall see, Israel was warned by Yahshua (in the Olivet Discourse) that they would have to flee their land after the Antichrist’s “abomination of desolation” (something we’ll discuss later), and hide out in the mountains (see Matthew 24:16). Since Jordan (i.e., Edom, Moab, and Ammon) have escaped the Antichrist’s grasp, the rugged mountains of Southern Jordan would seem to be a logical destination for the Jewish refugees.

“He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.” Note that although Egypt isn’t specifically included in the list of Gog’s formal allies, they will be overrun nevertheless. **“He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels.”** These two people groups *are* named by Ezekiel. Apparently, it doesn’t pay to follow the Mahdi into battle. **“But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.”** (Daniel 11:40-45)

The king of the south and the king of the north are seen attacking Antichrist’s U.N. forces in Israel in a coordinated pincer action. Is there an echo in here? That’s exactly what Egypt (the king of the south) and Syria (the king of the north) did in both 1967 and 1973. (Jordan, who shelled Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in 1967 and subsequently lost the West Bank to Israel, stayed out of the fray in ’73.) These hot-headed sons of Ishmael apparently think the third time’s a charm. They throw everything they’ve got at the under-defended Israelis (and yes, Syria *does* have a navy—mostly Russian-made Romeo submarines and missile frigates). It is at this point (SF2) that the Antichrist personally sets up headquarters in Israel, directing the war from his new base of operations. By the description, I’d place his command center in or near Hebron, between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas (the word “seas” *is* plural in the Hebrew text), not far from Jerusalem.

The Antichrist’s forces are able to repulse the two-pronged Islamic attacks. Egypt is beaten back and robbed blind, and Gog’s African allies, Cush and Phut (i.e., Ethiopia and Libya, northern and eastern Africa beyond Egypt’s borders) cower, at least temporarily, to his intimidation. As the European leader consolidates his grasp on everything of value in Israel and Egypt, the king of the north—Syria—is neutralized, losing territory by the mile. Jordan, who learned a painful lesson in 1967, refuses to put her toe in the waters of war, so with his hands full, the Antichrist leaves her alone for now, trembling in anticipation of his

next move. (As we shall soon see, Jordan's destruction—which is a prophetic *fait accompli*—may not be due to the Antichrist's actions at all.)

And where is Gog all this time? Antichrist's next move, as it turns out, is a reaction against “news from the east and north.” Who is east and north of Israel? Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran would all fit that description. But which of these nations has the potential at this point to alarm the Antichrist? Only Iran—Magog—the aggressive spiritual leader of the Muslim hordes (and quite possibly a nuclear power by this time), along with his eastern and northern allies, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Gomer, and Togarmah (all of whom we identified in the previous chapter). What is the “news” of which Daniel speaks? It is nothing short of the total collapse of his vaunted “peace plan.” For the first time since the seventh century, the entire Muslim world is united in a common cause: unlike earlier Arab-Israeli wars in which the primary protagonists, Egypt and Syria, were left to extricate themselves from their own self-made predicament, virtually the whole Islamic world is now poised and committed to finishing off the Jews in Israel once and for all. Egypt and Syria may have started it, but this time Gog has no intention of letting Israel finish it—*again*.

This is, needless to say, bad news for the Antichrist. It means that instead of a mere show of force ensuring peace in the Middle East as he had hoped, he is now faced with a full scale Middle-Eastern war, one that has the potential to spread like a wind-driven brush fire to the rest of the world. Specifically, the “news” that reaches him is that Gog's vast armies are on the move—they're headed toward Israel from Iran, Iraq, the Caucasus region, the “Stans,” and Turkey: the whole Muslim world “east and north” of Israel.

A two-front war is every commander-in-chief's worst nightmare. World War II taught us how it works: America was forced to fight both Japan and Germany at the same time, and it took a total effort from a nation with vast natural resources to pull it off. Britain, who had no such resources, made a valiant effort to stave off the Japanese advance in Southeast Asia while fighting for her life against the German war machine in her own front yard. World War II was also Stalin's chance to prove himself, and he did: he proved himself an insecure and cowardly hypocrite (traits that are usually called “pragmatic” nowadays). America desperately needed Russia to engage Japan on the Asian mainland—which would have put Japan in a two-front war and probably shortened the conflict. But Stalin, remembering the spanking Imperial Russia had received at the hands of the Japanese in 1905, refused to declare war until after the Germans were defeated (in April 1945), just in time to scoop up the spoils in the East. At the same time, he did everything he could to induce America to force Hitler to wage a two-front war on the European mainland—with the goal of compromising and weakening the German war effort against Russia.

Now, back in Daniel, the Antichrist is facing two fronts—or worse. As the war progresses, Egypt’s push from the south is reinforced by Gog’s African allies, and Syria’s northern attack is suddenly buttressed by the full weight of Middle-Eastern Islam. Saudi Arabia is making noisy diplomatic protestations, but she is at the same time quietly preparing for war herself. The Antichrist is between the devil and the deep blue sea—literally. If he turns tail and runs back to Europe, he will be the laughing stock of the world—his power base (not to mention his Messianic aspirations) will crumble. But his only alternative is a seemingly suicidal stand with Israel, surrounded on three sides by the Muslim hordes. (And on the fourth side, the Mediterranean is crawling with Egyptian gunboats and Syrian submarines.) I almost feel sorry for him. It’s tough pretending to be the Messiah when you’re not.

As bad as it was, World War II was a rather leisurely and docile affair compared to what’s coming. It took twenty years to set up and seven to play out. World War III will be all over except for the fallout (figuratively *and* literally) in—by my reckoning—about two years. As we shall see, several events will take place at the mid-point of the Tribulation (three and a half years into it) that imply the war will be over many months before this point. Brevity is not the only point of contrast. As a result of World War II, 55 million people died. While that’s horrible beyond comprehension, it’s child’s play compared to the carnage that will be wrought in the coming conflict. *Billions* will die. This war is more than just powerful men behaving badly, as in the past. This time, Yahweh has declared that the iniquity of man is full—it is time for judgment, for wrath. It is **“the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”** (Revelation 3:10) That is why the Holy Spirit is no longer restraining the evil in the world (see II Thessalonians 2:6-8).

The final straw that triggers Yahweh’s righteous anger is Gog’s invasion of Israel: **“And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,”** says Yahweh, **“that My fury will show in My face. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.”** (Ezekiel 38:18-20) Does this sound like a battle? No. Even though the Antichrist will be busy fighting his war against Gog, and will indeed have some successes (**“Many countries shall be overthrown...he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many”**), Yahweh will not be relying on him to destroy the enemy of His own chosen people. In the end, God will do the job Himself.

There are 1.4 billion Muslims in the world today. If half of them live within the territories of the Magog federation, and if a third of *them* are males of fighting age, it means that Gog could conceivably raise an army of two hundred million soldiers. If you're familiar with Revelation 9, you'll recognize this number immediately. It is the exact size of an army from beyond the Euphrates that's prophesied to kill one-third of mankind with weapons of fire, smoke, and brimstone. Are Magog's armies and the Revelation 9 force one and the same?

I don't think so. For starters, much of Gog's forces *start out* west of the Euphrates. And their objective is Israel—period. They're not interested in anything else (well, it *would* be a nice bonus if they could eliminate that meddling infidel Euro-trash who caused all this trouble in the first place). Even if they killed every living thing within the borders of the promised land, the number of slain wouldn't come remotely close to the one third of the earth's population at this time—two billion people plus—who are predicted to be killed by the eastern horde (cf. Revelation 9:18). Also, it's stated later in Revelation (chapter 16) that the Euphrates River will be dried up to allow this huge army from the east to "attend" a battle (presumably Armageddon). But the armies of Magog who start out east of the Euphrates will invade Israel from the north. Why? Because that's the only place where it's logistically feasible to ford the great river—nearer its source. In other words, the river will still have water in it when Gog attacks. The Muslims aren't like the Americans: they won't be flying (or sailing) their entire army to the battle zone. They'll be marching to it or riding in armored troop transports—all two hundred million of them (and even if it's only a tenth that size, it'll still be the largest single army the world has ever seen up to that time).

Whereas the Antichrist will, quite reasonably, see Gog's hordes as a formidable foe, Yahweh sees them as navel lint. **"The multitude of your [Ariel's—i.e., Jerusalem's] foes shall be like fine dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones like chaff that passes away; yes, it shall be in an instant, suddenly. You will be punished by Yahweh of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire...."** Remember the earthquake, and the fire of God's wrath, that was predicted in Ezekiel 38:19?

Isaiah continues: **"The multitude of all the nations who fight against Ariel, even all who fight against her and her fortress and distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams, and look—he eats; but he awakes, and his soul is still empty; or as when a thirsty man dreams, and look—he drinks; but he awakes, and indeed he is faint, and his soul still craves. So the multitude of all the nations shall be who fight against Mount Zion."** It will turn out that Muslim dreams of plunder and victory will be just that: dreams. When they awaken, they'll be worse off than ever—which is *saying* something. **"Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For Yahweh**

has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.” (Isaiah 29:5-10) The armies of Gog will imagine that success is within their grasp. They can almost taste their victory. Their numbers are overwhelming, and their leader—the long expected Imam Mahdi—has promised that the angels of Allah are fighting by their side. *It will be like the glory days of Islam, when all the world trembled at the sound of your scimitars slicing the wind.* Yeah, right. Whatever. Yahweh is not impressed. He’ll let the war play out, and then “in an instant, suddenly,” He will bring it all to an end—His way. The Muslim prophecies predicting a great and decisive victory for the Mahdi will prove in the end to be nothing but the inebriated ravings of cataleptic blind men—men, in fact, who have blinded themselves! All of Islam’s pretensions, all their delusions of glorious conquest, are nothing but a dream.

“I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,’ says Yahweh. ‘Every man’s sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am Yahweh.’” (Ezekiel 38:21-23) Some of the weapons Yahweh chooses to use against Gog’s armies are listed here. We have already seen the great earthquake, with its accompanying storms, which I take to be the final blow. Here we see the opening acts: (1) purposeful infighting or large scale accidental fratricide among the Magog coalition—not surprising, considering Muslims have always been more lethal to other Muslims than to outsiders, (2) pestilence, or disease, which, in light of the relatively short time frame of this war is quite likely a man-made phenomenon—bioweapons they brought with them, (3) heavy flooding and (4) huge hailstones, implying that this war will take place during the first half of the Tribulation, since the second half will be characterized by a dearth of precipitation, and (5) fire and brimstone, i.e., Sodom and Gomorrah-style destruction raining down from the heavens.

There are similarities between the Battle of Magog and a later conflict, the battle of Armageddon, that might lead the casual reader to assume they’re the same thing: they both feature enemies from many nations converging on Jerusalem, for example, and they are both characterized by great hailstones and a destructive earthquake, and great noises are mentioned. But neither pestilence nor fire and brimstone are listed among the “weapons” to be used at the Battle of Armageddon, and the “flooding rain” that helps destroy Gog’s armies is not only not listed as an Armageddon weapon, it would be a highly unlikely one four or five years after the Battle of Magog, for the whole world will have been suffering from a devastating three and a half year drought when this confrontation takes place.

Is the last weapon mentioned, fire and brimstone, a metaphor for nuclear warfare? Listen to David's description of God's wrath: **"Yahweh tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals. Fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup."** (Psalm 11:5-6) Though I'm reasonably certain David never saw a nuclear explosion, "a burning wind" describes it to a tee. But David could well be describing two things, two modes of wrath. For reasons I'll explain later in this chapter, I'm convinced that the phenomenon described as "fire and brimstone" here in Ezekiel is *not* man-made nuclear holocaust, but rather an act of God—perhaps timely and well-directed meteor showers striking the earth precisely on target and on schedule—the same phenomenon that destroyed the cities of the plain in Genesis 19. You can still find ash-encrusted golf-ball-sized sulfur-rich meteorites near the Dead Sea. There *will* be nuclear war, I'm afraid—just not within Israel's borders.

We would be hard pressed to find an Old Testament prophet who *doesn't* allude to this war. Even Moses gets in the act: **"For a fire is kindled by My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell. It shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I [Yahweh] will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them. They shall be wasted with hunger, devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, with the poison of serpents of the dust."** It's pretty clear that you don't want to be around when Yahweh finally gets angry. **"The sword shall destroy outside. There shall be terror within for the young man and virgin, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs.... Vengeance is Mine, and recompense. Their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them...."** Yahweh is speaking about all of His enemies here, not exclusively about Gog and Magog. But it certainly includes them.

"For Yahweh will judge His people and have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is no one remaining, bond or free...." This seems to be God's *modus operandi*: wait until all rational hope is gone, until things are impossibly bleak. Then act. That way, the nations, and especially Israel, will have no excuse for failing to see His hand in their deliverance. Notice that God's purpose here (one of them) is to "judge His people." Israel has been called to repentance: this will turn out to be their last chance. Daniel too describes the timing of Yahweh's deliverance as "when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered." (See Daniel 12:7)

Moses continues: **"He will say: 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise and help you, and be your refuge....'"** Muslims make pilgrimages to Mecca to visit the black rock, ensconced in the Ka'aba, their god supposedly inhabits. Here Yahweh challenges the black stone of Islam (or merely the power they presume

Allah affords them) to protect the armies of Gog from His wrath. **“Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand. For I raise My hand to heaven, and say, “As I live forever, if I whet My glittering sword and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the heads of the leaders of the enemy...”**” The Muslim god Allah is credited with making similar sounding statements throughout the Qur’an, though in practice, it is always Muslims themselves who shed the blood of Islam’s adversaries—Allah never lifts a finger to help, no matter how much credit they give him. Now it’s time to put up or shut up. The world is about to learn who the *real* God is.

Then, reminding us that salvation is not only for the Jews, Moses concludes, **“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.”** (Deuteronomy 32:22-25, 35-43) In His mercy, Yahweh has been waiting to avenge the wrongs done to His people, both Jews and believing gentiles. But the time for patience has past. Now is the day of vengeance.

Let’s pause and check our bearings. Where does all of this fit in the scheme of things as revealed in John’s Apocalypse? When we last looked, John had just been introduced to the rider on a white horse, “Mr. Wonderful,” the Antichrist. Now it seems, some of the luster has worn off Mr. Wonderful’s façade. He’s still going forth “conquering, and to conquer,” but his adversaries are no longer falling into his lap like ripe fruit. Taking over the world is getting to be nothing but work, work, work. In other words, war.

Now the second seal is broken. **“When He [the Lamb of God] opened the second seal, I heard the second living being saying, ‘Come and see.’ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.”** (Revelation 6:3-4) Notice that peace isn’t taken just from Israel, or the Middle East, but from “the earth.” Though the war begins as a hatred-fueled invasion of Israel, the conflict will invariably spill over to much of the rest of the earth. Man without God has just taken his best shot at running the world, and he’s blown it. Peace has been proven to be an impossible achievement, even with Man’s best efforts. It will become a reality only when the Prince of Peace rules.

The “four horsemen of the Apocalypse” (of which we have seen two so far) are reminiscent of something recorded by the Old Testament prophet Zechariah:

“Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze [a metaphor for judgment]. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ And the angel answered and said to me, ‘These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth. The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country.’ Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, ‘Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.’ So they walked to and fro throughout the earth. And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, ‘See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country.’” (Zechariah 6:1-8) Same metaphor, different meaning. This time, the horses represent spirits sent from Yahweh to summon the enemies of Israel to battle. As we saw in both Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 11, they will come into the Land from the north and the south. Interestingly, Zechariah doesn’t say where the red horses were sent. My guess is that they went east to beckon the final two hundred million, but we’ll have to save that whole discussion for later.

Perhaps you’ve noticed that we’re sixteen chapters into a book about the Last Things, and yet we’re only two paragraphs into the future stuff in the Book of Revelation, and you’re thinking, *This does not bode well*. Take heart; let me explain the structure of this most puzzling of books (John’s, not mine). Beside the fact that the Apocalypse is incomprehensible without frequent reference to the prophets, note that the book is not built like a banana—something meant to be consumed in a linear fashion, from one end to the other. Rather, I see it as an onion: it has layers one must peel back to get to the heart of it.

Huh? Okay, here’s what I mean. The prophetic part of the book speaks of seven seal judgments, followed by seven trumpet judgments, followed by seven bowl, or vial, judgments to be poured out upon the earth. Though they’re written in that order (and were no doubt delivered in that order to John) they are clearly (at least to me) broken down by subject. Every time a trumpet is blown or a bowl is poured out, some new category of wrath, some new manifestation of God’s judgment, is revealed. But I find it hard to picture one thing ending as the next one begins, like a line of toy soldiers. War doesn’t end before famine starts; famine doesn’t end before death starts.

Instead, I see the seven seal judgments as the whole outside “layer” of the onion. (Seven=complete, remember?) *Within* them (not *after* them) the trumpet judgments refine our understanding of what has transpired, and within *them*, a third layer of detail, the bowl judgments, delves even deeper, describing the wrath to be meted out specifically during the Antichrist’s tenure as the dictator of earth.

This is confirmed by the fact that the seal judgments, the comprehensive “outer layer,” are imposed by none other than Yahshua Himself—the Lamb of God. The trumpet and bowl judgments, however, are said to be delivered by angels. Thus to insist that Revelation is linear and strictly chronological is to imply that Yahshua’s involvement ceases a third of the way through—in other words, it’s nonsense. In the seal judgments we are given the entire picture in sweeping terms: we are shown generalized things like war, famine, and death. But in the trumpet and bowl judgments we see specific plagues, like nuclear war upon the earth, the sun’s increased power, or the death of all marine life. In addition, there are whole sections of Revelation that are parenthetical—that is, they aren’t strictly in the sequence of events at all but are sidebars meant to introduce us to key players, or explain the background history.

So if I seem to be skipping around, be assured that I’m not attempting to rip things out of context to fit my own preconceived timeline. I’m merely trying to make sense of the *larger* context—the one that includes not only the Revelation, but all of Scripture.

But now, since the most detailed explanation of what sets off World War III is found not in Revelation but in Ezekiel, let’s return there. **“And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, ‘Thus says Yahweh: “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken,” says Yahweh.”** (Ezekiel 39:1-5) Here we see the summary of what will happen to the hordes of Magog. Once they enter Israel (and *not before*, which ought to give us some insight into the futility of fighting foreign wars against *dar al-Islam* on their own home turf) Yahweh will obliterate them there. Their weapons will be useless to them; their lifeless bodies will “fall upon the mountains of Israel,” a feast for carrion birds and scavenging animals. We’re talking about tens of millions of troops, *dead*. And notice that there’s no indication here that they even get a shot off, although we’ll see that they make it all the way to the suburbs of Jerusalem before they’re annihilated—just as Sennacherib’s Assyrians did. Despite their vast numbers and overwhelming military superiority, they will not achieve their objective of slaughtering Israel.

We need to pause and reflect on this. Several times in Israel’s long history, she has been brought to the brink of extinction by the hand of Yahweh in judgment for her idolatries. The Assyrians, Babylonians and Romans all scattered her people among the nations. Evil, pagan nations just like Magog have often

been used as instruments of God's wrath. What's different this time? Why is Yahweh protecting Israel? By all accounts, the Jews as a nation have not repented at this stage; they have not turned *en masse* from the hollow caricature of true worship they've been practicing (or not) for the last two millennia. But I believe that now, the pendulum will have begun to swing back, thanks in no small part to the 144,000 Jewish youths who have for the last few years been making inroads into the hearts of Israelis and Jewish expatriates alike. By this time, they will have planted the seeds: *Yahweh is not the God of the Rabbis, the Talmud and the Mishnah—He is the God of the Torah, of the Psalms, of the Prophets. He keeps his promises, both for blessing and cursing. And—and this is the one that sticks in the collective Jewish craw—He has already sent His Messiah, Yahshua of Nazareth, whom we rejected and crucified two thousand years ago. Our fathers blew it. Face up to it. It's time to repent.*

One by one, family by family, the Jews do repent (although, as we shall see, the process of reawakening won't be complete until the last few days of the Tribulation). It's not just persuasive preaching, either. It's desperation: even before Gog's attack, many had come to the grim realization that without divine intervention Israel would not survive. Their covenant with the European leader, they sadly admit in private, was a deal with the devil. *Surrendering our own defense to a foreign power—even a multi-national power—was foolhardy. Of course, facing a billion angry Muslims on our own didn't look too smart either.*

As the tension builds, more and more Jews come to realize that they're dead if they can't somehow reestablish their relationship with Yahweh. It's just like back in the days of the Judges, when Yahweh had said, **"You have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress." And the children of Israel said to Yahweh, 'We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.' So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served Yahweh. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.**" (Judges 10:13-16) Yahweh apparently *can't* stay angry in the face of true repentance. At least, He never has.

By ones and twos, then by hundreds and thousands, Jews resolve that it must never again be like the days before the Babylonian captivity, when **"Yahweh, the God of their fathers, sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh arose against His people, till there was no remedy."** (II Chronicles 36:15-16) No, they would not mock these young messengers who were so obviously under the protection of Almighty God. To do so would be suicide. *These 144,000 young zealots are right: it's time to repent.*

Some people today think the Old Testament is a complete turn-off. They (not having read it) complain that it's all hell-fire and brimstone, wrath and retribution. *Where is the loving, personal God we see throughout the New Testament (excuse the Book of Revelation)?* We need to come to grips with the fact that it's all the same God—the Bible is one continuous story from beginning to end. The same compassionate deity who personally paid the penalty for our sins is also seen wreaking vengeance in a thousand Old Testament passages. How can this be? How does wrath square with forgiveness? How can justice coexist with mercy?

Like any loving Father, Yahweh wants to see his children doing well. He gives us opportunities, guidance, support, and love. When we screw up (and we all do), He even provides a way for us to come back into His good graces, providing for us, as the ubiquitous metaphor describes it, a “garment of bright, clean, white linen” that hides our sin from His eyes. All we have to do is put it on. But what's a Father to do when some of His children rebel against Him, refusing to accept His help, even going so far as to attack their siblings who want to have a close relationship with Him? Love can't be forced. The Father can only give His rebellious children time to repent, while (when it suits His purpose) protecting those who choose to love Him. At some point, though, time runs out: the Father must turn His back on the rebels, cut off their support, and write them out of the will. He finds no pleasure in doing so. But it's not His choice; it's ours.

That in a nutshell is what we see happening in the story of the Bible. Yahweh has given his children 6,000 years in which to repent—to acknowledge their fallen, sinful state, and receive His forgiveness, on His terms. Some have, and some have not. But as He said in the days of Noah, **“My Spirit shall not strive with [literally: judge, contend with, or plead the cause of] man forever.”** (Genesis 6:3) The day will come when God will say “Enough.” It is that day of which the “wrathful” Old Covenant scriptures speak when they describe the judgment of God, though the subject is brought up *all the time* in the New Testament as well. And although many—even most—of these prophetic “wrath” passages have seen some degree of fulfillment in history, I believe that most were intended to ultimately apply to the events of the final seven years before the return of Christ—especially to the war of Gog and Magog and its aftermath.

For example, there is no remotely literal fulfillment in history for many of Isaiah's prophecies. **“Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of Yahweh is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter. Also their slain shall be thrown out. Their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted**

with their blood.” (Isaiah 34:1-3) This hasn’t happened yet except in a very limited and localized sense. But in the Last Days, no one will be able to hide from the wrath of Yahweh; *all* nations will be judged. This passage reveals that the War of Magog will spread beyond the Middle East to involve the whole earth. We’ll explore how that might happen later in this chapter. Note also that there will be too many corpses to bury. The death toll from the War of Magog and its aftermath will exceed 1.7 *billion* people—one quarter of the earth’s population, over *thirty times* the unspeakable carnage of World War II. That number is revealed in reference to the fourth seal judgment: **“Power was given to them [death and Hades] over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.”** (Revelation 6:8)

Therefore, it shouldn’t be such a surprise that the Bible spends so much time warning us about it. Isaiah goes on to say, **“Please hear this, you [who are] afflicted, and drunk but not with wine.** [He is speaking to Israel, who is reeling, *staggering* from her affliction] **Thus says your Lord, Yahweh your God, Who pleads the cause of His people: ‘See, I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of My fury. You shall no longer drink it. But I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you, who have said to you, “Lie down, that we may walk over you.” And you have laid your body like the ground, and as the street, for those who walk over.’** (Isaiah 51:21-23) That’s a perfect description of Israel and her adversaries in the final years. *Dar al-Islam* wants to walk all over her. And Israel has bent over backwards trying to be fair with its Arab citizens, stopping barely short of committing national suicide in the interests of peace and political correctness. God reminds Israel that it is *His* fury they have been enduring for the last two thousand years (since they rejected the Messiah) but that is about to change—the shoe of adversity is about to go onto the other foot.

Isaiah later says: **“According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; the coastlands [a description that could include any nation on earth] He will fully repay. So shall they fear the name of Yahweh from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of Yahweh will lift up a standard against Him.”** (Isaiah 59:18-19) Here is confirmation that Yahweh intends to wait until Gog’s armies have invaded Israel before He destroys them. But notice that His judgment won’t fall only on the nations who march into Israel: the outlying areas—the “coastlands”—will also receive His attention, eventually.

Why would anybody attack God’s chosen people? His word is abundantly clear about the fate of those who do. There is a very short list of possible answers. One: you don’t know any better—but since the Bible is the world’s best selling book, that’s a pretty lame excuse. Two: you don’t think there is a God—that the Bible is just a collection of myths and fairy tales. But to believe *that* in the

twenty-first century, you've got to be willingly ignorant of a great many things. Or three: you think you're smarter-better-stronger than Yahweh, or you think your god is—which is the status of Gog's Muslim hordes. In a fascinating discourse that took place long before there even were Jews or Arabs on this planet, a man named Job philosophized about that:

He said, **“How can a man be righteous before God? If one wished to contend with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered? ...He does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number. If He goes by me, I do not see Him; if He moves past, I do not perceive Him; if He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’ God will not withdraw His anger. The allies of the proud lie prostrate beneath Him.”** (Job 9:2-4, 10-13) Unfortunately, we don't speak with that kind of eloquence any more. But the question must still be raised: “What kind of stupidity would it take to purposely challenge the God who made you?”

Job goes on to say, **“[Yahweh] makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and guides them. He takes away the understanding of the chiefs of the people of the earth, and makes them wander in a pathless wilderness. They grope in the dark without light, and He makes them stagger like a drunken man.”** (Job 12:23-25) Pretty astute for a guy whose idea of a “nation” was a thousand people who could actually get along with each other. His assessment is still true today, more poignant than ever. If potentates and presidents refuse to walk in His light, He will eventually flip off the switch.

Job's friend Elihu had a good grasp on the awesome power of Yahweh as well. **“Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice. Who gave Him charge over the earth? Or who appointed Him over the whole world? If He should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.”** (Job 34:12-15) In case you've been living too long in this present world, those were *rhetorical* questions he was asking: *nobody* put Yahweh in charge—He just is. We need to be reminded—often—that it is only God's constant care that makes life possible. If he were to merely “hold His breath,” we would not survive two minutes.

Strangely, one Biblical word that modern Christians often choke on is “vengeance.” It was used three times, for example, in Moses' quote we saw earlier. The increasingly liberal society we live in finds “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” a barbaric concept. Nowadays, folks would much rather think in terms of rehabilitation (which explains why they have no idea how to cope with the evil of Islam). They have been conditioned to shudder at the thought of anyone—even God—being the personification of absolute truth—as in **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** (John 14:6) If that were so, they reason quite rightly, *they* would be held to a standard of holy

conduct themselves, one they have no intention of trying to live up to. So to avoid this uncomfortable reality, they insist that there is no black and no white, only shades of gray; that vengeance is a crude relic of our caveman past, that there are no concrete standards of behavior, that morality is situational. But if that were really true, our legal system would find itself with no foundation. If we “rehabilitate” people whom society finds “inconvenient”—instead of punishing people who do wrong—we become the most immoral and irrational of people: law degenerates into the capricious bludgeon of those in power.

If we’re honest with ourselves, we all sense that there actually are such things as right and wrong. (Ask the man who’s being mugged whether he still believes there’s no such thing as moral absolutes.) But where do the standards come from? They emanate from the One who created us, who planted a sense of conscience within us, and backed it up with His recorded commandments—His Torah, or Instructions. We can deny it all we want, but deep down inside, we *know* it’s wrong when we murder, steal, cheat on our spouses, and lie about our fellow man in order to gain an advantage. That’s why we try to keep such things a secret. The one thing guaranteed to kill an insanity defense is an attempt to hide the crime.

The bottom line is that vengeance is a right and proper response to sin/crime—but not wielded by just anyone, not from self-appointed arbiters of moral uprightness. Rather, Yahweh has delegated this function to human governments—whom He then holds responsible to exercise His will. Yet in the end, only the One who set the standards in the first place is qualified to exercise vengeance. And ultimately, God will do just that: **“O Yahweh our Lord, to whom vengeance belongs...shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render punishment to the proud. Yahweh, how long will the wicked...triumph? They utter speech, and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. They break in pieces Your people, O Yahweh, and afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, ‘Yahweh does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand.’ Understand, you senseless among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge? Yahweh knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.”** (Psalm 94:1-11) In other words, don’t mistake God’s patience for senility.

Each of us needs to be very clear on this point: vengeance belongs to Yahweh. It’s not a pleasant thought; it makes some of us uncomfortable, even afraid. And well it should, if we’re among those who’ve declared the blood of His Anointed One to be of no value by refusing to acknowledge our sin and accept God’s remedy for it. The Psalmist had a perfect right to pray, **“May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more...”** (Psalm 104:35) or say, **“Tremble, O earth, at the presence of Yahweh, at the presence of the God of Jacob.”** (Psalm 114:7) If you’re

one of the billions who think you're too good for Yahweh's gift of eternal life, then get ready to **"Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of Yahweh and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day."** (Isaiah 1:10-11)

A metaphor we see time after time in scripture is that of a man reeling on his feet as though he were drunk—but he is not intoxicated; he is staggering under the weight of God's judgment. For example, Asaph writes, **"For in the hand of Yahweh there is a cup, and the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out. Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down."** (Psalm 75:8)

The prophet Jeremiah uses this same figure of speech to describe impending judgment. The context is the Babylonian conquest, but I believe the prophet is also identifying the participants of the coming dark times, for the destruction described extends far beyond the historical city of Babylon. It speaks of God's wrath upon *all* nations: **"For thus says Yahweh, God of Israel, to me: 'Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.' Then I took the cup from Yahweh's hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom Yahweh had sent me...."**

It's no accident that Israel, the recipient of the very oracles of God, is first on the list. **"Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and its princes, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day...."** As the keepers of the Word of Yahweh, they are held to a higher standard than the gentile nations that surround them—they're supposed to know better. We should not be unaware that part of the purpose of God's wrath in the Last Days is to purge Israel itself—to separate the wheat from the chaff, as it were. As Yahweh removes the rebels from among Israel, she will become pure, just as gold refined in a crucible is made pure by skimming off the dross.

Jeremiah's list of nations that will stagger under the effects of Yahweh's wrath continues: **"Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his princes, and all his people; all the mixed multitude [read: all of north Africa], all the kings of the land of Uz [probably Aram—today's Syria], all the kings of the land of the Philistines (namely, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod) [I think we can safely read the modern Palestinians into this, though the link is geographical, not genetic]; Edom, Moab, and the people of Ammon [these three nations together comprise modern Jordan—it's fascinating to observe how often the prophets group them]; all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon [in other words, Lebanon], and the kings of the coastlands which are across the sea [anybody's guess—this could include anyone on earth, but I might suggest that the Americas are particularly in view]; Dedan, Tema, Buz [Arabian nations], and all who are in the farthest corners [Russia, Scandinavia, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa would all answer to this description]; all the kings of Arabia**

and all the kings of the mixed multitude who dwell in the desert [that would pick up all of the Middle Eastern nations not otherwise identified]; **all the kings of Zimri** [an Arab tribe], **all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes** [both in modern Iran]; **all the kings of the north** [Turkey and the post-Soviet Islamic nations, at the very least], **far and near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth** [so much for a localized Middle-East war—the whole world is in for it]. **Also the king of Sheshach** [Babylon, a.k.a. Iraq] **shall drink after them....”**

This list, then, potentially includes every people group on the planet—with special emphasis on the nations specified in Ezekiel 38. The differences seem to be that Jeremiah gives less importance to the nations of northern and eastern Africa, Cush and Phut (though they’re included) and he includes the Arabian nations (who are conspicuously absent from Ezekiel’s prophecy). Note, however, that he’s describing a slightly different thing. Ezekiel’s list are those nations who formally ally themselves with Gog with the express purpose of annihilating Israel. Jeremiah’s list, on the other hand, are those nations who will “stagger and go mad because of the sword Yahweh will send among them,” i.e., the nations who will be on the receiving end of God’s wrath—apparently *all* of them, but with special importance placed on the Islamic nations. Note that although not all Muslim nations formally join the Magog federation, they will all taste the wrath of God anyway. Jordan won’t get off Scot free just because Daniel says it will escape from the clutches of the Antichrist; and Saudi Arabia’s diplomatic protests won’t make it immune to the ravages of war. Yahweh is cleaning house.

“Therefore you shall say to them, ‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: “Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.”’ And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts: “You shall certainly drink! For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth,” says Yahweh of hosts....” There he goes again, forecasting God’s fury against everyone, *starting with Israel*. I realize this is hard for some to accept, hard even to comprehend. Perhaps that’s why God warned us about it so many times. I feel like one of those shaggy prophets of doom in the funnies with their sandwich boards announcing, “Repent! The end of the world is coming.” The only problem is, it *is*—at least, the world as we know it.

Jeremiah’s not yet done. No one alive today has ever heard Yahweh do this: **“Yahweh will roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He will roar mightily against His fold. He will give a shout, as those who tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise will come to the ends of the earth—for Yahweh has a controversy with the nations; He will plead His case with all flesh.”** That’s *everybody*—one more reason to foresee a pre-Tribulation rapture: He’s not in the habit of

punishing the righteous along with the guilty. Note next that the actual implement of His wrath will be manmade war: the “sword” wielded by nations against each other. **“He will give those who are wicked to the sword,” says Yahweh. Thus says Yahweh of hosts: ‘Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth.’**” (Jeremiah 25:15-32)

Do you remember how World War I got started? A young man named Gavrilo Princip, who apparently believed that God’s law, **“You shall not murder,”** somehow didn’t apply to him, went to Sarajevo and assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A month later, as a direct result, Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia. Because Germany had ties to Austria-Hungary, it too declared war on Russia, and then, because Russia had signed a mutual defense pact with France, Germany attacked her as well. Having now made enemies on two fronts, Germany decided to invade neutral Belgium in order to consolidate its position (and gain a vital North Sea port—Bruges—for its U-boats). Alarmed, Great Britain felt it had no choice but to declare war on Germany, thus setting up America’s entry into the war a few years later. That is what it means for **“disaster [to] go forth from nation to nation.”** The conflicts that are on our horizon, however, will leave no one untouched. They will make World War I look like a pillow fight.

Piecing together the clues from scripture, it looks like World War III *will* follow this pattern—disaster proceeding step by step from one nation to the next. As they did in ’67 and ’73, Egypt and Syria will attack Israel together. But this time, the Antichrist’s U.N. forces have been tasked to “protect” her. So the Antichrist strikes back, gaining ground—lots of it. However, this time, rather than letting their Muslim co-religionists take it on the chin as before, the Mahdi/Caliph/Gog unites much of *dar al-Islam* in holy war: they will attempt to finish once and for all what their impetuous Arab brothers had started. What’s different this time? I think we can safely trace this newfound spirit of unity among the Muslim nations to a general shift toward Islamic fundamentalism—a trend we see gaining momentum, even among formerly “moderate” Muslim nations.

I should, perhaps, take a little time to head off a potential misconception. It may seem that I’m implying that today, nominal Muslims *cannot* be saved, that they cannot find Yahweh through the atoning blood of Yahshua the Messiah. I’m saying no such thing. As I write these words, repentance is still possible. The witness of the word of God is still efficacious. Christians, though under dire persecution, are still making the love of Yahweh known through their words and deeds in Muslim-dominated lands. And I understand that the Spirit of God is still revealing Himself to Muslims willing to honestly seek the truth: dreams and visions from God are changing lives today, even in the heart of Islamic darkness. But during the Tribulation, those former Muslims who have responded to the

Spirit will already have been raptured. They'll no longer be there to counter the voice of madness so rampant in their societies. God will have withdrawn His indwelling Spirit. The Gospel will be suppressed as it has never been before. Yahweh's arm is not shortened, of course, and His angel will be providing warnings (see Revelation 14:6-7), but from this point on, the only thing encouraging Muslims to flee from their disastrous religion is the impending wrath from the God of the Hebrews. Remarkably (as we shall see) many of them will do exactly that.

Anyway, from this point on, it all gets pretty speculative. One scenario consistent with the prophecies is that Russia becomes worried that a prime source of hard currency—the oil-rich Muslim nations—will be overrun by the aggressive and imperialistic new European dictator. The parallels between the Antichrist and Hitler will be lost on no one. Moscow's leaders figure that if they just sit there like Stalin did, they'll be next. So they dust off their old Warsaw-pact battle scenarios from the cold war—the ones pitting the Soviet bloc against NATO—and come to a horrible realization: there's no Poland, no East Germany, no Czechoslovakia in their corner any more, and that changes everything. With no buffer of “client states” in which to slow down the Antichrist's advance, the Motherland is a sitting duck, just as it was in 1940. And it's all too clear that without the brutal machine of Communism to push from behind, the Russian armed forces would be faced with a costly, unwinnable ground war, fought on their own territory.

Russia had been preparing for decades, spending huge sums on military readiness—not with European aggression in mind, but with a wary and covetous eye toward China and the former Soviet “republics” in southern Asia—the Muslim block. The Russian news source *RIA Novosti* (February 14, 2013) explains why: “The level of existing and potential military threats for Russia may increase significantly by 2030, and wars for natural resources should be expected, General Staff chief Col. Gen. Valery Gerasimov said on Thursday. The level of military threats will be linked to the struggle among the world's leading powers for fuel and energy resources, markets and ‘living space,’ he said, adding that military capability will be actively used to ensure access to those resources.” He urged a fourfold increase (from 16% to 70%) in new weaponry before 2030. But the article went on to say that Gerasimov's views were generally dismissed as “old news” by Russia's military establishment. Indeed, Vladimir Putin's vision for a “Eurasian Union” modeled on the European Union already necessitates (in his mind) vast expenditures on military hardware.

So in the post-Holy-Spirit paranoia of the times, Russia sees in the European-led threat a problem that, for all their arms spending, they hadn't anticipated: conventional warfare may no longer be an option. They're going to have to

think—and fight—outside the box. The Russians slowly come to the grim realization that whether economically or militarily, they're as good as dead—probably within a couple of years—if the Antichrist isn't contained. Ironically, they can't even appeal to the United Nations: this European madman has *them* in his back pocket. He's *already* got U.N. troops fighting against Russia's most important allies. Worse, since Gog was clearly the aggressor, they don't have a prayer of getting the U.N. to back down, permanent Security Council seat or no. The Russians come to understand that they can't buy the Antichrist off, out-negotiate him, or outfight him with conventional weapons. They can't even depend on the Russian winter to save them anymore: between advanced cold-weather battlefield technology and climate altering wizardry like the Americans' HAARP (or their own Woodpecker system) all bets are off. They know they must defend the Rodina against this new-age Hitler. But how?

Hold that thought for a minute. Jeremiah wasn't quite done telling us about how Yahweh's wrath will be manifested. **“And at that day the slain of Yahweh shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground.”** The dead will be so numerous, burying them will be a hopeless task. Nor will this be a local phenomenon—the carnage will be strewn worldwide. **“Wail, shepherds, and cry! Roll about in the ashes, you leaders of the flock! For the days of your slaughter and your dispersions are fulfilled; you shall fall like a precious vessel. And the shepherds will have no way to flee, nor the leaders of the flock to escape. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a wailing of the leaders to the flock will be heard. For Yahweh has plundered their pasture, and the peaceful dwellings are cut down because of the fierce anger of Yahweh. He has left His lair like the lion; for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the Oppressor, and because of His fierce anger.”** (Jeremiah 25:33-38) The word “Oppressor” here (obviously referring to Yahweh) is an unfortunate translation of the Hebrew *yanah*, which means “Destroyer” or “One who treats violently.” Yahweh is angry, not oppressive. The “shepherds,” of course, are the world's political leaders. Every one of them will know that there's no way out of their self-imposed predicament. Their sins have come back to haunt them. Not only will they *not* be able to keep their positions of power—the one thing every politician wants—but now they realize that they'll be lucky to get out of this mess with their lives.

What's happening? **“Behold, the whirlwind of Yahweh goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind. It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of Yahweh will not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart. In the latter days you will consider it.”** (Jeremiah 30:23-24) Yahweh's continuing whirlwind, appearing in the latter days? What does that mean? You were hoping for something a little more specific? How about the words of Yahshua? **“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of**

Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:26-27)

No more business as usual. No more behind the scenes maneuvering. No more politically correct injustice. The time of Yahweh’s wrath has finally come. But what’s *happening*, you ask? The unthinkable is happening.

Upon the first successful test of the atomic bomb on July 16, 1945, the man most responsible for its development, Robert J. Oppenheimer, “quoted” the Hindu demon-god Vishnu: “I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.” Seven years later, presidential candidate and Council on Foreign Relations member Adlai Stevenson intoned, “There is no evil in the atom, only in men’s souls.”

Demons and mortals alike know what’s coming, or at least they did at one time. But speaking for us mortals, we have forgotten to be terrified. We have “progressed” from paranoia and backyard bomb shelters to cold war stalemate (in which the concept of mutually assured destruction—MAD—kept the two superpowers from “pushing the button”) to a new state of post-cold-war denial. Most people are willingly ignorant of the fact that the threat of nuclear holocaust didn’t go away just because Russian Communism collapsed. When the Berlin wall came down, the whole world breathed a collective sigh of relief: the cold war was over. But the weapons, many of them, remain intact. Worse, nations large and small have now acquired their own nuclear weapons. And worse still, human nature remains evil.

The official score at the time of this writing is: Russia holds 8,500 nuclear warheads (down from 22,500 a decade ago—their high was almost 45,000); United States: 7,700 warheads (down from 12,000 a decade ago); France: 450 (down from 300); China 240 (down from 400); United Kingdom: 225 (down from 380); Israel, 80; Pakistan: 90-110 (*up* from 18 ten years ago); India: 80-100 (*up* from 18). Those are the nations that admit to having nukes, and the numbers of nukes they admit to having. In addition, North Korea (who withdrew from the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty in January, 2003) has announced that it too is a nuclear power.

Iran’s nuclear program, ironically, slowed down somewhat after the Islamic fundamentalists seized power in the late ’70s. (Seems it’s even harder to get things done under Muslim repression than it is under secular repression.) But their quest for the ultimate weapon continues unabated, despite protests and sanctions imposed by a rightfully alarmed United Nations. Libya gave up trying to build its own bomb long before Muammar Gaddafi paid the ultimate price for his

arrogance, but it is still both willing and able to buy its way in to the nuclear clubhouse. Iraq, in case you didn't notice, has been forced to put her nuclear aspirations aside for the moment—a factor that increases the chances that she will align herself with her fundamentalist neighbor Iran when the chips are down.

The region's wild card is Saudi Arabia, a signer of the NPT with no atomic weapons development program of its own. What *do* they have? 120 Chinese-built CSS-2 ballistic missiles topped, the CIA fears, with Pakistani-built nukes—ostensibly for defense against Iran, a.k.a. Magog, which helps explain Saudi's initial diplomatic protestations mentioned in Ezekiel 38:13—they've *always* been wary of Iran's aggressive behavior. We need to be aware that Saudi Arabia under the al-Saud royal family practices its own perverse brand of Islam—almost a cult—known as Wahhabism. The Wahhabi sect is an equal opportunity hater: the mantra that pours unabated from its mosques and universities is “Death to Jews, Christians, Hindus, and Shiites.” It is no fluke that fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were Saudis. One can't help but wonder if President Obama is so reluctant to develop American shale oil (or allow the building of a pipeline to transport Canadian oil to American refineries) because he is philosophically in support of Saudi's extreme form of Islam. Although our politicians routinely kiss this devil on the lips, the Saudis have been accurately characterized as “Talibans with oil and a good P.R. company.”

We are told that three former Soviet states (Kazakhstan, Belarus, and the Ukraine) have relinquished their nuclear arsenals, and four other nations who previously had nuclear weapons programs (South Africa, Algeria, Brazil, and Argentina) voluntarily shut them down in the early '90s. Even if all of this is true (and I'm not suggesting that it is) that leaves Russia with half of world's total nuclear arsenal, with delivery systems second only to those of the United States. (And to put things in perspective, John Maté of Greenpeace reports that as of the turn of the twenty-first century, “The United States alone has spent over 3.4 trillion dollars on preparing for nuclear war since the Second World War and continues to do so at a rate of nearly 30 million dollars a day.”)

Bear in mind that it would probably take no more than a hundred well placed nukes to blow the whole world back to the eighteenth century, though the total in play at the moment is still somewhere upwards of 17,000 weapons. Thus I would submit that it's not a particularly smart move to create insoluble problems for Russia in the unrestrained post-Holy-Spirit world. Yet that's precisely what Gog will be doing by attacking Israel, and what the Antichrist will be doing by overrunning the Middle East in retaliation.

With that in mind, let's return to Ezekiel's narrative. **“And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am Yahweh.”** (Ezekiel 39:6) We have already seen how Gog's armies will “fall upon

the mountains of Israel.” This is different. This is Yahweh’s judgment upon the homeland of Magog, as well as on other nations. Although “**those who live in security in the coastlands**” is a maddeningly imprecise phrase, I believe it implies global war—excluding the Far East, for reasons that will become clear later. If these people are living “in security,” then they’re *not* at war—yet. That, in turn, means they are *outside* the Magog Federation. The war, just as it did in 1914, is spreading one by one to those nations who thought they were safe.

Sending a “fire on Magog” could, of course, mean Sodom-and-Gomorra style divine judgment. But a far simpler interpretation in light of our current geopolitical predicament is that this phrase means nuclear warfare. Magog’s opponent, the Antichrist, has decided to employ tactical nuclear weapons against those who had allied themselves against his protectorate, Israel.

But why would he do this? He has to know how threatened Russia will be by his actions—and what her possible reaction might be. More to the point, by this time, the armies of Magog will *already* have been destroyed. Their corpses lie rotting on the mountains and fields of Israel. Magog has been de-fanged; her military capability has been annihilated. *Dar al-Islam* is no longer a threat. So why attack Magog’s homeland?

Because he *has* to. Look at the big picture—the spiritual picture: the only reason the Antichrist is there in Israel is because he is trying to present himself as the Jews’ Messiah—the savior of the world—the son of God. As we shall see, his whole *raison d’être* is to make people worship him. But the defeat of Gog’s army within Israel is clearly not the result of *his* actions, but of Yahweh’s: “**Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel...Every man’s sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.**” (Ezekiel 38:19, 21-22) Yahweh has chosen as weapons: a massive earthquake, confusion and fratricide in the Muslim ranks, floods, hailstorms, fire and brimstone. The list consists of what people usually call “natural” phenomena or “acts of God”—things that are all in some other way beyond the capabilities of conventional combat. Thus the Antichrist can’t plausibly claim credit for destroying Gog’s army. (Of course, he will anyway, plausibly or not.)

But what about fire and brimstone? That’s not your ordinary run-of-the-mill “freak weather occurrence.” We just got through explaining “**And I will send fire on Magog...**” as nuclear war. Isn’t this the same thing? It *could* be descriptive of atomic warfare, but it almost certainly isn’t in this case. Yahweh will not allow His land to be polluted in this way: He’s not done with it yet. This isn’t just a theory of mine based on a love of Israel and a healthy dose of wishful thinking.

Biblical descriptions of events subsequently taking place within Israel clearly preclude nuclear holocaust.

So what is fire and brimstone? “Fire” could be anything from conventional artillery to napalm to lightning from the heavens—or, of course, the literal burning of brimstone, which I’ll discuss in a minute. Isaiah, if you’ll recall, described Yahweh’s “weapon” as **“the flame of devouring fire.”** Elijah had called down fire from heaven to consume the overconfident soldiers of the idolatrous Samaritan King Ahaziah who had come to fetch him. This was a fact well known by Yahshua’s disciples: **“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.’”** (Luke 9:51-56) The first advent of Messiah was not a time of judgment; that time, however, is coming. Note that Yahshua didn’t deny that the power to send fire in judgment was His to wield. Yahweh apparently has no problem putting fire wherever He wants it.

Brimstone, technically, is just sulfur. To this day you can walk around near the ancient sites of Sodom and Gomorrah west of the Dead Sea and pick up golf ball sized pieces of ash-encrusted “brimstone” off the ground. It tests out at about 98% sulfur, burns with a “fervent heat” (as Peter would say), and gives off noxious sulfur dioxide fumes in the process—don’t try this at home, boys and girls. It seems likely to me that Yahweh’s destruction of Gog’s armies within Israel will be a rerun of Sodom’s demise—which Yahweh probably achieved with a pinpoint-accurate sulfur-rich asteroid strike.

Later we’ll see how the Israelis will bury the bodies and collect what the armies left behind. If nuclear weapons were used, there would be precious little left to retrieve. Nor do I think the Antichrist would use tactical nukes within Israel—not if he were trying to establish himself as the Messiah. *See what a great thing I’ve done to protect you Jews? I nuked ’em back to Allah for you. Oh, sorry about the radiation. But you should be able to come back and live here quite safely in two, three generations, tops.*

Outside of Israel, though, is another matter. The Antichrist may calculate that if he drops Israeli nukes on strategic targets within *dar al-Islam*, especially on Iran itself—described in scripture as “sending a fire on Magog—other Islamic nuclear-equipped nations (like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) won’t return his “unconventional” fire because of the likelihood of taking out their “holy” shrine,

the Dome of the Rock. (Having their own launch capabilities knocked out in the initial attack won't hurt, either.) The decision to nuke Magog will be a hasty and poorly thought-out improvisation, of course, but the Antichrist desperately needs a quick diversion: something—*anything*—to disguise the obvious fact that the one actually responsible for crushing Israel's antagonists is Yahweh Himself—the Living God. In other words, the Antichrist is trying to prevent that which is clearly predicted in scripture: **“So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One in Israel. Surely it is coming, and it shall be done,” says Yahweh. ‘This is the day of which I have spoken.’**” (Ezekiel 38:7-8)

I can hear you groaning. *You mean to say that the Antichrist risks turning this conventional regional war into a world-wide nuclear holocaust because he's trying to hide the fact that he's not God?* Yes, it could be just that simple. Let's face it: since Nagasaki, there's been no *good* reason for using nuclear weapons in warfare. That fact kept the cold war cold for forty years. But now that the Holy Spirit isn't in the “restraining” business any longer, self-control is in short supply among the world's leaders. This may not be the only scenario that works, but it does address the means, motive, and opportunity needed for the Bible's many “wrath of God” prophecies to come to pass.

If not nuclear war, what on earth could John have been describing when he recorded this: **“The first angel sounded [his trumpet]: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”** (Revelation 8:7) This seems to be implying that the atomic warfare will touch one third of the earth's land surface. The total landmass of the earth is about 56,890,000 square miles. Call it a coincidence if you want, but the areas of the nations described in the previous chapter as the Magog federation, plus the parts of Europe within the old Roman empire, plus Russia, plus the United States (whose participation is implied in Isaiah 18) add up to just short of 19,000,000 square miles—*one third* of the earth's land surface.

Realistically, of course, there are probably going to be some trade-offs. I can't imagine too much of Siberia will be targeted, but on the other hand, I can easily envision India and Pakistan using the general mayhem as an excuse to rekindle their old hatreds by trading nukes. (After all, they're the only two nations *multiplying* their nuclear arsenals these days.) And although Arizona and Iowa may not make particularly tempting targets, Toronto and Montreal shouldn't feel safe just because they're north of some line on a map.

Comparing this, the first “trumpet” judgment, with what we saw in the fourth “seal” judgment (Revelation 6:8), we conclude that nations comprising one third of the land surface of the earth will be directly involved in the nuclear catastrophe, and one quarter of the earth's population (most of whom are within

those nations) will be killed as a result of the warfare or the disease and famine that will inevitably follow. If we're starting out with seven billion people on earth, that's over 1.7 *billion* souls—dead.

We've seen how the “seals” of the scroll John witnessed in his vision represented the unique authority of Yahshua to exact God's wrath upon the unbelieving world. The second level of revelation is represented by the blowing of trumpets. The *shofar*, or ram's horn trumpet, was used to get Israel's attention—whether to gather at the tent of meeting, or to prepare for war. But when Yahweh or his angels blew the trumpet, the effect on His people was “shock and awe”: **“There were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled... Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.”** (Exodus 19:16; 20:18) Like God's trumpet on Sinai, the “trumpet” judgments are designed to wake the world up, to command its complete attention.

Isaiah's warnings should have been enough, but we keep snoozing. **“Behold, Yahweh makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for Yahweh has spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away; the world languishes and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish....”** A nuclear warhead is very democratic—it doesn't care if you're rich or poor, black or white, ugly or beautiful, brilliant or dumb as a bag of hammers. If you're too close to it when it goes off, you're dead. But when World War III starts, 144,000 people will be immune to its effects—the young Jewish evangelists who, as we have seen, have been “sealed” by God. It is my guess that most of them will have emigrated to Israel by this time, along with millions of Jews fleeing worldwide persecution. It's one more hint that Israel itself will not experience nuclear war. It should be noted that both “land” and “earth” throughout this passage are translated from the same word, the Hebrew *'erets*. “World” is from *tebel*, meaning “the habitable part of the earth.” So it should not be imagined that Isaiah is making a distinction between “the promised *land*” and the rest of the earth. He's talking about the whole enchilada.

The prophet continues, explaining the “why” of it all: **“The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left....”** For my money, this is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. This

nuclear holocaust didn't have to happen. Mankind has brought the curse upon himself.

"The new wine fails, the vine languishes; all the merry-hearted sigh. The mirth of the tambourine ceases, the noise of the jubilant ends, the joy of the harp ceases. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink is bitter to those who drink it. The city of confusion is broken down; every house is shut up, so that none may go in. There is a cry for wine in the streets, all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction. When it shall be thus in the midst of the land among the people, it shall be like the shaking of an olive tree, like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done." (Isaiah 24:1-13) Our hedonistic lives are going to look pretty stupid after the leaders of the "great" powers all drop the big one on each other. No one is going to feel like partying anymore, though the natural inclination of many will be to get drunk and stay that way so they don't have to face the grim new reality. The "gate" Isaiah mentioned is roughly equivalent to "city hall." In context, it indicates that the capital cities of the war's participants are toast, leaving "government" in the hands of whoever is strong enough to seize it. Mogadishu will serve as the model. But there will be precious few people left to govern—or exploit.

An anonymous Psalm describes the effects of the warfare: **"A fire goes before Him and burns up His enemies round about. His lightnings light the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax at the presence of Yahweh, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory."** (Psalm 97:3-6) From the experiments our government performed in the 1950s we have a reasonably good idea what one nuclear bomb will do. But we have no concept of what will happen when hundreds or thousands of these weapons are detonated more or less simultaneously. Changes in weather patterns—not just a nuclear winter, but a nuclear hurricane or tornado season—are a distinct possibility. Remember what Jeremiah said about **"the whirlwind of Yahweh"** in chapter 30? And how many nukes will it take to get a major fault system like the San Andreas in California to let go? References to earthquakes (the "trembling" earth) are ubiquitous in these prophetic passages.

It's interesting that both Ezekiel and John mention hailstones as a part of the phenomenon of God's wrath. This isn't the first time Yahweh has used hail against an enemy of His people. During the conquest of Canaan, He rained down hail upon the Amorites. **"And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that Yahweh cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword."** (Joshua 10:11) Or as Yahweh put it to Job, **"...Have you seen the treasury of hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war?"** (Job 38:22-23)

Although God obviously doesn't need a nuclear war in order to rain hail down on His enemies, the atomic weapons researchers in the '50s discovered that hail often accompanied nuclear detonations. Moisture was pulled aloft to where the air temperature is sixty or seventy degrees below zero. This resulted in hailstones—and not your ordinary pea-sized stuff, either, but hail large enough to dent the armor deck plating of warships anchored near the blast zone. This is reminiscent of what John described in the seventh bowl judgment: **“And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent [75-90 pounds]. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.”** (Revelation 16:21) *Question: Will men repent from their wickedness if Yahweh shows them signs from heaven? Answer: Hail? No!*

One wonders what David was contemplating when he penned these words: **“Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered. Let those also who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.”** (Psalm 68:1-2) David had never seen an explosion, but he knew what fire would do. The Psalmist Asaph continues the thought: **“Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.”** (Psalm 50:3) The psalms from which these generalized predictions of God's fiery wrath are taken both refer to places within Israel. It's not too much of a stretch to find their ultimate fulfillment in the future war against Magog.

David also says, **“Your hand will find all Your enemies; Your right hand will find those who hate You. You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; Yahweh shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth, and their descendants from among the sons of men. For they intended evil against You; They devised a plot which they are not able to perform. Therefore You will make them turn their back; You will make ready Your arrows on Your string toward their faces. Be exalted, O Yahweh, in Your own strength! We will sing and praise Your power.”** (Psalm 21:8-13) Who are these “enemies” the king is describing? Having studied Islam, the term “plot” jumped off the page and bit me. In the Muslim scriptures, Muhammad and his “god” are forever talking about plots and schemes. Typical—and telling—is this passage from the Qur'an: *“Do they not see Us advancing from all sides into the land they control, reducing its borders? When Allah dooms there is none who can postpone His doom. Surely they devised their plots, but We [i.e., Allah] are the best of schemers.”* (Qur'an 13:41) This is but one of thousands of confirmations that Islam is all about conquest—not about religious observance. But Yahweh knew about their feeble plots sixteen hundred years before Muhammad put the words in Allah's mouth. They have no idea Who they're dealing with.

Notice the nature of judgment here: fire will be the primary means of Magog's destruction. But beyond that, it appears that their entire race will be annihilated—their offspring, their descendants, will also be destroyed. Earlier in this chapter we covered the first few verses of Ezekiel 39. In verse 2 there is a play on words that's totally lost in the English, especially in the NKJV. The Authorized, or King James Version renders it like this: **“And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee....”** There is a single Hebrew word for the phrase “leave but the sixth part.” *Shawshaw* is the poetic way of saying “annihilate” in Hebrew. The word play comes from its resemblance to *shashah*, pronounced exactly the same way, which means “to divide into sixths.” Whether Yahweh meant He was going to kill five-sixths of Gog's armies within Israel or five sixths of the combined citizenry of the Magog Federation (or whether He really meant *annihilate*—totally obliterate them) the carnage will be unprecedented in the history of man. Bear in mind that the total death toll from this war will be one-quarter of the earth's population, over 1.7 billion people. So the only question is whether the first billion and a quarter out of that 1.7 billion who'll die will be followers of Islam (i.e., five-sixths of the earth's 1.4 billion Muslims), or five-sixths of the population of the Magog Federation proper (perhaps a third to half of that number), or only Gog's *armies* are completely wasted, leaving the rest of the carnage more generalized. The Psalm 21 passage quoted above (especially verse 10) seems to favor the former theory—leaving a “mere” half-a-billion casualties (nine or ten times the death toll of World War II) spread out over the rest of the earth.

Though thermonuclear war won't be visited upon Israel proper, the fire of Yahweh's wrath will be employed there (among other things) to destroy Magog's armies, leaving devastation and famine in its wake. The newly appointed priests will waste no time in going to the new temple to intercede on behalf of the Jewish people. The prophet Joel describes the scene: **“Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God. For the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of Yahweh your God, and cry out to Yahweh....”** Remember, one of Yahweh's stated purposes for allowing this costly victory to transpire is to drive Israel back into His arms of protection.

“Alas for the day! For the day of Yahweh is at hand. It shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods, storehouses are in shambles; barns are broken down, for the grain has withered. How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment. O Yahweh, to You I cry out; for fire has devoured the open pastures, and a flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field also cry out to You, for the water brooks are dried up,

and fire has devoured the open pastures.” (Joel 1:13-20) The Muslims are gone, but so are the crops, orchards, grasslands, and water supply. The Israelis are victorious, but in dire straits. And things will get worse before they get better: the whole second half of the Tribulation will be characterized by widespread drought. More on that later.

Yahweh will hear their cry and meet their needs, even in this most dire of circumstances. **“He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But those who wait on Yahweh shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”** (Isaiah 40:29-31) Not all of the Jews will wait on Yahweh, of course. But those who do will find shelter and renewed strength to face the challenges yet to come. They’ll need it—it’s not nearly over yet.

Having observed Yahweh’s *modus operandi*, I believe He will let Gog’s armies get all the way to the suburbs of Jerusalem before He burns their biscuits. Somehow, it just wouldn’t be *Him* to miraculously cut off his people’s enemies before all rational hope was lost. Jerusalem may get a little singed around the edges, but God won’t let it be destroyed—not this time. **“Yahweh said to Satan, ‘Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’”** (Zechariah 3:2) Indeed: a smoldering stick rescued from the fire and used as a club to bludgeon those who hate Yahweh and His people.

Zechariah has a lot to say about these days: **“The burden of the word of Yahweh against Israel. Thus says Yahweh, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: ‘Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples [that’s *dar al-Islam*], when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples [this, in contrast, is the whole world, and a bit later]; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it...”** God reminds us of His greatness—His résumé as it were—and then assures us that in the Last Days He intends to defend his chosen city.

How? **“‘In that day,’ says Yahweh, ‘I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, “The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in Yahweh of hosts, their God.” In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the**

sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem....” The Israelis won’t just sit around waiting for the Antichrist and his U.N. “peacekeepers” to deal with Gog and his armies. It’s their homeland: they will be on the front lines defending it. This new generation will have heard of the miraculous victories of ’48, ’67, and ’73, of course, but the Israelis have never faced such impossible odds before. They’re under no illusions: if Yahweh isn’t fighting with them and for them, they’re dead. Zechariah confirms here that He is. The “governors” whom God will raise up to lead the Israelis in battle will be “a fiery torch among the sheaves,” inciting their troops to valor and victory in the strength of Yahweh wherever they confront the Muslims. The reference to blinded horses seems to mean that Magog’s expensive battlefield technology will fail, leaving them with catastrophically errant comprehension of the battlespace, and contributing, as we have seen, to a disastrous level of friendly fire fratricide. “Rider madness” indicates a pattern of disastrous blunders on the part of the Muslim military leadership.

“Yahweh will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of Yahweh before them. It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.” (Zechariah 12:1-9) Historically, Judah is the territory south of Jerusalem—the Negev. Much of it is barren wasteland today. Well over half of Israel’s population lives in the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem corridor at the country’s “waist.” It seems reasonable to assume that since, according to Daniel, the Antichrist has overrun Egypt, the Israelis will use this southern territory as a fallback position as Magog’s forces attack Jerusalem and Tel Aviv from the north. Yahweh gives the least of them the valor of a King David (of whom it was sung, **“He killed his ten-thousands”**) as they go out against Magog. And beyond that, we should not ignore the implications of genetic links to the house of David and the tribe of Judah here. Yahweh is quite involved with individual Israelite tribal affiliations at this point in time. Apparently, the “stars” of the battle of Magog are from the tribe of Judah—King Yahshua’s tribe. Yahweh knows who they are, even if they don’t.

But the numbers of enemy troops are positively overwhelming. As hope runs out, as the unstoppable flood of Muslim troops reaches the Jerusalem suburbs, Yahweh seems to say, “Well done, boys and girls. I’ll take it from here.” Zechariah paints the scene: **“And this shall be the plague with which Yahweh will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their**

mouths. It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from Yahweh will be among them." (Zechariah 14:12-13) Panic? No kidding, Zack.

I'm admittedly extrapolating (again) here, but I believe the very next sentence (v.13) may offer us a clue as to what has happened. **"Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand."** We've already seen how among the troops of Gog, **"Every man's sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed..."** (Ezekiel 38:21-22) Zechariah may be giving us a hint as to the nature of this "pestilence." When the Muslims lose focus and turn on each other (which is something they've historically done far more frequently than attacking non-Muslims) they'll employ the biological or chemical weapons they intended to use against the Israelis, weapons that cause the gruesome symptoms described by Zechariah. This agent works so fast that the victim's flesh begins to rot away even before the corpse hits the floor.

I can guarantee that if I could come up with a formula that would do what Zechariah described, and I sent it to every government on earth, half of them would make up a batch and test it, and a third of them would manufacture it and stockpile some for a rainy day. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that it already exists. In case you were wondering, it works on animals, too. **"Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be."** (Zechariah 14:15) Notice that its deployment will be localized: **"in those camps."**

It's worth noting that the plague of Zechariah 14 *may* primarily reference events of another battle, Armageddon (perhaps four or five years later)—the effect of "the sword that proceeds out of the mouth of Yahshua," acoustic waves that turn His enemies to bloody goo. Perhaps I should have brought it up in Chapter 24 instead of here. But the circumstances are so similar, it's hard to be dogmatic either way. Either way, it doesn't pay to attack God's people.

Perhaps the trickiest part about crushing Gog's armies within Israel will be managing to avoid killing the Israelis who are fighting them in such close proximity. But it is this very selectivity that will convince the Jews that Yahweh has been intervening on their behalf. **"Then Yahweh will be seen over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning. Yahweh will blow the trumpet, and go with whirlwinds from the south. Yahweh of hosts will defend them; they shall devour and subdue with slingstones. They shall drink and roar as if with wine; they shall be filled with blood like basins, like the corners of the altar. Yahweh their God will save them in that day, as the flock of His people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown, lifted like a banner over His land."** (Zechariah 9:14-16) The single Hebrew word mis-translated "lifted like a banner" (*nasas*) means "sparkling, or glittering." Yahweh sees His people as precious jewels in His crown. Here, amid the pregnant metaphor of the trumpet of Yahweh, we see the final outcome of the battle. The Israelis are doing the

fighting, devouring Gog with “slingstones.” This could mean missiles and artillery, but I think it’s just as likely that Zechariah also meant weapons of opportunity, such as those David used to slay Goliath. Now as then, the Jews wield the weapons, and Yahweh provides the victory. Of course, the slingstones could be the hail Ezekiel reported.

Using a different metaphor, the prophet Micah confirms this. **“Now also many nations have gathered against you, who say, ‘Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.’ But they do not know the thoughts of Yahweh, nor do they understand His counsel; for He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make your horn [the symbol of national strength] iron, and I will make your hooves bronze. You shall beat in pieces many peoples; I will consecrate their gain to Yahweh, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth.”** (Micah 4:9-13) Islam has from its very beginning made plunder the basis of its progress—beginning with the rape of the three Jewish tribes of Yathrib (Medina). How ironic it is that what the Muslims have—their mineral wealth, for starters, will now be dedicated to Yahweh and utilized by His people.

Malachi explains what will happen: **“But to you who revere My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. And you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,’ says Yahweh almighty.”** (Malachi 4:2-3) Reverent Israelis—those who actually know and use God’s name—not “the Lord,” not “*ha-Shem*,” but *Yahweh*—will “trample the wicked,” but it’s Yahweh Himself who’s “doing it.” We are also graphically reminded here of the fire Yahweh will use against Gog’s forces: **“They shall be ashes under the soles of your feet....”**

We should not gloss over this Person identified as “the Sun of Righteousness” who will enable the Israelites to “trample the wicked” in the day of Yahweh’s wrath. The title refers to the central Fact of Yahweh’s plan of redemption. First of all, it’s actually “*Her* wings.” It’s the Spirit of Yahweh (*Ruach*—Spirit—is a feminine noun in Hebrew) and “She” is being characterized as the rising sun, the bringer of a new dawn of righteousness and prosperity. But this enigmatic phrase (seen here in the last chapter of the Old Testament) ties up a lot of loose ends for us. Back in the very first chapter of Genesis, the sun was said to appear on the fourth day of creation—*after* plant life had appeared on the earth. Since this is obviously a scientific impossibility, we are left to ponder what God meant for us to know by wording it like this.

The key to our understanding is the Sabbath principle—the idea that we are to have six “days” (that is, six thousand years) to work in this world, exercising our free will to honor Yahweh (or choosing not to), followed by one “day” (one thousand years) of rest from such labors. The seven thousand year calendar begins with the fall of Adam (the whole reason there had to be a plan of redemption in

the first place) and it will end with a Millennium of perfect peace under the scepter of the reigning Messiah. But when did the Spirit-empowered Messiah appear in human history? When did God take upon Himself the form of a man for the purpose of becoming our atoning sacrifice? Do the math: it was on the *fourth day*—at the very end of the fourth millennium since Adam’s curse descended upon our hapless race. The fifth millennium began with Christ’s passion.

So what, exactly, does “healing in her wings” mean? Israel was commanded to put “tassels” known as *tsitzit* on the corners of their garments (see Numbers 15:37-41) to remind them of Whose they were. Yahshua wore such tassels. They are referred to in Luke 8:43-48, when a woman touched these “wings,” the tasseled border of His garment, and received miraculous healing from her twelve-year infirmity. Yahshua Himself perceived that power had gone out of Him, healing the woman. That power was the same Spirit of God spoken of by Malachi—the same Spirit who will enable Israel to “trample the wicked.”

And what about Magog? Micah’s imprecation against Assyria goes far beyond ancient Nineveh: **“And it shall be in that day,’ says Yahweh, ‘that I will cut off your horses from your midst and destroy your chariots. I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst. You shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst. Thus I will destroy your cities, and I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard.’”** (Micah 5:10-15) *Vengeance on those who have not heard?* This sounds totally unfair, but it’s really just another mis-translation. The word “heard” is *shama*, meaning “to listen, take heed, pay attention, or hear in the sense of believing information and responding on the basis of having heard.” It’s the perfect description of *dar al-Islam*. Whether or not they’ve “heard,” they certainly haven’t *listened*.

Yahweh is talking not about merely punishing nations for their naughty behavior. He is talking about dethroning their false gods. Islam today holds 1.4 billion souls in bondage to a false god, Allah, who bears a striking resemblance to *Heyl ben Shachar*—“Lucifer, son of the dawn,” the fallen spirit who masquerades as the sun god, the adversary of mankind—Satan himself. Gog’s war against the Jews is in reality Allah’s war against Yahweh. When it’s over, *no one* will call upon the name of Allah. Another false god will have bitten the dust.

Chapter 17

Winners, Losers, and Wannabes

Thermonuclear war has no winners, only losers and survivors. Unlike the black death in medieval Europe, which killed a similar proportion of the population, this plague—the War of Magog—will affect not only people, but infrastructure. And unlike “conventional” world wars, this conflict will destroy not only buildings but the planet’s very ecological balance. There will be far more to “getting over it” than burying the dead and rebuilding the cities. It puts a whole new slant on the saying, “Third time’s a charm.”

World War III has the potential to kill the vast majority of life on earth, between the blasts themselves and the famine, disease, and altered weather that will inevitably follow. But Yahweh, in limiting the carnage to one quarter of the earth’s human population, is following through on a promise. After He had sent a worldwide flood to cleanse the earth of man and beast, **“Yahweh said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.”** (Genesis 8:21-22)

You can almost hear the sigh in His voice. Yahweh knows that the great flood is going to get the job done, but only barely. Even though Noah and his sons were true to their God, within a single generation man would once again begin to fall away. Three millennia later, the promised Redeemer would visit an oblivious world, our salvation suspended upon the thinnest of threads. Here in Genesis, Yahweh states His intention to protect the earth until His plan is fully accomplished. “While earth remains” implies that there will come a day when this fragile orb will no longer exist in its present form (something that is flatly predicted elsewhere). But until that time comes, nothing will be allowed to happen to it (like meteorite or asteroid collisions) sufficient to fatally disrupt the earth’s orbit, axis, or rate of revolution; and man will not be given enough latitude to bring to an end the life Yahweh placed upon this fragile orb. We have His word on that.

Wrath from Yahweh short of earth’s total annihilation, however, is predicted thousands of times in scripture, beginning with the oldest book in the Bible: **“Be afraid of the sword for yourselves; for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment.”** (Job 19:29) Even Job knew that God’s wrath could come dressed as man’s sword—or nuclear tipped missile, as the case may be. God repeated this message of “repentance or judgment” so many times, many don’t even hear it any more—it has become like a constant droning noise in the

background of our lives. But to ignore His warning is sin (not to mention stupid). **“All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘The calamity shall not overtake nor confront us.’** (Amos 9:10) Our being in denial about God’s coming judgment doesn’t make it any less inevitable.

Speaking for Israel, the prophet Micah addressed his nation’s enemies—Magog included: **“Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. When I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, Yahweh will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of Yahweh, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness. Then she who is my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, ‘Where is Yahweh your God?’ My eyes will see her; now she will be trampled down like mud in the streets.”** (Micah 7:8-10) Gog will attack Israel (i.e., going beyond merely hating her—something Muslims have done since the days of Muhammad) because he perceives her to be weak and defenseless—a “land of unwalled villages.” The European leader—the Antichrist—has assumed Israel’s defense, prompting Gog to ask the Jews, **“Where is Yahweh your God?”** Gog is about to find out where Yahweh is, ironically enough, through both the sword of the Antichrist and the direct judgment of God.

To review, the World War III scenario as I see it plays out something like this. First, as we have seen, Gog and his Muslim allies begin preparing for an all-out offensive against the poorly defended (and indeed indefensible) state of Israel. But Egypt and Syria jump the gun and invade the Land in a coordinated north-south pincer action. (It must be habit forming; they’ve done this twice before.) Antichrist and his “peacekeeping” forces retaliate, stopping Syria cold and overrunning Egypt and several other Muslim nations (alluded to but unnamed in scripture) in a humiliating rout.

This is all the further previous Arab-Israeli wars have ever gotten. At this point, what usually happens is that the Israelis gain some ground (which they get talked out of later—they’re far better soldiers than they are negotiators) and a truce is called. Some new lines are drawn on a map, and everybody goes home to lick their wounds.

The last time they played this game, in 1973, every nation they fought against had a “secular Islamic” government; that is, although nominally Muslims, their leaders were either kings, presidents, or dictators who ran their nations according to their own self-perceived national (or personal) interests. But on January 16, 1979, Iran’s Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was driven from his kingdom, relinquishing the reins of power to a previously exiled Ayatollah named Ruholla

Khomeini. For the first time in modern history, a fundamentalist Islamic state was formed—ruled not by politicians or potentates, but by Muslim clerics. The Qur'an, Sunnah, and Hadith, became the basis of law; Sharia now trumped custom, logic, and tribal culture. The attitudes of Muhammad, not the interests of the Iranian people, now underpinned the government's agenda. And what drove Muhammad? First and foremost, hatred for Jews and Christians, followed by lust, greed, and an insatiable thirst for power.

The bottom line is that since 1979, Iran has been the one Islamic nation in the world positioned to lead the others into holy war against Israel. The prophet Ezekiel, you'll recall, described just such a nation, calling it (if we follow the clues) "Magog." Its leader, called Gog, is a good match for a charismatic military/spiritual leader Muslims are told will appear in the last days, one called the Mahdi, the "Twelfth Imam" of Shia lore. Ezekiel identifies Gog as the "chief prince" of other, more moderate, Muslim nations—making him a good candidate for the leader of a revived Islamic Caliphate, something that hasn't happened yet, but appears likely to. What makes him the chief prince? His unquestioned religious authority, which other national leaders professing the same faith, concerned for their souls, feel at some level they must heed. The historian Josephus linked the Magogites to the Scythians, who settled a sweeping territory centered on the Caspian Sea region—in present-day northern Iran. Coincidence? I think not.

Is it possible that some other nation could be Magog? Sure, but it would have to meet some rather improbable requirements. Besides being the modern homeland for some of the descendants of the Genesis 10 historical character Magog (a broad swath of land potentially stretching from the Danube to India), Ezekiel's Magog must qualify as the spiritual mentor of several areas that are undeniably in Islamic hands, and have been for over a millennium. In order to qualify as the base of operations for the "chief prince," this nation would have to be in a position to unify a major portion of the Muslim world in a common cause, and afford to equip them for battle. Iran could do this: they sit on the world's fourth largest known oil reserves (after Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates—all of which are much too far south to be considered Magog's long-lost kin, besides the fact that they are primarily Semitic peoples—descendants of Shem—not Japhethites, the line from which Magog—and its chief prince, Gog—descends).

There is also no rival (at present) for Iran's status as the most devotedly religious Islamic nation on the planet, even though they are ruled by the minority Shiites. Presented with an "all-expenses-paid" chance to eliminate the Jews once and for all, the Sunnis in the region might gladly set aside their age-old differences and take up arms with the Shiites—just my opinion, of course. The

objection could be raised, of course, that U.N. sanctions imposed upon Iran to “encourage” them to abandon their nuclear ambitions have compromised their ability to afford to wage conventional warfare as it’s described in scripture. But that’s not exactly what has happened. The brunt of economic hardship has fallen upon the shoulders of Iran’s middle class—the only segment of Persian society who is less than thrilled to have fundamentalist Islamic clerics calling the shots. The government, meanwhile, has taken what it needed to pursue its agenda off the top, leaving its most productive citizens to fend for themselves. If anything, the sanctions have only strengthened Iran’s national belligerence, while at the same time crippling the only people in the country who might have been able to curtail the madness.

If I had to make a second guess as to the identity of Magog, I would have to choose Iran’s neighbor, Turkey: no less than four of the participants in the Magog federation (Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Togarmah) are in or near Turkey. Moreover, Turkey has shown increasingly fundamentalist tendencies as of late. The informative website www.islam-watch.org reports, “Up to now Turkey has acted in a mediation capacity between Israel and countries like Iran. However President Recep Erdogan dreams of a revived Caliphate and the past glory of the Ottoman empire. Erdogan has been implementing a policy of stealth Jihad in Turkey, quietly replacing pro-Western figures with fundamentalist leaders, especially in the military which has always been pro-Western. Since 1960, the military has intervened in Turkish politics three times in defense of secularism, which is enshrined as the bedrock of the nation’s political system, laid out in the preamble of the republic’s constitution. According to the Turkish Daily News, in 1995, Erdogan was quoted as having said: ‘Democracy is like a streetcar. You ride it until you arrive at your destination and then you get off.’ From his body language and recent actions, Erdogan is signaling to the world that Turkey is ready to disembark from the streetcar called Democracy.” That being said, Turkey is not a particularly wealthy nation, nor do they have the long-standing reputation as serious Muslim fundamentalists that Iran enjoys. My money, therefore, is solidly on Iran, though it is certain that Turkey will ally themselves with them in the end.

But the Ezekiel 38 and 39 prophecy focuses on (and against) Gog—the personal leader of Islam’s hordes—not on his land (although Magog and its allies will get toasted in retribution—39:6). Iran (i.e., Persia) is specifically named among the combatants, so their participation and support is assured. But it is Gog, the Imam Mahdi, who will covet Israel’s land and possessions (38:10-12), lead his armies (38:14-16) to ignominious defeat (38:21-22). And it is Gog whose rotting corpse will be among those picked clean by carrion birds and wild beasts on the mountains and fields of Israel (39:3-5). And note that although Gog will lead Iran (or the renewed caliphate), he doesn’t have to be Iranian-born to fulfill the

prophecy. A birthplace anywhere near the Caucasus region will fulfill the prophetic requirement.

Getting back to our hypothetical but Scripture-consistent World War III scenario, we find this “Gog of the land of Magog” uniting the Islamic nations of the Middle East in a combination rescue of Egypt and Syria and invasion of Israel. The war at this point escalates from a local to a regional conflict—the entire Middle East becomes embroiled in it. As the Antichrist’s forces are busy subduing Egypt, the armies of the Magog federation sweep in from the north, covering the land of Israel “like a cloud” with an invasion force of unprecedented size. This news is said to “trouble” the Antichrist (don’t you just love Biblical understatement?) and he reacts violently, intending to annihilate Magog and its allies. But as this immense multinational Muslim force closes in on Jerusalem, Yahweh Himself suddenly enters the fray, destroying the armies of Magog on the mountains of Israel with a combination of fratricide, floods, disease, hailstorms, fire and brimstone, and an intense earthquake.

This leaves Antichrist with a good news/bad news story. It’s good that the Muslim forces have been beaten within the country he swore to protect, but *his* armies and battle tactics had nothing to do with the victory, and everyone knows it. The Jews—many of them—can’t help but perceive the hand of Yahweh in Magog’s defeat, and that could pose an unexpected wrinkle in the Antichrist’s forthcoming plans to declare himself the Messiah. But nobody actually *saw* God doing all that damage, so in a bold move worthy of the demon who will possess him, the Antichrist decides to attack the nations of the Magog federation with nuclear weapons. This, he calculates, will (1) rid his “protectorate,” Israel, of the Muslim threat forever, making *him* their national hero, (2) confuse the issue of who was responsible for defeating the Muslim forces within Israel’s borders, and (3) give him the military credibility he so desperately needs to buttress his imminent messianic unveiling—something we’ll discuss in a later chapter. This is the very sort of thing the first-century Jews expected to see from the Messiah: fire from heaven raining down upon Rome and its legions. If Yahshua had done *that*, instead of going to the cross, he would no doubt have gained a loyal and enthusiastic following among the Jews of His day. (‘Course, we’d still be lost in our sins, estranged from the God who made us—His *real* mission would have been a colossal flop.)

But in order for the ruse to work, the Antichrist will have to move quickly—so fast that there is no perceived time lag between the destruction of Gog’s armies within Israel and the decimation of the Islamic power base within their homeland. He can’t afford to be seen as playing “catch-up” to an unseen God, nor as weak or indecisive in his military tactics. It must all appear (to the ever-gullible news media, anyway) that this great victory was a carefully orchestrated one-two punch

delivered in defense of his historic “covenant with many.” Though brutal and arguably unnecessary, nuclear attacks against Damascus, Istanbul, Ankara, Cairo, Amman, Baghdad, Riyadh, Islamabad, and Tehran—along with twenty or thirty other significant Muslim targets—can be “spun” as indispensable insurance against future Islamic aggression. But only if he acts *quickly*: there’s no time for him to ponder the geopolitical ramifications.

It’s my guess (SF5) that Antichrist will use *Israeli* nukes (not the E.U.’s or NATO’s) on his foe. It’s not only more poetic that way, there’s always the factor of plausible deniability if things get terribly out of hand—*Hey, the Jews nuked ‘em. I had nothing to do with it!* The European leader is nothing if not shrewd. He figures that if the need arises (i.e., if the Jews prove uncooperative, unreceptive to his messianic overtures), he might someday have to use the “warmongering Israelis” myth to elicit the support of all the world in a united effort to kill every Jew on earth—which is essentially what Gog wanted to do. (Not to let the cat out of the bag, but this is precisely what *will* happen.) The likely outcome of his tactical nuclear war, on the other hand, eludes him entirely. Although Satan knows exactly how the rest of the world will react, the Antichrist plows ahead with his plan apparently oblivious to (or merely unconcerned with) the fact that the most advanced nations on the planet—including his own—will surely be incinerated in the unpleasantness he has foolishly unleashed.

The key to global nuclear escalation is Russia. It matters not what sort of government they have when this all takes place—they’ll still have half of the world’s nuclear weapons inventory. The Russians may have problems, but they’re not stupid. They’ll *know* the Israelis didn’t unilaterally nuke the Muslim capital cities on their own—it was that pompous EuroThug with the Israel fixation who spends half his time in Jerusalem. They’ll know that without the nations of *dar al-Islam* to trade with (much of it for their weapons and nuclear technology), their economy, which wasn’t much to begin with, oil or no oil, will collapse. (Moving from a Communist economy to private sector capitalism was a bust in Russia—they merely switched from one kind of criminal to another. It demonstrates what I’ve always theorized: capitalism will only work in societies driven by Judeo-Christian values.) Moscow’s leaders will perceive that if they don’t do something—and soon—Mother Russia will soon find itself on the Antichrist’s hit list as well.

So because restraint is a thing of the past (II Thessalonians 2:7), and because they feel cornered and threatened, Russia launches what is for them a preemptive nuclear strike, not against Israel (which they know has been a meaningless pawn ever since they signed the Antichrist’s peace treaty was implemented) but against Europe, the kingdom of the madman who brought the world to the point of no return and beyond. *Treaties? Disarmament? Peace? Nyet! What does this man*

know of peace? At the first sign of trouble, he panics and sends nuclear weapons raining down upon his enemies. He did not have to do that to win his little war. But now he will see what it is like to taste fear....

Remember World War I, when one nation after another joined the fracas because their allies were threatened? History is about to repeat itself. Although Europe has chafed for decades under the shadow of the swaggering Americans, they're now glad they didn't dismantle NATO altogether. The proud Americans, for their part, are gratified to see the pretentious Europeans, especially the French, come crawling back *again* begging for help—until the bombs start falling on *them*, that is.

Over the past few years, the Americans will have seen their conventional military might wither up to the point of semi-uselessness (SF7). When their profligate spending began to impinge upon their ability to borrow money, the military was the first place the budgets were cut. Of their armed forces that were still operational, much of it was deployed to the Middle East several years before under U.N. auspices—to keep the peace in Israel. The subsequent invasion of Magog left the Americans staggering and bloodied. Not a few of them lost their lives in the “natural” disasters that swept away Magog's armies as they approached Jerusalem. And now this bombastic EuroTrash has gone and opened Pandora's nuclear box. In uncharacteristic disarray, the American forces are spread so thinly throughout the world that fighting a conventional war, NATO against Russia, would seem impossible even if the nukes weren't already in play. But since they are, there's only one thing left to do: fight fire with fire. The generals holed up in the Pentagon figure *that* out in about five minutes. Faced with universal and unwavering military advice and growing public pressure, a reluctant American President—who, like WWI's Woodrow Wilson, was voted into office on a “peace” platform—authorizes a nuclear strike against Russia.

The first-tier targets—for both sides—are the largest cities and the most important military installations. The immediate problem for the Russians is that fully half of America's nuclear strike capability is mobile: Ohio-class missile submarines—known as “boomers”—the most stealthy and survivable platform in the American arsenal—each capable of launching twenty-four missiles with multiple nuclear warheads (MIRVs). Just one of our missile subs (or one of their similar Typhoon-class subs) is capable of raining down more destructive power upon the earth than all of the bombs dropped during World War II—by *both* sides.

Fighting a post-cold war nuclear battle is not as easy as it sounds. In the U.S., the vast majority of static launch sites—missile silos—have been decommissioned. Some of America's eighteen missile submarines have been retrofitted to launch Tomahawk cruise missiles instead of their original nuclear-

tipped Trident IIs. Worse (or better) is the fact that the atomic weapons themselves need to be constantly maintained. The more time that goes by, the greater the chance is that the bomb will be a “dud,” that it will fail to detonate. The triggers must be periodically recharged. Most of these bombs and warheads are over a half-century old.

For these reasons, I don’t foresee a ’60s-style scenario with clouds of ballistic missiles darkening the sky, flying over the north pole and North Atlantic in both directions on their way to their hapless targets in Russia and America. Rather, after the initial salvo, I expect a mad scramble among military brass and technicians on both sides (or should I say, *all* sides) to re-activate the aging nuclear arsenals they never thought they’d need. Even if the first volley cuts the head off the snake, its body will continue to twitch for some time. Submarines will be recalled to their home ports to re-arm. Missile silos that can be will be hastily reconditioned and pressed back into service. In the end, I suspect many of the nukes will be delivered the same way the very first one was: dropped from an airplane. The order of the day will be: deliver the bombs as fast as you can, however you can. Accidents, of course, will happen. “Friendly fire” mishaps could kill millions. This war won’t necessarily be over in a few hours, as the pundits predicted back when such a holocaust was actually expected. It will drag on for month after terrifying month—with no assurance that any particular location will be spared—until no one is left alive who knows how to deliver or detonate these diabolical instruments of death.

When it’s finally apparent that the last bomb has fallen, the Jews in Israel will look at each other, pinch themselves, and wonder aloud, “How in the world did we escape all that? If there were no God protecting us, we’d all be dead right now.” The words of David, their greatest king, will ring in their ears as if they’d been spoken yesterday: **“Yahweh is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior, You save me from violence....”** *Yes, they’ll agree: from the worst sort of violence. First millions of Muslims descend upon us bent on finishing what Muhammad started, and then this European madman launches nukes from our back yard toward their biggest cities, pushing a good portion of the world into nuclear war—yet we’re still here, alive and breathing. “I will call upon Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies....” Not to mention my friends.*

For the first time in several thousand years, maybe *ever*, the Jews will realize what Yahweh's promises really mean. **"When the waves of death surrounded me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon Yahweh, and cried out to my God. He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth. Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. He rode upon a cherub, and flew; and He was seen upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness canopies around Him, dark waters and thick clouds of the skies...."**

You've really got to wonder what David had been shown when he wrote this. It fits none of his recorded victories (literally, at least), and yet it's a perfect, if somewhat poetic, description of Israel's deliverance through World War III. **"From the brightness before Him coals of fire were kindled. Yahweh thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice. He sent out arrows and scattered them; lightning bolts, and He vanquished them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered, at the rebuke of Yahweh, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils."** (II Samuel 22:2, 5-16) David by all accounts wasn't much of a seafarer, but the Spirit informed him that in these dark times, the ocean currents would actually become visible. How?

John reports (Revelation 8:8-9) that a third of the sea will become "blood," and he implies that everything in that same one-third portion of the oceans will die. The Atlantic Ocean with its adjacent seas and gulfs is about a third of the earth's total water area. It normally grows about one inch wider each year as the North American tectonic plate moves west and the Eurasian plate moves east. The crack between these moving tectonic plates is defined by the Mid-Atlantic Ridge—a huge underwater "mountain" range running the entire length of the Atlantic, formed by magma seeping up from the earth's interior as the gap widens.

What would it take to split open this mid-Atlantic rift? A few hundred megatons worth of nuclear warheads? Yeah, that might do it, if detonated directly over the rift in the North Atlantic—where both Russian and America submarines could be presumed to be on patrol. Between the explosion and the radiation, it could, perhaps, precipitate the kind of death of a third of the world's oceans spoken of in Revelation 8. Such a blast could conceivably rip the fissure open all the way down to Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic, causing earthquakes, tsunamis, and an underwater volcanic hell—the death of the Atlantic Ocean. Maybe. At the very least, **"the foundations of the earth [would be] uncovered."** (It's worth noting that the scientists who designed the very first atomic bomb were genuinely concerned that it might crack the earth's crust.) The ocean currents, the

“channels of the sea” that circumnavigate the globe, would carry the color of death with them. Even though the color shift would be barely perceptible from onboard a ship, the space satellites orbiting overhead would “see” everything quite clearly. Was David really that smart, or do you think he might have been getting help with this?

Now put yourself in the shoes of Russia, trying desperately to prevent the launch of American nuclear weapons from a dozen Ohio-class submarines in the North Atlantic (or is it the other way around?). Would it be so hard to figure out that if you nuked the *ocean* you could eliminate this entire submerged threat at a single blow? Of course, if you scored a direct hit on one of the subs, the atomic warheads aboard the target vessel—up to 192 of them—could conceivably all detonate at once. This is but one of many possible ways David’s prophecy could be realized: **“From the brightness before [Yahweh] coals of fire were kindled,”** leading to **“the foundations of the world [being] uncovered”** and **“the channels of the sea [being] seen.”** This is not the only possible mode of fulfillment, of course. Just remember this: it *will* happen. We’re just not told how.

Consider this: the second trumpet judgment of Revelation 8 ties the death of a third of the ocean’s life and its apparent transformation to “blood” to a volcanic event—a “great mountain burning with fire being thrown into the sea.” We’ll explore this prophetic event (and its likely means of fulfillment) in a future chapter. Coming as it does on the heels of the first trumpet judgment (which clearly speaks of the nuclear war we’ve been describing) I find it entirely plausible that the two things are related: that a nuclear detonation precipitates or triggers the volcanic event in question. But I’m still having trouble envisioning how a massive crustal rip—even one running the entire length of the Atlantic Ocean from north to south—could by itself kill *everything* in that portion of the world’s seas.

I was at a loss for a possible mechanism for marine death on this scale until the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster of April 20, 2010. It wasn’t the escaping oil that caught my attention: God has built nature with an amazing capacity to heal itself, with or without man’s intervention. (I know, such talk is considered blasphemy in environmental circles. I don’t care.) But one of BP’s failed attempts to solve the oil spill problem raised a largely overlooked issue that has the potential to provide a prophetic mechanism in which **“a third of the living creatures in the sea died.”** (Revelation 8:9) In early May, BP deployed a 125-ton dome over the largest of the well’s leaks at a depth of 5,000 feet, in hopes of capturing up to 85% of the escaping oil. The measure failed due to an unforeseen buildup of methane clathrate inside the dome—adding buoyancy and obstructing the flow of crude oil.

It turns out that this hydrate of methane exists naturally in huge quantities in the depths of the world's oceans. Normally, it's quite stable, existing in solid form (sometimes referred to as "burning ice") that is believed to have been formed *in situ* in ocean floor sediments by migration of microbially produced methane gas, rising from depth along geological faults. It is precipitated or crystallized into solid form upon contact with cold sea water, in depths down to about 2,000 meters. If for some reason the ocean temperature rises, or if the pressure drops, the form of the methane can change from its solid state to liquid, and then to gas. This fact, of course, has the environmental community all atwitter, first because there is twice as much carbon tied up in undersea methane clathrates than in all of the fossil fuels on earth, and second because there's no politically correct way to control it. (Horrors!)

So what might happen in our admittedly speculative nuclear war scenario in which somebody decides to eliminate the threat from his enemy's missile submarines by nuking the North Atlantic ocean? Along with the potential for underwater tectonic disaster, you'd now have the added factor of a couple of trillion cubic feet of methane being instantly released from its frozen state—along with the "match" to light it up. Nuclear explosions are said to generate lots of heat—a million degrees Kelvin or so, roughly 1.8 million degrees Fahrenheit. (I have no idea how hot it might get if you set off 192 of them all at once.) Then add enough free methane in the water to keep the fire going for six or eight thousand miles. You tell me: is it possible to boil an entire ocean? Could anything survive such a holocaust? Naturally, I must assign this whole scenario a high speculation factor—SF8 or 9. But that doesn't mean it *couldn't* happen.

Back to Scripture. David wasn't done: **"He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters."** "Waters," you'll recall, is a picture of the gentile nations among whom the Jews have been dispersed. **"He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too strong for me."** No one has ever hated the Jews like Muhammad's followers hate them, but it doesn't matter how strong Islam grows; Yahweh will deliver His people. **"They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support. He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me."** (II Samuel 22:17-20) The Hebrew word for "broad place" is *merchab*, which carries with it the concept of spaciousness or roominess, and implies comfort, safety, and freedom. Apparently Yahweh disagrees with Israel's agreement to give away land to the Muslims in exchange for hollow promises of peace. He will restore everything they've lost at the negotiating table, and then some.

"It is God who avenges me and subdues the peoples under me; He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Yahweh, among the Gentiles, and

sing praises to Your name. He is the tower of salvation to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore.” (II Samuel 22:48-51) Here we see a hint of how the thing will ultimately get turned around: Israel will be lifted up in stature among all of the nations of the world. This is a theme we’ll see over and over again in Scripture. And how does Yahweh intend to show “mercy” to David? By placing his direct physical descendant, Yahshua, God’s anointed One, upon the throne of Israel—forever.

The deliverance, redemption, and restoration of Israel is an oft repeated theme in the Old Testament. These passages gain new poignancy when reviewed in light of the Magog-War prophecies. **“Let the redeemed of Yahweh say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.”** (Psalm 107:2-3) While publicly celebrating one’s redemption is always a good thing, it will be especially timely when the Jews who have been regathered to the Land are miraculously rescued from Magog by the direct hand of Yahweh. As we shall soon see, however, crediting God with their deliverance will be the very thing that transforms the Antichrist from their wannabe savior into their worst persecutor. His true colors are about to be hoisted.

Again we read, **“Behold, all those who were incensed against you [Israel] shall be ashamed and disgraced. They shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them—those who contended with you. Those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing....”** Be honest, now. That has never happened in the history of Israel (in any short-term sense, anyway), though the devastation of Germany after World War II gave us a hint of what it might look like. But it is precisely the fate predicted for the nations of the Magog federation. If Isaiah is a true prophet of Yahweh (and his Messianic prognostications prove that he is) then you can count on this coming to pass.

He continues his report: **“For I, Yahweh your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you. Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you,’ says Yahweh and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth. You shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills like chaff. You shall winnow them, the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them. You shall rejoice in Yahweh, and glory in the Holy One of Israel.”** (Isaiah 41:11-16) Here again we see Yahweh’s plan to infuse the men and women of Israel with valor far beyond their own native abilities. He knows the Jewish nation is but a “worm.” That’s the whole point: His strength is made perfect, complete, in our weakness. If you think about it, that must really drive Lucifer nuts.

A few chapters back, I predicted that a universal persecution of Jews would break out after the rapture, and many of them would seek shelter in Israel. But

that doesn't mean that they'll still have the spirit of timidity that let Hitler walk all over them. The same sort of inner strength that Isaiah predicted for the Israelis is prophesied as well for those Jews still scattered among the gentile nations: **"Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from Yahweh, like showers on the grass, that tarry for no man nor wait for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, who, if he passes through, both treads down and tears in pieces, and none can deliver. Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off."** (Micah 5:7-9) I read into this that when the Jews do emigrate to Israel, they'll do it on their own terms. They'll come because they want to come, not because they were driven out of their native lands. They'll come because Yahweh is drawing them. But until they emigrate, they'll be anything but passive victims; they'll be the guys you don't want to mess with if you know what's good for you. Hitler would not have recognized them.

Here's how Yahweh explained it to Ezekiel. **"When the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, 'These are the people of Yahweh, and yet they have gone out of His land....'"** The nations in their ignorance have had a hard time honoring a God whose "chosen people" are so idolatrous.

"But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went....'" Religious Jews who presume—even today—that they are in the center of God's will and blessing because they're the biological descendents of Abraham, need to come to terms with this indictment: the way Yahweh sees it, they have "profaned His name." They have presented to the world a God who is by all accounts petty and vindictive, a micromanaging control freak. He insists on perfection, and provides the means of atonement for their failures—but then proceeds to *take away* that mechanism (the temple) leaving them to remain, for all they know, condemned by their sins for eternity. Until the Jews recognize that the temple's design and service (and virtually every other precept in the Torah) were symbolic—that they were fulfilled in the life and sacrifice of Yahshua the Messiah, the one Christians call Jesus Christ—they will continue to be part of the problem, presenting a profane caricature of Yahweh to the world.

Yahweh doesn't intend to let this unsatisfactory situation stand forever. **"And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh,"** says the Lord Yahweh, **"when I am hallowed in you before their eyes."** (Ezekiel 36:17-23) And how does Yahweh propose to become "hallowed," to be made holy, in Israel before the eyes of the gentile nations? By utterly destroying Israel's impossibly large and determined enemy—the Magog federation. Ezekiel relates *that* prophecy just two chapters later.

There are several reasons why Yahweh has chosen to deal with Magog this way (beside the fact that Islam is a major stronghold of Satan). First, He wants to draw Israel back to Himself. We'll discuss that in detail in the next chapter. Second, He wants to make it perfectly clear to the gentile nations that there is indeed a "supreme being" who is personally involved in the life of planet earth, and personally invested in the nation of Israel. After they see what has happened to Magog, they will know that they have a choice—the same choice they have always had: repentance or judgment. **"As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders.' The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall put their hand over their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of Yahweh our God, and shall fear because of You."** (Micah 7:15-17)

The "fear" we see in that last sentence is an interesting study. "Be afraid" is the Hebrew word *pachad*, meaning to fear, tremble, revere, dread, or be in awe of something—the emphasis is on a state of sever distress or a feeling of terror. But the word for "fear" is the Hebrew *pare*: although it can carry many of the same "fear" connotations, it leans more toward the "respect" or "reverence" shade of meaning. By using both words in the same context, Micah is pointing out that one way or another, the nations will all come to "fear" Yahweh. They will either learn to respect and revere Him—forsaking their arrogance in light of His "wonders"—or, if they remain unrepentant, they will merely be terrified in His presence, trembling at His obvious greatness. We're told in Revelation that much of mankind will choose not to repent, but at least the choice is crystal clear. They (and we) are without excuse.

"Thus says Yahweh: though they are safe, and likewise many, yet in this manner they will be cut down when he passes through. Though I have afflicted you [Israel], I will afflict you no more; For now I will break off his yoke from you, and burst your bonds apart." (Nahum 1:12-13) Nahum was speaking of Assyria's downfall, but I wouldn't be surprised to see a secondary fulfillment in Magog's defeat. Although many prophecies have already come to pass in a primary (and/or partial) sense many centuries ago, I believe that for many of them, their ultimate fulfillment will be played out in this last great war and its aftermath. The more I review this material,

the more I become convinced that the prophecies against these neighbors and adversaries of Israel have not been included in scripture so much for their historical value (reporting what God did, and why) as for the insight they contain concerning the Last Days (warning us of what God is about to do). They are even more relevant for us today than they were when they were written. Note that Nahum says the time will come when even though God is no longer using the nations as a rod of correction against Israel's rebellion, those nations will continue to afflict her. And it is at that point that He will step in and free them.

These warnings are relevant for the first-tier participants of World War III as well: the nations of *dar al-Islam*. I believe there's a reason we aren't told explicitly in Ezekiel 39:2 whether Yahweh intends to "annihilate" Magog and its allies, or will "leave but the sixth part" of them, as the idiomatic expression *shawshaw* renders it. After all, one sixth of world's Muslim population is still roughly equivalent to the entire population of the United States—there's something to work with there, and God knows it. **"Thus says Yahweh: 'Against all My evil neighbors who touch the inheritance which I have caused My people Israel to inherit—behold, I will pluck them out of their land and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. Then it shall be, after I have plucked them out, that I will return and have compassion on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land....'"** Repentance leading to a reversal of fortune (that is, a softening of God's wrath toward the Islamic nations) is possible, even now during the dark days of the Tribulation.

But it won't happen unless they change their hearts, minds, and course of action. **"And it shall be, if they will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As Yahweh lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal [or Allah, as the case may be], then they shall be established in the midst of My people. But if they do not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation,' says Yahweh."** (Jeremiah 12:14-17) The key word is "if." The choice, as always, is reserved for man to make. Israel is surrounded by "evil neighbors," all of them Islamic nations today. But taken in a broader sense, this passage warns any nation (read: America) who has Jews living within it to "learn carefully the ways of Yahweh's people." Those "ways" are recorded in the Torah, though not even the Jews understand them today. Whoever calls on any "Lord" other than Yahweh will *as a nation* be "plucked up and destroyed." But the nation that "swears by the name of Yahweh" shall be "established in the midst of His people," that is, Israel. The "establishment" of nations during the Kingdom age will depend upon their respect for Israel and reverence for her King, Yahshua.

The Jews were not the only race to be scattered and dispersed by Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. All of those empires fell, allowing their captives' descendants to return. (Not all did, of course.) But there is one empire

which has not fallen, one which holds well over a billion souls in bondage to this very day. They did not disperse their captives; they simply enslaved them where they lived. Yahweh has not forgotten about the descendants of the Jews who were swallowed up in Islam's seventh-century advance across the Middle East. Until the very end, He will give Muslims every opportunity to repent from their Satanic doctrine and turn to their Creator, Yahweh. What they do with their chances will make the difference between "leaving but the sixth part" of them and "total annihilation," a difference of over 200,000,000 souls.

With that in mind, let's look at some of the players, these "evil neighbors" to which Jeremiah referred, separately. We shall begin with Egypt, who has always played a significant role in the international life of Israel. Several prophets pronounced judgment upon her in the context of the same enemies Israel and Judah faced (e.g. Assyria and Babylon). But some of those predictions look like they'll slop over into Egypt's fate during the Last Days as well.

"The burden against Egypt. Behold, Yahweh rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; Everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom." So far, this looks just like the kind of fratricide in battle predicted for the allies of Magog. **"The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst; I will destroy their counsel, and they will consult the idols and the charmers, the mediums and the sorcerers...."** Could the prophet Isaiah be ultimately referring to the practice of Islam? Egypt is the world's center for higher Islamic learning (if there is such a thing). Moreover, according to the Hadith of al-Bukhari, Muhammad was often referred to by those who knew him best as a sorcerer or magician (and not a very good one at that—he performed no signs or miracles). And worshiping an idol (actually, a relic), the black rock of the Ka'aba, is one of the five pillars of Islam. **"The Egyptians I will give into the hand of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them,' says Yahweh of hosts...."** (Isaiah 19:1-4) Daniel will later refer to this man as "a king [who] shall arise, having fierce features," who will conquer Egypt—he's talking about the Antichrist. I find it fascinating that although the Antichrist is predicted to **"stretch out his hand against the countries, and Egypt shall not escape"** (Daniel 11:42), Isaiah says here that it is *Yahweh* who is providing his victory. As so often happens, Yahweh "uses" one human agency to chastise another.

"The waters will fail from the sea, and the river will be wasted and dried up. The rivers will turn foul; the brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up; the reeds and rushes will

wither. The papyrus reeds by the River, by the mouth of the River, and everything sown by the River, will wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishermen also will mourn; all those will lament who cast hooks into the River, and they will languish who spread nets on the waters.” (Isaiah 19:5-8) The Nile has always been the artery carrying the life-blood of Egypt. Here we see Yahweh applying a tourniquet. In a future chapter, we will see how God’s two witnesses are empowered to call for a three-and-a-half-year worldwide drought—a drought severe enough to dry up both the Euphrates and the Nile.

But before all that happens, the Egyptian army will flood into Israel, intending to implement Muhammad’s murderous mandate. **“Who is this coming up like a flood, whose waters move like the rivers? Egypt rises up like a flood, and its waters [i.e., its gentile armies] move like the rivers; and he says, ‘I will go up and cover the earth [or land, i.e., Israel]; I will destroy the city and its inhabitants.’ Come up, O horses, and rage, O chariots! And let the mighty men come forth: the Ethiopians and the Libyans [eastern and northern Africa] who handle the shield, and the Lydians [western Turkey] who handle and bend the bow.”** Yep, there are the allies of Magog again, just as Ezekiel listed them. **“For this is the day of the Lord Yahweh of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; It shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord Yahweh of hosts, has a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates.”** The headwaters of the Euphrates are due north of Israel, in Turkey; read: Meshech and Tubal. **“Go up to Gilead and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt; In vain you will use many medicines; you shall not be cured.”** Gilead is in modern Jordan. The prophet is saying that Jordan will be unable to help Egypt in her plight, even though she will escape the Antichrist’s grasp. **“The nations have heard of your shame, and your cry has filled the land; for the mighty man has stumbled against the mighty; they both have fallen together.”** (Jeremiah 46:7-12) So it looks like Egypt isn’t going to fare too well in World War III, nor are Gog’s other allies, for that matter. But is all hope for Egypt lost? Are they beyond redemption?

Returning to the Isaiah passage we just left, we find that the answer, remarkably, is no. The grace of Yahweh is unfathomable: first me, then the Jews, and later even the Egyptians. Is there anybody His love can’t touch? Apparently not. It starts with “shock and awe.” **“In that day Egypt will be like women, and will be afraid [*charad*: to tremble, be startled, be frightened] and fear [*pachad*, to fear, tremble, dread, be terrified or in awe] because of the waving of the hand of Yahweh of hosts, which He waves over it. And the land of Judah will be a terror [*chaga*: a source of great fear and confusion] to Egypt; everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid [*pachad*] in himself, because of the counsel of Yahweh of hosts which He has determined against it...”** The Hebrew language has quite a few words that offer various shades of meaning to the concept of “being afraid,” and Yahweh has used most of them here. (Conspicuously absent is *yare*, the word for reverential fear.) Egypt has done everything it could to bring Islamic terror to Israel. Yahweh is about to

return the favor on behalf of His people. If I were the country known for Islamic scholarship, if I were living in the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood, I'd do some serious reassessments of the power of Allah after I saw the combined Muslim armies get toasted extra crispy by Yahweh in Israel. And apparently, that's precisely what Egypt does.

I'm guessing (SF2) that the following verses describe the Millennium and the days leading up to it: **"In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan [i.e., Hebrew] and swear by Yahweh of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction...."** Perhaps this city is renamed in memory of the destruction of the armies of Magog. The point is that parts of Egypt are acting like Israeli colonies—a development that is, shall we say, not particularly likely under the current economy.

"In that day there will be an altar to Yahweh in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to Yahweh at its border. And it will be for a sign and for a witness to Yahweh of hosts, in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to Yahweh because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them. Then Yahweh will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know Yahweh in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to Yahweh and perform it. And Yahweh will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to Yahweh, and He will be entreated by them and heal them." (Isaiah 19:16-22) I realize we're getting way out ahead of our timeline again, but does the word "wow" come to anybody else's mind here? *Egypt* will repent, honor Yahweh, and be healed? Who saw that one coming?

Here's what's happening: Egypt has invaded Israel, and as a result has gotten itself whupped (a highly technical military term meaning "defeated") by the Antichrist. The European leader proceeds to rape and plunder his way from Cairo to Khartoum. Then the hapless Egyptians watch dumbfounded as Yahweh and a handful of Jews whup Magog's vast armies in Israel. The Antichrist's subsequent nuclear attack is intended as a prelude to his self-proclaimed unveiling as the Messiah (something we'll discuss in our next chapter). The only problem (for him) is that the Jews don't buy it—they turn instead to Yahweh, and eventually, to the *real* Messiah, Yahshua.

And Egypt? After languishing under the yoke of the Antichrist for three or four years, and deciding, after due consideration, that the Antichrist's Messianic claims are every bit as bogus as Muhammad's were, Yahweh sends someone to rescue them from Antichrist's clutches. The translators, in capitalizing "Savior" and "Mighty One," have assumed that Egypt's champion is none other than the returning Yahshua, and that's certainly possible, though hard to shoehorn into the revealed timeline. But the capitals aren't there in the original. Therefore, it's also possible (SF5), and even more poetic to my mind, that Egypt's knights in shining armor are *Jews*—perhaps with some angelic assistance—the same heroic sons of

Abraham who've been fighting a guerilla war against Antichrist ever since his "messianic" debut a month before the middle of the Tribulation. As our timeline will reveal, the Antichrist's unchallenged three and a half year reign of terror will end one month before the Messiah's Kingdom commences. Could it be that Israel will "liberate" Egypt during that final month? Food for thought.

As incredible as their repentance and redemption are, Egypt is not alone in this regard. **"In that day [the Millennium] there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria [which straddled modern Syria and Iraq], and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom Yahweh almighty shall bless, saying, 'Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.'**" (Isaiah 19:23-25) Like I said, wow.

That isn't the only reference in Isaiah's writings to a "highway" between Assyria and Israel. He also says, **"There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt."** (Isaiah 11:16) Here the highway is seen as a path for the returning Jews to their God-given land, a way of escape from the coming persecution. It is Yahweh's purpose to gather *all* of Israel back to the Land—even if they (or anybody else) have yet to discover their true identity. These same two nations are mentioned among the places from whence Israel will return to their Land. **"They shall walk after Yahweh. He will roar like a lion [the voice of authority]. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses."** (Hosea 12:10-11) It is my guess that most of these Egyptian and Assyrian "Jews" have no idea that they are sons of Israel—yet.

I must confess, I searched in vain for back-up prophecies detailing the repentance of Assyria. With the exception of that one cryptic glimmer in Isaiah, the news is uniformly grim. The following prophecies all had initial fulfillments in the downfall of ancient Assyria; it is a matter of conjecture how much of this applies to modern-day Iraq or Syria (Assyria straddled the fence between them). Modern Syria was originally known as Aram, whereas Assyria derives its name from Asshur; these were two of the five sons of Shem, and grandsons of Noah. Today's borders have little to do with the territories of the ancient kingdoms. Though Assyria's capital, Nineveh, is now a hundred miles or so within the borders of the immense present-day mass of Iraq, the original Assyria spread mainly to the west, encompassing much of present day Syria. This was all part of

the Persian empire in Ezekiel's day. So it appears certain that Assyria will indeed find itself on the losing end of this war—just like the other Islamic allies of Magog.

“Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; your nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on the mountains, and no one gathers them. Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?” (Nahum 3:18-19) One might be tempted to read the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime into this passage. I'd resist that temptation: the prophet has bigger fish to fry. Assyria—Syria and Iraq—will be mortally wounded as a result of their participation in the schemes of Gog.

And consider this supporting prophecy from Isaiah: **“It shall come to pass in that day that Yahweh will whistle for the fly that is in the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. They will come [to the Land of Israel, that is], and all of them will rest in the desolate valleys and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all thorns and in all pastures. In the same day Yahweh will shave with a hired razor, with those from beyond the River, with the king of Assyria.”** (Isaiah 7:18-20) These esoteric verses are a direct parallel to the Daniel 11:40 passage describing the pre-Magog pincer attack against Israel. God considers Egypt and Assyria nothing more than insects, but ones useful for His purposes: the fly who bites and the bee that stings. The last sentence could be a reference to Gog, who—with Assyria (Syria and/or Iraq, called the king of the north by Daniel)—is a “hired razor,” a surrogate instrument of judgment in the hands of Yahweh, the means by which Israel will be brought to its life-saving epiphany. Shaving the head and beard were preliminary to the taking of special vows. Here Yahweh Himself is “vowing” to follow through on His promises of redemption for Israel.

The same Messianic passage from the prophet Micah that pinpointed the birthplace of Yahshua also foretold the eventual downfall of Assyria at the hand of Yahweh and the “shepherd-princes” He raises up for the task. When Assyria falls during the last days, the Jews will know exactly Who it is who has saved them: **“When the Assyrian comes into our land, and when he treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princely men. They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when he comes into our land and when he treads within our borders.”** (Micah 5:5-6) Again we see that Yahweh will not deal with Muslim aggression until they “tread within Israel's borders.” But once they have, Israel will take the fight to the invaders' doorstep, with Yahweh (as always) providing the victory.

Isaiah again: **“I will break the Assyrian in My land, and on My mountains tread him underfoot. Then his yoke shall be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, has**

purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:25-27) The "Assyrian" here, in the context of future fulfillment, could be a metaphor for, or representative of, the entire Magog federation. And even if it isn't, we have seen ample scriptural evidence that Syria and Iraq are slated for destruction in this conflict. As Ezekiel reports, Gog's armies will be broken within Yahweh's Land—just as Sennacherib's 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were "broken" while besieging Jerusalem. Isaiah prophesied the final performance, and then he was an eyewitness to the dress rehearsal in the days of Hezekiah's reign (see Isaiah 37:36). But note that what happened to Sennacherib's Assyrian attackers is "purposed against the whole earth." This is further confirmation of the World War III scenario we have deduced from other passages. Assyria/Magog represents only the beginning of Yahweh's wrath. It is His purpose to **"give those who are wicked to the sword.... Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth."** (Jeremiah 25:31-32) The judgment will begin in the Middle East, but it will spread to the "whole earth," and be "stretched out over all the nations."

Isaiah wasn't done with Assyria. **"Yahweh will cause His glorious voice to be heard, and show the descent of His arm, with the indignation of His anger and the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, tempest, and hailstones."** The implements of Yahweh's wrath here are strikingly reminiscent of those listed in Ezekiel 38:22. **"For through the voice of Yahweh, Assyria will be beaten down as He strikes with the rod. And in every place where the staff of punishment passes, which Yahweh lays on him, it will be with tambourines and harps; and in battles of brandishing He will fight with it. For Tophet [the place of burning] was established of old; yes, for the king [Gog, in the immediate sense, but in the broader picture, perhaps Satan's fate is indicated] it is prepared. He has made it deep and large; its pyre is fire with much wood. The breath of Yahweh, like a stream of brimstone, kindles it."** (Isaiah 30:30-33) Here again, the description of Assyria's downfall precisely matches that of Magog's future, though it's a poor fit for the recorded destruction of Sennacherib's armies in Hezekiah's time (when fire, tempest, hail, and the voice of God had nothing to do with it). Naturally, when Yahweh destroys the invaders, the response among the Israelis will be unrestrained celebration—"with tambourines and harps" (drums and guitars?). These guys know how to party—and more to the point, *why* to party.

Since Assyria overlaps both Iraq and Syria, let's look at the prophecies that home in on Syria's capital, Damascus—the oldest continuously occupied city in the world. **"The burden against Damascus. Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap.... The fortress also will cease from Ephraim, the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria. They will be as the glory of the children of Israel,' says Yahweh of hosts."** (Isaiah 17:1, 3) So much for "continuously occupied." Most cities in the region have been "ruinous heaps" at one time or another, but Damascus has never "ceased from being a city." Ephraim was the northern

portion of Israel—bordering Syria. The only way the “fortress will cease from Ephraim” is for Syria to cease being a threat. This all conspires to suggest that Syria, and Damascus in particular, will be on the Antichrist’s nuclear hit list. It also goes a long way toward explaining why, during the Millennium, the Golan Heights—so critical for Israel’s defense today—are not even included within her formal borders. Their strategic high ground will no longer be required for Israel’s security, for Syria will no longer be a menace.

Isaiah goes on to explain: **“In that day his strong cities will be as a forsaken bough and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel; and there will be desolation....”** Considering the context, I can’t help but see a more universal application than just Syria in this passage. America in particular would do well to heed its warning. **“Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold, therefore you will plant pleasant plants and set out foreign seedlings; in the day you will make your plant to grow, and in the morning you will make your seed to flourish; but the harvest will be a heap of ruins in the day of grief and desperate sorrow.”** (Isaiah 17:9-11) It matters not how powerful, prosperous, or productive a nation may be: if they forget Yahweh and refuse to trust Him, all their efforts will come to nothing.

Jeremiah offers more information. **“Against Damascus. Hamath and Arpad [cities to the north of Damascus] are shamed, for they have heard bad news. They are fainthearted; there is trouble on the sea; it cannot be quiet [or, ‘They are disheartened, troubled like the restless sea’ (NIV)]. Damascus has grown feeble; she turns to flee, and fear [Hebrew *retet*: trembling caused by utter panic] has seized her. Anguish and sorrows have taken her like a woman in labor. Why is the city of praise [or renown] not deserted, the city of My joy? Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day,”** says Yahweh of hosts. **“I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-Hadad.”** (Jeremiah 49:23-27) I envision more in this passage than the primary context—Syria’s impending conquest by Nebuchadnezzar—would suggest. In my admittedly overactive imagination, I can see the outlying areas of Syria (such as Hamath and Arpad) stunned, shaken, and wallowing in misplaced “survivor’s guilt” (“Why were we spared?”), because Damascus has been the target of the Antichrist’s nuclear attack—perhaps his first, since Damascus is so close and so threatening to Israel. Worse, Damascus had seen it coming—she had gotten advance warning—and yet was in such denial (or such terror) that no efforts were made to evacuate the city. So Syria’s entire defense structure (“wall”) and political leadership (“palaces”) have been wiped out with the push of a button.

If there is a victim among the nations of *dar al-Islam*, it is surely Lebanon. Never a nation to stir up trouble on her own, Lebanon has until quite recently managed to escape the ravages of life under Islam. It has historically had a large nominally Christian minority, and for the first six decades of the twentieth century was considered the jewel of the eastern Mediterranean. But since then, it has been like a war zone; Beirut has become a metaphor for a shell-pocked city under siege and anarchy. What happened?

In the late '60s, the myth of Palestinian homelessness was exposed for the fraud it is (though nobody in the mainstream media was sharp enough to catch it): the descendants of the Arabs who had voluntarily left Israel in 1948 had become a *majority* in Jordan. Yasser Arafat and his "Palestinian Liberation Organization" (a misnomer if ever there was one) decided it was time for regime change. But after a year-and-a-half-long struggle for power with the government of King Hussein, the PLO and its political party, Fatah, were finally evicted. The terrorist organization Black September derived its name from the PLO's September 1970 defeat. And where did Arafat go (besides to hell a few decades later, a casualty of AIDS)? To Lebanon, yesterday a stable and peaceable Mediterranean paradise—today a war-torn wasteland, thanks to the Palestinian Muslims (with a lot of help from Syria).

Throughout the Bible, Lebanon is used as a metaphor (or a direct example) of a fruitful, pleasant place. We need to remind ourselves that the Lebanon we see today is only temporary: if you'll recall our discussion of Israel's promised borders, almost all of present-day Lebanon is included in Israel's geographical future—restored to its former glory. There is therefore very little direct prophecy concerning Lebanon's future, but there are a few nuggets, like this one: **"Behold, Yahweh of hosts will lop off the bough with terror. Those of high stature will be hewn down, and the haughty will be humbled. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One."** (Isaiah 10:33-34) If any nation has ever been taught a lesson in humility, it is modern Lebanon. In ancient times, Lebanon was considered a paradise on earth. It was known for its magnificent cedars—tall and proud—which in turn became a metaphor for pride among men and angels (cf. Ezekiel 31), something Yahweh hates. So I'm not suggesting that the current debased state of the country is the primary fulfillment of this prophecy, but it certainly fits. If Yahweh can use scum like the Antichrist and Gog as tools with which to achieve His goals, He can certainly use Yasser Arafat (though I tend to choke on the concept) to bring about His long term objectives.

Okay, so Lebanon has been humbled. Now what? **"Is it not yet a very little while till Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest? In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The humble also shall increase their joy in**

Yahweh, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.” Here again, we’re peeking ahead a bit into the Millennium. We see Lebanon restored to her former glory, those who troubled her “brought to nothing,” and the Holy One of Israel being worshiped—all things that look next to impossible as things stand today, but like I keep saying, Yahweh loves doing the impossible—if saving the world were easy, any god could do it. **“For the terrible one is brought to nothing, the scornful one is consumed, and all who watch for iniquity are cut off—who make a man an offender by a word, and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and turn aside the just by empty words.”** (Isaiah 29:17-21) Whatever other fulfillments this prophecy has seen, the prophet’s description of “all who watch for iniquity” fits Lebanon’s Palestinian parasites to a tee. “In the gate” means “in matters of government.” The deceitful rhetoric and terrorist agenda imported into Lebanon by Yasser Arafat’s PLO (and institutionalized by today’s Hezbollah) made responsible and stable government impossible. But their reign of terror won’t last forever: Beirut and Damascus have radically divergent futures.

We have seen how Jordan manages to avoid invasion by the Antichrist during the first phase of the war. That’s not to say that she becomes some sort of Middle Eastern Switzerland—a neutral party, straddling the fence. On the contrary, Jordan has a big—and surprising—role to play in the Last Days. And as the neighbor sharing the longest border with Israel, we shouldn’t be surprised to find that the Bible has a great deal to say about her fate.

The Scriptures don’t call this territory “Jordan,” of course. It’s identified by the three principal people groups that settled the land east of the Jordan River valley. Let’s do a quick geographical review. South of Aram (Syria) on the east side of the Jordan (Hebrew: *Yarden*—“descender”) is the land of Ammon. (Depending on what historical time frame you’re looking at, Gilead lies between them.) South of Ammon—at the latitude of the Dead Sea—lies Moab. These two nations were descended from the children of Abraham’s nephew, Lot (a sad, sick story related in Genesis 19). If you’ll recall, the Israelites who were to enter the Promised Land under Joshua were told to keep their hands off both Moab and Ammon (Deuteronomy 2), as well as the third Jordanian group, Edom. Never great at following instructions, half of the tribe of Manasseh, plus Gad and Reuben (in that order, north to south) invaded Ammonite and northern Moabite lands, pushing them further east. But these lands were never allocated by Yahweh to the people of Israel.

Edom is an interesting case, from a geographical point of view. This nation's patriarch was Esau, Jacob/Israel's twin brother. Originally Edom was due south of the Dead Sea. It is often identified with Mt. Seir, which is in the mountain range just east of the Arabah (the rift valley running north and south between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba). So their origins are definitely within modern-day Jordan. But if you'll check a good Bible atlas, you'll notice that the nation slowly crept west, then north, as time went on—eventually supplanted geographically by the Nabataeans. By the time of Christ, the name Edom had morphed into Idumea, and their territory extended from Gaza (only a few miles inland from the Med) to the Dead Sea (now its *eastern* border). In other words, it ended up smack in the middle of ancient Judah. But for the sake of the prophecies, I think we can safely place Edom in its original location, within the borders of Jordan.

Scripture usually handles them separately; therefore so shall we, beginning with Edom. The Last Days prophecies concerning the children of Esau go all the way back to Moses' day. Balaam speaks: **“And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly. Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, and destroy the remains of the city.”** (Numbers 24:18-19) The “One” he refers to is none other than the Messiah, who will destroy Edom not in its prosperity, but its “remains.” This isn't the last we'll hear of that connection. It is but one of many hints of Edom's bleak fate during the Last Days.

Note that Balaam contrasts the fate of Edom against that of Israel. So does Obadiah: **“The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau, for Yahweh has spoken.”** Lest we come to the conclusion that the prophet is only talking about a people group, and not necessarily about the inhabitants of their geographical location who moved in afterward, the prophet continues: **“The inhabitants of the South [i.e. the Negev—he's talking about Israelis] shall possess the mountains of Esau, and the inhabitants of the Philistine lowland.”** Not only will Israel again possess the Gaza strip (the Philistine lowland), they will own southern Jordan—the mountains of Esau. **“They shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria.”** Read: the West Bank. **“Benjamin shall possess Gilead [northwestern Jordan]. And the captives of this host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath (midway between Tyre and Sidon, in today's Lebanon). The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad (location uncertain—possibly in today's Iran—but about as far removed from Jerusalem as you could imagine; the reference is apparently to the Jewish exiles scattered all over the earth in the Last Days) shall possess the cities of the South [the Negev]. Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be Yahweh's.”** (Obadiah 17-21) Some of these areas (everything in Jordan, for instance) are not included within the definitive Numbers 34 definition of Israel's borders. For that reason, I see the Jordanian

territories listed as “territories” or “possessions” of Israel during the Millennium—not part of the state proper, but under Israel’s administrative control, kind of like Guam or the Virgin Islands are to America.

The prophet Jeremiah seems to have something to say about most everybody; Edom is no exception. **“Against Edom. Thus says Yahweh of hosts: ‘Is wisdom no more in Teman [a city near Mt. Seir]? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished? Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths [of the Arabian desert], O inhabitants of Dedan! For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will punish him.”** This isn’t looking good. Dedan was located in the northwestern Arabian peninsula—three or four hundred miles south of Edom. Whatever it is from which they’re being warned to flee is going to affect thousands of square miles. **“If grape-gatherers came to you, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? If thieves by night, would they not destroy [only] until they have enough? But I have made Esau bare; I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself. His descendants are plundered, his brethren and his neighbors, and he is no more.”** (Jeremiah 49:7-10) Like Obadiah, Jeremiah predicts the total annihilation of Esau’s line.

“‘I have sworn by Myself,’ says Yahweh, ‘that Bozrah [an Edomite city north of Mt. Seir] shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse. And all its cities shall be perpetual wastes.’ I have heard a message from Yahweh, and an ambassador has been sent to the nations: ‘Gather together, come against her, and rise up to battle! For indeed, I will make you small among nations, despised among men.” (Jeremiah 49:13-15) The prophet goes on to say that the nations will fight against her. This can’t refer to Antichrist’s push to gather territory, however, because Daniel specifically reports that Edom will escape (11:41). The prophecy was fulfilled with the Babylonian and Persian conquests. (The Greeks and Romans didn’t have much influence there.) Under these regimes, Edom was “made small among nations,” but was not yet wiped out.

But what was that about a curse? In Romans 9:13, Paul refers to a Malachi prophecy concerning Edom that placed it in the same “on-its-way-out” position that Jeremiah had: **“‘Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?’ Says Yahweh. ‘Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.’”** It is fascinating to me that the Biblical personality the Islamic scriptures try to pass off as “Jesus”—one who will return in the Last Days and support Imam Mahdi—is not Yahshua, but rather someone named Isa, that is, Esau, the one man Yahweh declared that he “hated.” **“Even though Edom has said, ‘We have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places,’ thus says Yahweh of hosts: ‘They may build, but I will throw down; they shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people against whom Yahweh will have indignation forever. Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, “Yahweh is magnified beyond the border of Israel.””** (Malachi 1:2-5) So we see that by the close of the Old Testament canon, Edom

was still alive and kicking. Though impoverished, it was still proudly self-sufficient, too stubborn to turn back to the God whose heritage they had once shared with Jacob.

Yahweh, through Jeremiah, now informs us why Edom is slated for destruction. It's an old, oft-repeated theme, one that America would do well to heed: **"Your fierceness has deceived you, the pride of your heart, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill! Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there,' says Yahweh...."** There's very little that Yahweh hates more than pride. It leads us into all kinds of sin, not the least of which is the attitude that we're so great we can afford to ignore the will of Almighty God. Are we any better than Edom? I think not.

"Edom also shall be an astonishment; everyone who goes by it will be astonished and will hiss at all its plagues. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors,' says Yahweh, 'No one shall remain there, nor shall a son of man dwell in it. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the floodplain of the Jordan against the dwelling place of the strong; but I will suddenly make him run away from her. And who is a chosen man that I may appoint over her? For who is like Me? Who will arraign Me? And who is that shepherd who will withstand Me?..." The primary fulfillment of this passage was in the displacement of Edom by the Nabataeans, who, as we have seen, drove them west and north.

"Therefore hear the counsel of Yahweh that He has taken against Edom, and His purposes that He has proposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely He shall make their dwelling places desolate with them. The earth shakes at the noise of their fall; at the cry its noise is heard at the Red Sea. Behold, He shall come up and fly like the eagle, and spread His wings over Bozrah; The heart of the mighty men of Edom in that day shall be like the heart of a woman in birth pangs." (Jeremiah 49:16-22) Once again, this demonstrates that it's not quite over yet for Edomite lands: Bozrah will be the starting place for the returning Messiah's "campaign" against the armies of the earth assembled against Him at Armageddon. (That "shaking earth" reference seems to be speaking of the great earthquake of the seventh bowl judgment: see Revelation 16:18.)

I probably would have missed the significance of the Bozrah reference, but Isaiah speaks of the very same thing: **"Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments [i.e., stained with blood] from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?—I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save...."** (Isaiah 63:1) We'll cover the whole passage in detail a few chapters hence; this sneak preview is merely to point out that Edom will be involved.

Like Jeremiah, Isaiah has quite a bit to say concerning Edom. **"Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of Yahweh is against all nations,**

and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them; He has given them over to the slaughter. Also their slain shall be thrown out. Their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll. All their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree....” He begins by warning *all* nations of the coming judgment, a warning we would do well to heed. But almost immediately, he gets down to cases—beginning with guess who.

“For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; Indeed it shall come down on Edom, and on the people of My curse, for judgment....” There’s that curse again, but in context it appears as if Edom is symbolic of all nations deserving of judgment because of their unbelief: he is not only the estranged brother of Israel, but also symbolic of the estranged child of Yahweh—he represents all of unsaved mankind, those who have cursed themselves. “The sword of Yahweh is filled with blood. It is made overflowing with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. The wild oxen shall come down with them, and the young bulls with the mighty bulls. Their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust saturated with fatness....” I realize that it’s hard for us to appreciate the metaphor of sacrifice here. Try to put yourself in the sandals of a Jewish prophet seven centuries before Christ: the temple still stood, and in times of celebration or national repentance the altar would run red with sacrifices to Yahweh. Solomon, for example, was said to have offered up 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep on the occasion of the dedication of the temple. But whereas sheep were indicative of the coming sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Yahshua the Messiah, and goats stood in for the sins of the people, the offering up of bulls represented a forsaking of false gods—and specifically, the endeavors and machinations of man. Isaiah is saying here that the false god of Edom—the Allah of Muhammad’s evil imagination—will die a bloody death.

Yahweh’s sacrifice here is not the slaughter of bulls, sheep, and goats, but of those who stood in the way of the “cause of Zion:” “For it is the day of Yahweh’s vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion.” Note that according to scripture, Yahweh is a Zionist. “[Edom’s] streams shall be turned into pitch, and its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste. No one shall pass through it forever and ever. But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it; also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. and He shall stretch out over it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness....” This is getting heavy. Clearly, this prophecy has seen no fulfillment in history—which means it is yet to be, for the Word of Yahweh cannot fail. The words “confusion” and “emptiness” (“chaos” and “desolation” in the NIV) are the same words used to describe the unformed earth in Genesis 1:2: *tohu* and *bohuw*. This is no metaphor; it will actually happen. And remember, Edom—southern Jordan—is Israel’s next-door neighbor

on the southeast. It's as if Yahweh wants there to be a horrible physical reminder, one that endures throughout the Millennium, of what it means to turn your back on Him—within a three-hour bus ride from Jerusalem.

Isaiah continues: **"They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all its princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in its palaces, nettles and brambles in its fortresses; It shall be a habitation of jackals, a courtyard for ostriches. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals, and the wild goat shall bleat to its companion; also the night creature shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There the arrow snake shall make her nest and lay eggs and hatch, and gather them under her shadow; there also shall the hawks be gathered, every one with her mate. Search from the book of Yahweh, and read: not one of these shall fail; not one shall lack her mate. For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them. He has cast the lot for them, and His hand has divided it among them with a measuring line. They shall possess it forever. From generation to generation they shall dwell in it."** (Isaiah 34) Although the land of Edom will be uninhabited by man from the time of its destruction during the Battle of Armageddon onward, it is not *uninhabitable*. All kinds of wilderness creatures will make their homes there. This is not the first time Yahweh has set aside a piece of land for the exclusive use of wild animals because of the sins of man: the great city of Babylon was assigned precisely the same fate. There's a lesson in there somewhere.

Moving north to Moab, we see similar bad news, starting again with the words of Balaam: **"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near. A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult."** (Numbers 24:17) This is clearly a Messianic prophecy, and it seems to correspond well to the coming destruction of Edom spoken of by both Isaiah and Jeremiah. In a tragic attempt to engineer a fulfillment of prophecy, the influential Rabbi Akiba "anointed" a warlord named Shimon ben Kosiba as "Bar Kochba," Aramaic for "Son of a star." It was a transparent and futile attempt to make "his man" fit Balaam's Messianic prophecy. In 132 A.D., Bar Kochba revolted against Rome, prompting Emperor Hadrian to finish destroying Judea, a job that had been begun in 67 by Vespasian, whose son Titus besieged Jerusalem and razed the temple in 70. Both Bar Kochba and Akiba were slain in 135, and their rebellion was crushed. So much for "destroying the sons of tumult." I could find no historical reference to Bar Kochba going to Moab, *ever*.

Why was Moab slated for destruction in the first place? It's pretty much the same story as for Edom—their pride and violence. **"We have heard of the pride of Moab—He is very proud—Of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath. But his lies shall not be so. Therefore Moab shall wail for Moab; everyone shall wail. For the foundations of Kir Hareseth you shall mourn; surely they are stricken. For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah; the lords of the nations have broken down its choice plants, which**

have reached to Jazer and wandered through the wilderness. Her branches are stretched out; they are gone over the sea. Therefore I will bewail the vine of Sibmah, with the weeping of Jazer. I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh, for battle cries have fallen over your summer fruits and your harvest." All of these place names are strongholds belonging to either Moab or the Amorites—on the eastern side of the Jordan. Moab (descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot) was for a time under Yahweh's protection (Deuteronomy 2:9), though the Amorites were, from the exodus onward, slated for utter destruction. But either way, Yahweh is "in tears" over their self imposed fate: He doesn't wish *anyone* to perish. "Gladness is taken away, and joy from the plentiful field. In the vineyards there will be no singing, nor will there be shouting; no treading will tread out wine in the presses; I have made their shouting cease. Therefore My heart shall resound like a harp for Moab, and My inner being for Kir Heres. And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he will come to his sanctuary to pray; but he will not prevail...."

"This is the word which Yahweh has spoken concerning Moab since that time. But now Yahweh has spoken, saying, 'Within three years, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be despised with all that great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble.'" (Isaiah 16:6-13) This is all fulfilled prophecy. (There were *three* Assyrian invasions between 732 and 701 B.C., the time frame in which the prophecy was given—first by Tiglath-Pileser, then Sargon, then Sennacherib.) Yet I can't help but wonder if it will all come around again for another go.

There is a subtle difference between Edom's judgment and Moab's. In Edom, all of Esau's descendants are going to be wiped out; on the other hand, Yahweh intends to first break Moab's pride by cutting off the source of her prosperity, which in turn is the source of her arrogance. Moab has refused to acknowledge Yahweh as the source of her blessings; therefore she shall see those blessings removed. (Pay attention, America.) And when she cries out to her false god—these days, it's Allah—nothing will happen, because Allah has no more power to save than any other dumb rock.

That's not to say that poverty will be Moab's only punishment. Isaiah speaks of deserted cities: "The cities of Aroer [a Moabite town twenty miles east of the Dead Sea] are forsaken; they will be for flocks which lie down, and no one will make them afraid." (Isaiah 17:2) What used to be thriving communities will revert to grazing land.

Zephaniah explains *why* they're deserted. "I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the insults of the people of Ammon, with which they have reproached My people, and made arrogant threats against their borders." (Zephaniah 2:8) Here we go again: it's pride, leading to a violent and aggressive attitude—especially toward Israel. The western press likes to refer to the West Bank—more properly the hill country of Judea and Samaria—as the "occupied territories," as if they had been stolen from

their legitimate owner as a prize of war in the Six Day War of 1967. The truth is that it was *Jordan* who “occupied” the West Bank illegally between 1948 and 1967. So when Zephaniah speaks of “arrogant threats against Israel’s borders,” he’s pointing a finger of rebuke directly at modern Jordan. Note that in the prophecy, we’re talking about both Moab and her northern neighbor Ammon now—the rest of Jordan north of Edom. And don’t forget, the “Palestinians,” the descendants of those Arabs who voluntarily left Israel in 1948 so that they wouldn’t get in the way of the intended Muslim genocide of the Jews, are now the *majority* in Jordan. In other words, there already *is* a “Palestinian homeland.” It’s called Jordan. Maybe somebody in our State Department—since we’re so all-fired anxious to impose democracy on everybody—should point that out.

I’ll admit that at first glance, it seemed to me that Yahweh was being overly harsh to Jordan, at least in comparison to nations like Egypt and Syria, who have attacked Israel time after time. *Jordan sat out the ’73 Yom Kippur war. And they kicked the PLO out, didn’t they? Doesn’t that count for something?* Perhaps, but the fact remains: God has promised to curse those who curse His people. Jordan may have laid low and acted moderately (i.e., in her own self-interest) for a few years, but her aspirations haven’t changed.

Consider this March 31, 1977 quote from Palestine Liberation Organization executive committee member Zahir Muhsein in the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*: “The Palestinian people does not exist. The creation of a Palestinian state is only a means for continuing our struggle against the state of Israel for our Arab unity. In reality today there is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. Only for political and tactical reasons do we speak today about the existence of a Palestinian people, since Arab national interests demand that we posit the existence of a distinct ‘Palestinian people’ to oppose Zionism. For tactical reasons, Jordan, which is a sovereign state with defined borders, cannot raise claims to Haifa and Jaffa, while as a Palestinian, I can undoubtedly demand Haifa, Jaffa, Beer-Sheva and Jerusalem. However, the moment we reclaim our right to all of Palestine, we will not wait even a minute to unite Palestine and Jordan.” That’s their plan. Yahweh has other ideas.

It bears mention that the Jews have nobody but Abraham to blame for their Moab-Ammon woes. He was told quite plainly to “**Get out from your country, from your kindred, and from your father’s house.**” (Genesis 12:1) So what did he do? “**Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son**” with him when he left Haran (verse 5). He had been specifically instructed to leave Lot (his “kindred”) behind. But because he didn’t follow Yahweh’s instructions to the letter, he and his descendants have been dealing with the “Lot” problem ever since. There’s a lesson in there somewhere, methinks.

So what will happen to Moab and Ammon—today’s Jordan—in the end? **“Therefore, as I live,’ says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘surely Moab shall be like Sodom, and the people of Ammon like Gomorrah—overrun with weeds and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, and the remnant of My people shall possess them.’ This they shall have for their pride, because they have reproached and made arrogant threats against the people of Yahweh of hosts. Yahweh will be awesome to them, for He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth.”** Beginning with Allah. **“People shall worship Him, each one from his place, indeed all the shores of the nations.”** (Zephaniah 2:9-11) Moab and Ammon will end up as the Israeli “outback,” desolate, inhospitable, practically uninhabited—and the possession of Israel. And there, as in every other place on earth, Yahweh will be worshipped. Just because it hasn’t happened yet, don’t assume it never will.

That’s it then. It’s three for three. All of the people groups representing modern Jordan will suffer virtual annihilation, their nation decimated and depopulated. The Bible never says precisely how this will happen, only that it will. I’d like to offer a suggestion, a plausible scenario for Jordan’s coming perdition. As I write these words, Syria (north of Jordan, for those of you who are still geographically challenged) is said to have one hundred missiles armed with VX nerve gas aimed at Israel. This represents enough nerve poison to kill every living thing in the country, a goal that becomes more and more desirable for Syria every passing day because of its continued swing toward a more fundamental form of Islam (a contagious affliction, apparently). There is absolutely nothing to stop Syria from obliterating Israel except (1) the threat of retaliation, (2) the political repercussions of killing Israel’s Palestinian Arab population, and of course (3) the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit. After the rapture, however, point 3 will no longer be a factor. And as World War III gets underway, points 1 and 2 will evaporate. It will take about a nanosecond for a frustrated and paranoid Syrian leadership to decide what to do with those chemical weapons.

Then why don’t we read about the obliteration of Israel in scripture? Because it never takes place. Did you ever hear the expression “history repeats itself”? In the case of future history, Biblical prophecy, it happens all the time. The only time the phrase “west wind” occurs in the entire Bible is in reference to a plague—or more precisely, the elimination of a plague: **“Then Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land—all that the hail has left.’ So Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and Yahweh brought an east wind on the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt. They were very severe; previously there had been no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them.... So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.”** Okay. So far, we have a plague of unprecedented

proportions descending upon the nation where the Israelites happen to be living. **“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, ‘I have sinned against Yahweh your God and against you. Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and entreat Yahweh your God, that He may take away from me this death only.’ So he went out from Pharaoh and entreated Yahweh. And Yahweh turned a very strong west wind, which took the locusts away and blew them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the territory of Egypt. But Yahweh hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.”** (Exodus 10:12-20)

By sending **“a very strong west wind,”** Yahweh removed the plague. Now let’s go back to our Syrian VX scenario. What would God do if they actually pushed the button? I submit to you that He would do exactly what he did in Exodus: send **“a very strong west wind.”** Net effect: Israel is spared; Jordan (directly east of Israel) is annihilated.

Just a guess, you understand. Make that one an SF9.

All of this is but a prelude to the fall of the rest of the **“gods of the earth,”** something we have come to group under the umbrella title **“Babylon,”** representing the sum total of man’s false worship, religious and otherwise. The few who remain will begin to understand the promise Yahweh made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: **“I will bless those who bless you and curse him who curses you.”**

In conclusion, let’s examine one more cryptic prophecy from Isaiah, one that has not yet been fulfilled: **“But they [Judah and Ephraim together, i.e., Israel] shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines [apparently the Gaza Strip] toward the west. Together they shall plunder the people of the East [Jordan]. They shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab; and the people of Ammon shall obey them.”** (Isaiah 11:14) Whatever else this may entail, it’s clear that the **“Palestinians”** are no longer going to be a thorn in Israel’s side. I believe that this is a condition that will persist throughout the Millennium. But when does it start? At the risk of getting ahead of our story, it’s entirely possible that a severely depopulated Jordan will become the primary wilderness refuge for the Israelis as they flee from the Antichrist after the middle of the Tribulation, with more hiding out among the ruins of the Gaza Strip. *But the Antichrist is their ally, isn’t he? The whole point of the “covenant with many” was to protect Israel, wasn’t it? Why would they have to flee?* It’s a long story. I’ll tell you later.

Arabia is a tough one to figure out. We have seen (in Ezekiel 38:13) that Saudi Arabia, with a few other nations, will lodge diplomatic protests against Gog’s belligerence during the opening days of World War III. We have also seen

that Jeremiah named several Arabian nations in a list of those who would experience judgment. To recap, **“Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.... Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who are in the farthest corners; all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed multitude who dwell in the desert; all the kings of Zimri....”** (Jeremiah 25:15-16, 23-24) Because the judgments pronounced extend beyond the actual Babylonian conquest that occasioned the prophecy in the first place, I concluded that these nations (as well as the others on Jeremiah’s list, all discussed in the previous chapter) will find themselves on the losing side in the War of Magog.

Despite their diplomatic stance, the Antichrist will know that as a potential threat to Israel (and more to the point, his own demigod aspirations), Saudi can’t be ignored. They’ve built a sprawling missile base at Sulayyil, about 500 kilometers south of Riyadh, employing a huge staff of Chinese workers installing about 120 CSS2 Dong Feng-3 ballistic missiles and a dozen or more launchers. Each of these missiles can carry three or more nuclear, biological, or chemical warheads. With a range of about 3,500 kilometers, these missiles can reach as far as Libya, Greece, or portions of India—Israel they could hit blindfolded. The Saudis are rumored to have funded Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program, so it’s not much of a stretch to envision Pakistani nukes (and remember, Pakistan is one of only two nations on earth that is *increasing* the size of its nuclear arsenal) atop their Chinese missiles (all paid for with American oil dollars because our politicians are blind to the wisdom of a policy of energy independence). Therefore, whether or not they actually intend to use their sophisticated weapons against Israel (my guess is that they’re not, because they have nothing to gain, except perhaps prestige among their fellow Islamic nations, and everything to lose) the Antichrist will be reticent to take any chances: Saudi Arabia—at least its military installations—will find themselves on the Antichrist’s nuclear hit parade. He won’t be having second thoughts about destroying the Saudis’ vast oil reserves, either: now that he’s in *de facto* control of Israel, *their* newly found oil is virtually his.

And yet we find passages like these two in Isaiah that seem to indicate that the nations of the Arabian Peninsula will be among those who in the end *turn around and honor Yahweh*: **“The multitude of camels shall cover your land, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah. All those from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of Yahweh. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you. They shall ascend with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory.”** (Isaiah 60:6-7) Or how about this? **“Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar [in Arabia] inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing.”** Sela literally means “rock.” This is probably the Nabatean stronghold of Petra, in Edom/Jordan, which has been

suggested as a likely destination for the flight of the Jews from the Antichrist at the middle of the Tribulation (something we'll address in due time). **“Let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them [that is, both Kedar and Sela] give glory to Yahweh, and declare His praise in the coastlands.”** (Isaiah 42:11-12)

This is way more significant than it seems at first glance. Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, the home of that perverse doctrine's two most revered sites, Mecca and Medina. What's more, the princes of Saudi have been instrumental in underwriting the financial burden of world Islamic terrorism, a fact to which our geniuses in Washington turn a blind eye in order to keep the black ooze flowing freely. For Saudi to end up honoring Yahweh, it's kind of like the Vatican announcing they've all decided to become Lutherans! It represents a complete about-face. In short, it signals the death of the most vile and destructive pseudo religion on the face of the globe, one that before the bloodbath of World War III held over 1.3 billion souls in spiritual bondage. This is exactly the kind of outcome most Christians would love to see but would never dream was possible. (That's due to a lack of faith on our part, not to a lack of power on Yahweh's.) If Arabia turns from Islam to the worship of Yahweh, the mandatory hajj pilgrimage to Mecca—one of the five pillars of Islam—will cease. In short, if you cut off its head, the beast can't live for long.

Modern Iran is composed primarily of historic Media, Elam, and Persia (to restrict the list to the scripturally relevant nations). And a few chapters back, we discussed the evidence identifying Iran with ancient Magog, the leading nation of the invasion force whose adventures are detailed so vividly in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Since Magog is a major player in World War III, I half-expected to find a plethora of vituperative prophecies outlining Iran's demise. I found no such thing. The only nations who are specifically denounced in scripture are the ones whose historic progenitors were antagonistic toward Israel. So the Medes are mentioned only as participants in the overthrow of Babylon. The Persians, partners with the Medes in the Babylonian conquest, are given a bit more press: their eventual ascendancy over their allies to the northwest—and everybody else in the Middle East—earned them a place in Daniel's prophecies as the second great gentile kingdom. But they were never really an enemy of Israel. They inherited the Land from Babylon and generally treated the Jews well—although there was one close call during the reign of Ahasuerus (a.k.a. Xerxes), detailed in the book of Esther. But that was apparently precipitated by Satanic trickery and the jealousy of one powerful man (Haman), not a national anti-Israel predisposition. Consequently,

scripture has nothing to say about Persia's specific role in the Last Days, except as an ally of Gog.

Likewise, next to nothing is said about Elam. But they must have been part of Israel's problem at one time, for Jeremiah reports: **"Thus says Yahweh of hosts: 'Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the foremost of their might. Against Elam I will bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and scatter them toward all those winds; there shall be no nations where the outcasts of Elam will not go. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies and before those who seek their life. I will bring disaster upon them, My fierce anger,' says Yahweh, 'and I will send the sword after them until I have consumed them. I will set My throne in Elam, and will destroy from there the king and the princes,' says Yahweh. 'But it shall come to pass in the latter days: I will bring back the captives of Elam,' says Yahweh."** (Jeremiah 49:35-39)

That last phrase, "bring back the captives of Elam," can be misleading. Some loose English translations take it to mean "restore the fortunes of Elam," (as in the NIV), but this reading doesn't mesh very well with what immediately preceded it. I would suggest that "captives of Elam" really means "Elam's captives," i.e., the Jews who were exiled there under Babylon's brutal reign. Consider this parallel passage from Isaiah: **"It shall come to pass in that day that Yahweh shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros [upper Egypt] and Cush [East Africa], from Elam [Southern Iran] and Shinar [Babylon, or Iraq], from Hamath [Syria] and the islands of the sea [most notably, America]."** (Isaiah 11:11) It's clear to me that the imprecation against Elam is a direct result of the shabby treatment the Jews in exile received at the hands of the Elamites. It is equally clear from this prophecy that there are huge unidentified Israelite populations (who are as yet clueless to their history and heritage) inhabiting North Africa and the Middle East.

The bottom line is that for the most part, the nations comprising Iran's heritage had little friction with historic Israel. This explains why Yahweh inspired Ezekiel to use a distinct and ancient name for the region's inhabitants—Magog—when describing the Islamic hordes who would ultimately submit to Satan's command to go and perish on the mountains of Israel.

The aftermath of Gog's invasion of Israel will be a messy, smelly affair. You can't just leave millions upon millions of dead bodies lying around without attracting a few flies. Yahweh, through Ezekiel, describes the whole stinky mess: **"It will come to pass in that day that I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travelers, because there they will**

bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog [literally, Gog's hordes]." (Ezekiel 39:11) Here we have an apparent contradiction. The Dead Sea forms the eastern border of Israel at that point, so how can the burial place be "in Israel" and also "east of the sea?"

There are two possible explanations. First, remember what we covered a few pages back: the area east of the Dead Sea (i.e., Jordan) will be pretty much wiped out. And these lands will be "owned" by Israel: **"The residue of My people shall plunder [Moab and Ammon], and the remnant of My people shall possess them."** (Zephaniah 2:9) So just as dead bodies were always buried "outside the camp," so will the corpses of Gog and his fallen followers be taken outside for proper disposal.

Maybe. The other alternative to the puzzle is that we have a translation glitch (yes, it does happen.) Although most English translations render it something like the NKJV, the NIV gives us a variant rendering that changes the meaning 180 degrees: **"...in the valley of those who travel east toward the sea."** Although valleys leading to the Dead Sea are more numerous on the Jordan side, there are a few likely possibilities on the rain-starved western side; my guess is that Hamon Gog could be located in one of the gorges that lead toward Beersheba, south of the Lashon (the peninsula poking out from the eastern shore)—one of the most desolate spots in Israel.

Anyway, **"For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. Indeed all the people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified,"** says the Lord Yahweh. **"They will set apart men regularly employed, with the help of a search party, to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. The search party will pass through the land; and when anyone sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. The name of the city will also be Hamonah [i.e., Horde]. Thus they shall cleanse the land."** (Ezekiel 39:12-16) Clearing the Land of bodies and processing the equipment and materiel Magog's armies brought with them will become a boom industry in Israel during the Tribulation, and the people who do the grisly job will become folk heroes of sorts, sort of like our FDNY guys became to us in 2001. The Israelis will apparently have to build a whole new town to house the thousands of workers needed to get the job done—somewhere near the Valley of Hamon Gog. Since Gog's defeat will have given the Jews a new-found appreciation for the holiness of Yahweh, they will be scrupulous about cleansing the Land, for Yahweh has declared it holy—set apart for His purposes. Every last scrap of human remains must be found and disposed of. I can imagine the search crews scouring the land for bones and body parts, noting the GPS coordinates of

each piece they find and flagging the sites for the disposal units that will follow them.

As any forensic anthropologist knows, they won't be finding whole bodies very long. In a matter of weeks (depending on the time of year), the bodies will have been reduced to skeletons. **"And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord Yahweh, speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: 'Assemble yourselves and come; gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you, a great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams and lambs, of goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. You shall eat fat till you are full, and drink blood till you are drunk, at My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you. You shall be filled at My table with horses and riders, with mighty men and with all the men of war,' says the Lord Yahweh."** (Ezekiel 39:17-20) Did you ever wonder why God created flies? It was for moments like this. I think the phrase "every sort of bird and...every beast of the field" may refer not only to carrion birds and scavenging mammals, but also to insects and bacteria. Interestingly, the word translated "bird" here (or worse, in the KJV, "feathered fowl") is *tsippowr*, meaning "hopping" (from the primitive root *tsaphar*, "to skip about") hence indicative not so much of vultures as little birds like sparrows—and, I believe, the insects that invariably infest a corpse within hours of death. The bugs of Israel have all received an engraved invitation to the feast.

The bodies won't be the only things being gathered after the unsuccessful invasion. The hordes of Magog will be equipped with the best weapons Iranian oil money can buy. Russian, French, Chinese—even some home-made technology will be left behind. (It's a constant source of fascination to me that the oil-rich Muslim nations, though wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice, manufacture very little except for weapons—a legacy of their prophet's pirate past, no doubt—while tiny, beleaguered, resource-starved Israel makes and exports a wide variety of useful and sophisticated products from computer hardware and software, electronic communications and print-graphics technology to the world's best water desalinization equipment. They have the highest ratio of University degrees to population in the world, and fully twelve percent of their workforce holds advanced degrees. Their \$245 billion dollar economy exceeds all of their immediate neighbors *combined*. Their per-capita income exceeds the UK, and Israel has well over twice as many scientists and technicians in its workforce per-capita than either Germany or Japan. But despite all this and much, much more, the French Ambassador to England recently intoned, "Israel is nothing but a shitty little country." Excuse his French.)

But I digress—again. In the only vocabulary available to him, Ezekiel described the massive scavenger hunt: **"Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will**

go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them,” says the Lord Yahweh.” (Ezekiel 39:9-10) Are Magog’s armies really going to be using bows, arrows, and spears against Israel? I sincerely doubt it. Ezekiel described what he saw: the weapons of his day. If Yahweh had shown him an Iranian Naze’at-10 450mm rocket in flight or a Zulfiqar main battle tank (based on the venerable Russian T-72) rumbling through the Negev, what would he have been able to say? Not much. But bows and arrows he knew.

The essence of the prophecy is this: Israel will gather up and use whatever the Horde brings in with them. This in itself is a remarkable commentary on Yahweh’s provision. Israel is a very heavy per-capita energy user—on a par with America or Europe. Until the ’70s, the nation pursued a program of energy independence based on nuclear power. But since that time, perhaps because of its vulnerability to sabotage, they have abandoned nuclear energy. Today, Israel’s power needs are met through fossil fuels, mostly oil (imported from Mexico, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the former Soviet Union) and coal (from Australia, South Africa, and Columbia). Oil exploration within Israel is ongoing, and as I noted, there have been some spectacular shale oil and gas discoveries in recent years. But it will be some time before the potential energy bonanza catches up with technological reality.

I mention all that to make the point that Israel has not used wood fires as its basic energy medium in quite some time. They’d have no means for burning wooden weapons for fuel even if they had them—the stocks of AK-47 rifles, for example, couldn’t be used to generate electricity or power a bus without some serious infrastructure changes. But the Israelis *could* use oil—precisely the commodity that a modern army runs on. Jet-A for aircraft; diesel for tanks and trucks; gasoline for other vehicles. The Magog federation will come well-equipped with Iranian and Iraqi fuels—knowing they can’t count on being able to tap Israel’s vast reserves of oil, at least until after they’ve seized the country. Ezekiel is telling us, in so many words, that the Israelis won’t have to produce or import petroleum for seven years after the invasion—which is a good thing, because much of the world’s fuel production capacity—including their own—will be crippled during the war and its aftermath.

Another prophet sheds more light on what’s happening: **“Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together: gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance.”** (Zechariah 14:14) It’s safe to say that fuel won’t be the only thing the Israelis will appropriate from the dead Muslim horde. They will systematically collect and utilize everything of value. Equipment, food,

weapons, tools, clothing, vehicles—*everything*. This implies, as I have said, that the destruction of Magog’s armies within Israel will come about as a result of something a wee bit less destructive than atomic bombs. If the fuel is to survive while the soldiers die, Yahweh is going to have to be very selective about where He sends fire and brimstone and where He sends floods and hail.

A few of the commentators who have gotten close enough to the subject to analyze this have concluded that the war of Magog must come *before the beginning* of the Tribulation. That’s because the Jews are seen still using the leftovers seven years later, and the final advent of Christ, they assume, must change everything—*immediately*. I, on the other hand (because I see the Antichrist’s grubby hands all over this thing) have placed World War III somewhere during the first half of the Tribulation, meaning (horrors!) that the Israelis will still be burning the devil’s gas a couple of years into Yahshua’s reign. How can that be? Isn’t Yahshua going to sweep in and make everything instantly wonderful? Isn’t utopia—a sort of Greenpeace heaven where nobody burns anything that might pollute the atmosphere or contribute to global warming—going to instantaneously arrive the moment Yahshua’s right foot touches down on the Mount of Olives?

No. Sorry. It doesn’t work that way. Remember what Isaiah said about Yahshua’s Millennial reign? “The *government* will be upon His shoulders....” At the risk of getting ahead of the story (again), let me explain. Christ’s kingdom on earth will be populated by mortal human beings—the Tribulation saints, consisting of newly enlightened Jews, post-rapture “Christians,” (who I call the Fellowship of Repentant Laodicea) and their children. As they follow Yahshua’s example and instructions—His governance—they will gradually see the earth healed before their very eyes. But *they* will do the work of rebuilding world’s infrastructure. *Work?* Yes. That’s where the fun is. Even back in the Garden of Eden, Adam had “work” to do. (It’s us who turned work into drudgery.) Of course, maybe it’s not quite fair to call it “work.” Part of what it means to be made in the image of God is that we are creative beings, just like our Father. He has put within us a drive to bring order to the chaos we see around us, for He is a God of order. When we search for knowledge, build great structures, compose music, raise our families—or just clean the toilets and mow the lawn—we are not “working.” We are simply following our divinely implanted creative instincts. God won’t wave a magic wand and do all of this for us, like Cinderella’s fairy godmother—not as long as people still inhabit this world in their corruptible, mortal bodies. The Millennial reign of Christ will teach us what we could have had all along if only we’d all walked with Yahshua all along.

In other words, I see no problem with the Jews continuing to use the war materiel left behind by Gog several years into the Millennium. I have a feeling it

will last just long enough, like the oil and flour of Elijah's widowed landlady, to transition Israel into a bright new tomorrow.

In closing, I'd like to revisit a Psalm by Asaph, who prays that the future enemies of Israel will suffer the same ugly fates as those who troubled her in the past. **"Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones."** There have been alliances against God's people before, but never on the scale of today's militant Islam. **"They have said, 'Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.' For they have consulted together with one consent."** In times past, the point of attacking Israel has invariably been run-of-the-mill nationalistic lust: the invader wanted its wealth or lands (it's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa has always made it a target), or Israel just happened to be in the path of a ruler's grand territorial ambitions (as in the case of Alexander the Great). Even when Rome came in and bludgeoned the place within an inch of its life—twice within seventy years—the point of killing Jews was not merely *killing Jews*. It was putting down rebellion. The Romans just wanted their *pax Romana*, their nice, obedient, profitable, low-maintenance, tax-paying empire. If the Gauls had behaved like the Jews, they would have gotten the same brutal treatment. But Islam is a different kind of beast: Muslims want to **"cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more...."** That's their only motivation. They hate Yahweh, so they hate His people. They don't even know why.

Asaph then gets down to specifics. **"They form a confederacy against You: The tents of Edom [Jordan] and the Ishmaelites [Read: Egypt—the Sinai Peninsula. Note that according to Genesis 36:3, Esau (Edom) married Ishmael's daughter—the two families go *way* back together]; Moab [Jordan] and the Hagarites [an Aramaean, read: Syrian, confederation located in Jordan]; Gebal [Byblos, i.e., Lebanon], Ammon [Jordan], and Amalek [northern Sinai]; Philistia [Gaza Strip] with the inhabitants of Tyre [Lebanon]; Assyria [Syria and Iraq] also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot [Jordan]...."** Today, Muslim territories, one and all.

The Psalmist now prays that they'll all meet with a bloody end: **"Deal with them as with Midian, as with Sisera, as with Jabin at the Brook Kishon, who perished at En Dor, who became as refuse on the earth...."** Asaph's example is the story of Deborah and Barak, recorded in Judges 4 and 5, where the army of Jabin, king of the Canaanites, was wiped out to the last man—900 iron chariots: all toast. Sisera, the

commander, fled the scene and hid with a lady named Jael, who gave him a nice big glass of milk, made him all cozy under a warm blankie until he fell asleep—and then hammered a tent peg through his skull. Get the picture?

“Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb, yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, ‘Let us take for ourselves the pastures of God for a possession....’” Oreb and Zeeb were Midianite princes whose vast army (described in Judges 7:12 as “numerous as locusts” with “innumerable” camels—later clarified as a force 135,000 strong) were routed by Gideon’s little 300-man commando force (with a bit of help from Yahweh). Oreb and Zeeb lost their heads over the matter—literally. Judges 8 continues the saga: the Midianite Kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, now down to their last 15,000 troops, were pursued through the countryside by Gideon’s little band. Gideon personally put them to the sword and, in a move as prophetic as it is ironic, took the ornaments that were hung around the necks of the Midianites’ camels—crescent moons, the very Islamic symbol under which the hordes of Magog will march to their similar doom.

“O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like the chaff before the wind! As the fire burns the woods, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire, so pursue them with Your tempest, and frighten them with Your storm. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Yahweh. Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; yes, let them be put to shame and perish, that they may know that You, whose name alone is Yahweh, are the Most High over all the earth.” (Psalm 83) Notice how closely the Psalmist’s description of the battle—whirling dust, fire and flame, tempest and storm—parallels Ezekiel’s play by play account of the battle of Magog. And notice that Asaph isn’t really praying for their “conversion” here. He wants these armies of Satan to realize before they die that they backed the wrong god. The “Most High over all the earth” has a name, and it’s not Allah. It’s Yahweh.

Chapter 18

No More Mr. Nice Guy

A lot has happened in the three and a half years since the world hailed the new European leader's historic Middle East peace plan, touted at the time as "earth's last, best hope for an enduring peace," or some such rubbish. By now the frightened and hungry—and a billion and a half less numerous—inhabitants of the earth know just how wrong they were to buy into it all. Whatever it was, it was not the road to peace.

The question, remarkably, remains: whose fault was this war? If the truth were told (it won't be, by the way) everyone would realize that the Antichrist's peace plan was fatally flawed from its conception. Comprehending neither the nature nor the motivation of Islam, the Antichrist had hamstrung Israel and dangled its helpless form like a tasty morsel before the covetous eyes of the ravenous Muslim wolf. No one who understood the real Muslim agenda would have been surprised when Gog snapped at the bait. But therein lay the problem: *no one understood*. Everyone assumed Islam was a religion, not a political doctrine with political objectives. So everyone outside of *dar al-Islam* was caught unawares.

Then came the reaction: nuclear holocaust. Amazingly, the European leader's story is holding—so far. He's placing the blame squarely where it's expected: on the Jews. But slippery to the end, he "defends" them before the world (what's left of it). *Yes, the Israelis nuked the invading Muslims, but it was totally justified—a case of self defense. Outnumbered a thousand to one, their very national existence was in danger. Although I'm horrified at the outcome, I'm sure you can all see that they were given no choice in the matter.* The Jews, of course, have no idea that he's lying. Like the rest of the world, they actually believe their own military was responsible for pushing the button. Many of them are even proud of it. But the truth has been buried—literally. Every Israeli technician who was involved in preparing the warheads for the Antichrist—with a gun to his back—has disappeared. Casualties of the war, it is claimed.

Ironically, the Antichrist owes his life to the fact that he was in Israel, not Europe, when the bombs started falling. His own capital city, along with a hundred other major European population centers, was decimated by the blasts. Every major EU and NATO military installation was hit. Russia had subsequently received a similar pounding at the hands of the Americans, but the land is so vast, only the largest cities and bases were targeted. More to the point, little or no damage was done to Russia's secondary nuclear strike capability because of the mobility of their launch platforms—Typhoon-class submarines and mobile truck-based missile launchers. Russia's first order of business had been to move as

much of their nuclear arsenal as they could to new and undisclosed locations, and about half of their nuclear stockpiles had been successfully secreted out of harm's way.

Before launching their nukes, the Russian leadership had hotly debated whether their own intelligence concerning the West would prove correct—that America had grown so soft, liberal, and politically correct, they would never rise to the challenge and launch a nuclear counteroffensive against an enemy that had not actually attacked them. Some of Russia's brightest minds had predicted that America would not come to Europe's aid, but would instead play possum until the danger blew over, going no farther than lodging diplomatic protests at the U.N. Others insisted that historic ties and treaty arrangements like NATO would compel America to launch a counterstrike whether they were attacked or not. The argument that tipped the scale was that the Magog War was in fact a *dar al-Islam versus United Nations* affair: by attacking the European leader, Russia would *de facto* be attacking the United Nations—to which America had clearly sold its soul. The U.S. was its biggest financial backer and supplied its largest military contingent. And U.N. world headquarters sat upon U.S. soil, in its most populous city. The European Leader had, in point of fact, figured out how to use the American military machine as his own personal bludgeon by pulling strings at the United Nations. So it was settled: America's ability to project power globally would have to be eliminated in the first strike. New York and Washington would top the hit list.

Then, one by one, sometimes weeks apart, America's other prime military targets and premier cities had been hit—or missed, as the case may be. Russia's intercontinental missile technology, having been designed in an era when political gamesmanship was the holy grail, looked great in parades but proved somewhat less than reliable in practice. Several—no one would ever know how many—went nuclear on their launch pads, incinerating huge tracts of Siberian forest. Several more fell short—a thousand miles short—of their intended targets in the U.S., setting Canada's vast woodlands ablaze. The fact that Russian targeting technology wasn't nearly as accurate as the Americans' only added to the terror. A missile intended for the Norfolk Naval Base landed instead on Colonial Williamsburg—which hadn't been a particularly good military target for well over 300 years. Another, aimed at Florida's MacDill Air Force base, landed fifty miles east, near Orlando—killing Mickey Mouse instantly.

Ironically, the Americans had been in a relatively good state of defense readiness—*decades previously*. But they had sacrificed their military preparedness on the altar of profligate pork-barrel spending, liberal welfare boondoggles, and environmental hysteria. The fact that the rapture had gutted the military of many of its most valiant warriors and clear-headed thinkers didn't

help, either. Now, when the missiles began falling, all the politicians and pundits could do was point fingers of blame at each other for failing to have a solution. One factor that had been ignored far too long was the Americans' total reliance on electronics. The nuclear war had a ripple effect extending far beyond the explosions and the radiation: the EMP—electromagnetic pulse—generated by each detonation knocked out power grids, transportation, communications, commerce, and medical facilities in wide areas that weren't directly devastated by the blasts themselves. Just because the suburbs hadn't been leveled, it didn't mean that life went on as usual.

The Russians had been as surprised as anyone when the Vatican went up in smoke. Their plan had been to spare Rome—whether it was out of superstition or prudence wasn't clear. There were no military installations within the city proper, though several bases in Italy had been targeted. The Russians weren't claiming “credit” for the strike, but they weren't denying it, either. They didn't want to appear weak or uncommitted, and besides, they weren't absolutely sure it hadn't actually been a mistake—or a deliberate disobedience of orders—on the part of one of their commanders. The truth didn't occur to anyone: the Antichrist had instructed one of his own agents to drive to Rome with a NATO hydrogen bomb in the back of a pest-control van (his idea of a joke). Parked on a side street near St. Peter's while the agent made his getaway, the truck didn't look out of place—until the Vatican City evaporated in an inferno the likes of which Dante could never have imagined. And since no one was familiar with Revelation 17:16, **“The ten horns...will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire,”** no one was shocked when the European governments comprising the Antichrist's European federation invoked emergency powers to tap the Vatican's vast hidden wealth in order to “provide relief to the people of the Roman Catholic world.” Humanitarian relief, of course, was the last thing on their minds.

Perhaps the destruction of the Vatican shouldn't have come as such a surprise. Everyone in the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy was familiar with the famous Prophecy of the Popes, penned in the twelfth century by the Irish Bishop Mael Maedoc Ua Morgair (better known as St. Malachy). It was a list of cryptic descriptions supposedly characterizing every pope from his day forward, some of them supported by remarkably accurate (if you knew what to look for) Nostradamus-like prophecies. The “list” was first published in 1595, bearing some indications of textual tampering designed to “align” certain previous popes with Malachy's prophecy. But with the list a matter of public record since then, the fulfillments have had to stand on their own—and one way or another, they invariably do (though some of them “feel” like a bit of a reach). Typical is the next-to-last pope on the list. Malachy had characterized Pope Benedict XVI as the “Glory of the Olive,” and the prophecy is seen by pundits to be accurate because Benedict (Joseph Ratzinger) was born on the feast day of St. Benedict

(Joseph Labre), and the olive branch is the chosen symbol of the Benedictine order. Not a few have also tied his papal reign to a marked acceleration of the appearance of Last Days signs, spoken of by Christ during his Olivet Discourse.

The final pope (according to Malachy's prophecy) took the papal throne in 2013, when Pope Benedict retired from his office—the first to do so on his own initiative since Pope Celestine V in 1294. Rumors abounded that Benedict XVI resigned after an internal investigation informed him about a web of blackmail, corruption, and gay sex in the Vatican, but the official reason (of course) was his failing health. He was, after all, the oldest man to have been elected Pope (at the age of 78) since Pope Clement XII in 1730. Benedict's unexpected retirement had paved the way for the one Malachy called "Petrus Romanus," or Peter the Roman.

So Benedict's successor, the 76 year old Jorge Mario Bergoglio, an Argentine Jesuit of Italian descent, was chosen in March, 2013. He took the papal name Francis (*not Francis I*, interestingly enough—just "Pope Francis"). He named himself after St. Francis of Assisi—whose full given name was Francesco di Pietro di Bernardone; so he's now *literally* "Peter" the Roman. It should not be overlooked that Francis of Assisi, shortly before his death, prophesied that at the time of the Tribulation a man would "be raised to the Pontificate, who, by his cunning, will endeavor to draw many into error and death... Some preachers will keep silence about the truth, and others will trample it under foot and deny it...for in those days Jesus Christ will send them not a true Pastor, but a destroyer." Neither this nor Malachy's list is inspired scripture, so it's hard to say what prophetic significance it all has. Only time will tell.

In any event, it is alarming enough that Francis was the *last* pope on the list. But the final segment of the Prophecy of the Popes is enough to give even the staunchest Roman Catholic nightmares: "In the extreme persecution of the Holy Roman Church, there will sit Peter the Roman, who will nourish the sheep in many tribulations. When they are finished, the City of Seven Hills will be destroyed, and the dreadful judge will judge his people. The End." Thus the prophecy foretells the end of the Vatican—just as Revelation 17:16 implies.

Returning to our timeline—Just when it seemed things couldn't get any worse, two back-to-back natural disasters had struck the earth. Scientists had been breathlessly watching both situations for decades, but had proved powerless to do anything about them. First, a huge volcano in the Canary Islands had blown its top, sending half the mountain crashing into the Atlantic and setting off the largest tsunami in recorded history, decimating the coastlines on both sides of the Atlantic. It would never be determined whether the seismic shocks caused by the detonation of hundreds of nuclear weapons had had anything to do with the eruption and collapse of the volcano, or if it was merely a coincidence. Geologists agreed that the event was as long overdue as it was tragic. The British Isles and

Western Europe were inundated, as was the American East Coast, as the megatsunami swept away everything the nukes had spared within forty or fifty miles of the shoreline. Boston and New York: gone. London and Amsterdam: gone. Philadelphia and Paris: crippled. Miami, Havana, Caracas, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Aires, all having escaped the nuclear carnage, were each wiped out by an unstoppable wall of water. Africa fared a little better, but only because it has fewer densely populated cities along its western shoreline.

A few days after the Canary Islands disaster, the first of hundreds of new volcanic islands began appearing in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, belching ash and greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. Like a string of Mount Pinatubos, their smoke darkened the sky all over the world, adding to the billions of tons of radioactive dust the recent nuclear war had pumped into the air. The sun's light was measurably obstructed, and the moon, when it could be seen at all, took on a ghastly red hue. The only reason anyone knew about the new island chain, however, was the imagery being sent down from orbiting satellites—not a single ship in the entire Atlantic Ocean, north or south, remained afloat. Worse, when scientific research vessels were finally able to reach the area, they could find no signs of life in the ocean—none at all. Everything from whales to plankton had died.

Then, as if to add an exclamation point to the death sentence the earth had already received, an asteroid that NASA scientists had been tracking since late 2004 broke up in the earth's atmosphere, sending Buick-sized chunks of white-hot debris raining down on earth from Budapest to Detroit in a spectacular and deadly lightshow. The earth's shaken populace thought at first that they had dodged the bullet—as the astronomers had predicted. There was no direct impact, no immense crater, no extinction event like the one that had killed off the dinosaurs sixty-five million years previously. It took months for them to realize where the real danger was: the high sulfur content of the asteroid was poisoning the earth's water supply with acid rain over much of the northern hemisphere.

The fact that all of this, either overtly or between the lines, had been predicted in the Bible didn't raise as many eyebrows as it should have. Relatively few people knew about the prophecies of the Last Days, since the Christians had been raptured years before and the Bible had been suppressed ever since then. But between the 144,000 Jewish messengers and the angelic warnings that had been proclaimed all over the world for the last several years, the remaining population wasn't completely in the dark. In the dim light of the unseasonable winter that seemed to be descending upon the earth, small pockets of survivors heatedly discussed two things: "Where are we going to find something to eat?" and "Is all of this the result of man's folly, or is it God's judgment?"

That second question tended to divide the room into warring camps. The weight of public opinion in recent years, from the media, organized religion (what was left of it), and even the politicians, had agreed—even insisted—that God was whatever you conceived Him to be, a sort of “great spirit” who resided in all living things. Most people weren’t *totally* stupid, of course. They’d figured out what this really meant: that God was neither personally interested in their welfare or behavior, nor could he do anything to help—or harm—them. In other words, even if He existed (and the pseudo-intellectual rhetoric screamed that He did not) they were perfectly free to live their lives without His interference—and certainly without His standards of conduct. This in turn meant that the only real rule in life was “don’t get caught.”

But the horrific events of recent months—if you’d been lucky enough to live through them—looked for all the world like the “wrath of God,” whatever *that* meant. It had never been this bad before. A quarter of the earth’s population was dead—*1.7 billion people*. The whole planet was an ecological disaster area. And then there was the nagging memory of the “event” that had started everything rolling downhill—when all the born-again Bible-thumping whackos had disappeared *en masse*. Try as they might, no one had ever satisfactorily explained that one. Could it be that there *was* a God, and that He was trying to tell them something?

Don’t be so #@%&! gullible, was the inevitable response. You haven’t actually seen God do anything, have you? No. Everything that’s happened is either attributable to nature—things we’ve been worried about for years—or the direct result of our leaders making bad decisions, one after the other. And you can trace it all back to one thing: if the Jews hadn’t nuked the Arabs, we would have been just fine. Then, as now, no philosophy that couldn’t be reduced to a sound-bite was given much credence. It didn’t have to make sense or fit the facts; it only had to be plausible, succinct, and politically correct. Everything was somebody else’s fault—and if you could pin the blame on the Jews, so much the better. And God? If there is a God, He’s going to have to show us some signs and wonders to prove He’s there. All we’ve seen so far is human blunders and bad luck. I’ll start believing in God when he starts showing his face.*

The foregoing scenario is admittedly somewhat speculative on my part, but it does fit the prophetic record—all too well. Interestingly, the confusion on earth about whether to “blame” God or man is only confirmed in scripture. For

although John in his apocalyptic vision sees ominous angelic activity, no causal link is established at this stage between heaven's proclamations and earth's woes.

"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." (Revelation 8:1-6) If you'll recall, I have described the Book of Revelation as an "onion"—i.e., not strictly chronological, but rather with layers of detail becoming more specific as you peel them back. This passage introduces the second layer, known as the Trumpet judgments. We see the prayers of *all* the saints as the catalyst of judgment. And what are the saints praying for? My guess is, it's: **"[May] Your kingdom come; [may] Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven.... For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."** (Matthew 6:10, 13)

The first Trumpet judgment describes nuclear warfare in first-century language. This is the same World War III that I have attempted to flesh out with my hypothetical scenario: **"The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up."** (Revelation 8:7) Strong's informs us that the Greek word for "burned" is *katakaio*—from which we get our English word "cataclysm"—meaning "to burn down (to the ground), i.e., to consume wholly—burn up, utterly." In other words, we're not talking about getting merely singed or scorched, but total destruction.

A more generalized description of this nuclear holocaust and its aftermath were given under the third and fourth "seal" judgments. **"When He [the Lamb of God] opened the third seal, I heard the third living being say, 'Come and see.' So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.'" (Revelation 6:5-6)** The black horse—the third of the so-called "four horsemen of the Apocalypse"—represents famine. A "denarius" was equivalent to a full day's pay for a common laborer in John's day. So forget making the rent or car payment. It will be all one can do to feed himself and his family. That last phrase, **"do not harm the oil and the wine,"** gives us a bit more insight. Luxury items like wine and olive oil will still be available—for a price. This implies a widening gap between rich and poor. Rampant inflation won't cramp the style of the super-rich. The vast

majority, however, will fall into the latter category—poor and getting poorer by the minute.

But there's another recent development that may shed even more light on the "oil and wine" puzzle. I'm talking about the strange and largely inexplicable disappearance of honeybee populations, a phenomenon known as Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD. Some agricultural centers (notably California) have reported up to a seventy percent decline in the number of bees. There are any number of theories as to why CCD is happening, from pesticides, to pollution, to pests, including viruses and fungi. Some of the more creative doomsday theorists have blamed cell phone radiation or the genetic modification of crops. I personally wonder if the earth's weakening magnetic field (by which bees navigate their way back to the hive) may have something to do with it. The third seal judgment informs us that all sorts of basic foodstuffs are going to be in such short supply, they'll become horrendously expensive. But what might CCD have to do with "not harming the oil and the wine"? As it turns out, neither olive trees nor grapevines depend on honeybees for the development of their fruit. Could it be that we've stumbled upon a central cause of the severe and deadly famine of the Tribulation years—the disappearance of the honeybees?

"When He [the Lamb—Yahshua] opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living being saying, 'Come and see.' So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth." (Revelation 6:7-8) Hades (from the Greek root meaning "unseen") is the state or place of departed souls, the equivalent of the Hebrew *Sheol*. Because Hades follows death here, it is clear that the death of the mortal body, not the soul, is meant. The color of this horse is actually a pale, sickly green—the color of a corpse in decay. After the separation of men's souls from their bodies—which is all "death" means in this context—these souls must wait in sheol/hades for the coming day of judgment. We'll discuss these issues later.

A "fourth of the earth" adds up to over 1.7 billion lives lost in this war—*over thirty times* the appalling death toll of World War II. The "sword" is indicative of any kind of weapon, of course, including nuclear warheads. But as with any large-scale modern war, the fighting is only the beginning. Famine and disease often kill far more people than soldiers with weapons do. The word for "beast" isn't the usual *zoon*, or animal. It's *therion*, a venomous, wild beast—a diminutive form of the word translated "trap." My guess is that the Spirit directed John to use this word to accurately describe something the world would not discover for another nineteen hundred years: bacteria and viruses—the sources of disease.

Following the nuclear war (since each *series* of end-times plagues—seals, trumpets, or bowls—is apparently chronological within itself), we see this: **"Then**

the second angel sounded [his trumpet]: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” (Revelation 8:8-9)

That’s a pretty straightforward description of a volcano, but with the added twist of a huge landslide or perhaps a Krakatoa-style caldera collapse. It used to be hard to be dogmatic about precisely what it was that John saw. But now—based on recent scientific findings—it seems that what he foresaw actually *was* “a great mountain burning with fire being thrown into the sea,” in particular, the impending collapse of the Cumbre Vieja volcano on La Palma Island, at the western end of the Canary Island chain. We should not overlook the verb “thrown” (Greek: *ballo*). The word implies volition or purpose: the mountain didn’t “fall” into the sea as if by accident; it was thrown, hurled, placed or deposited. The word can mean “to bring about; to cause a state or condition.” The implication (in the prophetic context) is that the nuclear weapons so recently detonated on both sides of the Atlantic (or within it) might well be the trigger that sets off the volcanic eruption and landslide of the second trumpet judgment.

In one prophetically significant respect, Cumbre Vieja is far more dangerous than your average volcano. In October 2000, researchers Simon Day and Stephen Ward warned of the potential for a landmass twice the size of the Isle of Man—weighing in at about a trillion tons—breaking off during Cumbre Vieja’s next big eruption and plunging violently into the Atlantic. Since this crumbling and unstable hulk is one of the steepest mountains in the world (when the undersea component is factored in), it has the potential to set off the largest tsunami in history. Day and Ward’s computer models predict a series of waves up to 50 meters (165 feet) high moving at jet airplane speeds—up to 500 miles per hour—slamming into the American East coast, destroying everything within miles of the shore, all the way from Nova Scotia to Brazil. Cumbre Vieja historically erupts at intervals of a few decades to a century or so. The last big blast was in 1949, so it’s due.

We also have firm scientific data concerning the likely trigger for the *next* trumpet judgment. **“Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.”** (Revelation 8:10-11) The Greek word for “star” is *aster*, from which we get our word asteroid. And NASA astronomers have identified the very asteroid that has the potential to fulfill the prophecy. It was initially designated 2004 MN₄ and is now called 99942 Apophis. NASA initially gave it a 1 in 38 chance of impacting our planet—extremely good odds (in a bad sort of way) as these things go, odds that could easily be altered by minor angelic (or human) intervention. Apophis is estimated to be 325 meters

long and 4.6×10^{10} kg in mass, about the size of the asteroid that caused the Tunguska event of June 30, 1908, flattening thousands of acres of Siberian forest.

Although astronomers initially gave Apophis a 2.7% chance of hitting the earth on its next pass in April, 2029, they are now “certain” it will miss, although it will pass Earth well *within* the orbits of our geosynchronous communication satellites. But (they swear) it will come no closer than 19,400 miles (31,300 kilometers) from our planet’s surface. (To put that in perspective, the average distance between the earth and the moon is 238,900 miles.) Actually, the 2029 pass will be much closer than the initial predictions indicated, but the more recent calculations have narrowed the margin of error.

But here’s the caveat: there are *humans* involved. Because asteroids are a recognized reality, and because anything over about 100 meters in size can be expected to be extremely destructive to our planet, our scientists not only track them, but have proposed dozens of strategies for physically keeping them away from Earth—breaking them up with nukes, using kinetic impact devices, gravitational attractors, ion beam shepherds, solar sails, mass drivers, and anything else they can conceive of in their fertile little minds. NASA is feverishly working on the problem, and Russia has recently embarked on a 58 billion ruble (\$1.9 billion) ten year program to defend against such threats from outer space. My observation is simply this: if we meddle with the trajectory of Apophis (or any other asteroid), are we not just as likely to make things worse for ourselves as we are to make them better? Man in his arrogance has botched virtually every major problem he has tried to solve. Will this one be any different? We humans are now so scientifically “advanced,” it is well within our power to screw this up.

Note that this plague is specifically said to have come from the sky: “**A great [aster] fell from heaven.**” The only explanation that makes sense is that it’s an asteroid. The name Wormwood is from the Greek *apsinthos*, a word that implies bitterness and calamity. NASA’s University of Arizona Space Imagery Center reports, “The amount of this sulfur [generated by a meteor strike] can be substantial, because meteoritic materials contain up to 6.25 weight percent sulfur. Consequently, even if the asteroid or comet does not hit a Sulfur-rich target, it can still cause dramatic increases in the total amount of atmospheric sulfur. Once vaporized, this sulfur can react with water to form sulfate (or sulfuric acid) particles. These particles can greatly reduce the amount of sunlight that penetrates to the surface of the earth for a period of up to several years. Over time, the sulfate will settle out of the stratosphere (upper atmosphere) into the troposphere (lower atmosphere) where they can form acid rain which can have additional environmental and biological effects.” That sounds like a recipe for “bitter waters” to me.

The *Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains* defines *apsinthos* as: “the taste of wormwood, a bitter-tasting herb used as a cure for intestinal worms.... The meaning of ἀψιθός [*apsinthos*] in Revelation 8:11 is not that the waters turned into a particular plant but that the waters came to be as bitter as the plant in question.” The word for “made bitter” is an entirely different word, *pikraino*, carrying the added connotation of resentment, anger, or hate. Perhaps this bitterness explains why “death” was listed among the causes of death in the fourth seal judgment we just looked at: John had no earthly way to adequately describe the catastrophe he saw unfolding before him—he had neither the vocabulary nor the scientific knowledge, and yet, in the power of the Spirit of Yahweh, he did a marvelous job of informing us of the dire physical consequences of rejecting Yahshua.

The timing? Friday, April 13, 2029—about two and a half years into the Tribulation by my reckoning. This is when NASA scientists calculate that the huge meteoroid they’re tracking will have its next close encounter with the earth. This would put it after the Battle of Magog and the commencement of the nuclear war that follows (and it provides a rough timeframe for the Cumbre Vieja tsunami as well), but it’s almost a year before the Antichrist assumes total control of the nations of the earth—something we’ll discuss shortly. Indeed, I think that (along with the volcano/tsunami of the second trumpet judgment) the Apophis asteroid could have a positive impact (pardon my word choice) on the Antichrist’s ability to seize control of the political and monetary reins of the entire planet—something he’ll need to do before he institutes the universal oath of loyalty known in scripture as the “mark of the beast.” We’ll discuss the prophetic particulars of these things within the next few chapters.

In short, Apophis and Cumbre Vieja are a prophecy researcher’s dream come true, even though they’ll be a nightmare for everyone who lives to see them. That being said, it doesn’t really matter whether my hypothesis is right or wrong. What’s certain is that God’s Word cannot fail. The “how” of it is something only time will tell. However it transpires, though, this is incredibly bad. Nothing like it has ever happened before—not during man’s tenure upon the earth (with the exception of Noah’s flood). Every shred of “business as usual” has been forcibly removed from human society. From this point on, the very survival of the planet balances on a razor’s edge.

Our military “geniuses” call it nuclear winter. Even *they* have figured out that the detonations and radioactive fallout are only part of the problem with nuclear warfare. Even without the volcano and meteorite chasers, the billions of tons of smoke and debris blasted into the atmosphere during the nuclear war won’t simply fall back to earth in a day or two. Wind currents will disperse them—first darkening the sky in the target areas, then spreading the pollutants over the entire

face of the globe. John saw this too: **“Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”** (Revelation 8:12) The effect is being described from the earth’s point of view. Nothing has happened to the sun (yet) or the moon. Rather, the sun’s light, upon which the human race utterly depends, is partially blocked. This, of course, is a prime cause of the famine that will follow the shooting war: with sunlight levels lowered, even in areas that weren’t directly attacked, crops will grow much more slowly, if at all. Nations used to agricultural surpluses will find it hard to feed themselves, and regions that traditionally import food will starve.

We’re not even halfway through the Tribulation, and it looks doubtful if the world can recover from the environmental damage that man and nature have inflicted upon it. As we shall see, it will get worse—much worse—before it gets better. But let’s pause for a reality check: let us remind ourselves Who built the earth in the first place, Who put us, with a billion other life forms, on it—and why. We are here for Yahweh’s pleasure. He made us so that we might commune with Him—and he made the world to support the life he created within us. That in itself makes our willful destruction of the earth and its inhabitants a heinous act of disloyalty to our Creator—which explains why Satan works so hard toward that goal. Yahweh, however, is not limited by the failings of man or the machinations of the devil. **“He made the Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning and makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth; Yahweh is His name.”** (Amos 5:8)

We need to reanalyze the political and economic lay of the land, for it has changed a great deal from the world’s situation of only a few years before. Again, what I’m about to describe is something of an extrapolation, but consistent with what is revealed in scripture.

For the first time since the days of Nimrod, there is a worldwide power vacuum. The war has killed many of the world’s leaders and disrupted governments from Oslo to Canberra, from Tokyo to Cape Town. The Americans have a Constitutional crisis on their hands, for the entire emergency succession roster from the President on down, along with the majority of Congress, has been wiped out. The Russian President, plus his heir apparent *and* his top six rivals, are all dead. The Asian governments that escaped the war’s nuclear ramifications are nevertheless facing famine from crop failures, economic meltdown from the loss of their trading partners, and widespread anarchy at home. Europe’s largest cities

are in ruins, and many of its national leaders have fallen. But the Antichrist—the charismatic overlord of the continental federation—escaped without a scratch. He had been personally directing U.N. operations in Israel, upon which no nuclear weapons fell, at the time of the attacks. *Mr. Lucky.*

As we have seen, the Islamic nations in the Middle East and Africa have been decimated—not just their leadership, but the vast majority of their populations. That in itself sends economic shockwaves around the world. Only now are people coming to grips with how much they depended on Middle Eastern oil. The world is learning the true meaning of the term “energy crisis.” Between atomic blasts in the Middle East oil fields and the tsunami devastation in the North Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean, the world’s oil production is off by over eighty percent. The Americans are beginning to see how stupid they were to stifle oil exploration and production within their borders in an effort to appease the powerful green energy lobby.

In a ripple effect, the coal mining industry (what’s left of it) slows to a virtual standstill for lack of fuel, and farming on anything approaching a large scale becomes impossible. Much of the world’s nuclear power generation capability has been knocked offline—some with Chernobyl-like repercussions. Even solar energy generation is impossible, since the sun has become **“black as sackcloth of hair.”** (Revelation 6:12) There are great new opportunities for geothermal power generation in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, but nobody knows how to harness the awesome energy being unleashed there. People peer at the sooty sky and brace for a long, severe winter. Crop failures are predicted for the coming year. Food prices skyrocket. The cost of electricity (if it’s available at any price) soars. Anarchy threatens to engulf the globe. Even the nations who were left relatively unscathed have been sent back to the stone age. Their politicians are about to face new and unprecedented challenges—like how to avoid being assassinated by their own starving, angry populations. This passage bears repeating: **“Wail, shepherds, and cry! Roll about in the ashes, you leaders of the flock! For the days of your slaughter and your dispersions are fulfilled. You shall fall like a precious vessel [shattering into tiny, worthless fragments]. And the shepherds will have no way to flee, nor the leaders of the flock to escape.”** (Jeremiah 25:34-35)

As society unravels, the remnants of government around the world come together in agreement: what’s desperately needed is strong central leadership on a worldwide scale. *If we can’t impose order from the top down, the whole human race is doomed. We will fight and kill each other in a paranoid scramble for self-preservation until there is no one left.* It has escaped no one’s notice, of course, that the United Nations is in disarray. Its world headquarters in New York was destroyed in one of the first nuclear blasts to hit the U.S. But its heart still beats: a fierce determination to gather the peoples of the world together under one banner,

united in purpose and determined in will—to pull the world up by its own bootstraps, proud and independent, empowered to shake humanity’s collective fist in the face of Yahweh and scream: *We don’t need You!*

To my mind, one of the twentieth century’s strangest trends was polling. Surveys were taken on every conceivable subject. Sure, it made some sense in the commercial realm, where focus groups were employed to determine what people would be apt to spend their money on, and why. If people were attracted to the bad red thing instead of the good blue one, then that’s what they’d put on the market. But in matters of truth, faith, and the eternal destinies of men, polling makes no sense at all. Truth is not a matter of popular opinion; it just *is*. If ninety-seven percent of the human race agree that there is no God, does that make Yahweh non-existent? Of course not. The point, though, is just as valid the other way around: our unanimous assertion that God is here among us—in the flesh—would not in itself make it true. Our opinions have absolutely nothing to do with the truth or falseness of the matter. People (at least in the West) have gotten so used to voicing their opinions on issues that are not really matters of opinion, they will assume during these dark days that all they have to do to make everything work out is to achieve consensus. It’s the ultimate myth of democracy: *We can—and will—elect our own Messiah.*

And so, like ancient Israel demanding a king Saul to govern them, the world goes looking for the ideal candidate. It quickly boils down to a short list of three (I’m obviously beyond speculation here—this mental exercise is merely to give you a feel for the moment): an American Senator—the apparent front runner in the heated contest to replace their dead President; the Premier of China—the head of world’s most populous nation (and one of the few national leaders to escape the nuclear holocaust); and the European leader—who has already proven himself to be what the others may or may not be: a diplomat of the first rank and a shrewd and capable leader of men.

After some jockeying for position, it becomes clear that there’s only one man for the job. Even the Chinese and American candidates reluctantly agree: the European leader is the perfect man to guide the shattered world back from the brink of destruction. He’s the only one who commands universal respect among nations (excuse *dar al-Islam*, but they no longer count). He has proven his diplomatic abilities in the crafting and implementation of the world’s most comprehensive peace treaty. And when that treaty was breached—unilaterally sabotaged by the deceitful Magog federation—it was he who defended the injured party—personally—driving the Egyptians out of Israel and destroying the overwhelming Islamic invasion force. In the process he proved his military abilities beyond a shadow of doubt. (The fact that he actually had nothing to do with Gog’s defeat within Israel is conveniently overlooked. *Somebody* has to take

the credit, after all.) Even when disaster struck—when the Jews he was so valiantly trying to protect panicked and used their nuclear weapons against the Muslim foe (the fact that he himself had touched off the nuclear fuse was a secret he was determined to take to the grave), he mounted a Herculean and well-coordinated relief effort saving, so it was claimed, hundreds of thousands of lives. He's so much like Nero, it's scary, but nobody sees the parallels.

All of this makes the European leader the man of the hour. He's tall, handsome, and speaks in a resonant baritone voice, spouting wonderful platitudes in six different languages. Besides, he looks great on TV, and even with electricity prices going through the roof, the television and Internet (which are more or less the same thing by this time) are the last things to go—people are turning off their lights, refrigerators, and washing machines, but not their electronic communication devices.

The news media have gotten themselves back up and running (the war didn't knock out the satellites), and to hear them tell it, everyone on earth is getting behind the European leader. It's true that every government still in operation has voiced its support of a one-world system—sort of a United States of Earth—with the Euro Leader at the helm. But there are multitudes who, as individuals, have their reservations. None of these misgivings are being reported, however, for the media moguls have decreed that unity is of the utmost importance at this crucial juncture in history. It's as ironic as it is hypocritical. For the last hundred years the Western press had been giving front-page coverage to every dissenting voice, ignoring the vast majority who just wanted to live quiet, peaceable lives. After all, controversy sells. So “causes” such as women's lib, homosexual rights, the “need” for a Palestinian homeland on Israeli soil, “reproductive rights” (i.e., the ability to legally kill your unborn children), abolishing the death penalty—for people who impose their own death penalty upon others—and religious freedom (in other words, your God-given right to hate God) had been artificially kept on full boil for decades.

Now the world media was issuing its latest self-fulfilling prophecy: the European leader would soon become the *world's* leader. His program—some of it—has been leaked to the media: he will implement revolutionary technologies to improve life for all people. The power of the computer will be implemented to ensure the freedom of every individual on earth, to fight—even prevent—crime, make wars obsolete, head off medical emergencies, locate missing persons—even make buying groceries and paying your electricity bill easier. It will be a bold, imaginative step, one with utopian benefits for everyone on the planet.

A live televised event is planned to formally introduce the world to their new leader, and as the hour approaches, the despair and anarchy that had gripped the globe begin to dissipate. In the wake of a worldwide nuclear war, amid the worst

ecological disaster since the demise of the dinosaurs, many people actually convince themselves there's hope. They sense that somehow they've always had an inner longing for somebody like this, someone who could take the burden of world government upon his shoulders, a wonderful counselor who would be a father figure to them, one who would finally put an end to war—a prince of peace. Almost no one knew that several thousand years before this, the prophet Isaiah had predicted the appearance of just such a man—unfortunately, not the man the celebrants were honoring, but the One he was impersonating.

In a move fraught with portent, the Antichrist arranges for his inauguration to be held at the scene of his greatest diplomatic triumph—the new Jewish temple in Jerusalem—the building that was designed to convince the Jews that he Muslims could be trusted this time. Ironically, the temple mount, which was supposed to be a symbol of earth's unity, now has a large open area right in the middle of it that will serve perfectly for this huge gathering. The gap was created when exuberant Israelis had bulldozed the Dome of the Rock shortly after Magog's humiliating defeat. They didn't want to give the few remaining Muslims a reason to come back—*ever*. They would not repeat Moshe Dayan's disastrous blunder of 1967.

The big day arrives. It has been almost three and a half years since his first worldwide diplomatic triumph. It's a short time, as history goes, but long enough for people to have forgotten that his Middle East peace plan—his “last, best, hope for world peace”—was the singular event that had primed the world for war. It was the Euro Leader's “covenant with many” that had, despite its promises of peace, focused the irrational hatred of a billion Muslims upon the tiny, insignificant nation of Israel, bringing to a climax decades of divisive squabbling. The world has conveniently failed to comprehend that the Russians had seen *him*—not Israel—as the threat when *Dar al-Islam* had been nuked into oblivion. There are but a relative handful who comprehend that the European leader is evil incarnate. What will they do now? When Germans during the 1930s had perceived the truth about Hitler, many of those who were able had fled the Fatherland. But where can one flee this time? This man is about to assume leadership of the entire world.

The European leader and his entourage climb the stairs to the temple mount in triumph as film crews from news organizations around the world record the scene. The dais has been placed directly over the lower summit of Mount Moriah—the rock around which the Muslims had built their shrine (on the octagonal foundations of the second-century Roman temple to Jupiter). In the background stands the new temple, shimmering despite the darkened sun—a symbol to all the world of the fresh spirit of religious tolerance that had built it. The irony—like the polluted air—is so thick you can cut it with a knife.

As he mounts the dais, the Antichrist greets world leaders, religious potentates, and business magnates; all of the most influential men of the earth have come to pay homage to their new leader. A few chapters back, I hypothesized about a liberal Jewish theologian who would be instrumental in making a “success” out of the Antichrist’s vaunted worldwide ecumenical council. We’ll meet this fellow in scripture in a little while—he plays a major role in what’s coming. For now, imagine him as the master of ceremonies on this most auspicious of occasions, this combination press conference and coronation on the temple mount. The theologian/rabbi/guru gives a glowing forty-minute appraisal of the Antichrist’s accomplishments, characterizing him as a “Prince of Peace.” He prudently neglects to mention his most noteworthy achievement so far—setting off a global thermonuclear war.

Introductions done, the Euro leader approaches the podium. A billion viewers are tuned in—those in cities that weren’t destroyed in the war—watching the scene with fascination and awe. As he begins his speech, however, the scene becomes confused. A shadowy robed figure is seen approaching from behind. A knife is raised high into the air, then thrust with fury deep into the man’s right shoulder, narrowly missing the bullet-proof Kevlar vest he’s wearing. The Euro leader spins around to face his assailant and is shocked to see a man he knows—one of the priests who serve at the new Jewish temple. The deranged priest raises the knife again, and before the stunned onlookers can react, plunges it deep into his victim’s right eye, screaming in Hebrew, “I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other Gods before Me!”

The priest is immediately cut down in a hail of gunfire, but the damage is done. The European leader is mortally wounded. Half a dozen doctors confirm the obvious: his cerebral cortex has sustained massive trauma; he never had a chance—he was dead before his body hit the floor.

I can remember as if it were yesterday a bright fall day during my college freshman year. I had just finished my last class of the day and was strolling across campus toward the parking lot when I noticed all kinds of odd things going on around me—guys running for no apparent reason, girls crumpled on the grass sobbing uncontrollably. Through an open door I saw a classroom full of people watching television; many were weeping. I can’t have walked thirty yards before it became apparent what had happened: President Kennedy had been shot. Analyzing my experience later, I was amazed at how quickly the information had traveled, and how quickly the nation’s perception of the victim shifted—Kennedy’s assassination instantly elevated him from popular politician to revered martyr. People, including me, who hadn’t paid much attention to his life or policies before, suddenly became keenly attuned to everything he had done—and everything he might have accomplished, had he lived.

Now, imagine watching the Antichrist's assassination—on *live television*. Even for those disinterested in politics (and *everybody* will be politically aware after living through the horror of a nuclear war) the man's stature will suddenly be raised to new heights: from the most powerful and influential man on earth to a beloved martyr, a *bona fide* saint, all with the stab of a knife. *But it doesn't matter, you say. The man's dead.* Yes. But therein lies the problem: the Antichrist, now a fallen hero who has instantly attained mythic proportions in the hearts of men and women all over the world, refuses to *stay* dead. Minutes after the coroner confirms his death, as the cameras roll on, the Antichrist regains consciousness and groans. He sits up, asks those nearest him what happened, and complains of a sharp pain in his right eye—he can't see very well, he says. He seems puzzled by the odd reaction of the bystanders—they look as if they've seen a ghost.

But you were dead, they protest. We watched you die. It was horrible!

He gets to his feet, rubbing his shoulder with his left hand. As a billion incredulous viewers watch, he absent-mindedly brushes at the bloodstains on his jacket, and responds, “Yes, that would explain all the fuss. Lucky I wore a dark suit. Loan me your sunglasses—let's get on with this, shall we....”

I'm not making this stuff up (well, not all of it anyway). The Bible tells us what will happen; but it doesn't give us much detail as to how, so I've taken the liberty of fleshing out the plot a little. At this point, we need to get back into the actual scripture. If you'll recall, John was shown this scene: **“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.”**

(Revelation 13:1-2) This established the identity of the man we've come to know as the Antichrist. He is a gentile (from the “sea”) who has taken over a federation of ten kingdoms that was represented by seven “heads,” or leaders. The comparison to wild predators shows him to be swift and ruthless, with both great power and unrivaled authority. But his real strength comes from “the dragon,” Satan himself.

John goes on to say, **“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.”**

(Revelation 13:3) That's it, I'm afraid. A few verses later, John confirms that the wound was literal and apparently mortal, referring to **“the beast who was wounded**

by the sword and lived,” but this is all the Bible gives us plainly concerning the beast’s fatal head wound. Now you know as much about it as I do. Obviously, it could happen in any of a thousand ways—I’ve sketched in one of them. But we know that it *will* happen, and we know that the bottom line is that **“all the world...followed the beast.”**

So where did I get all the specifics about his injuries? From an obscure Old Testament passage that, frankly, I’m not one hundred percent sure applies to the Antichrist. But if not to him, then to whom? You be the judge: **“For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock!”** That establishes his character—he’s perfectly compatible with the self-worshiping Antichrist. And the wounds? **“A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye. His arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded.”** (Zechariah 11:16-17)

And the bit about the Jewish priest/assassin? I made it up: put a big SF9 on that one. But you’ve got to admit, it’s awfully poetic. No one would be in a better position to see through the charade, as you’ll soon see (though there will be many with ample motive). And if the assassin is Jewish, it will make it all the easier for the Antichrist to plausibly make an abrupt about-face in his policy toward Israel’s defense, if (or should I say *when*) it comes to that.

I’m sure you didn’t miss the parallel between Yahshua and the Antichrist here. Both were slain and then rose from the dead. There isn’t an original bone in Lucifer’s body (okay, he’s a spirit—he doesn’t have bones—but you know what I mean). From the very beginning, Satan has been trying to counterfeit Yahweh’s plan for our salvation. This is his last bogus bill. They say that the best way to spot a counterfeit is to be intimately familiar with the real thing. Unfortunately, those who will be fooled by Satan’s plot here have no idea what the real Messiah looks like. But this kind of sign will impress them like Christ’s resurrection never did, because it will happen on live worldwide satellite TV. Satan is the ultimate game-show host, and the name of the game is “You Bet Your Life.”

This is the turning point of the Tribulation. This is where the mask comes off, where the real agenda of the Antichrist becomes clear—sort of. Until now, he has been seen as a political leader in a world desperately trying to convince itself that there is no God. But the whole world has just seen what looks like a *bona fide* miracle. A man has come back to life from the dead. Does this mean that there *is* a god? I believe that the Antichrist will at this point give credit where credit is due: not to Yahweh, you understand. To Lucifer.

It is here that the insight we gleaned from the Illuminati and the Freemasons helps us understand what is going on. “Satan” is not a name; it is a description, an

epithet. It means “adversary.” The being to whom this slur is ascribed—so often we sometimes forget that it’s not his name—is popularly known as Lucifer, who was at one time a prince among Yahweh’s angels—the mightiest of them all. The devil *hates* being called the adversary. He wants to be known as an angel of light, or better yet, worshipped as God Himself. Satan no doubt prefers being called “Lucifer” because he’d really like us humans to believe that he’s the source of enlightenment. That’s why Adam Weishaupt named his satanic “Illuminati” organization after him. To those of us who are personally and intimately familiar with the wealth of Yahweh’s goodness, Satan’s ploys are absurdly easy to spot. (His “Allah” persona is a particularly bad joke.) But the world in their spiritual blindness during these times won’t be able to see that he’s as phony as a pink three-dollar bill: the vast majority will think this counterfeit Christ actually has value.

Satan’s whole agenda, as we read in Isaiah, is to usurp the rightful place of Yahweh in our hearts: **“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!...”** Note that this pegs him as the recipient of all of the false sun-god worship that’s been going on since the days of Nimrod; and linguistically, his name is tied to the crescent moon deity of the Muslims as well. But there’s a possible translation glitch with the word rendered “morning” or “dawn.” The Hebrew noun *sahar* does indeed indicate daybreak, but the emphasis appears to be, as the *TWOT* notes: “that time *just prior* to sunrise.” The adjective *sahor* (spelled identically) means “black” (describing skin or hair color, for example); and the verb *sahar* means “to diligently seek.” It would appear that this “son of the dawn” may *promise* illumination, but he doesn’t quite deliver. It is no accident that the entrance to Yahweh’s tabernacle and temple faced the east: one had to *turn his back* on the rising sun in order to enter His courts.

This is the only place in the English Bible where Satan’s name is even hinted at—and even this is more a description than it is a name. “Lucifer,” Latin for “light bearer” is *Helel* in Hebrew, meaning “shining one, morning star, or day-star. The word upon which it’s based (*Halal*) is a verb that on one end of the spectrum means to shine, flash forth light, or praise, but it also means to boast, to make into a fool, or to act like a madman. How we see him is (by God’s design) our choice to make.

But forget the name. It’s far more important that we know Satan’s character: he’s our *adversary*, our *accuser*. The description continues: **“How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God [i.e., the angelic host]; I will also sit in the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’”** (Isaiah 14:12-14) He knows he isn’t God, of course, but he dreams of being “*like* the Most High.” It’s

ironic, though. Considering the fact that the Creator's name is repeated seven thousand times in scripture, it's a sad commentary indeed that so many people recognize the name "Lucifer," while so few know the self-revealed name of the true and living God: Yahweh.

Anyway, with diplomacy and tact, the Antichrist will eloquently explain who "saved" him from the assassin. He will describe this god of light who has performed such a remarkable sign. He won't refer to him as Satan though, for to him he's not the adversary but the ally. He'll call him by a name he prefers: Lucifer perhaps, or maybe Allah, or simply "the Lord" (which, after all, is what Ba'al meant). And then he'll call upon the world to join him in worshiping his god—the one who restored his life. Again we see a blatant Satanic counterfeit: as Christians worship Yahweh through his resurrected Messiah, Yahshua, the Antichrist will be demanding that the world worship Lucifer through himself. I personally have a hard time comprehending how anybody could fall for this, but then again, Satan has an impressive track record of persuading people with disastrously illogical but brilliantly packaged arguments. I mean, look at Islam. Give Muslims booty or promise them a paradise filled with virgins, wine, and low-hanging fruit and they'll follow you anywhere—even to hell.

Whether or not Satan is actually responsible for bringing the Antichrist back to life is a matter of conjecture. I don't know if Yahweh has given him the ability to do that—and that's what it would take: God-given ability. The prophetic record is rather ambiguous on this point. It could just as easily be slight of hand illusion (he wasn't really dead) or demonic possession and reanimation of his corpse. We aren't given enough information to be dogmatic. But we do know one thing for sure: the whole world buys it: **"So they worshiped the dragon [named "Lucifer"] who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months."** (Revelation 13:4-5)

The cat, as it were, is out of the bag: the inhabitants of earth now know who they're dealing with. As the Rolling Stones put it (without having a clue how terrifyingly close to reality they'd stumbled) their devil says: "Please allow me to introduce myself; I'm a man of wealth and taste...." The one John calls the "dragon" is now, perhaps for the first time ever, presented to the world openly. And the Antichrist? The people won't call him the "beast" or the "Antichrist," of course. He will be spoken of in the most glowing and flattering of terms. There is to be no more ambiguity. Satan will no longer hide behind religion and petty distractions. It's time for a showdown: the world must choose between Yahweh and "Lucifer."

I don't really understand why, but Yahweh has allotted a full three and a half years—basically the entire second half of the Tribulation period—for Satan to rule the earth in person through the Antichrist. Perhaps it's His sense of fair play. He doesn't want anyone coming to Him later and whining, "I was tricked—I didn't understand what was going on. It all happened so fast." *Everyone* will understand that they're making a conscious choice: you're either for Yahweh or against Him. For once in their lives, they'll get the candidate they voted for. This period—three-and-a-half years, or forty-two months, or 1,260 days, (remember, we're still using the prophetic-year reckoning of 360 days)—is referred to many times in scripture (though the last half of the Tribulation is not always perfectly coterminous with every "1,260-day" period). We'll see it described again by Daniel later in this chapter. If you thought the first half was bad—thermonuclear war, environmental disaster, the death of a third of the earth's oceans and a quarter of its population—then you're in for a shock. It only gets worse.

"Then he [the Antichrist] opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven...." Note that he didn't blaspheme the *temple* (which he plans to utilize for his own purposes), but the "tabernacle," the *skene* in Greek—the movable tent that provided the pattern for the temple. If I may read between the lines, it seems that what's being attacked and blasphemed here is the plan of God for the redemption and reconciliation of mankind, that which the tabernacle was designed to symbolize in a hundred little details. Even now, God's plan stands as an impediment to the beast's agenda. "Those who dwell in heaven" are the rapture participants, whether living or dead on the day of the harvest. They are all beyond his reach now, and he hates it.

If you'll recall, Yahshua assured us that the "gates of hell would not prevail" against the called out assembly that He would build upon the testimony of Peter (i.e., the He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God). This would be the case during the entire "church age" (i.e., up through Philadelphia, the church of the rapture). But now we read of a horrible (though temporary) paradigm shift: **"It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."** We are being confronted with a terrifying reality here: everyone on earth at this time is either "written in the Lamb's Book of Life" or worships the Antichrist. There is no middle ground, no way to avoid making the choice. And failure to worship the beast carries with it the death penalty. **"If anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."**

(Revelation 13:6-10) John concludes the passage by giving us a bird's eye view of the final forty-two months of the history of mankind.

We see several things that distinguish this period of time. First, the Antichrist is in complete control of the whole earth now, not just the Balkans, Europe, or the lands he was able to overrun in the opening days of World War III. Second, he is now openly blaspheming Yahweh and everything and everyone associated with His kingdom. He can't touch the raptured saints, of course, but he goes out of his way to attack all that they stood for. Two groups find themselves in his crosshairs: the Jews (whose incredible national epiphany we'll explore in a future chapter) and the new Christians, the neoEkklesia, those gentiles who have belatedly chosen to follow Yahshua after the rapture—the Fellowship of Repentant Laodicea, if you will. Both groups must either flee and “go underground,” or stay put and perish—for 1,260 of the longest days imaginable.

Third, now that Satan has come out of the closet, the world is divided into two—and only two—camps: those who are Yahweh's children, and those who worship Satan. The ramifications are stunning. This means that all of the world's religions (excluding the reverence for Yahweh, which as we have observed is not really a religion at all but rather a relationship between God and His people)—*all of them* come to terms at some level with the fact that their god is actually Lucifer! This has always been the reality, though concealed beneath a cloak of secrecy and false identities from Ba'al, Merodach, and Chemosh, to Diana, Zeus, and Apollo, to Shiva, Vishnu, and Allah—to the pitiful, dead caricature of Jesus so many settle for in today's apostate world. But note that Yahweh has known all along who were His, for their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, even these latecomers. Yes, they're going to experience a few very tough years, but God's eye is on His children. The Antichrist may kill their bodies, for this is Satan's moment in the sun. But he can't touch their souls, because their spirits are forever linked with that of the eternal living God.

That, however, brings up an interesting question. We've seen two of Satan's most influential tools—Islam and Catholicism—get pummeled during the first half of the Tribulation. Doesn't that mean the devil is fighting against himself? Doesn't he have an interest in perpetuating the lie? No, not any more.

The answer gets to the heart of his real agenda. Throughout the history of man, Satan has apparently been content to seduce people away from Yahweh. But he wants more: he wants to be worshiped as himself, as “Lucifer,” the light bearer—something that has always been a rare phenomenon in this world, something so horrible it had to be done in secret if at all. So Satan has always had to use surrogates, substitutes, gods with other names who were nothing but figments of the imagination, gods who had been given substance by priests and sculptors (or, more recently, by advertising agencies). He has never really wanted man to believe that there is no God. What he has desired, rather, was for man to believe that there was no *Yahweh*. Satan's greatest yearning, from day one, has

been for mankind to worship him openly for who he thinks he is: Lucifer—not Allah, not Krishna, not Mary and a gaggle of saints, not even a phony caricature of a Jesus who bears no resemblance to the Yahshua of history and heaven. Only Lucifer—alone and glorified: *Helel*, the boaster.

You’ve got three and a half years, big guy. Knock yourself out. You said, “**I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.**” Just remember what the *real* God said through his prophet when he described you: “**Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.**” (Isaiah 14:14-15)

A few chapters back, if you’ll recall, I concluded from the convoluted evidence in Revelation 17 that the Antichrist would be possessed by the same demon that inhabited the twisted Roman Emperor Nero. But the disasters of the Tribulation’s first half were precipitated by the actions of one who, as far as I can tell, wasn’t necessarily demon possessed. Yes, the Antichrist was following Satan’s plan to the letter, and yes, his intrigues resulted in unmitigated horrors unleashed upon the earth. But what he did and why he did it speak of a garden-variety megalomaniac on the order of a Mussolini or Saddam, albeit a really clever one who’s getting lots of Satanic assistance. Now, as we approach the three-and-a-half year mark, we perceive a quantum leap in evil. I believe that it is here, in the Antichrist’s apparent return from the dead, that we see the demon of Nero take over his persona (not that he’s an unwilling participant—he has consciously sold his soul in exchange for unlimited temporal power).

When John states matter-of-factly that “**It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them**” (Revelation 13:7), he’s announcing that things are about to get worse—much worse. The overt persecution of Yahweh’s people is about to begin, and those who aren’t specifically sealed (that is, every follower of Yahshua now on earth except for the 144,000 Jewish messengers) will suddenly be faced with two choices; run and hide, or stay and die. There will be no more pretense of religious or political tolerance, no more gently coaxing cautious Jews into his camp through favors and concessions, no more lenience for dissenting opinion. From now on, the name of the game is submission. Of course, the whole thing will be couched in politically correct terms: *for the greater good of society at large, for the future of our children, the anarchy must be reined in; the benefits of the new worldwide system of law and order will far outweigh the little inconveniences. We must all pull together in this great endeavor; we can and will forge a bright new tomorrow from the ashes of yesterday’s failures.* Good grief.

It is not without significance that John's whole discussion of the Antichrist's new openly Satanic agenda comes upon the heels of a symbolism-rich recap of the history and prophecy of these days. We, too, should pause and get our bearings. **"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars...."** The woman is Israel. Her garland is her twelve tribes, and the sun in which she is enrobed represents the glory of Yahweh. Could the moon under her feet be Islam's crescent and the greater counterfeit it represents? The symbol certainly fits. Here again we are reminded that Isaiah 14's *helel ben sahar*, generously rendered "Lucifer, son of the dawn," aspires to be mistaken for Yahweh, the true light, but throughout history he has had to masquerade as something else—a mere reflection, as the moon's light is of the sun. **"Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.... She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne."** (Revelation 12:1-2, 5) The only child destined to rule like this is Yahshua. His human roots and destiny are outlined here—the in-between stuff is left out. Of special interest is the word translated "caught up," *harpazo* in Greek—the same word Paul used to describe the eventual rapture of those who would follow Him—those who would be described as "the body of Christ."

"And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born." (Revelation 12:3-4)

What I want to know is how John knew what a dragon looked like. Does my mental picture of dragons (based on medieval art and Saturday matinees) match—even remotely—what he saw? I don't suppose it matters. At any rate, this is definitely Satan. If there were any doubts, they are dispelled in both Revelation 12:9 and 20:2, where the dragon, the serpent of Garden-of-Eden fame, the devil (meaning "slanderer"), and Satan (the "adversary") are all identified as the same creature. It also proves that Herod was acting under the devil's explicit instructions when he ordered the children in Bethlehem slaughtered in an attempt to destroy the coming King.

It's no coincidence that the dragon is described as having **"seven [crowned] heads and ten horns."** This is precisely how the political empire of the Antichrist, a.k.a. the beast, is described. Does this mean they're the same thing? No, but it does establish that the Antichrist is operating in the spirit and power of Satan. This is no coincidence. We have already seen (actually, it's a few chapters *later* in Revelation) how the seven heads are associated with Roman Emperors—a metaphor for godless earthly authority. And Rome, you'll recall, was the only remotely logical candidate for the fulfillment of Daniel's explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's fourth kingdom of iron, or the fourth prophetic beast of Daniel

7. Of course with Biblical prophecy these symbols often take on several layers of meaning and have near and far fulfillments. One thing is absolutely certain: the Antichrist and the dragon are joined at the spiritual hip.

John continues the overview: **“Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”** (Revelation 12:6) In a twisted sort of way, it’s gratifying to learn that Israel has finally learned to take instructions. Their Messiah, during His Olivet discourse, had told them (i.e., told those living in Judea) that a time would come, marked by a specific sign, when they would have to run for their lives. In Revelation, we are assured that Israel (the “woman”), as a nation, will do precisely that. Those who flee will be sheltered for three and a half years—the same three and a half years in which the Antichrist exercises authority over the earth. The “they” that “feed her” in the wilderness I take to be those “stars of heaven,” who were *not* swept away by the dragon’s tail—in other words, angels who remained loyal to Yahweh. Supplying the needs of the “woman,” Israel, is in perfect accord with Yahweh’s consistent and long-standing promises to her.

Here’s how Mark recorded Yahshua’s admonition: **“So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ [we’ll cover this shortly] spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.”** (Mark 13:14-19) The parallel passage in Matthew calls this period of time the “great tribulation,” and Jeremiah calls it the “time of Jacob’s trouble.” We’ll talk about this episode in detail in a coming chapter. For now, just note that the shift in the political wind that causes the Jews to flee is extremely sudden. There’s no time to plan; there’s not even enough time to pack.

But not all of the action’s here on earth. Although we can’t be dogmatic about the timing, it appears to me that the following scene culminates near the midpoint of the Tribulation, for it signals a drastic change in Satan’s *modus operandi*. **“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”** (Revelation 12:7-9) Angels and demons, though spirits, are finite creatures—they can’t be in more than one place at a time. The reason Lucifer is called the devil, i.e. the slanderer, is that he spends time in heaven accusing us of being sinful, unworthy people. He’s right, of course, but if we’re willing to accept

God's gift of salvation, our penalty has already been paid, so his case gets thrown out of court. At some point, however, Satan and his angels will be evicted—they will no longer have access to the throne of Yahweh—contempt of court, I suppose. This is good news and bad news: he won't be accusing Christians any more (as if God couldn't see our shortcomings on His own if He had chosen to look), but from that point forward, Satan and his minions will be spending all their time on earth, walking about like roaring lions looking for tasty spiritual morsels to devour.

John explains. **“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.’”** (Revelation 12:10-12) After almost six thousand years of satanic trickery and deceit focused on separating us from the God who made us, it's come down to this: a final three and a half years of open warfare against mankind upon the earth. Not against God, you understand: Satan's already lost that battle. His anger is directed against the sole object of his jealous hatred—man.

Here's the way Satan sees the game: if he can get you to your grave without knowing Yahweh, he's won. Of course, he'd prefer it if you'd actually side with him—to accept his spirit and be “born from below” as Yahweh's people are “born from above.” Those who are indwelt with Satan's spirit are his most effective tool in obfuscating the message of Yahweh's redeeming love. But as much as Satan craves our worship and submission, he's willing to settle for our souls. Until this point he's been content to leave people alone who were disinterested in, or antagonistic toward, the Word of God—those people would likely die in their sins anyway, so why expend the effort? But now it's a whole new ball game. He can no longer afford to sit around and wait for the lost to die of natural causes. Satan is now like the forlorn cartoon vulture sitting on a tree limb who turns to his buddy and says, “Heck with patience. I'm going to go out and kill something.” A major paradigm shift is indicated here. Satan is no longer seen merely fostering ungodly behavior in the earth—now he's harvesting all the lost souls he can, while he's still got the chance. He knows his days are growing short.

Nor is he prohibited from killing God's children any more—something he now begins to do with reckless abandon, as much out of spite as to prevent the “cancer” of eternal life from spreading. I get the feeling that among the saved at this point in history, hanging on to one's mortal life is no longer a top priority.

Every soul who dies trusting in Yahshua is further evidence that Satan has been “overcome by the blood of the Lamb.” He can’t win.

When the heavenly voice said, **“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea,”** I think we can safely assume that he was speaking of Jews (commonly symbolized by the earth or land) and Gentiles (the sea). **“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [i.e., three and a half years], from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”** (Revelation 12:13-17)

The first group on Satan’s hit list is Israel. Although this is nothing new for Satan, it’s a 180-degree turnaround for the one he has empowered as his emissary: the Antichrist—at least as far as his public persona is concerned. As we shall see in a future chapter, the trigger for his newfound rage is Israel’s national rejection of his Messianic claims, and worse (for him), their belated acceptance of their true Messiah, Yahshua.

Time after time in the Book of Judges we read of Yahweh’s willingness to rescue Israel when they cried out for help. Here, for the first time in a long time, Israel is crying out to Yahweh again: “Save us!” The phrase “two wings of a great eagle” seems to modern ears to be a reference to the use of aircraft as the Jews make their escape. It may mean nothing more than this, but I have my doubts. I’m having trouble picturing six or eight million Israelis lined up at David Ben Gurion Airport trying to catch El Al flights to the middle of nowhere. The whole point of fleeing to the “wilderness” is that it’s hard to get to. No, I think something else is happening here.

Could it be that the “great eagle” represents America? I know, *I know*—all of the governments of the earth, America included, will have fallen under the suzerainty of the Antichrist by this time. But factor in that we’ve had three and a half years of angelic preaching and witnessing by the 144,000, and I think there could well be enough latent mutiny in the U.S. military (who have always been more honorable than the politicians who issue its marching orders) to engineer a massive, spontaneous, and unauthorized rescue effort on behalf of the Jews. There’s no reason to suppose that the huge American contingent of the U.N. peacekeeping force stationed in Israel will have been sent home at this time. They will be on the scene, equipped for battle, and will still remember their original

directive: protect Israel. One thing's for sure: such an operation would definitely separate the sheep from the goats.

A few chapters back, I reiterated the popular theory that Isaiah 18 refers to America. Listen again to the payoff verse: **“In that time a present will be brought to Yahweh of Hosts: a people [whose description leads us to the conclusion that they are Americans]—to the place of the name of Yahweh of Hosts, to Mount Zion.”** (Isaiah 18:7) If Americans are to be responsible for bringing the Jews back to Jerusalem from wherever they've fled, it isn't inconceivable that Americans will also be responsible for hiding and protecting them in the first place. I don't know for sure, of course. The evidence is cryptic, to say the least. Maybe it's just wishful thinking on my part. I'd love to see my countrymen form the backbone of the Fellowship of Repentant Laodicea. At any rate, this scenario sure beats our present course, leading the lynch mob demanding that Israel commit geographical suicide by surrendering her buffer territories to her mortal enemies.

And what about the “flood” sent by the serpent to destroy the Jews? Is that literal—is it water? I doubt it. The last three and a half years of the Tribulation, as we shall see, will be a time of worldwide drought. Since Satan has in times past been given the ability to manipulate storms (cf. Job 1:19, Mark 4:37), this drought is, like the ten plagues of Egypt, a sign from God that Satan's teeth have been pulled. So though we don't know precisely when this “flood” will occur, it seems highly unlikely that Satan will be able to conjure up a deluge of water—especially one extensive enough to threaten millions of people. But a “flood” of gentile troops? Troops that get swallowed by the desert? Yeah, that makes sense (in a divine wrath sort of way). It would also explain why, after **“the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood,”** the Antichrist didn't merely pursue the Jews using conventional military means: he's *already* sent everything he had after them—with disastrous results. (Is there a Pharaoh in the house?)

It's those @#%&! Christians, the world leader will seethe. This is all their fault. Even if nobody else gets it, the Antichrist will understand the bond—like a mother and her child—between the Jews and Christians. I've heard commentators claim that all of the Tribulation martyrs will be dead by the Tribulation's midpoint, freeing God to “do his worst” to the remaining world. Sorry, it's just not true. Yahshua is, even now, “standing at the door, knocking,” appealing to a lost world to invite him in.

And the Antichrist? At this point he and his pet dragon will go out **“to make war with the rest of [Israel's] offspring.”** Over a billion and a half people are already dead, but he's just getting warmed up. No more Mr. Nice Guy.

Chapter 19

Visions of Grandeur

When Yahshua began His earthly ministry, He was heralded by a charismatic figure we know as John the Baptist, who had been predicted to come in the spirit and power of Elijah. John was the last of the “Old Testament” prophets—that is, men called to announce Yahweh’s program in the days before Yahshua’s death, burial, and resurrection ushered in the “Kingdom of Heaven.” The Antichrist knows that he too will need a forerunner like John if he is to pass for the Messiah.

He’s not a very good match, I’m afraid, but the Antichrist’s herald is this guy: **“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon....”** Notice that this beast comes “up out of the earth” (in contrast to the first beast, the Antichrist, who rises “up out of the sea.”) The use of this common metaphor leads me to believe that he’s a Jew (SF3). In my hypothetical narrative, I’ve already introduced this character as an Israeli religious leader or theologian of some sort, someone who is, like the Antichrist, widely honored and respected. If you’ll recall, I guessed that he would be roundly hailed as a “prophet for the New Age,” or some such nonsense. The comparison to a lamb reminds us of Yahshua’s introduction in Revelation 5. But there the Messiah had seven horns. This beast has two (which I take to mean spiritual influence over both Jews and gentiles—SF6). In other words, this lamb/beast may look sort of like the real thing, but he’s an impostor. The real tip-off, of course, is what he says: he speaks like the dragon—his words are smooth and slick, but if you listen to him, you’ll get burned.

John the Baptist introduced Yahshua to the world, saying simple and profound things like, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” This False Prophet, showing more flair for the theatrical than John could have dreamed of, operates as a combination master of ceremonies, press agent, and house magician for the Antichrist. **“And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men....”** A few years ago, I went to see the illusionist David Copperfield in a live performance. Before my very eyes, I watched him perform stunts that were clearly “impossible,” like making a motorcycle disappear from the stage in a cloud of smoke, only to make it reappear moments later—*with him riding it*—on a small platform set in the middle of the audience. My point is that though my senses told me it was all real, I *knew* he was faking it, though I couldn’t figure out how.

Would I commit my soul to a course of action based on the amazing things I'd seen? Of course not. So why are the inhabitants of the earth buying into the Antichrist's program just because they've seen some "great signs?" Bear in mind that the vast majority of people will never see these signs in person, but only via their televisions or computer screens. And that only makes it worse. I've seen entire *planets* explode on the silver screen. How's the False Prophet going to top that? Either these are *some signs* he's performing, or the inhabitants of earth have grown terribly gullible. I suspect it's a little of both. Unlike me and my intellectual admiration for the talents of David Copperfield, the Antichrist's audience is emotionally desperate for a savior, and they're willing to suspend reason if it helps them believe what they so frantically *want* to believe. Most of them, truth be told, would follow the Antichrist *without* all the signs and wonders: all they really want is an end to the misery, uncertainty, destruction, and death they've seen in the past three years, and nobody else seems to have answers.

Twice John tells us that the False Prophet does his sleight of hand "signs" only when the Antichrist is around. This is calculated to add to the illusion of divine intervention. **"And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed."** (Revelation 13:11-15) Why do all these megalomaniac types feel like they have to have big statues of themselves? They all seem to have an edifice complex.

Big? Actually, that's an extrapolation or assumption we can't really make. We aren't told what the "image" is like, or how it's built or presented. It might be a huge statue like those Lenin or Saddam seemed to favor so much, but that's pretty "twentieth century." It could, on the other hand, given the technological advances of the age, be a hologram or some other type of electronic apparition or projection, which would have the advantage of being able to make "live" appearances in multiple locations at the same time. Note that this "image" is built by others upon the demand of the False Prophet. The image is said to be "*to* the beast," that is, in honor of him. But the word for image is *eikon*, meaning a representation of something or someone, which begs the question: who, precisely is the "beast?" The Antichrist and the demon who inhabits him are spoken of interchangeably in these passages, and the dragon, Satan, is the one who empowers them both. An image made in honor of one of them honors them all. It seems most likely, however, that the "image of the beast" is a visual representation of the Antichrist. Remember, he has at this point been publicly assassinated and "miraculously" reanimated. But the *real* man may not be quite as "presentable" as Satan would like you to believe (though he's definitely alive

because we'll read of his capture and death at the "battle" of Armageddon, much later in our story).

The False Prophet's slickest trick is undoubtedly the animation of the Antichrist's likeness. John reports that "**he [the false prophet] was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast,**" but "breath" here is a loaded word: it's *pneuma*, normally translated "spirit." Strong's offers as its second definition of *pneuma*, "the spirit, i.e., the vital principal by which the body is animated." In other words, this image—like the Antichrist it honors and represents—actually becomes "alive" at some level. Of course, to John, even an actor on a television sit-com would have looked "alive," so maybe we shouldn't read too much into the concept of "giving breath to the image of the beast." But if it *is* a real spirit animating the image, I believe it's the dragon's own persona. Notice that the worship of the masses is to be directed toward the *image*, not to the Antichrist. That's all Satan wants—to be worshipped as if He were God. This is turning out to be scarier than it looked at first glance.

What would we think if we saw the Statue of Liberty climb off her pedestal in New York Harbor and stroll down 5th Avenue? (I've seen that one at the movies, too.) No doubt we'd all be amazed. But what if she then said that everybody in Manhattan had to bow down in worship to her or she'd squash them like bugs? Amazement would quickly become fear: some would bow, and some would run, but everybody would take her seriously, especially after she began stomping on passers by. Multiply all that by a million, and you've got the basic idea of what's going on here in Revelation 13.

An image—an idol, if you will—is a surrogate for whatever it represents. Those who bow before (i.e., do the bidding of) the image are actually worshipping the man himself and the dragon who empowers him. I know that seems pretty elementary, but Yahweh thought it was important enough to make the prohibition of image worship His second commandment: "**You shall not make for yourselves any carved image**" (Exodus 20:4)—right after the biggie, having no gods but Him alone. The reason I'm stressing this is that the "image" won't necessarily take the form of a statue. Even though it's spoken of as a singular entity—*an* image, *the* image—and though the abomination of desolation, which is an apt description for such an image, is said to be seen "**standing in the holy place**" (Matthew 24:15), all such "graven images" are prohibited by the Second Commandment. Who knows what kind of new technology might be pressed into the devil's service by then? Maybe everybody will be required to carry around a credit-card-sized hologram generator that delivers the Big Guy's daily fireside chat, live and in three dimensions, every afternoon precisely at six o'clock. I just don't know. But those required to worship the image will.

Whatever form the image takes, it will only serve to demonstrate that some things never change. The prophet Habakkuk wrote, **“What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, the molded image, a teacher of lies, that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols? Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’ To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’ Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, yet in it there is no breath [Hebrew: *ruach*—spirit] at all. But Yahweh is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”** (Habakkuk 2:18-20) It’s interesting that the prophet defines these worthless idols by their lack of breath or spirit, and yet the False Prophet is said to “give breath” to the Antichrist’s image. This is clearly an idol designed to fool some of the people all of the time—the jaded yet gullible lost souls of the Great Tribulation. The bottom line for the False Prophet is the same as for any idol maker: **“Woe to him....”**

In the three-ring circus of popular eschatology, if the “center ring” is the rapture of the Church, the other two must be the battle of Armageddon and our next subject, the Mark of the Beast. Even the most ignorant seem to have die-hard opinions about these three hot topics. Makes me want to skip it and move on.

But you’ve stuck with me this far, so I’ll give it my best shot. The Mark of the Beast is mentioned eight times in Revelation (and nowhere else in scripture, which should tell you something about its relative lack of significance to those of us on this side of the rapture). In only one passage is it explained in any detail, and even then, as prophecies go, this one is more cryptic than most: **“He [the False Prophet—the beast from the land] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”** (Revelation 13:16-18) That’s it. That’s all there is. For centuries, these three little verses have been generating controversy far beyond their importance to the people doing the debating.

And why is that? Why does everyone consider the Mark such a big deal? It’s because of the dire consequences of “receiving” it. John explains in the next chapter: **“Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image,**

and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:9-11) Yeah. That sounds bad. So before I attempt to explain what the mark actually is, I’d like to clear up the matter of who it’s for and what it does.

First, notice the dichotomy between **“He causes all...to receive a mark”** and **“If anyone...receives his mark.”** This implies that the mark will be compulsory by international law—*everyone* will be required to have the Mark—presumably to ensure that the system works properly. But some, engaging in “civil disobedience,” will refuse it, which will make them outlaws, unable to function or participate within society. The Mark alone grants access to the world of commerce, for **“no one may buy or sell”** without it or what it represents. So it’s a bad-news-worse-news story for those living in these dark days: take the Mark and you can collect your pay and buy food for your family, but by doing so you’ll be bringing down the wrath of God on your head. Or refuse the Mark, become an outcast from society, and bring down the wrath of the *Antichrist* on your head. The false prophet, lest we’ve forgotten, has the power of life and death over the world’s populace, and he’s not squeamish about using it: **“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast.... As many as would not worship the image of the beast [would] be killed.”**

Don’t get me wrong: it won’t be “optional,” any more than refraining from stealing cars or not robbing banks is optional. Refuse the Mark and you’ll be breaking the law—and the penalty is death. The choice, though, is between breaking the law of Man or breaking the law of God. Everyone on earth will eventually have to decide between openly allying himself with the Antichrist by receiving his Mark or being persecuted for refusing it.

Second, notice that the mark is inextricably linked with the *worship* of the Antichrist: **“If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark....”** This is the key to the whole thing. No one will be in doubt as to what they’re doing when they accept the Mark of the Beast. It will be characterized as an indication of support, cooperation, loyalty, even devotion to the Antichrist and the god he serves. And remember, Lucifer’s role will no longer be a secret at this point. Bowing to the Antichrist will be recognized as being tantamount to bowing to Satan.

If you think about it, the Mark of the Beast firmly links the doctrine of salvation by grace to a pre-tribulation rapture. Those who believe that the Church will go through the Tribulation (taking the “post-tribulation rapture” position) are saddled with a salvation-by-works scenario: if refusing to accept the Mark is what saves believers in the Tribulation from the eternal wrath of Yahweh, then they are being saved by their own works. There is therefore no reason for Yahshua to have shed his blood for their sins. But if refusing the Mark is the criteria for last-generation Christians, what must *earlier* believers—those who die before the

Mark is instituted—do to earn their salvation? They are, as they say in theological circles, “screwed.” No similar works are specified for them—only the grace of Yahshua is provided. One way or another, the Post-Toasties (as a friend of mine calls them) have a terrible problem.

Here’s what’s really happening. The trial that is imminent for those who refuse the Mark is specifically that from which Christ promised to spare the Church of the rapture, i.e., that of Philadelphia. Yahshua said to them, **“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”** (Revelation 3:10) So deciding whether or not to take the Mark of the Beast *is* the trial—a test that’ll be graded on the pass-or-fail system. To those who have accepted Yahshua’s grace after the rapture—to the Church of Repentant Laodicea—He said, **“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”** (Revelation 3:19) And indeed, for many, the refusal to align themselves with the Antichrist will cost them their lives—the ultimate “chastening.” Putting their lives at risk in the name of Yahweh will surely require both “zeal” and “repentance”—a change of mind.

But their sacrifice is not lost on heaven: there they are lauded as those who **“did not love their lives to the death.”** (Revelation 12:11) Indeed, these are they (in the most literal of senses) of whom Yahshua spoke: **“Then [Yahshua] said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.’”** (Luke 9:23-26) On the other hand, I have a feeling that, survival instinct aside, they may not be all that concerned about hanging onto their mortal lives by this time—the world will have become a nasty place to live. As a matter of fact, even the Spirit of God states that there will come a time when being dead—presuming you’re in Christ, that is—will actually be considered a blessing: **“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord [Yahshua] from now on...that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”** (Revelation 14:13) Notice that their works *follow* them, not save them.

So it’s clear that the Mark of the Beast is something imposed during the Tribulation—and it won’t be required until right around the midpoint, when the Antichrist is given authority over the whole world. This will be the beginning of the *Great* Tribulation, presumably just after Satan has been thrown out of heaven and is aware of how little time he has left. There will be a specific point in time when Lucifer will come out of the closet for all the world to see, demanding worship through his minion, the Antichrist. The only believers, then, who will be

faced with the “test”—*should I take the Mark or should I head for the hills?*—are those who were saved between the rapture and this satanic unveiling, known as the “abomination of desolation.” They will be required to demonstrate their faith by their works—to choose between expedience and devotion, between death masquerading as life and life disguised as death—by refusing to receive the Mark. This is the crucible of the refining process of which Yahshua warned Laodicea in Revelation 3:18. Though people saved before the rapture may encounter trials, they will never be faced with this particular test.

Not to belabor the point, but this is not something new, some super-test for super-saints. In a very real sense, every Christian has always faced the same kind of choices, though usually with less dire *temporal* consequences at stake. James talked about it at length: **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith....”** I have the feeling that quite a few new Christians (being law-abiding citizens at heart) will be asking Yahweh for wisdom when it comes down to a choice between doing what the law requires and following their conscience, which is begging them not to—especially if they don’t know what nasty consequences promise to follow.

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren....” It’s as if James was talking directly to the Tribulation believers. The temptation they’ll face to take the Mark will be tough, there’s no doubt—it’s probably the worst temptation in history. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden had no such appeal: the serpent never said to Adam and Eve, “If you don’t eat the fruit, I’ll kill you.” That’s why Yahweh warned the Tribulation Saints about the consequences ahead of time. This is like the blessings-and-cursings passage of Deuteronomy all over again (only shorter, and personalized—not national in scope). Israel blew it and paid the price the first time. Let us pray that the post-rapture believers will not.

James continues the thought: **“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can [such a] faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone**

will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (James 1:2-6, 12-16, 2:14-19) Refusing to take the Mark of the Beast will first and foremost entail the faith to believe that God is as good as His word—that even though it might cost you your mortal life, you are *still* safe in the arms of Yahshua. But after all that, there is still the “sheep and goats” issue: sheltering the emissaries of Christ during the Tribulation (definitely the 144,000, and perhaps other believers on the run as well) will be a terribly risky enterprise, but one that Yahshua equates with meeting *His* needs.

What, exactly, is the Mark? We aren't told, so it's impossible to be dogmatic. The word in Greek is *charagma*, which *Strong's* defines as “a scratch or etching, i.e., a stamp (as a badge of servitude) or sculptured figure (statue), hence: graven, mark.” Our word “character” comes from the same root. Even though the word can mean something graven in three dimensions like a statue, a different word (*eikon*, meaning an image that represents someone, a likeness) is used for the “image” or statue of the beast.

Its description and function give us the strongest clues. As we saw, everyone will be required “**to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads.**” We may therefore infer that the Mark is a physical sign that identifies its bearer as part of the “system.” You're either in or out. It will be either visible to the eye or otherwise detectable (perhaps electronically), and because it is applied to a specific part of the body, it will function as an identity badge to authorize or qualify its owner. Note that having some sort of mark *per se* is not necessarily a bad thing—it's spiritually neutral. We all remember the serial numbers the Nazis tattooed on their death camp victims during World War II, and I'm told that Coptic Christians in Egypt today often tattoo a small cross on their right hands—to show that they're *not* the beast's.

Before the age of computers, Bible expositors naturally assumed that everyone would have the same Mark, perhaps a simple 666 tattoo, that would tell whoever checked that you were an “official” human being, eligible to receive all the rights and privileges afforded by your status in the Antichrist's new world order. That theory fit the requirements of scripture well enough, but since the advent of the microchip, it is now possible to envision how the Mark could *in itself* fulfill much more of the prophecy.

In order for the Antichrist to hope to pull this off, the Mark must not only be required, but *desired*. Force is hard to apply on a worldwide scale. For the Mark's

implementation to become a practical reality, there will have to be a reason for people to *want* to have it. And there is. Actually, if you're able to mentally remove all of the Satanic baggage, the scenario of the Mark sounds like a dream come true for every law-abiding citizen of planet earth. (Remember: Satan's evil, not stupid.) The only reason possible precursors or models for the Mark are routinely shunned today is because there are still quite a few people around who are familiar with the Christian Scriptures. But as we and our point of view are marginalized during the days leading up to the rapture, the stigma associated with these "pre-Marks" will evaporate. The process has already begun.

The key to the Mark's physical nature is John's description of its function. **"No one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."** How is that possible? A generic "I'm-in-the-club" Mark would be virtually useless in preventing commerce, especially in the black market, which might be expected to thrive in a post-nuclear-war world. As long as there's money—currency—in circulation, paper notes or metal coins that society agrees have specific value, buying and selling will go on, regardless of what the government has to say about it. If you don't believe me, ask your friendly neighborhood drug dealer or prostitute—the money that goes through their hands bears no semblance of official regulation. No one other than the parties involved in the transaction has any idea what's going on. No records are kept, no taxes are paid, no infringements of the law are divulged. If you think about it, cash is often the very thing that makes crime possible.

Now imagine yourself in the post-nuke world. Governments that haven't already fallen are teetering on the brink of collapse. Most of the world, financially, looks like Germany in 1920. Remember the third seal judgment? *A loaf of bread for a full day's pay*. It's not just that food is scarce. It's that inflation is rampant. People no longer trust the currency of their nations like they used to. The value of a dollar (euro, yen, peso, pound, or ruble, etc.) is directly related to the confidence people have in the government issuing the currency. And what is the totalitarian mind's standard answer to that kind of problem? Control, of course—starting with wages and prices. It will be complicated, since the crisis has engulfed the entire globe, but with the power and technology now at the disposal of this centrally administered one-world government, the first order of business will be to reinvent the socioeconomic wheel.

Cash, as we have seen, is practically obsolete even today. And in a world where control is imposed globally from the top down, currency will be the first thing they look at. *Is it even necessary anymore?* The Antichrist will have been pondering this for years, and now, near the half-way point in the Tribulation, he will implement his plan. It will consist of two parts: electronic money and a comprehensive database that tracks and monitors every living human being. The

necessary technology is commonplace already—it has been around for years. The only things lacking have been the will and the authority to put the plan into action.

There will be no apparent downside from the point of view of the Antichrist's administration: it will be seen as the ultimate way to exact submission from the earth's unruly population. The threat of financial disenfranchisement will be enough to keep almost everyone in line.

And in the shadow of decades of deficit spending by nations large and small, the Antichrist may also see an opportunity to finally impose some financial stability on the earth—and solidify his own power at the same time. Profligate and irresponsible fiscal mismanagement by governments large and small had pushed the price of commodities like gold (upon which sound national finances used to be based) to astronomical levels. But the Antichrist reasons that if the world has only one currency, the value of which is set by fiat declaration by the central government (*him*) without reference to the perceived value of gold or anything else—then no person or organization or nation will be in a position to influence or control anything: the beast will hold all the cards.

This move will in itself destroy the best laid plans of nations like Russia and China, who had been buying and hoarding gold and silver for decades in an effort to weather the storm that even they could see brewing on the horizon. If they had paid attention to God's word they would have known better (but then again, if they had paid attention to God's word, they wouldn't be here dealing with the Antichrist, would they?). Listen to what Scripture has to say about "protecting yourself" by hoarding precious metals: **"Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days."** (James 5:1-3) **"They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse. Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of Yahweh. They will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs, because it became their stumbling block of iniquity."** (Ezekiel 7:19) **"Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Yahweh's wrath."** (Zephaniah 1:18) Note that every time the prophets warn against the futility of amassing gold and silver, it is done in the context of "the day of Yahweh's wrath" or "the last days."

So the Antichrist's Mark of the Beast and the audacious worldwide financial coup upon which it's based will take the entire planet off the gold standard, once and for all. This will (according to the brochure) end inflation, end Wall Street profiteering, and end poverty. And that's not the only reason this will be a marketing man's dream. The ostensible benefits for the populace will be obvious, tangible, and easily communicated. Financial crimes, from muggings to identity theft, will be a thing of the past; layoffs and cutbacks will no longer happen.

Putting lipstick on this pig—excuse me: *presenting this plan to the world*—will be a snap.

The electronic money part is easy enough to comprehend. We've been using it for years in the form of credit cards, debit cards, bank checks, internet banking, and ATM machines. Until now, we've always used currency as well, but seldom for anything approaching a sizeable purchase. Large amounts of cash, in fact, are a red-flag giveaway to law-enforcement officials that some sort of crime is taking place. "Money laundering" often involves converting currency to electronic money, which can be more easily transferred without raising suspicion. So the jump to a "cash-equals-crime" mindset will be simple enough. In the wake of the anarchy that follows the war, crime prevention will become a worldwide priority. The vast majority of survivors, more fearful of bandits than bureaucrats (a big mistake) will welcome a cashless monetary system as the first step in a comprehensive anti-theft program.

But credit or debit cards can be stolen too, and they're only slightly harder to use than stolen cash. The key to minimizing personal financial crime is requiring foolproof I.D. So what is needed, the Antichrist will say, is a comprehensive, worldwide personal identity system. The Americans developed the prototype for it way back in 1935 when we introduced the Social Security number. Now, every U.S. citizen (and a fair number of aliens) have a nine-digit number that—*theoretically*—identifies each of them to the exclusion of anyone else in this country. The system, however, isn't foolproof. Because the number is not actually *part of you*, it's possible to borrow, steal, or duplicate it. Almost no one actually checks. It's possible to pass for a legitimate U.S. citizen merely by using the Social Security number of some other person, alive or dead. (One striking example: President Obama used a Social Security number that cannot possibly have been legitimately assigned to him—it's from a block of numbers issued in Connecticut, a state he never lived in.) Illegal immigrants have been known to use the SS numbers of other taxpayers when applying for jobs in the U.S., paying their FICA taxes into the account of the number's true owner—thereby cheating themselves of future benefits—in order to maintain anonymity. It is said that a clever thief, with little more than your name and Social Security number (not the *card*, mind you, just the number) can steal your identity—and with it your entire financial world.

But what if your public identity were part of you, and it went with you wherever you went? In a way, of course, that's always been the case: Yahweh Himself designed it that way. Your fingerprints, retinal pattern, voice print, and DNA profile are virtually impossible to fake, though most of these things are not terribly practical (yet) as on-the-spot ways of verifying your identity. They all require huge amounts of computer memory and expensive equipment to access.

All that's really needed is a ten- or eleven-digit number. (Ten digits would allow for 9,999,999,999 separate identities, barely enough to accommodate the present population of earth.) The number would be unique to you, but to work, it would have to be something no one could access without your physical presence (just like a fingerprint or retinal scan).

Perhaps the ideal personal code will be determined to contain three sets of six digits—six-six-six. We'll discuss this familiar prophetic theme at length in a moment; for now, let's just consider how the I.D. system might work. The first six numbers might form a rough physical description of the number's owner. One digit describes your gender—male, female, and (if I know Satan) a designation for surgical monstrosities somewhere in between. One identifies your race—a range of designations designed to promote “diversity,” something dear to Satan's heart. The last four numbers state the year you were born. With this information, your 18-digit code could not easily be stolen and used by someone else. The person or machine checking the number would, for example, be looking for a forty-seven year old Hispanic woman, not the Asian teenager who's trying to buy a car with her number. The last twelve digits in the code would be your own personal I.D. number (broken into two sets of six to make it easier to read and memorize). The computer, of course would know that #254874-568342 is owned by a white female born in 1997—not a person of some other description. So faking the number without access to the hacker-proof database would be virtually impossible.

The easiest, lowest-tech way of applying the I.D. code to your body would be to etch the number in bar-code form into the skin, like a hyper-accurate machine-generated tattoo. Like the laser-readable UPC (Universal Product Code) marks found on every grocery item, a simple scan would tell the system that you are really *you*. The technology to achieve this has been around since the mid-1970s; it's cheap, reliable, and familiar. And the world is gearing up for the next-generation biological model: Houston inventor Thomas W. Heeter holds U.S. Patent 5,878,155, described as a “Method for verifying human identity during electronic sale transactions.” For all practical purposes, it's a barcode I.D. tattoo designed to facilitate Internet commerce.

Other, more sophisticated, ways of applying the Mark are under development as we speak, and we'll discuss them in a moment. But for now, let's pause to consider the ramifications. In normal use, having the Mark could make your financial life safe and convenient—or at least that's how the government's marketing gurus will present it... *You're off to work in the morning. Need to put a few gallons of gas or a couple of kilowatts of electricity into your car? Just scan your Mark into the machine—your purchase will automatically be debited from your account. Same thing with that coffee and bagel you habitually pick up. Your*

paycheck isn't a check at all any more. Rather, every afternoon at six o'clock a day's wages are automatically deposited into your account—less taxes of course. Pick up a dozen eggs and a carton of milk on the way home—but don't "pay" for it; just scan your Mark.

Your “bank” is no longer a private corporation, one of many from which you can choose based on its services or convenience. It's now a single world-government monolith that controls all of the planet's finances. Everything you owe, you owe to *them*; everything you have “saved up” is merely “ones and zeros”—electronic money—in their computers. This state of affairs is the result of a global financial meltdown predicted in scripture and easily foreseen by anyone today with a pulse and an IQ over 50. *You can check your account balance any time you like—just scan your Mark into the reader that's built into your cell phone, tablet, or computer. If you run a little short, don't worry; we'll cover you. We'll just roll the shortfall into your loan.* Virtually every adult has a “loan,” which includes their house, car, everything they owe, all rolled into one lump sum, all with the same low interest rate, all borrowed from the only legal lender on earth—the central government. As long as you don't get too far out ahead of your income, you're golden, or at least that's what they'll tell you. (Remember the line from old folk song, “Sixteen Tons?” *I owe my soul to the company store.*)

They'll say, *Crime is a thing of the past.* While a blatant lie, this marketing myth will receive so much air time people will actually begin to believe it. *It is true that certain types of crime no longer “pay.” Dangerous illegal drugs are no longer available because money is no longer anonymous. Muggings and armed robberies no longer take place, because there's no cash to steal, and fencing stolen goods is next to impossible.* Of course, there's nothing to keep somebody from killing you for your sneakers. Guns have been declared illegal, which means in practice that only government agents and criminals have them. Making ammo has become a lucrative underground cottage industry. The barter system thrives.

Some crimes *are* history, though, simply because the government has opted to decriminalize, regulate—and tax—them instead. So prostitution has moved off the streets into legal bordellos. Marijuana was legalized long before the rapture in many places. Cocaine, meth, ecstasy and other usually non-lethal drugs have been made available through licensed dealers. (The harder stuff is available only with a doctor's prescription, but at least it's paid for by the world-state's universal health plan.) Taking a page from the lottery playbook, such “services” are now actually seen as a good thing because a portion of the proceeds are set aside to fund public education (which is now little more than a vehicle for indoctrinating obedient, politically correct future taxpayers). Child abuse, stalking, bullying, and rape are no longer considered crimes if the victims aren't actually killed in the process—depriving the state of potential future tax revenues. Many local governments have

noted that laws that had been pushed through by moralistic, holier-than-thou do-gooders before the rapture were out of step with the current shades-of-gray pop theology. What had once been viewed as a matter of right or wrong, good or bad, is now seen “more clearly” as merely convenient or inconvenient. This attitude has now been reflected in new laws decriminalizing “victimless” offenses.

Obviously, there will be other uses of the Mark that make for good P.R. as well. Criminals (like serial murderers and Jews) who have been tried and convicted—even if they haven’t yet been caught—can be penalized by having their “account” frozen, or even having all of their ill-gotten gains confiscated. Fugitives can be more easily apprehended by tracking their recent Mark scans as they buy food. In more advanced areas, the Mark can be tied to all sorts of conveniences: it’s the key to your guard-gated community, your home, office, and car. It’s your library card, your passport, your driver’s license, your health insurance I.D. It gets you past the security checks at the airport with a minimum of fuss. It’s keyed to your medical and dental records, your social security status, movie rentals, and your local pizza parlor’s buy-ten-get-one-free deal. Scan your Mark and you can get a free abortion on demand.

I can envision the Mark being marketed as a stepping stone to even greater things. To help it reach its full potential, a plan will be promulgated to use the Mark as the centerpiece of a worldwide database that includes every individual’s fingerprints, DNA profile, and maybe retinal scan and voiceprint. This information will be anticipated as God’s gift to law enforcement, for if a suspect or victim has left behind a fingerprint or drop of blood at the scene of the crime, the authorities will be able to immediately determine who he or she is. This database will have to be built up gradually, of course. They could plan to start with convicted criminals, government and military employees, and newborn babies. As time permits, more and more groups will be included: school children, medical professionals, driver’s license holders, registered voters, and so forth. Those concerned with the possibility of innocent children being required to receive the Mark—thereby earning the wrath of Yahweh—should be reminded that not only is the essence of the Mark the oath of submission that goes with it—making small children immune—the longest this phase can last is three and a half years, the last half of the Tribulation. Therefore it may be argued that even the first newborn to get the Mark will not have reached the “age of accountability” (though that’s not a Biblical concept) when Yahshua returns to set things right again. The bottom line: God is never unfair.

The law-enforcement angle will present another level of anguish for those new believers who want to be good, law-abiding citizens but can’t bring themselves to worship the Antichrist. *After all*, the argument will go, *who but criminals—those who wish to remain anonymous when they perform their*

nefarious acts—would resist such a system? It's highly unlikely, but the government might even quote scripture (out of context, of course), reminding the reluctant that only bad **"men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."** (John 3:19) If Scripture weren't being repressed, they might pompously quote: **"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."** (Romans 13:1-4) *"God," of course, is who we define him to be. If you're not planning on breaking the law, what do you have to be afraid of?* The rule of the Antichrist will serve to demonstrate how true Paul's words were when applied to every previous earthly government—even the worst of them.

You know how in cops and robbers TV shows, the techno-wizards are always able to miraculously pin down the location of the bad guys by zeroing in on their IP addresses? That's *sort of* true, as far as it goes, but there's a rub. Under the original Internet Protocol version 4 (IPv4), which is still in use today, a net user's IP address was a 32-bit number—that's 2^{32} possible unique addresses. (If I told you I understand how it all works, I'd be lying to you, but hear me out.) That sounds like a huge pool of IP addresses, but it became clear early on that this system would eventually prove inadequate. In practice (or so a tech-savvy friend of mine tells me) web addresses under the IPv4 system can be moving targets. They're assigned only temporarily under a system called "dynamic addressing." In other words, a computer won't necessarily have the same IP address every time it's used. But under a new version of the Internet Protocol, the far more robust IPv6 (with 128-bit addressing), it is theoretically possible to provide fixed and permanent IP addresses for every user on the net. Deployment for the IPv6 protocol began in the mid-2000s, and the two systems run side by side today.

So much for the background. Let us now consider the prophetic ramifications of how the IPv6 system could aid the Antichrist in "encouraging" people to enroll in the system known to us as "the Mark of the Beast." Most of us are only vaguely aware of how utterly dependent we've become on our computers. If you had your own permanent IP address (rather than merely one drawn from a pool), it would be possible to track your every move—or shut off all of your contact with anybody else using such devices. And it's not just our laptops and tablets, with which we do our work and communicate with the outside world. It's also the hidden applications—the information/GPS unit in your car, for example. If OnStar can open your car door remotely if you lock your keys inside—or bring it to a safe, slow stop if it's stolen—what makes you think the Antichrist's central

government won't disable every computer and electronic device in your entire life if you refuse to take the Mark: no IP address for you, *you criminal*—no car, no computer, no credit card, no cell phone, no bank account. You'd find yourself cut off from the world, on foot, flat broke, and back in the dark ages—except that now, there are people equipped with every high-tech tool imaginable who are out there trying to track you down and kill you. That's why, in the Olivet Discourse, Yahshua told the Tribulation saints (in generalized terms) to get out of town *immediately* when they see the abomination of desolation.

Because taking the Mark is required of everyone, no hard-to-meet conditions will be imposed on the applicants. They won't have to have a high-school diploma, own land, be white males over twenty-one, or anything like that. There's a chance that a minimum-age requirement will be set, but it's hard to say. (In America the Social Security number is now a cradle-to-the-grave sort of thing.) But just as driver's license applicants must affirm that they intend to obey the traffic laws of their state, people receiving the Mark will be required to pledge their allegiance to the government, its leader, and its laws (a factor that argues against children being forced to accept it). The oath of allegiance to Satan is the whole point. Perhaps a two-stage program will be implemented—first the physical mark, which could be imposed (or at least numerically assigned) at birth (or against one's will), and second, the oath of allegiance that activates it (including all of its political, religious, and financial components), required of everyone upon reaching a certain birthday, as young as twelve or as old as eighteen.

It's quite clear in Scripture that by accepting the Mark they will be aligning themselves with the Antichrist, his prophet, and Satan—the beasts and the dragon—but just how blatant the wording of the oath will be we can only guess. If you'll recall, Freemasons are required to take blood-curdling Satanic vows as they rise through the orders, but they never know what they'll have to say until they're actually repeating the words—when it's a little hard to stop and examine the import of the oath. On the other hand, this last three and a half year period—the Great Tribulation—is the only time Satan will ever get to be openly worshiped. It's all he really wants. Will he settle for hidden meanings and mindless platitudes at this late date? I don't know, but I doubt it. I can state with certainty, however, that the new followers of Yahshua will somehow *know* not to receive the Mark; they will understand that it requires denial of their Messiah.

So let us return to the question: what, precisely, is the Mark of the Beast? Some of the older commentators suggest that it needn't be a literal, physical “mark” at all, since the mark of God's sealing on the foreheads of the 144,000 seems to be figurative (which is not to say non-existent: it's absolutely effective in keeping them from physical harm). In light of contemporary technology and

common sense, however, there is no reason whatsoever to suspect that the Mark is anything less than a literal, physical insignia or identifier of some sort. Earlier, I mentioned the tattoo hypothesis, in which a laser-readable bar code is permanently inscribed on the skin. Although this would satisfy the scriptural requirements, our technology has progressed so much further already, it's easy to envision something far more sophisticated being utilized.

Let's review the ground rules: **"He [the False Prophet] causes all...to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."** (Revelation 13:16-17) We have seen the demonstrable advantages (at least on paper) of a cashless society, and we have established that the key to administering it would be a worldwide personal identification system. The enrollee has to bear only the I.D. number itself—the data it represents is stored remotely in a computer database, known these days as a "cloud." But rather than a tattoo, which has a marketing downside (*I don't want that ugly thing on my skin*) as well as potential scanability problems (*Will it read as well on dark skin as it does on fair, or on wrinkled "senior skin" as well as on a young person's? And what if the recipient is already covered in tattoos?*) it would make more sense to simply implant a microchip with a small antenna under the skin. An external scanner would emit a radio signal that passes through the skin, energizing the chip, whose number would then be transmitted via the Internet to a secure site. In an interesting confirmation of this concept, note that the KJV's rendering of the phrase is "*in* their right hand...*in* their foreheads."

Science fiction? Not at all. It exists today. In December 2001, a Palm Beach company called Applied Digital Solutions announced the development of its new, miniaturized, implantable RFID (radio frequency identification) chip, trade-named VeriChip or VeriMed. In its original form, it's a tiny cylinder, 11.1mm long and 2.1mm in diameter, though with advances in miniaturization, it could conceivably shrink to a fraction of that size. It is inserted under the skin in a simple outpatient procedure requiring only local anesthesia, a tiny incision, and a small bandage. As the technology advances, such a gadget could probably be implanted subdermally with a simple syringe, like getting a flu shot. The VeriChip was designed to be used to provide vital information about other implanted life-enhancing devices such as pacemakers, heart valves, or medication pumps—without the invasive surgery that would otherwise be necessary. With a 128-character memory, it's a ready source of data about the patient's name and condition, as well as the medical device's original components, settings, and other essential parameters.

ADS also introduced a product called Digital Angel, the world's first biosensor designed to be linked to GPS technology via Web-based wireless

telecommunications. Similar technology is already widely used to keep track of pets and livestock. Today, it is being contemplated for use with high-risk human subjects—Alzheimer’s patients who might wander off, corporate executives in South American countries where kidnapping for profit is a growth industry, or practically anybody visiting the Middle East. Uses envisioned for the future include the monitoring of parolees or ex-convicts and children who are the focus of custody battles. Biometric systems are being explored by several nations for immigration control purposes. Soldiers in the field could be individually tracked, giving their headquarters more precise information on their moment-to-moment strike capabilities. The list of possible applications is practically endless.

Despite its theoretical promise, the technology and its development have been plagued with problems, scandals and lawsuits. Despite assurances that the scanners needed to read the implants would be in use by eighty hospitals in South Florida, it was revealed in May, 2002, that *not one* had been implemented. The stock price plummeted. Then, In 2007, it was revealed that RFID implants of a similar design had caused cancer in hundreds of laboratory animals. Oops. Applied Digital Solutions, Digital Angel Corporation, and the VeriChip Corporation are no more. They became known as the PositiveID Corporation. PositiveID finally discontinued marketing their human-implantable microchips in 2010, and in 2012 these technologies and brands were acquired by a company named VeriTeQ—whose majority shareholder is one Scott R. Silverman, who was the driving force behind both PositiveID and VeriChip. In other words, it’s all a corporate shell game, and the “pea” is being hidden until the technology can be reintroduced under some new guise.

Taking the “mark” concept to the next level, in 2007 Somark Innovations announced a new RFID ink—a chipless system that tattoos a mark or code onto the skin. The ink is metal-free, invisible or colored, biocompatible, chemically inert, and can be read—even through hair—from a distance of four feet away. The mark is applied with a geometric array of micro needles, a reusable applicator, and a one-time-use ink capsule. It can be done in under ten seconds. Japanese tech giant Hitachi has entered the fray as well, developing RFID chips so small (the size of a grain of sand—only 0.15 x 0.15 millimeters square and 7.5 micrometers thick) that they’re called “dust” or “powder.” They utilize a 128-bit ROM (Read Only Memory) that can store a 38-digit number. So it appears that the Antichrist is going to have his pick of technologies.

In America, resistance to the new technology has put civil libertarians and evangelical Christians on the same side of the issue—a rare occurrence indeed. Their reasons for opposing chip implants or RFID tattoos are polar opposites, of course. In defending the concept of the right to privacy, groups like the ACLU smell Gestapo tactics in anything that could conceivably make the job of law-

enforcement agencies more efficient—like tracking known child molesters to make sure they aren't loitering near elementary schools, *'cause, let's be fair, until the guy has actually made off with another kid, he hasn't broken any laws, right?* Meanwhile, my fundamentalist Christian brothers smell the dreaded Mark of the Beast in these technologies and anything remotely similar to them—and conclude that they should be avoided at all costs.

Bringing the issue close to home, it was widely rumored that the Affordable Care Act (a misnomer if ever there was one; it's commonly referred to as ObamaCare), included a provision that as of March 23, 2013, we would all be required to have a “Big Brother” RFID microchip implanted. If true, it would have set me into “civil disobedience mode,” along with millions of other Americans. But it's not true, exactly. First, the legislation in question read: “The Secretary shall establish a national medical device registry... to facilitate analysis of postmarket safety and outcomes data on each device that: (A) is or has been used in or on a patient; (B) and is (i) a class III device; or (ii) a class II device that is implantable, life supporting, or life sustaining.” So no, it's not exactly calling for an RFID microchip implanted in everybody, though such chips would have been regulated. Second, this is from H.R. 3200—the House's version of the bill, not the final act. This section never made it into the law in its final form. The fact remains, however, that the powers that be have tried, and will continue to try, to wear down the populace on such issues as this, until we can no longer see any point in fighting against the inevitable. We've seen it a hundred times: what begins as an unthinkable abomination becomes (with time and satanic pressure) a bad idea, then a slippery slope requiring caution, then a *fait accompli*.

It should be noted that on the state level, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and California, as well as legislative bodies in Georgia and Virginia, have all passed various laws that prohibit employers or others from forcing anyone to have RFID chips implanted under the skin. This issue ought to be a no-brainer for everybody, but apparently, it isn't.

I should reiterate that the subdermal chip or RFID ink technologies themselves—like any technological innovation—are *spiritually neutral*. They can be used for good or ill, just like the printing press, television, the Internet, electric guitars, or a thousand other things. We Christians have the curious habit of equating the evil we read about in scripture with what we perceive in the world around us—and then trying our best to stamp it out, whether Yahweh wants us to or not. But innovation is not the same thing as evil. Besides, God never told us to force non-believers to behave themselves. His instructions were simple and clear: preach the gospel—tell the world by our words and deeds about the good news of Yahweh's provision for our reconciliation with Him, while at the same time

separating ourselves from the sins we see in the society around us. There's very little that Satan can't usurp and use for his own purposes if he wants to.

Though our hearts may be in the right place when we try to prevent ominous prophecies like the Mark of the Beast from occurring, it demonstrates that our minds have slipped out of gear, as when Peter tried to dissuade his beloved Master from going to the cross (you remember, that's when Yahshua called him "Satan"). Yahweh *told us* this would happen. He didn't tell us to try to stop the Mark from coming to pass, to obstruct its development. He merely said, "Don't *receive* it." If His word is true, then these things *will* happen, and through them His will, in the end, will be accomplished. God is perfectly capable of taking care of His own kingdom—a kingdom which, I might add, is supposed to be populated exclusively by people who *choose* to be its citizens. We, on the other hand, need to listen better.

I hasten to point out that if this theory proves correct—that the Antichrist will use personalized microchips to implement his sovereignty over mankind—the chip itself is *not* the Mark of the Beast. The Mark, rather, is the inevitable baggage that goes with it: the "oath of allegiance," whatever form it takes, to the world ruler and the god he serves. It's entirely possible, in fact, that the Mark will be implemented with different technologies in different regions, depending on varying states of infrastructure development. The universal problem will be that you can't get the *physical* Mark, whether a chip, tattoo, or some unforeseen mechanism, without kissing the devil on the lips. Yahweh knows we're easily fooled. That's why he calls us sheep. He won't hold Tribulation believers accountable to be clever enough to see through a plan that on the surface promises merely to facilitate commerce and stifle crime—but is really a satanic plot to take over the world, a plot known only to a handful of evil and powerful men. No, God never called us to paranoia or even insight, only to faithfulness. The deal will be clear: receive the Mark and align yourself with Lucifer and his lapdog (okay, *lap-beast*), or stand with the true and living God—and be prepared to run for your life or die for your faith.

By the way, don't be too impressed that Satan should come up with such a clever scheme as the Mark of the Beast—requiring submission to himself and the dragon he serves as a precondition for the right to live one's life in "peace." As usual, a search of the scriptures reveals that the Mark (as a concept) is actually something Yahweh implemented first—thousands of years ago, if only in a prophet's vision. For Satan, it's merely one more phony in a long string of pathetic counterfeits. Ezekiel writes, **"Then He [Yahweh] called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, 'Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand.' And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed**

with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side." Here's God's six-plus-one pattern again: Yahweh plus six men. "They went in and stood beside the bronze altar...."

"Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; and Yahweh said to him, 'Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.'" I believe this one who was to judge mens' hearts and apply the Mark of Yahweh represents Yahshua Himself: the Word made flesh. "To the others He said in my hearing, 'Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.' So they began with the elders who were before the temple. Then He said to them, 'Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!' And they went out and killed in the city." (Ezekiel 9:1-7)

Ezekiel's vision (which spans chapters 8 through 11) speaks of the idolatry into which Israel had fallen: gross idol worship (8:10), weeping for Tammuz (8:14), and bowing to the sun (8:16). Those who "**sigh and cry over all the abominations**" are marked "**on the foreheads**" and are thereby put under the protection of God. I get the impression that there aren't too many of them. Is it a literal, visible mark? I have no idea. Ezekiel was having a *vision* when he saw it, and Zeke saw some really weird stuff in visions. (The same thing, of course, is true of John's description in Revelation. All we know for sure is that the Mark is *real*: it has consequences.)

The idolaters that Ezekiel sees are then put to the sword (okay, *ax*) by men coming from the north; the prophecy was fulfilled in the near term by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. Note that the marked men are not expected to force the others to follow the true God or adhere to a strict code of outward moral uprightness. Rather, they are characterized by their weeping for the sins of their nation, crying out to Yahweh because of the abominations they see engulfing their people. When's the last time your cheeks got wet because you were in anguish over the sins of your nation?

The Antichrist, mimicking God, intends to "**utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but...not come near anyone on whom is the mark.**" And he will indeed have a certain amount of success in persecuting the Tribulation saints, as we shall see. But Satan is not Yahweh, the Antichrist is not Yahshua, and the False Prophet is *not even remotely* the Holy Spirit. Where God's Mark indicates salvation leading to eternal life, Satan's Mark says "dead man walking." In the end, that's all anyone really needs to know about it.

But Yahweh provided one more bit of information—something designed to help believers living in those dark times verify or confirm that the system to which they’re being told to ascribe is actually the Mark of the Beast, and not some quasi-innocent look-alike or precursor, like the Social Security System. **“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”** (Revelation 13:18)

For almost two millennia now, everybody and his idiot nephew has taken the 666 ball and run with it. The theories are as numerous “as the stars of the sky and as the sand which is on the seashore.” And some of them, I must admit, are creative to the point of genius. That’s not to say they’re *correct*, but they sure are imaginative. Because the number is said to somehow correlate to a name (though we aren’t told how) the theories invariably revolve around number codes of one sort or another.

The obvious starting point is that neither the Hebrew nor Greek alphabets with which the Bible was composed have “numbers,” *per se*. Instead, letters of the regular alphabet are pressed into service as numbers. The context tells you if you’re dealing with numbers or letters spelling out a word. This is evidently harder than it sounds, especially in Hebrew: there are many places where the Masoretic text and the corresponding Septuagint translation disagree in their rendering of numerals, leading us to the conclusion that there may be more cultural baggage attached to the process of sorting out these numbers than we’d like to think. The Greek for 666, or as the King James words it, “six hundred, threescore and six,” is three characters: *chi-xi-stigma*, $\chi\xi\varsigma$. *Chi*’s numerical equivalent is 600; *xi*’s is 60; and *stigma* (ς —an obsolete letter, used only as a number in Koine Greek, not to be confused with *sigma*— σ) represents 6. It’s interesting (but not terribly significant) that the word *stigma* in Greek means a “brand, mark, spot, or colored patch.” Hence in English we describe a “mark of infamy or a token of disgrace” as a stigma. Funk and Wagnalls says that “stigma” was formerly used to denote “a brand made with a branding iron on slaves or criminals.” Coincidence? If you say so.

Another possibility is latent in the fact that in all of the earliest Greek manuscripts of Revelation (i.e., pre-Constantine vintage), the “*chi-xi-stigma*” mark was presented as a *nominum sacrum*, three Greek capital letters scribed with a horizontal line above them, indicating that it is a code or place-holder of some sort. It has been pointed out by scholars fluent in Arabic that viewed *sideways*, this mark bears a remarkable resemblance to the written name of Allah! *There’s* something to ponder.

Because of this letter-equals-number system, some researchers have made a contact sport out of discerning “hidden meanings” in sets of Hebrew, Greek, or Latin words that add up to the same numbers (or numbers related in some way, such as the sums of their squares). They call this process “gematria.” Using this or similar formulas in other languages, people with an axe to grind have discovered 666 in a wide variety of names and titles. Not surprisingly, many “identify” the Pope or the Catholic Church as the Antichrist with this method, finding 666 within such Greek titles as *Lateinos* (“Latin-speaking man”), *He Latine Basileia* (“The Latin Kingdom”), or *Italika Ekklesia* (“Italian Church”). Catholic buzzwords in Latin get the same treatment: *Vicarius Filii Dei* (“Substitution for the Son of God”—a title for the Pope), *Dux Cleri* (“Captain of the Clergy”), and *Ludovicus* (Vicar of the Court) all add up to 666 in Roman Numerals. In Hebrew, it’s the same song: *Romiith* (meaning “Roman kingdom”) and *Romiti* (“Roman man”) both come out to 666.

I didn’t figure this out, of course. All of these “solutions” have been around for centuries. And I’m not suggesting they shed any real light on the identity of the Antichrist. They’re only included to demonstrate that with a little ingenuity, you can find 666 in almost anything. A few cases in point: If you start with A=100, B=101, etc., “Hitler” comes out to 666. ’Course, the only conceivable reason for starting to number the English alphabet at 100 is to *make* “Hitler” add up to 666! For that matter, if you use the same formula and multiply the result by two (because he has twice as many legs), it turns out my cat, Moe, is the Antichrist (a theory that’s not altogether unreasonable, if you know my cat). My personal favorite? If you convert their names to Hebrew letter-number equivalents, both William Jefferson Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton add up to 666. (Maybe that would explain the treachery of the Clinton-sponsored anti-Israel Oslo accords of the mid-’90s. *Naaaaah.*)

Is gematria, therefore, worthless? As a means of predicting who the Antichrist will be, most definitely. As a means of verifying his identity once he shows up and starts fulfilling prophecy? Maybe not. Computer-generated ELS (equidistant letter sequence) tables have revealed some significant confirmations hidden in the Hebrew text, and the really remarkable thing about them is their close proximity to each other *and* to plain-text passages that support them. Also to be found are many such things as half a dozen words relating unmistakably to the September 11 disaster in the same place, or the names of quite a few influential Rabbis in close proximity to their dates of birth and death. We need to use the brains God gave us in interpreting these things: they prove *only* that the God who inspired their placement in His Torah exists outside of the bounds of time as we know it, and He’s interested in us knowing that fact. But as a means of divining the future, these things are useless, even dangerous. (I would, however, hasten to point out that the Rabbis’ dates of *death*, not merely their births, were embedded in the text.

It's as if Yahweh is saying, "Don't follow these men. They are all dead. If you want to live, follow Me. I live forever!")

So I wouldn't be a bit surprised to find that somehow, the Antichrist's name or title calculates out to 666. I say his title (as opposed to his given name) could qualify as the key to the 666 conundrum because the Greek word used for "name" in passages like "**no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name**" (Revelation 13:17), *onoma*, means, according to Strong's, "name, either literally or figuratively (authority, character); called, (sur-) named." Your *onoma*, then, is simply what you are called. As a case in point, the reigning Yahshua's title is called His "name": "**And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name [onoma] written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**" (Revelation 19:16) I don't know (or care) what the gematria for the Messiah's title is. But the numerical equivalent of the Antichrist's name or title (or both) will likely work out to 666. "**It is the number of a man.**"

But this side of the rapture, nobody will know what that name is (and even if we did, there's not a thing we could do to avert the inevitable unpleasantness). The 666 puzzle is not for us; it's for those faced with the all-important decision of whether or not to bow to the beast and accept his Mark. If 666 is a number readily associated with a program or person who otherwise fits the Biblical description, and if you're unlucky enough to be around when it all happens, my advice is this: flee. Run away. Hide. Do *not* accept his Mark. Do not submit to him or his government. Even if they kill you and your loved ones for your stand, you'll still be infinitely ahead of the game.

John's vision recorded in the Revelation is the only place in the Bible where we're given any hard information about 666 or the Mark of the Beast. Sixes played a significant role in several other Biblical dramas, however. David's nemesis, Goliath, and the big statue of Nebuchadnezzar were both closely associated with the number six. And how's this for a coincidence? "**The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold...**" (II Chronicles 9:13, cf. I Kings 10:14-15) All three examples deal with the pride of Man. Feel free to take *that* ball and run with it.

Before we leave the subject, there is one more prophecy concerning the Mark that we need to cover. "**Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, 'Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.' So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.**" (Revelation 16:1-2) If you'll recall, there are three levels of judgment listed in Revelation. First are the "seal" judgments, which I have characterized as the outer layer of a prophetic onion. The seals are opened by Christ Himself; they cover the entire Tribulation in sweeping terms. The next layer provides more detail: the "trumpet" judgments

are delegated to angels. The innermost layer of the onion, the “bowl,” or “vial” judgments, begins with the verses we just reviewed. As with the trumpet judgments, an angel (not Christ) administers this curse: he pours the wrath of God down upon the earth.

A subtle shift seems to be in play here. The seals opened by the Lamb of God report and reveal what is happening on earth during the Tribulation. Likewise, the angels delivering the trumpet judgments merely “announce” what is going to happen: they aren’t said to have caused the disasters. The first four, as we have seen, seem to be describing the effects of nuclear warfare (something man has brought upon himself) and predictable, maybe even derivative, natural disasters. The last three proclaim events that will take place in either the demonic or spiritual realm (again, statements of fact with no clear causal connection to the angels or their Trumpets).

But the last series, the bowl judgments, can be seen as God’s *personal* infliction of wrath upon the earth—Yahweh’s direct and well-deserved punishment upon mankind. Significantly, they all appear to be “poured out” during the second half of the Tribulation—starting with these “foul and loathsome sores.” At first glance, the English translation seems to be indicating two different targets, those who “had the Mark,” and those who “worshipped the image of the beast,” but I believe there is but one object of wrath here, identified by two separate and parallel criteria. Those who worship the beast’s image are the same people who willingly receive the Mark. You can’t get the “benefits” of the Mark (like keeping your miserable life for a little while longer) without worshiping the beast and the dragon who empowers him.

We need to address the nature of this “**foul and loathsome sore.**” It could, of course, have something to do with the physical “Mark,” an infection, perhaps, that sets in sometime after the microchip (if that theory is correct) is implanted. Personally, I have my doubts. Although it isn’t explicitly stated, the passage implies that *all* of the Mark-holders will suffer from this affliction; the odds that this could happen, given the worldwide administration of the Mark and the medical precautions that will surely be brought to bear, are vanishingly remote. With several billion implants to be manufactured, it would make sense that a number of widely separated facilities would be set up to handle the load. Again, there is little chance that each of these factories could be infected with the same virus or bacteria, or that no one, anywhere, has a natural immunity to it. And then there’s the fact that such a disease could easily spread from the marked populace to the unmarked minority—something that is not indicated in the prophecy.

No, I think what we’re seeing here is just what it looks like: divine wrath. Every single one of the recipients of the Mark has, by definition, willingly allied himself or herself with the Antichrist and Lucifer and at the same time officially

and permanently rejected Yahshua and Yahweh. Therefore, God has said, *Alright, if that's what you want, I won't be a part of your life anymore. You want a Mark that will identify you as Satan's? Fine. As my parting gift, I'll give you a mark that you cannot only see, you can feel and smell, too.* Okay, that was an extrapolation. Far be it from me to add anything to God's word. But you get the picture.

An intriguing psychological phenomenon might be expected to arise because of the “**foul and loathsome sore.**” It won't take long for the media and the authorities to latch onto the fact that *only* followers of the Antichrist—the majority of most populations, I would guess—are developing this malady. Therefore, even if the official Mark of the Beast is invisible by design, it will *become* visible by virtue of the plague that follows it. Disguising your loyalties will no longer be possible. In time, the disgusting abscesses will actually become a badge of political correctness, a chic symbol of patriotic rectitude. Whoever is covered with these stinking pustules will be considered one of the beautiful people. Clear, perfect skin, on the other hand, will come to be regarded as the stigma of a lawless and antisocial rebel, a backward and hysterical religious terrorist—one to be shunned at all costs, or better yet, hunted down and killed. Black is white, up is down, right is wrong, ugly-as-sin is lovely-to-look-at, only less subtle than in today's world. In the end, the lie will be as plain as the sores on your face.

Somewhere during the Tribulation timeline, an abrupt and fundamental change will take place in the public persona of the Antichrist. He must transform from politician to despot, from military tactician to unchallenged tyrant, from charismatic, popular leader to crazed, all-powerful demigod. Only after this transformation will he attempt to institute the Mark, require the worship of his image, and impose his will over every living creature. All of the indicators seem to point toward a sudden shift just before the mid-point of the seven-year period. The logical “trigger” for this transformation is his apparent assassination. In the previous chapter, we took a look at how the prophecies concerning the apparently mortal wounding of the Beast/Antichrist might transpire. Scripture leaves it unclear whether he is actually killed at this time—then reanimated by a demon living within him—or if it's all smoke and mirrors, an elaborate ruse to gain the attention and awe of the world. After the attempt is made upon his life, however, everything about the man is different (not that he was such a sweetie before—he purposely precipitated a nuclear war that killed off a quarter of the planet for no better reason than to impress a group of people he doesn't even like, the Jews).

It's obvious that he is now demon possessed, totally and openly controlled by the dragon, Satan.

One thing the scriptures make abundantly clear is that as a result of his "miraculous resurrection," all the world will run after the Antichrist. **"And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies...."** (Revelation 13:3-5) Satan will at this time "come out of the closet," and because of this incident come to be worshipped as himself (or at least as he'd like you to think of him—as Lucifer, the light bearer) rather than in the guise of some man-made false god like Allah or Apollo. It will be his finest hour.

But in a clinical sense, the Antichrist's "near-death experience" is not unique; the phenomenon has been documented and studied widely in recent years. Many people have "come back" after having been declared dead, speaking in reverent terms of an overwhelming sense of peace, of walking toward a brilliant white light at the end of a long tunnel. *Death is not so bad*, they say. *Dying changed my life*. But the world does not worship people because they have had near-death experiences, nor do we tend to give credence to stories of meeting Jesus or dear departed relatives at the end of the tunnel of light. When it comes to life after death, we don't know quite what to believe. It's all considered a little weird.

This time, however, it will be different. This time, the world *wants* to believe. Billions have gathered (in front of their televisions and computer screens, at least) to honor the Antichrist with their praise, submission, and loyal obedience, only to see him get assassinated—and then brought back to life—before their very eyes. They're positive his resurrection wasn't any ordinary resuscitation—it was a miracle, a sign: *here at last is the one we've been waiting for*. The world is primed for this. The timing is perfect. If this death-resurrection scenario had happened to any other man at any other time, it would have been written off as an amazing but unexplained phenomenon, an interesting but insignificant glitch in the march of human history, a footnote in the Guinness Book of World Records. But here, now, under these circumstances, mankind hears the call of destiny.

Apparently recovered from his little adventure, the Antichrist resumes his place at the podium and addresses the earth. Calmly, passionately, he tells his audience what he's seen, where he's been, and what it all means. *You have doubtless heard stories of people dying, only to witness a brilliant luminescence leading them on to the gates of glory. I, too, have seen that glory—I have conversed with the giver of light. He said I must return—return to you—for I had a job to do, a message to bring, a destiny to fulfill. I must lead you into the Promised Land—not a place, but a state of mind. Follow me, my children, as I*

follow the light giver. He is mighty and terrible—a source of awesome power—and he has given his power to me—to Me! I do not ask for your obedience today—I demand it! Witness the power I now possess....

Suddenly, the charismatic leader raises his good arm toward the heavens. The polluted sky immediately parts, allowing a brilliant stream of pure sunlight to pour down upon the dais where he stands—and *only* there. The people gathered on the temple mount gasp in amazement; the incredulous reporters describe what they're seeing to their worldwide audiences, though they're clearly not prepared for this kind of miracle. As the cameras roll, the Antichrist sweeps his outstretched hand before him, and as if in obedience, the darkened edges of his heavenly spotlight begin to roll and boil—angry black clouds, driven by fierce winds. His hand now forms a fist, and as he crashes it down upon the podium, lightning and thunder burst forth from the swirling maelstrom above him. Hail begins to pelt the terrified onlookers. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, it ends: the Antichrist sweeps his hand once more across the sky, and the storm ceases. Slowly the sun spot illuminating the dais closes. The whole episode has taken just six minutes.

The power is mine, he says with finality. Obey me, or experience hell on earth. Worship Me, for I now possess authority over all men. I have not been elected by mere mortals. I have been made your absolute ruler by the giver of light, the one who illumines us all, the almighty Lucifer!

The throng assembled on the temple mount erupts into hysterical celebration. Around the world, there is no one who has not been deeply affected. Most feel the same stirrings of utopian longing that had flickered briefly when this man had brought the world to the brink of peace a few years before. *Surely this is our Messiah, our savior. Remember all that stuff about the "Second Coming" the Christians used to harp on? This must surely be it—Looks like they were right after all! Besides, we don't have much choice in the matter. We've gotta do what he says. Did you see what he did to the sky?*

But scattered here and there across five continents, small pockets of Yahshua's new believers huddle together and stare at their televisions in shocked disbelief. *This can't be good. Lucifer? That's Satan, isn't it? The devil himself. I have a feeling we're about to face a trial worse than anything the world has ever seen, brothers and sisters, and the world has seen a lot in recent days. Many of us won't survive. But we must try to hang on until Jesus returns. Run away. Hide. Live off the land. Whatever it takes.*

In Israel, there are mixed signals. Many Israelis, even the leaders, have been convinced for some time that the Antichrist is a fraud. Ever since the defeat—the *annihilation*—of Magog, when the Antichrist proved his impotence to deal with the invasion, it has been clear that Mr. Wonderful was no "god on earth." No, it

was Yahweh, the God of their fathers, who had rescued them from the Muslim hordes, and it's slowly dawning on some of them that it was Yahshua—whose name means “Yahweh is Salvation”—Immanuel, “God with us”—who had been their savior two millennia before, if only they had recognized Him. In a future chapter, we'll explore this national paradigm shift in detail, for the scriptures have a great deal to say about Israel's great awakening.

But at the moment, the Jews are conflicted. The European leader—now undisputed world dictator—has made it clear that he wants to make Jerusalem his capital city. Now that the vast majority of the world's Jews live in Israel, they're torn between the guaranteed prosperity that comes with owning the most important piece of land on earth, and the guaranteed eternal death that comes with accepting the Antichrist's Messianic claims. In the end, millions of Jews will opt to go with their heart, for they now *know* it's true—they really are Yahweh's chosen people.

One Israeli watching the televised unveiling of the Antichrist smiles sadly to his wife and jokes, “Moses was right. *We are* a stubborn and stiff-necked people. Two thousand years ago, we told the real Messiah to take a hike. Only now, when this false Messiah shows up offering us the world on a platter, do we figure out that Yahshua of Nazareth was the real deal after all. Do we have our timing down, or *what?* One thing is certain: if we do as this madman says, we will surely taste the wrath of Yahweh. Get up! Grab the children! We must leave, today, right now. The city is no longer safe....”

Okay, it's time to get our feet back on the ground. I've been spewing out prose like a novelist, but it's important to remember that the scenario you've just read does have a basis in fact—i.e., Biblically revealed prophecy. I've brought us to the doorstep of one of the most chilling recurring themes in the entire Bible: the “abomination of desolation.” (I realize that phrase doesn't mean anything in today's English; I'll try to make some sense of the scary-sounding title as we go on).

Paul described the Antichrist as “...**the man of sin...the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**” (II Thessalonians 2:3-4) Although it may not seem to at first glance, this passage actually supports the picture of the Antichrist's satanic obeisance that we painted in the previous section. The question is: who is he trying to pass off as god? Until the middle of the Tribulation, Satan always had to content himself with being worshipped

through surrogates, false gods, idols, and demigods. By elevating himself above all gods who have ever been openly worshipped (including the one true God, Yahweh), the Antichrist is giving Satan, a.k.a. Lucifer, the one thing he has always wanted: center stage. There is no way the Antichrist can pull this off without demonic support, of course—he must give credit where credit is due. Bear in mind that John tells us, **“The dragon [identified elsewhere as Satan] gave him his power, his throne, and great authority,”** and **“They worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’”** (Revelation 13:2,4) Just as when we Christians worship Yahweh and Yahshua as one God (who dwells within us as the Holy Spirit), people will see the Antichrist and Lucifer as one. You’d think that’d be a bad thing, wouldn’t you? Sadly, it won’t be seen that way. Yahshua predicted even this: **“I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.”** (John 5:43)

I have hypothesized that the Antichrist will demonstrate his satanic powers by manipulating the weather—in a public and undeniable format. That would certainly cause anyone who saw it to wonder, **“Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”** But where did I get the idea that Satan has power over the weather? Sure, he’s called **“the prince of the power of the air”** (Ephesians 2:2) but that’s a wee bit vague. In the early chapters of the Book of Job, however, we’re given a very clear picture of what Satan can and cannot do. Clearly, he can influence (though not compel) men to perform his will—to suggest a course of action that advances his agenda. And, if Yahweh allows it, he is able to inflict disease upon us: he gave Job a case of boils so bad it made him wish he’d never been born.

But the surprising thing is that Satan also controlled the weather—things insurance adjusters routinely call “acts of God.” They’re *not* acts of God, necessarily. Job was informed that: **“The fire of God [that’s how the messenger described it] fell from heaven...”** (Job 1:16) and, **“Suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness....”** (Job 1:19) These were things *Satan* did in order to test Job. They weren’t coincidence; they weren’t random natural occurrences—and they weren’t merely bad luck. They were Lucifer’s handiwork. Remember, the false prophet who pimps for the Antichrist **“even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth.”** (Revelation 13:13) This ability is nothing new. And although we aren’t told as much, I’m convinced that the storm that rose on Galilee that threatened the lives of Yahshua and His disciples (Luke 8:23) was whipped up by Satan as well. The good news, both in Luke and Job, is that God overrules Satan. The devil was given divine *permission* to take away Job’s wealth and family; without it his hands were tied. And Yahshua calmed the devil’s storm with a word and a yawn. His authority over the weather clearly outweighs Satan’s.

Christians should find this truth extremely liberating. Nothing can happen to us—*nothing*—without Yahweh’s knowledge and permission. Satan can’t touch us unless God is allowing it in order to teach us something about Himself. As powerful as the devil is in some ways, we are free to thumb our noses at him—to treat him like the naval lint he is in our Father’s eyes. More importantly, we are free to ignore his suggestions; he can’t make us sin (I’m preaching to the mirror here). It’s all a question of relationships. *My Daddy can beat up your daddy.*

This is demonstrated by the experience of the seventy disciples, after Yahshua had sent them out to preach the Gospel. **“Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’”** (Luke 10:17-20) We are given the power to overcome all spiritual obstacles, if only we will exercise that power. But this is only a byproduct of the *real* good news, that of our undying relationship with Yahweh. As a parent of nine adopted children, I know exactly what that is: there comes a day in the adoption process when we “go to court,” and the final paperwork is filed. Our new child’s “name is written” in the county archives, and that means he or she is legally, permanently ours, with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities that come with being my son or daughter. Of course, it’s an even bigger deal becoming a child of God.

But I digress. We were discussing the self-exaltation of the Antichrist. Paul, if you’ll recall, told us that **“He sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”** This and parallel passages, of course, are what led us to believe that T3, the third temple, will be rebuilt on Moriah in the last days. (Yes, there’s a temple of God in heaven, but the Antichrist is a man, and not a very nice one at that—he’s not likely to show up there.)

So how, exactly, does one “sit as God in the temple?” Did Yahweh ever “sit” in the temple? Yes, in a way. We need to go back to the original specs for the wilderness tabernacle to see God’s design for the temple. **“...And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy. You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy.”** (Exodus 26:33-34) The Most Holy, otherwise known as the “Holy of Holies,” was the inner sanctum of the tabernacle/temple, separated from the Holy Place by a veil, or heavy curtain. The only object within the Most Holy place was the ark of the Testimony (or Covenant), upon which was placed the mercy seat, making the ark, for all practical purposes, look like a golden throne. (If you’ll recall, we discussed the function of the ark—and its present location—back in Chapter 13.)

When the Israelites were done building the tabernacle of meeting in the wilderness, Yahweh moved in, so to speak. **“Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle.”** (Exodus 40:34-35) The same thing happened at the dedication of T1, Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem. **“It came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Yahweh, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised Yahweh, saying: ‘For He is good, for His mercy endures forever,’ that the house, the house of Yahweh, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of Yahweh filled the house of God.”** (II Chronicles 5:13-14)

So God, manifesting Himself as a cloud (the *Shekinah*), filled the tabernacle and the temple with His glory. The “seat” of his power and grace was said to be within the Holy of Holies, for that is where the High Priest, once a year on the Day of Atonement, sprinkled the blood of the sacrificial lamb onto the mercy seat (literally, the *kaporet*, or “atonement cover”—from the Hebrew verb *kaphar*: to cover, purge, make atonement or reconciliation). And as we have seen, it now appears that Yahweh arranged for the blood of *The Sacrificial Lamb*, Yahshua, to be sprinkled upon that very same mercy seat—secreted away in the catacombs beneath Golgotha.

Have you figured it out yet? Have you put two and two together? Yeah, me too, and I can almost guarantee that the Antichrist is “smarter” than you and me put together. He will have heard the stories—how the amateur archaeologist found the ark of the Covenant in a cave beneath the north end of Moriah, but never brought it out. All he has to do (he figures) is follow the clues, find the ark, put it in the Holy of Holies, rebuild the East gate of the temple mount so he can make a grand entrance, and plunk his fanny down on the mercy seat—all on worldwide television, of course. *Where else would a god sit? Of course, it’ll have to be cleaned up a little. We can’t have the ruler of the world sitting on old dried blood, can we? That thing is covered in solid gold; it should look brand new when we’re done—spectacular under the studio spotlights.*

I know it’s the middle of the Tribulation, and there will be all sorts of weirdness going on, but do I *really* think Yahweh will let this wannabe Indiana Jones use the mercy seat—and the priceless blood of the Lamb of God—to pull off a cheap publicity stunt? No, I don’t. But he doesn’t have to. All he has to do is convince the world that he’s in possession of the genuine article. No sweat. He will, no doubt, have had film crews documenting his multi-year-long scientific search for Israel’s holy relics. He may even find them (right where Ron Wyatt said they’d be). Getting them out, however, will be another matter. After losing

half a dozen archeology/film crews to “unexplained circumstances,” he’ll get the hint. *Paramount Studios didn’t use the real thing; why should we? A replica will do nicely.* His people will simply abscond with forty or fifty pounds of Muslim gold earmarked for the Dome of the Rock remodeling project (*they’re dead—they’re not going to miss it*) and mock up a new ark of the Covenant, complete with mercy seat—in complete secrecy, of course. *Heck, we’ll even make the table of showbread and the lampstand while we’re at it.* The film crews will show them being “found,” restored, and brought with great pomp to the new temple. It’ll all be very believable—and it’ll all be as phony as a Hollywood movie.

It’s admittedly an odd idea: the Antichrist sitting in the Holy of Holies—on the mercy seat—pontificating to the world that they must now yield total obedience to their new master. In point of fact, though, it’s designed to snare just one group of people, the Jews. (Atmospheric signs and wonders—and a standing army of millions—will do the trick with everybody else.) Going after the Jews is a dead giveaway that the plot is satanic: Lucifer covets what Yahweh has and is—he wants His power, His glory, His city, and even His people. I’ve said it before, but it bears repeating: if Yahweh hadn’t declared his special love for the Jews, nobody, not even the devil, would give them a second thought today (if only because they would doubtless be extinct as a separate people, like the far more powerful Canaanites, Hittites, and Chaldeans before them).

But to the Jews, who know that even *touching* the ark of the Covenant can be fatal, this masquerade will be persuasive—even compelling. Remember, for the last two thousand years, they’ve been looking for the Messiah, but all they know is what’s written in the Old Testament—which the Masorete scribes purposely altered in an attempt to obfuscate the Messiah—who is identified *by name* in the Tanach seventy-seven times! (It’s invariably translated “salvation.”) Therefore, the Jews’ perception of what their Messiah will be like is not necessarily colored by our New Testament knowledge of the historical Yahshua of Nazareth; they’re looking for someone who will rule the world with a scepter of iron. The prophets said far more about the reigning Messiah than they did about the suffering Savior. So as phony as this Antichrist guy looks to us from this side of the rapture, he will seem quite convincing to those living halfway through the Tribulation.

This act of purposely desecrating the temple has a specific title in prophetic scripture, used in both the Old and New Testaments: the “abomination of desolation,” or, as the KJV puts it, the “abomination that maketh desolate.” The NIV is a little clearer, rendering it the “abomination that causes desolation.” The scripture specifies several of these “abominations,” but only one is yet future—the one I have just described.

Since such words have fallen out of favor in our shades-of-gray politically correct world, it would behoove us to look closely at their meanings.

“Abomination” is from the Hebrew *shiqqwts*, meaning disgusting, filthy (especially when applied to idolatry), or detestable. The corresponding Greek word is from a root that means “to stink.” *Bdelugma* denotes a detestation of something idolatrous: an abomination. “Desolate” or “desolation” comes from *shamem*, the Hebrew word meaning to stun, devastate, stupefy (make amazed, astonished), to make desolate, lifeless, or destitute; to destroy or lay waste. The Greek equivalent is *erimosia*, desolation, from a root that means despoliation, to come to naught. An “abomination of desolation,” then, is a stinking, filthy, disgusting act of idolatry that causes stunning, astonishing devastation. If you need a clearer picture of this, think of the Islamic attack on the World Trade Center (and don’t kid yourself; that’s all 9/11 was—a shocking, detestable act of wanton destruction done in the name of a false god).

Now that you know how it works, let’s look at the Biblical examples, given to prepare the last generation for what’s coming. **“He [King Manasseh] even set a carved image of Asherah [i.e., Ishtar] that he had made, in the house of which Yahweh had said to David and to Solomon his son, ‘In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever’.... But they paid no attention, and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom Yahweh had destroyed before the children of Israel. And Yahweh spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, ‘Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations’ (he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols), therefore thus says Yahweh, God of Israel: ‘Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle.’”** (II Kings 21:7, 9-12, cf. II Chronicles 33:7) I don’t know about you, but *my* ears tingle whenever I turn on the evening news. I wonder if that’s just a coincidence.

In 175 B.C., a relative nobody, Antiochus IV, through a series of murders and intrigues, seized the throne of the Seleucid empire, which controlled Israel at the time. Miffed that “his” Jews were not much help in his subsequent war against the Ptolemaic forces of Egypt (does any of this sound familiar?), he persecuted them, murdering thousands. He put an end to the daily temple worship, sacrificing a sow on the altar and erecting a statue of a Greek god in the temple. **“And forces shall be mustered by him [Antiochus IV Epiphanes], and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.”** (Daniel 11:31-32) These “exploits,” if you know your history, were carried out by the Maccabees—who, if I’m not mistaken, will serve as role models for the heroic Jewish warriors doing battle with the Antichrist in the coming dark days. But as before, there will be some Jews who will **“do wickedly against the covenant”** and whom **“he [this time, the Antichrist] shall corrupt with flattery.”**

The Olivet Discourse warns of a time of impending trouble for the Jewish nation. Within it is another of those maddening prophecies that have both near and far fulfillments in mind. Luke records it like this: **“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”** (Luke 21:20-24) In the light of events that transpired less than a generation after these words were spoken, it is obvious that the near fulfillment was to be found in the sack of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus in 70 A.D. The war raged for years (it began in 67) before the siege began. There was plenty of time to escape, and thousands of Christians who lived in the city, knowing the prophecy, did precisely that. But non-Christian Jews, neither knowing nor believing the words of the slain Rabbi, holed up in Jerusalem and died—or were enslaved, dispersed to the farthest corners of the empire.

End of story? Not by a long shot. Yahshua apparently kept talking, throwing a different light on things. There was more to this than just Romans. Matthew and Mark both recorded more of the story: **“So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not”** (let the reader understand), **“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be....”** Although similar in tone, this admonition clearly speaks of something more intense, more sudden, than the siege of Jerusalem. The signal to flee has changed from “when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies” to “when you see the abomination of desolation.” The times he is speaking of now are said to have no parallel in history, past or future. That means worse than Assyria, worse than Babylon, worse even than Hitler’s holocaust, where half of the world’s Jewish population was annihilated.

And was Yahshua talking only about Jews, or the whole race of mankind? Here’s the *really* bad news: Mark goes on to report, **“Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, He is there!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.”** (Mark 13:14-23; cf. Matthew 24:15-26) The most successful “false

christ” of all, of course, will be the Antichrist, but there will apparently be many others, all doing things that defy logic and “prove” their divine status. But beyond that, unnatural death during this time will be so common, the human race, over seven billion strong as I write these words, will actually become an endangered species. What we’ve seen in our study up to this point (over 1.7 billion souls dead due to the Gog-Magog war) is merely a warm-up act.

Nowhere in scripture is a nice, clean Tribulation timetable given to us. But it’s possible to piece the clues together from hints scattered throughout the prophetic record. It seems that a great deal is happening at our present juncture, at or near the mid-point of the Tribulation. So perhaps it would be helpful to do a quick review of the passages that tell us the timing of these days—if for no other reason than to remind you that I’m not just making this stuff up as I go along.

If you’ll recall, the general time structure of the Tribulation is laid out plainly in Daniel: **“Seventy weeks [literally sevens, i.e., seven-year periods] are determined for your people and for your holy city....”** Sixty-nine of these seventy seven-year units have already passed, coming to a close on the day Yahshua made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, less than a week before his crucifixion. This leaves one “week” left to go, seven years in which to **“finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”** (Daniel 9:24)

This last seven-year span of time starts with a treaty: **“Then he [the Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”** (Daniel 9:27) Here we see that three and a half years into the seven-year covenant, the “willful prince,” i.e., the Antichrist, will stop the Jewish sacrificial service that’s been going on in the rebuilt temple (since it can’t, by Levitical law, be performed in any other place) and set himself up as god in their stead. This time the treachery of the broken treaty is couched in poetic terms, no less sinister for their eloquence: **“on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate.”** In other words, this man will employ the most detestable sort of idolatry—that of overt Satan worship—as he sets out to destroy mankind. This is the same event of which Paul warned us: **“...the man of sin...the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped...sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”** (II Thessalonians 2:3-4)

Daniel also gives us a recap of the three and a half years following this pivotal episode. **“I was watching; and the same horn [the Antichrist] was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days [Yahshua] came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.... He [again, the Antichrist] shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”** (Daniel 7:21-22, 25) A “time” in this context is a prophetic or schematic year, 360 days, so he’s saying the saints (Hebrew *qaddish*, holy ones) are going to get pummeled for three and a half years—until the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish believers are in view in this case, but we realize from Revelation 12:17 that the new gentile Christians are in for it as well.

We know that the schematic “prophetic” year of 360 days is being used in these predictions because the first sixty-nine “weeks” were fulfilled precisely, to the very day, using this system: $69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880$ days from the prophetically revealed starting point. (If you don’t know what I’m talking about, go back and re-read Chapter 7.) In the passages we’ve just reviewed, time spans are spoken of in rather generalized terms, in “weeks” (sevens) and “times.” But there are several passages that pin things down more tightly, to months or even days.

First, let’s look at the clues about timing that *precede* the abomination of desolation. Ezekiel writes of a seven-month period of time when Israel will be mopping up from the devastation of the Gog-Magog war: **“...They will bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog. For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. Indeed all the people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I [Yahweh] am glorified.”** (Ezekiel 39:11-13) Here we see that for seven months, practically everybody in the country is occupied in cleaning up the country—disposing of the dead bodies, but also presumably gathering up and stashing the left-over war materiel and supplies the Muslims brought in with them. Nobody is seen running for their lives, which leads us to the inescapable conclusion that there is *at least* a seven-month gap—perhaps much longer—between the end of World War III (or the Gog-Magog phase of it within Israel) and the abomination of desolation.

Second, when John in his vision was given a reed and told to measure the temple of God, he was instructed to ignore the outer court because **“they [the gentiles] will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”** (Revelation 11:2-3) Forty-two months and 1,260 days are the same length of time—half of the Tribulation’s seven 360-day “years”—in other words, three and a half prophetic years. We’ll talk about these two witnesses in a future chapter, but for now, consider the length of their prophetic ministry: *exactly* 1,260

days. Note that though they're exactly the same duration, we aren't specifically told that the forty-two months and the 1,260 days are coterminous. Indeed, the fact that the two identical time spans are expressed in two different ways might be a clue that they aren't precisely the *same* 1,260 days.

Third, from what we've seen of the progression of events during the Tribulation up to this point, it seems reasonable to assume that the time period specified in this next verse will fall primarily within the second half of the Tribulation, ending only when the Tribulation itself is all but over: **"Then the woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days."** (Revelation 12:6) When the Antichrist makes his wannabe-god move, the Jews in Israel who had recognized Yahweh's miraculous preservation of their nation from the armies of Gog will say, "No way, José," or something similarly politically incorrect. And as we read in Mark's rendition of the Olivet discourse, they'll know it's time to run for their lives. Note that the time period is precisely the same length as the ministry of the two witnesses, but again, it isn't specifically stated to be the *same* 1,260 days.

Fourth, there will be a dark period when believers [in context, specifically the believing Jews] will have no power to defend themselves, when Satan will be given free reign on the earth. **"One said to the man clothed in linen [apparently an angel]... 'How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?' Then I heard the man clothed in linen...[swear] that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished."** (Daniel 12:6-7) When this time—the time of Jacob's trouble—is over, "all these things shall be finished," in other words, the three and a half year period comes at or very near the end of the Tribulation—Yahshua's arrival brings it to an end.

So far, we have a collection of seemingly quasi-unrelated statistics: seven months to bury the dead; forty-two months for the gentiles to "tread the holy city under foot"; three and a half years for the saints to be "given into the hand" of the Antichrist; 1,260 days for the two witnesses to prophecy; time, times and half a time (three and a half years) when God's holy people will have no power at all, and 1,260 days for Israel's fleeing multitudes to be sustained and protected by Yahweh in the wilderness. But it seems reasonable to roughly equate the "woman's" (i.e. Israel's) 1,260-day flight into the wilderness, the three and a half years of helplessness, and the forty-two months in which the gentiles "will tread the holy city underfoot." The reason the gentiles are there and in control is that the Jews—many of them—have fled for their lives.

We have also been told that the Antichrist will bring the temple sacrifices to an end in the "middle" of the seven-year Tribulation (Daniel 9:27). Incredibly, Daniel, at the end of his ministry, gives us even more precise timing for the

abomination of desolation. **“Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.”** He begins by telling us what we’ve seen elsewhere, that some of the Jews will come to repentance at this time, and some will dig in their heels. **“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up [note that he has hereby equated the two things], there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days....”** What? Not 1,260 days? Nope, there’s an extra month here. (This in turn means that the “middle of the week” reference in Daniel 9:27 is an *approximation*.) I believe that that the prophet is saying that the abomination of desolation, the self-declaration in the temple by the Antichrist that he is god and that the world must worship him, will occur precisely one month before the mid-point of the Tribulation, leaving 1,290 days to go until—until what? It just says, “There shall be 1,290 days.” The only logical meaning is *until the end of the Tribulation—until the beginning of the Messiah’s reign*.

Perhaps this means that at the time of the abomination of desolation, a thirty-day deadline is set for the inhabitants of Israel to bow to the image of the beast (pledge allegiance to him) and receive the Mark. It makes sense that the Antichrist would begin imposing his will there, planning to work his way through the rest of the world in successive waves. Doing Europe or America on such a short deadline would seem an impossible task, but Israel—the world headquarters of the beast—is certainly small enough to serve as a “test market.” Besides, truth be known, it’s the only patch of ground Satan cares about, because it’s the only place with which Yahweh has personally identified Himself. The devil is nothing if not predictably covetous. Bottom line: the Jews have a thirty day window, *max*, in which to beat a retreat into the wilderness, where Yahweh has promised (as we saw above in Revelation 12:6) to protect them from the jealous rage of the jilted false Messiah.

But Daniel isn’t done. The angel tells him, **“Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”** (Daniel 12:10-13) *You shall rest?* Yeah, Daniel probably died from the headache all these dates gave him. 1,335 days? From when? From the same event specified in the preceding verse, i.e., the abomination of desolation. But this puts us past the end of the Tribulation, doesn’t it? Yes, by forty-five days. Apparently, the returning Messiah is giving Himself forty-five days to clean house, as it’s described in Matthew 25, to “separate the sheep from the goats.” The first month and a half of the Millennium will be used to judge those people who are still alive on planet earth. (We’re only talking about timing here; the *subject* is going to have to wait for a future chapter).

Still confused? Good; I’m not the only one. With the information we’ve just reviewed, let’s go back and construct a possible timeline. I’ll have to make to

educated guesses for the significant but unspecified milestones, of course; I'll put the Biblical certainties in italics. The Tribulation is to last for seven schematic years (Daniel 9:27), so $7 \times 360 = 2,520$ days, total. Here's the first half:

Day 1: The seven-year peace "covenant with many" is "confirmed" by the Antichrist. The U.N. assumes its peace-keeping role.

Day 2: Gog begins secret talks designed to unify the Islamic world against Israel.

Day 30: The Jews break ground on their new temple site.

Day 90: Antichrist sets up personal headquarters in Israel to monitor U.N. peacekeepers, or possibly so he can serve as the "special representative."

Day 300: The third temple is completed on Mount Moriah and the Levitical liturgy is restored. Other shrines are in progress.

Day 340: Gog's forces in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, etc. begin to assemble.

Day 360: *Egypt and Syria attack Israel* in a coordinated surprise military action.

Day 361: Antichrist's forces strike back.

Day 400: Antichrist's forces push Egypt and Syria back to Israel's borders.

Day 470: Antichrist sweeps across the Sinai, enters Egypt.

Day 500: Egypt surrenders.

Day 520: Gog's Islamic allies in Northern and Eastern Africa begin gathering their troops.

Day 590: Ethiopian, Sudanese, and Libyan armies clash with Antichrist's forces.

Day 630: Antichrist fights the African Islamic armies to a standstill.

Day 650: Syria attacks Israel with nerve gas. The missiles are blown off course, making Jordan a wasteland.

Day 680: The Antichrist, alarmed at Gog's armies assembling north of Israel, leaves Africa and prepares to meet them.

Day 700: Gog's forces begin their sweep into Israel through Lebanon and Syria.

Day 720: Saudi Arabia, the United States, and others lodge formal protests at the U.N.

Day 750: Hampered by U.N. forces, Gog makes flanking maneuver through Jordanian territory.

Day 780: Gog's African allies cross Sinai toward Israel.

Day 800: Gog's forces close in on Jerusalem. The Antichrist is powerless to stop their advance. The Israelis fight valiantly but are close to being overwhelmed.

Day 810: *Yahweh miraculously destroys Gog's armies within Israel with fire, brimstone, floods, an earthquake, and fratricide.*

Day 815: *Israelis begin the burial of Gog's armies.*

Day 820: *Antichrist sends nuclear missiles to Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.*

Day 825: *Antichrist nukes other Muslim nations.*

Day 840: *Russia retaliates, sending nukes to Europe and America. America and Europe respond in kind.*

Day 875: *Cumbre Vieja Volcano erupts, splits, and plunges into the sea, causing a devastating tsunami. Commercial Babylon falls.*

Day 882: *Apophis Meteorite breaks up in the atmosphere, making rain and groundwater poisonous over a third of the earth's land surface.*

Day 1,025: *Israelis complete the burial of Gog's armies and the collection of its war materiel.*

Day 1,100: *Last nuclear weapon is detonated.*

Day 1,230: *Abomination of desolation. Mark of the beast is instituted. The daily temple sacrifices cease. Jews flee.*

Day 1,251: *The two witnesses begin prophesying. (SF3—I'll explain later.)*

Day 1,260: *The mid-point. Gentiles take over Jerusalem.*

We'll deal with the second half in the coming chapters. You'll find a similar wrap-up list of Great Tribulation events at the end of chapter 24. And in case you're wondering if it's possible to assign calendar dates to these events (rather than mere sequence and time interval observations), it is. But there's a caveat: you have to make a few assumptions that are not specifically spelled out in so many words in scripture, or if they are, are not recognized for the truths they represent by the vast majority of Christians today. A list of these assumptions, and the chronological data that emerge if they're true (as I believe they are) can be found in the Appendix section. Make sure you're sitting down when you read it.

Please remember: the Tribulation is only the End of the Beginning. A new day—and a new eternity—follows. I know it looks exceedingly grim at this point. And it's going to get worse before it gets better. But for the children of Yahweh, physical death is just a temporary glitch.

Chapter 20

Babylon Is Fallen

It's time to keep a promise. Back in Chapter 14, I said I'd eventually cover what the Bible has to say about the final disposition of Babylon. So here we go.

The key to understanding Babylon is its pervasiveness. It is not one thing, but many: anything that systematically replaces Yahweh in the affections of man. On a personal level, it can be religion, but it can also be the absence of religion. It could be a lifestyle—ranging from being the most lascivious sexually deviant libertine to the most ascetic monk trying to impress God with his self-sacrifice. It might be the single-minded pursuit of power, sex, or money; but it could just as easily be self-righteous disdain for such things—pride in being humble. It could be a solid wall or a smokescreen—if it keeps us from having a real relationship with our Creator, it's part of Babylon. We all need to heed the stern warning of John: **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God [in a word, love] abides forever.”** (I John 2:15-17) There's God's gift again: choice. We can choose the lust of the world—defined here as imminent death; or we can choose to do the will of Yahweh—which is to believe, trust in, and rely upon Him—which gives us eternal life. Gee, that's a tough one.

Babylon as a scriptural metaphor, however, usually takes on more “corporate” proportions—going far beyond its personal ramifications. The end result is always the same: a purposeful, systematic rebellion against Yahweh's revealed will. But its manifestations shift by time and place. The prototypical Babylon, of course, is the ancient city on the Euphrates, the birthplace of organized, systematic idolatry in the post-flood world. In later times another city, Rome (Revelation 17:1-10), earned the epithet of “Babylon.” How much of the slam should be attributed to the brutal persecution of Yahweh's people before Constantine's time, and how much to the apostasy of the Rome-based Catholic Church after him, is left unsaid. What is clear, however, is that the whore of Babylon (**“Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth,”** to be more precise) will ultimately be revealed to be something far beyond the scope of the city of Rome, though the Vatican is definitely part of it. Babylon is not merely evil in herself, but as “the *mother* of harlots,” she spawns further generations and permutations of evil.

We have already explored how Babylon shows up in false worship. Virtually every “religion” on earth is a man-made construct designed to obfuscate, one way or another, the love of God. They are invariably based on works and

submission—formulas by which man is told he can earn his own “salvation.” The definition of *that*, of course, varies from religion to religion. To Muslims, it’s arrival in a fictional paradise dripping with low-hanging fruit and populated with sex-starved virgins (which kind of leaves the gals out in the cold, explaining why Muslim men treat them like cattle)—it’s stuff Muhammad couldn’t get enough of. (Allah’s not there, by the way. He’s in hell gleefully torturing everybody who didn’t make it because he *predestined* them to their eternal fiery torment.) With Hindus, it’s just the opposite: they long for nothing, or more correctly, *nothingness*—the complete absence of feelings, thoughts, and memories. That’s their nirvana: escape from the cycle of life. Makes sense, I suppose, if all they know in this world is pain, misery, and fear—a life totally bereft of joy and fulfillment. The really insidious religions, like Mormonism, masquerade as Christianity while leading their adherents deeper and deeper into a Babylonian-style “mystery religion” that promises to make them gods of their own worlds, just as Yahshua is of this one. Satan’s got something for everybody, and it’s all lies. Many religions are more philosophies than anything else, trying to get you through this life rather than into the next one. We’ll discuss the real heaven (and the real hell) in future chapters. Suffice it to say that to talk intelligently about either place, you have to be getting your information from someone who’s actually been there. Otherwise, your theories are nothing but uneducated guesses.

As we have seen, the religion of Babylon—in all its forms—will be ultimately absorbed into the one-world religion of Lucifer worship, fronted by the devil’s emissary on earth, the Antichrist, his game-show-host house magician, the false prophet, and an image of the beast that’s somehow hosting Satan’s spirit. By the middle of the Tribulation, followers of all the world’s false religions will have had a collective epiphany, realizing that they’ve all been worshipping the same entity, the Dragon, all along. When George W. Bush said in a 2003 press conference, “I believe we [Muslims and Christians] worship the same god,” he was voicing this very religious epiphany. To my mind, it was the worst blunder of his presidency (and he made some whoppers). Maybe *he* worships the same god as the Muslims. I don’t. In the end, it will all boil down to a clear choice: know Yahweh, or worship the dragon, Satan, Lucifer. In reality, that’s always been the case.

But Babylon has a non-religious side to it as well. Like I said, *anything* that systematically separates us from Yahweh is a candidate for this dubious honor. Indeed, most of the relevant Revelation passages seem to be describing not a religion but a system of finance or commerce. And as we have discovered, an entity we find at work in the world today fits the prophecies to a tee. For years, conspiracy theorists have been breathlessly tracking the progress of the Illuminati, a secretive (though not terribly secret) Luciferian organization whose goal is to unite the world under one all-powerful government ruled by a super-rich elite class—them. The Illuminati, after two-hundred-plus years of behind-the-scenes

maneuvering, are now alarmingly close to actually achieving their one-world ambition. I predict that as the Tribulation approaches, the international bankers and industrialists of the Illuminati will welcome the advent of the Antichrist as the last puzzle piece they need to complete their goal of the domination of earth. They will finance his rise (as they did Hitler and Lenin), undermine his foes, and greedily prepare to reap the ultimate windfall: ownership of the whole world.

Many of them won't understand the Satanic connection, of course. They'll consider themselves too enlightened to be influenced by such ancient religious hocus pocus. Others—those at the very center of the inner circle—will recognize that their god and the Antichrist's god are one and the same: Lucifer (or Allah, or Ba'al, or whatever he will choose to be called). Both groups, however, will make the same fatal error. They will assume that the emerging European leader is their ally, someone they can manipulate to achieve their own purposes, someone whose goals are in alignment with their own, someone they can manage. After all, they have grown used to bending Presidents and Kings to their will—bringing them to power as well as removing them from office. It's an art they've been perfecting since their inception, and by this late date they are very, very good at it. In their pride, the Illuminists will take for granted that the Antichrist, too, will prove to be someone they can control. Those few who know they're following Lucifer will erroneously assume that Sun Tzu's adage, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," is true and that it will work to their advantage. But it is not true, and never has been in any causal sense. They're playing with fire, and they've never seen a match like this one before.

The truth of the matter is found in John's vision: **"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast [i.e., his home-boys, the leaders of his European Federation], these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled."** (Revelation 17:16-17) In other words, Yahweh (as He has so often) is going to use one evil to eradicate another. To amend *The Art of War*, "The enemy of My enemy may not be my friend, but he might prove useful." And think beyond the rather obvious Babylon permutation of the Roman Catholic Church here. The Antichrist will know that in order to rule the world, you have to control its money—all of it. The Illuminati is about to find out the hard way that there is no such thing as honor among thieves.

So without further ado, let's see what God's word has to say about the demise of **"Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth."** At this point, John has just witnessed the rise of the Antichrist and his ten-nation empire, and has been told that the men who will "give their kingdom to the beast" will hate the harlot. Considering her behind-the-scenes role in bringing the Antichrist to power, that may seem surprising. But the reason for their hate will become

clear presently. **“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory....”** Lucifer would like you to believe he’s the great illuminator, so God wryly begins by sending an angel to shed some badly needed light on the subject. **“And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’”** (Revelation 18:1-3) Demons, foul spirits, and unclean birds (i.e., scavengers) all speak of evil. Babylon, then is the very home of wickedness in the world, despite its riches and apparent success. Actually, it’s worse than that for the “citizens” of Babylon; it has become a prison, a cage, from which there is no escape. I’m pretty sure you won’t see any Illuminati bankers repenting and using their wealth to spread the gospel; their own nefarious organization assures unwavering devotion to Lucifer’s cause.

The angel is speaking in generalities here: **“all the nations...the kings of the earth...the merchants of the earth.”** Bear in mind that one out of every nine or ten people who ever lived are walking the earth *today*—7,100,796,382 (at this particular moment) out of what *can*’t add up to much more than sixty billion, total. Therefore it’s perfectly logical to assume that the conditions of which he speaks are those that will prevail world-wide during the days of the prophecy’s fulfillment (rather than some previous period of great evil). So who, today, have the “kings of the earth” crawled into bed with? Who has made the “merchants of the earth” filthy rich? And who, if you’ll pardon the expression, has been screwing “all the nations”? Why, the Illuminati, of course, the octopus-like cartel of international bankers and industrialists who have been running the world their way—from behind the scenes—for the past hundred years or so. On the eve of their greatest triumph they will learn the truth of the first half of the proverb: **“Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.”** (Proverbs 11:4) When the angel reports that **“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,”** he’s talking about *them*.

The tip-off is the phrase *“all the nations (i.e., ethnicities, people groups).”* Until quite recently, it could never have been truthfully said that **“all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,”** or as we might say in our polite manner of speech today, *“All the nations have been seduced into an illicit and self-destructive relationship with the harlot of Babylon,”* (or, in our somewhat less than polite but nevertheless accurate vernacular, *“Every country on earth is getting screwed.”*) What am I talking about? I’m talking about crushing and inescapable national and personal indebtedness on a worldwide scale.

How we got here is a long and twisted tale. Hold onto your hat. Remember John Dee? He was the Cabalist innovator in the courts of England's Henry VIII and Elizabeth I who is credited with founding Freemasonry, or at least organizing it along occult lines.

Cabala, by the way, is an esoteric system of interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures based on the dubious idea that every word, letter, number and accent mark has a hidden, occult meaning (with which, presumably, you can make the Tanach mean anything you want it to). Invented by Jewish mystics with way too much time on their hands, it surfaced somewhere between the seventh and eleventh centuries, promising religious enlightenment to the elite cognoscenti, the initiates into its mysteries. It enjoyed an enthusiastic following among pagan-leaning Jews, and later among so-called "Christian" ecstasies until the "age of enlightenment" in the eighteenth century—which is hilariously ironic, since Lucifer's—the wannabe "light-bearer's—fingerprints are all over it. Cabala was an important ingredient in the writings of Adam Weishaupt, the founder of the Illuminati. Not surprisingly, it is making a comeback in these Last Days: a Google search will turn up hundreds of thousands of references on the Web. Since it's authored by the Father of Confusion, it not only defies precise description, it apparently can't even be spelled: it is alternately rendered Cabbala, Caballah, Kabala, Kabbalah, Kaballah, Qabala, Qabalah, and Qaballah.

Anyway, one of Dee's machinations was the proposition that the British were descendents of the ten lost tribes of Israel. I know it sounds stupid, but he had really good political reasons for promulgating this theory.

The Jews had been expelled from Britain in 1290 (as they would be from Spain in 1492). But in the turbulent wake of England's split from the Roman Catholic Church (precipitated because Henry presumed he needed a divorce from his first wife Catherine if he was to father a male heir) it was considered prudent to forge a political alliance with the Jewish bankers of Amsterdam, who had grown rich and powerful as international money lenders (and who, not incidentally, bore no love for the Roman Catholic Church). The concept of British Israel was thus forged to suggest a common racial identity. This paved the way for the eventual return (in 1664) of the Jews to England. It also created the fraudulent basis for British Imperialism: the idea that they, as the rightful heirs of Abraham, were destined to rule the earth. (If I had a nickel for every time someone stole something or killed someone because of a twisted interpretation of Yahweh's scriptures, I'd be a wealthy man.)

Fast forward to 1689. The last of the Catholic-leaning Stuart kings is replaced on the English throne by William of Orange (formerly William Stradholder, Captain General of the Dutch Forces, who had—through the machinations of Jewish money lenders in Holland—married Mary, princess of York, setting him up as the future English king.) Five years after his coronation, William repaid his benefactors for their influence—and in the process plunged England, and eventually the whole world, into the cesspool of financial Babylon. In 1694, you see, he persuaded the British Treasury to borrow 1,250,000 pounds from the Jewish banking houses of Amsterdam. National debt, as we know it today, was born.

The amount was horrendous, but the terms were worse. The lenders' names were to be kept secret. They were given a charter to establish a central bank—the Bank of England. This bank's directors were then given the right to establish the gold standard for paper currency. (At this point, the fox was in the henhouse.) Further, the bankers were allowed to lend out ten pounds worth of paper currency for every pound they held in gold—in effect, creating money out of thin air. Alarmed yet? It gets worse. The national debt they had created (and this is the real innovation here) was to be paid for by direct taxation of the English people—both the principal and the interest on the unpaid balance. Of course, then as now, it was never intended that the principal would ever be paid off. Rather, the bankers would continue to pull money out of the ether and lend it to the government at interest: in four short years England's national debt increased almost *thirteen fold*, to 16,000,000 pounds! The foxes now owned the chickens *and* their children's children's children. *Way to go, William. Hope you enjoyed being king.*

Perhaps you've gotten so comfortable with the idea of national debt that none of this bothers you. But it should, for Yahweh Himself considers the whole scheme an "abomination" (Revelation 17:5). Perhaps you think it's somebody else's problem. Wrong again. It's your problem, if you're a taxpayer or depend on one. I don't care what country you live in; if you pay income taxes, a large proportion of those taxes goes to pay for interest on loans, money your government has borrowed. And why have your leaders borrowed this money? To pay for wars, for social programs, crime-fighting—things that more often than not, the powers behind the governments have *engineered* in order to induce them to borrow money to deal with them. You may protest, *What about infrastructure—roads and such? What about space exploration? What about protecting the environment?* Yes, all of these things and more are properly within the purview of government budgets. But none of them have ever *required* borrowing a penny. If there are beneficiaries, the costs should be borne by them. If there are villains that negatively impact expenses, they too should bear their proper share. That's why we have, for example, gasoline taxes for road users, fines for industrial polluters, and tolls for bridge passage. We have no business

using taxpayers' dollars to send space probes to distant planets searching for signs of life—signs the scientists desperately hope to find so they can prop up their sagging evolutionary presuppositions. Communication satellites, on the other hand, should be paid for by the people who benefit from the service they provide.

Am I implying that we should all stage a tax revolt? No. It's far too late for that. William of Orange cooked our goose back in 1694, and we've been reheating the poor thing ever since: 1913 was a particularly auspicious year, with the passage of the American Federal Reserve Act *and* the National Income Tax—something so contrary to our founding fathers' ideals it took a Constitutional amendment to perpetrate it. Andrew Jackson is *still* rolling over in his grave about that one. Back in chapter 14—Mystery Babylon—I recommended reading G. Edward Griffin's *The Creature from Jekyll Island—A Second Look at the Federal Reserve* (1994-2004), American Media). I mention it again here because if we don't understand how currency, wealth, and central banks work, we will never comprehend the evil octopus of financial Babylon as presented in prophetic scripture.

National debt in the modern (post-1694) sense is a stealthy and nefarious form of slavery. We are all familiar with the term “debtor nations,” a description used of those small, poor countries who come to the rich industrialized ones hat in hand, looking for a loan or a handout. It's an erroneous concept: practically *all* nations are debtors, even (or should I say *especially*) the largest and most prosperous. The United States, as I write these words, has *legally* incurred debts totaling over sixteen *trillion* dollars. But don't blink: the number is rising so fast it will be obsolete by lunch time. We owed “only” five trillion at the turn of this century. Although it's impossible to calculate, one source projects that our national debt (if we stay on our present course) will reach *fifty trillion dollars* by the time I expect our prophetic scenario to play out (with the abomination of desolation taking place on March 28, 2030). We're not just in a financial hole, folks—this is the journey to the center of the earth! And the United States is not alone in this predicament. Virtually every industrialized nation on earth—even cash-rich China—is up to their ears in hock. So how do developing nations borrow money from “wealthy” ones? They don't.

To understand why, we need to comprehend how money is created. In the real world, building wealth is the natural result of industry—of applying work and insight to the solution of problems and the meeting of needs. That explains why Israel, for example, with very little in the way of natural resources (until very recently), became so much more prosperous than any of its oil-soaked Islamic neighbors. But that's only the real world. The world of international finance (the pond in which the Illuminati shark swims) is something else again. The money that's loaned to developing or “third-world” nations is *created* in parallel with the

debt it represents—not by wealthier nations, but by banks. It is nothing but ones and zeros in a computer somewhere. There is absolutely nothing of real value backing it up. Scary, huh?

Today, all industrialized nations operate their own Bank-of-England style central banks. In the U.S., it's the Federal Reserve Bank; in Germany, it's Die Deutsche Bundesbank, France has the Banque de France, The U.K. has the Bank of England, and so forth. There's even a European Central Bank, headquartered in Frankfurt. These are, in effect, banking monopolies with sweeping powers that were created by legislative acts of their respective nations (or, in the case of the E.U, federations). They are allowed to issue currency far in excess of any actual assets they hold—the FRB, for example, has no silver at all, and all the gold held in the Federal Reserve System and at Fort Knox covers no more than ten percent of the outstanding paper currency. Our money, therefore, has no substantive basis of value—it is created by fiat, not by the policy of the government, but of the central bank.

But wait, you say. These central banks are owned by their respective national governments, aren't they? No, sorry, they're not. They're corporations, owned by individuals and other corporations, not by governments. Worse, they all have interlocking directorships, joint stock ownership, cross ownership, and substantial cross loans. The directorates and majority shareholders of these institutions comprise an incestuous list indeed. The same family names pop up over and over again: Rockefeller, Morgan, Lazard, Warburg, Schiff, and of course, Rothschild—the Who's Who of the Illuminati. Their interests lie in protecting each other, not in looking out for the welfare of their host governments—and certainly not the citizens of those nations. People in these industrialized countries are there for only one purpose: to pay the bills. As often as not, they do this with a “hidden tax” called inflation. When institutions such as our Federal Reserve Bank pump unsupported dollars into the economy (calling it “quantitative easing” so you won't realize it's blatant theft), the value of each dollar diminishes. That is, it will purchase less. That's why the same gallon of milk that cost 49 cents in 1960 will set you back \$3.52 in 2013. It's not that the cows got a raise in pay; it's that the dollar, due to reserve bank meddling, is worth less—and is on its way to becoming *worthless*.

There's more to “**all the nations [that] have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication**” than the industrialized world, of course. Developing nations don't have their own central banks. Does that prevent them from selling their souls to the devil, as we have? Not any more. Today, they have the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund which, in slightly different ways, serve as conduits for international bankers (read: Illuminati, whether they know they're in the club or not) to create new money in parallel with new debt. The World Bank, holding

only nominal reserves contributed by its “wealthy” member nations, draws up bonds on the behalf of the “debtor nation,” which are then sold to commercial banks. In purchasing these bonds, money is “created” by these banks. The IMF presents itself as a financial pool of money quotas contributed by its subscribing nations—most of the world. But only a quarter of the quotas are payable in gold (the rest being created in parallel with debt)—again, credit is being manufactured out of thin air and wishful thinking, with but a fraction of the new money backed by anything resembling real assets. Actually, it has been even worse since 1979, when the IMF instituted what are known as “Special Drawing Rights,” which serve for all practical purposes as a new form of international currency—a.k.a. new-world-order funny money.

Did you happen to pick up on the *real* game the international banking community is playing? With “wealth” being conjured up from nothing in parallel with the debt of their victims—excuse me, *client nations*—they are risking little or nothing (since no real assets are changing hands), yet interest payments—in real money this time—must still be paid. And paying down the principal? Who’s got anything left over for that? In theory, debt principal that is paid off cancels the artificial creation of “wealth” that was accomplished through the original loan. But the loans are never really expected to be retired. That’s the whole point: the interest is supposed to pile up forever, making the international bankers ever richer in the process. Although there’s no consensus on the number, the total world debt today, public and private, seems to be somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 *quadrillion* dollars. If you work out the compound interest numbers for the next twenty or thirty years, the picture becomes truly frightening—or slapstick silly—depending on your spiritual point of view. Is this sustainable? I think not.

There are natural consequences to basing the world’s money system on the creation of debt. First, it raises the cost of goods and services, which curtails the buying power of men and nations. This leads to a surplus of those same goods and services, which precipitates cut-throat competition, leading in turn to an inflationary death spiral. If left to manage itself, this process inevitably leads to either bankruptcy or war (or both). The Illuminati may be master tinkerers, but even *they* can’t keep this ship afloat forever. Don’t forget, the whole point was to take what billions of people had earned with their hard work and sacrifice and put it into the bloated pockets of an arrogant elite who didn’t earn it. It’s nothing but an elaborate snatch and run, and the whole world is their 7-Eleven. What was it Yahweh wrote with His own finger? Oh, yes: “**You shall not steal.**” (Exodus 20:15)

Lest we forget what got us started on this rant, allow me to reprise these few verses: “**Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have**

committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” (Revelation 18:1-3) The Illuminati (or if you don’t like the conspiracy-theory overtones in that title, call it “commercial/financial Babylon”) and their whole one-world-and-it’s-all-for-me scheme are toast. The house of cards is scattered to the winds. The usurious interest they charged on loans of money that didn’t really exist (and wasn’t theirs anyway) is nothing but a happy memory. As we shall see, some are pleased about this turn of events, and some are horrified. But there’s nothing anyone can do to hasten or prevent it: the fall of economic Babylon is a prophetic *fait accompli*.

I mentioned that the ten nations of the Antichrist’s original European empire (Revelation 17:16) are said to hate the harlot, despite her assistance in elevating their boy to a position of unparalleled prominence. Now you know why. They, with every other government on earth, are up to their eyeballs in debt to them—debts that will no longer have to be repaid if the Illuminati can be somehow neutralized. The behind-the-scenes elites will put their man in power and finance his rise to international prominence (just as they did Adolph Hitler a century previously), assuming they can maintain control. But for his part, the Antichrist owes his allegiance to no one but the dragon, Satan. He won’t think twice about stabbing his backers in the back.

This particular gambit is not without historical precedent. The Knights Templar, formed in 1118 ostensibly to provide security for Catholic pilgrims visiting Jerusalem, had for almost two centuries grown obscenely rich by lending money at interest to European heads of state. In 1307, one such king who was deeply in debt to them, Philip IV of France, colluded with Pope Clement V to seize their wealth and turn them—7,000 strong, though twice that many were arrested—over to the Inquisition for “re-education.” Accusations of religious unorthodoxy (read: idolatry, witchcraft, Satan worship—which may not have been groundless) were made, giving the Pope and the king a free hand to do whatever they wanted—which was to torture the Templars into confession, in turn giving them justification for seizing their wealth. *Voilà!* Problem solved. No more debt. I get the feeling that the Antichrist will do something very much like this to the International Banking Community that helped put him in power.

And it gets better (for him). The Antichrist is about to take over their scam, like one Mafia don encroaching on the territory of another. If I may indulge in a little blue-sky speculation here, I would suggest that the Antichrist might, upon his ascension to earth’s throne, cancel all debts, public and private—just wipe the slate clean (SF7). This move would ingratiate him to the masses, who are personally, like their nations, in hock up to their necks, while costing him nothing. Of course, if you don’t receive the Mark of the Beast, your debts remain on the books. This move would also serve as the launch platform for Illuminati II—a

new world-wide super-bank controlled by the central government—i.e., by the Antichrist himself.

Of course, whether or not he actually does this is immaterial—it's not specifically prophesied. But it's what I would do in his shoes, an evil win-win scenario. The fact of the prophesied worldwide financial meltdown—the fall of the commercial/financial whore of Babylon—is what we need to be cognizant of. Whether the Antichrist will cause it or merely capitalize upon it is anybody's guess. The shattered pieces of a financial infrastructure devastated by nuclear war and its aftermath will be there for the taking—but only the most ambitious, ruthless and cunning of megalomaniacs would attempt it.

Where does all this leave the Tribulation neo-believers? After all, it was primarily for them that this information has been provided—the news of Babylon's fall isn't of much practical use to us on this side of the rapture. Or is it? You'd have to be blind or asleep to be unaware that the earth is headed for financial Armageddon—a “fiscal cliff” overlooking the bottomless abyss. John's vision tells us what to do, now *and* then: **“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow.”** (Revelation 18:4-7) Get out now, separate yourself from Babylon, while you still can.

This begins with the same advice we saw in the Old Testament: **“Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.”** (Zechariah 2:7) You can't flee from “Babylon” if you don't realize you're living there. If the world's system is the foundational basis for your life, you're in big trouble. If you “share in her sins,” you'll “receive of her plagues.” This is a plea for a pilgrim mentality among the followers of Yahweh, both before the rapture and after. Especially after. It is a call for holiness—separation *from* the world and separation *to* God. The speaker here (though we aren't told) could well be Gabriel, the angel whose particular mission is the welfare of Israel, for he refers to his audience as “my people.” This, then, is one final warning to God's chosen: *If you're still part of the problem, stop. Repent. Turn around. Think differently. Flee. Be an enemy to this evil, for she is certainly an enemy to you!*

On a more specific note, this instruction seems to be directed especially toward Israel. It is with bitter irony that we note the significant involvement of individual Jews in the perpetration of Illuminati oppression. And indeed, it goes even deeper than that: historically, Jews have been culpable in the perpetration of heinous crimes at the national level. For instance, out of 556 important functionaries in the Bolshevik state in 1918-19, 457 of them were Jews. Karl

Marx, from whom they got their philosophy (based on Weishaupt's concepts), was Jewish. For that matter, Adolph Hitler was concerned (or perhaps convinced) that he was the grandson of a woman who had been raped by the scion of a prominent Jewish (and Illuminati) family—a Rothschild, no less—making *him* one-quarter Jewish. The fact that it was a presumption on his part didn't prevent him from murdering six million Jews in blind retribution. The Jews have always been their own worst enemy. No wonder Yahweh chose them to be a symbolic microcosm of humanity at large.

Remember what Moses warned of in Deuteronomy 28:53? If the Israelites refused to serve Yahweh, they would **“eat the fruit of [their] body, the flesh of [their] sons and daughters...in the siege and desperate straits in which the enemy shall distress you.”** This cannibalism was, sadly, literally fulfilled several times in their disastrous history. But I believe Moses' warning could go even further: that Jews would ultimately be responsible for metaphorically devouring their own race through precipitating prejudices and pogroms. Today, some researchers have noted the Jewish strongholds within the Illuminati and concluded that Zionism is the problem. References to the infamous fabrication *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are ubiquitous in the literature. Although individual Jews are indeed ensconced in places of power within the Illuminati, *the Jews* (as a nation—Abraham's offspring and the focus of Yahweh's promise) have nothing to do with it. People who have equated Yahweh's purpose in restoring Israel with the Illuminati's satanic agenda of enslaving the world through their avarice are fatally misguided. Oh, how wrong you can be.

Because they're the power behind a thousand thrones, the Illuminati bankers and industrialists are confident that they can't—at this late date—be shaken from their positions of power. But their security is an illusion. **“For she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.”** (Revelation 18:7-8) Not since the days of Adam Weishaupt have the members of this nefarious organization been *personally* vulnerable. Sure, they suffered setbacks and roadblocks to their agenda over the years, but they weren't subjected to punishment for their crimes—primarily because they owned governments the way Jim Henson owned Kermit the Frog. The industrialized nations were their puppets, and the developing nations were the dirt under their feet. They're seemingly untouchable. But Yahweh, as we have seen, delights in doing the impossible—even when it comes to judgment.

The world's economic meltdown won't occur gradually over a period of years or months. It will happen in one day, in one hour, as suddenly and as unexpectedly as the September 11 Islamic attack on the World Trade Center.

Bringing down the financial infrastructure of the earth, however, will take more than flying a couple of airliners into tall buildings. The task will be more like trying to destroy the Internet, something that was designed to be so pervasive and decentralized that a thousand individual attacks wouldn't even dent it.

Complicating the problem is that the Illuminati is—as far as the world can see—leaderless. Not since the days of Albert Pike has anyone been able to point to a single individual and say, “That’s the head of the Illuminati.” This fact has led some to conclude that it doesn’t really exist anymore, that all that’s left is the babblings of conspiracy theorists and paranoid kooks. I would submit to you, however, that this manifestation of Babylon is now being personally supervised by the same person who’s been running the religious side of the whore’s enterprises for the last six thousand years: Satan himself.

I believe that financial Babylon will enter World War III fully expecting to emerge more or less intact from that conflict. (After all, the Illuminati predicted, promoted—and probably planned—this war, just as they did the previous two worldwide conflagrations and countless smaller wars, financing and equipping the military machines of every major contestant. They most certainly planned *for* it.) They will envision crawling from their hiding places amid the rubble of Western Europe and North America—or with foresight, Paraguay, the Cayman Islands, Madagascar, or some similarly out of the way place—rub their hands together, and prepare to make another killing, buying up what’s left of the “civilized world” for pennies on the dollar. Business as usual.

This time, however, Yahweh is not going to let them get away with it. Through one mechanism or another, the entire structure of commercial Babylon is prophesied to fall apart—suddenly and irretrievably. My guess (based on the clues left for us in Revelation 8 and 18) is that the proximate cause of financial Babylon’s demise is either nuclear war (Trumpet Judgment number one), or the second Trumpet Judgment, the eruption, collapse, and tsunami of the Cumbre Vieja volcano. (They could, in fact, happen at virtually the same time.) The Antichrist will know better than anyone how to avoid “letting a crisis go to waste.” The Illuminati octopus is counting on holding all the cards when the dust settles. But they may not be prepared for World War III going nuclear, they’re not factoring in the clean sweep of the most devastating tsunami in human history, and they’re *certainly* not factoring in the satanic ambition and empowerment of the Antichrist. His plans don’t include toeing their line or paying loan interest to them. He’s thinking big, thinking outside the box. And that’s a problem, because they *own* the box—they designed and built it to contain guys like this. *Who does he think he is?* Remember, Illuminati strategy from the beginning has been to control, finance, and manipulate *both* sides of every conflict. Ironically, with their “side” the only one left standing, they will find themselves betrayed by their own front man. Welcome to the grim reality of Satan worship, guys.

One more random thought before we move on: the Antichrist, as we have seen, will be assassinated (only to be re-animated) on the eve of his ascension to the throne of the United States of Earth. I have hypothesized that his murderer is a Jewish priest trying to do Yahweh a service. But he could just as easily be an agent of the Illuminati. Establishing means, motive, and opportunity would be a no-brainer. Impossible? I give you the parallel precedent of John F. Kennedy's assassination, and rest my case.

Okay, back to Babylon. **"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come....'"** Here we see the political fallout. The "kings of the earth" find the flow of funny money suddenly cut off. There will be no more borrowing money to gain political advantage—standard operating procedure among governments large and small today. It's called deficit spending, but in reality it's selling our children into slavery, just as our parents sold us. In a very real sense, access to this counterfeit capital is all that stands between many politicians and the unemployment line. As they spend you into an illusory prosperity (and your children into slavery) they drive the gullible voters to the ballot box in enthusiastic droves. *Vote yes on free lunch*. Though as Margaret Thatcher once said, "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money."

I must confess that I've never been able to read Revelation 18 without picturing New York City in my mind. I realize that's probably a provincial and limited view—that any city, even *that* one, could fully embody the evil of Babylon. After all, John wouldn't have called *Rome* "Babylon" (in so many words) if Nebuchadnezzar's capital on the Euphrates had been sufficient to describe the real character of the "mother of harlots and abominations" of which Yahweh is so concerned about teaching us. I need to remind myself that the Greek word for "city," *polis*, in context, may not mean so much "a place" as "a system," for in John's day, a city was the closest thing there was to a system—internally interlocking, interdependent, symbiotic, self-interested, and prepared to defend itself—a living socioeconomic organism. In the twenty-first century, such a *polis* need not be confined to a single location. That being said, if one city in the world were to be singled out as the poster child of Commercial Babylon, post-rapture New York would have to be it—in my imagination the very incarnation of the human pride and concentration of ill-gotten wealth that Yahweh so clearly despises.

For example, the New York Stock Exchange is unquestionably the world's epicenter for what we see next: **“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.”** (Revelation 18:9-13) Imagine what would happen if all such trade suddenly stopped—not just on Wall Street but in every securities trading center. Remember what I said the Antichrist would probably do in response to the anarchy of the post-WWIII world? I hypothesized that he would freeze wages and prices. We need to understand that Satan knows nothing of freedom, of *choice*. His style is top-down control—something he has never been able to universally impose until now, at the midpoint of the Tribulation. The creation of markets through innovation and hard work is a byproduct of the creative nature of Yahweh that He built into us. That man has so often been motivated by greed or covetousness in his commercial endeavors doesn't change that fact. But creativity under the Antichrist's rule will give way to control—brutal and unbending—once he has wrested power over Babylon's *polis*/system away from her former overlords.

Take a close look at that list through first century eyes. In all of the categories we see here (media of exchange, apparel and fashion, building materials, food and beverages, drugs and cosmetics, transportation, and human resources) we see a decided leaning toward the high end of the scale—luxuries. In the middle of the list is the phrase “wine and oil,” which reminds us of something we saw earlier. The third seal judgment pronounced (and I paraphrase—*loosely*), “The average man must work all day for barely enough to keep him alive, but the rich ruling elite will still enjoy their luxuries.” (Revelation 6:6) That was the state of affairs right into the dark days of the Magog War: the cream of society (who were prepared for it) rose above the stench of death, viewing the devastation as little more than an opportunity to buy the earth for a fraction of its worth. But here in Revelation 18, we see their plan coming apart.

Now, not only is the market gone for luxury goods, so is their posh lifestyle. **“The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing....’”** There's that phrase again—the same thing we saw when the politicians witnessed the demise of Babylon. Now it's **“the merchants [who] stand at a distance for fear of her torment.”** Notice that it's not the merchants and politicians themselves who have been destroyed, but the behind-

the-scenes elite whose boots they've been licking for so many years—and their assets. Now they're whistling a different tune: *We don't even want to be within miles of those people. What's happening to them might happen to us, too. Guilt by association. Punishment by proximity.*

The same phenomenon is now seen even farther down the food chain, demonstrating two things. First, the influence and reach of the Babylonian system is pervasive indeed, and second, when the worm turns, nobody wants to be near the apple. **“Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’ Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”**

(Revelation 18:14-20) New York has one of the busiest harbors in the world. Coincidence? If you say so. It's hard to say how much of this is literal and how much is figurative. Sadly, there's a third thing happening here, or rather, *not* happening. Nobody seems to recognize the evil nature of financial Babylon. All they know is that she is suffering a violent and sudden death, and that's going to hit them hard in the wallet. Those who witness her demise don't seem to be cognizant of their own culpability before God. They're merely afraid of the poverty they now see looming in their futures.

Once again we need to take a lesson from September 11. The terrorist attacks came with a price tag—some say their direct and indirect costs exceeded a hundred billion dollars. We all stood back wringing our hands, saying stupid things like, “No place is safe anymore. We must find a way to protect ourselves.” But we all saw the names of the perpetrators (mostly Saudis, not Afghans) in the newspapers, learned of their motivations and their beliefs, and read their handwritten prayers to Allah. We all listened to the tapes of Osama Bin Laden telling us plainly that his terrorist organization, al-Qaeda, was nothing—that Islam was everything. And yet, with all that evidence, there *still* aren't a hundred people in America who are willing to stand up and tell the truth: that the reason we were attacked is the evil teaching of Islam—and that if we don't fight Islam itself, we will never make any progress toward curtailing its terrorism. My point is simply this: there's a trend developing here, and it isn't good. We once fought against Nazism. Then we compromised with Communism. Today we refuse to acknowledge the obvious evils of Islam. But during the Tribulation, men won't even *recognize the existence* of Babylon—the most pervasive, all-encompassing evil of them all. What will it take to get their attention? A cut in salary.

But what happens? How is Babylon finally overthrown? Here's how John describes it, but I'm afraid it raises more questions than it answers. **“Then a mighty**

angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, 'Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth; for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.'

(Revelation 18:21-24) Just when this started sounding like it might be describing the destruction of a real, physical city, (in my imagination, New York) we get down to that last sentence, which clearly doesn't fit the Big Apple at all in any literal sense. But according to prophetic precedent, it's perfectly normal for Yahweh to mix literal fulfillments with metaphorical ones.

If New York *represents* the sins of financial Babylon, God could literally wipe it off the face of the earth (directly fulfilling this prophecy) in symbolic retribution for the evil system that has been seducing men to their eternal deaths—and persecuting the saints of Yahweh—ever since the days of Adam. This speaks mostly of “effect,” not “cause.” This, as a prophetic phenomenon, is identical to the Bible's treatment of Rome, specifically described as the “city on seven hills,” as the seat of *religious* Babylon. Commentators for the past fifteen hundred years have concluded (shortsightedly) that Rome—i.e., the Roman Catholic Church—is *all there is* to the “Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (as she's called in Revelation 17:5). Indeed, she is described (in verse 9): “**The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.**” But in the very next verse, John goes on to demonstrate conclusively that although the *city* of Rome may be in play, the Roman Catholic Church is not all there is to Babylon the Great. Again: Rome *represents* the sins of religious Babylon, and its destruction at the hands of the Antichrist (prophesied in verse 16) will provide (as New York will for commercial Babylon) “*symbolic* retribution for the evil system that has been seducing men to their eternal deaths—and persecuting the saints of Yahweh—ever since the days of Adam,” as I phrased it above.

Let's review the facts. The Babylon of which John speaks, if you put it all together, is a system of evil that permeates the earth—a system of religion, politics, and commerce that Yahweh will utterly destroy through sudden and violent means of His own choosing. Those who benefited by it will lament its passing. Political leaders, merchants, and middlemen (those involved in shipping) are specifically seen mourning her loss. As Babylon's domination of the entertainment industry (**harpists...**), the industrial base (**craftsmen...**), agribusiness (**the sound of the millstone**), and the energy industry (**the light of a lamp**) comes to an end, the normal cycle of life (**the voice of the bridegroom and bride**) will be disrupted.

Because the most detailed description of her fall comes in Revelation 17 and 18—near the end of the book, *after* all of the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments have been pronounced, many thoughtful students of scripture assume that commercial Babylon's hour of demise occurs near the end of the seven-year Tribulation. After all, the seventh and final bowl judgment includes this statement: **“And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.”** (Revelation 16:19) The angel that delivered the details concerning the fall of Babylon to John was one of the angels of the seven bowls—the last series of judgments to be revealed. But although John no doubt wrote these things down in the order he saw them, his book is replete with parentheticals and flashbacks; it is obviously not laid out in strict chronological order. The death of *commercial* Babylon actually makes far more logistical sense if we place her sudden destruction during World War III—the nuclear phase of the War of Magog. Remember the phrase, **“For in one hour she is made desolate.”**

Point one: if indeed New York is representative of the “city” that's described, it can be expected to be at the top of everybody's nuclear hit list—whether the Muslims', the Russians', or the Antichrist's (all of whom would have different reasons for wanting her gone). Of course, the same would be true of any literal city God might choose to make His point—London, Paris, Rome, Hong Kong, etc. But perhaps we should be thinking not of “one city,” but of “all the cities that fit the profile.” If we think of financial Babylon as a *system*, then we could expect it to have multiple epicenters—all of which might be logical targets of a nuclear superpower trying to eliminate the threat of a European megalomaniac.

Point two: it's hard to imagine any semblance of “business as usual” remaining for three or four years after a third of the planet and a quarter of its population is destroyed in a nuclear war or its aftermath—certainly not enough for merchants to be shocked and dismayed at the destruction of a single seaport city so long after the war. But the surprise and distress that the “merchants” of the world would experience if, suddenly and unexpectedly, a city (or system) wielding the financial and political influence of New York were wiped out by a nuclear bomb—*that* would certainly precipitate the kind of anguished reaction John describes: “Alas, alas, that great city...” This strongly suggests an earlier, rather than later, destruction of commercial Babylon.

Point three. According to the prophecy of the second Trumpet Judgment—which will occur sometime after the commencement of World War III (Trumpet #1) but before the burning “star” falls from the heavens (Trumpet #3)—all life will die in one third of the earth's oceans, including any ships that happen to be there at the time (Revelation 8:9). This “third of the sea” is probably a description of the greater Atlantic Ocean. Now, carefully compare this fact with the description of Babylon's demise: it specifically mentions *witnesses in ships at*

sea: “Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning.” This implies that the destruction of financial Babylon will occur *before* the “great mountain burning with fire” is “thrown into the sea”—the singular event prophesied to turn a third of the sea to blood and kill everything living within or upon it. In other words, the “one-hour” destructive event that destroys financial Babylon will *precede* (if only momentarily) the second Trumpet Judgment (the Cumbre Viejo eruption and tsunami, unless I miss my guess). That leaves us but one logical prophetically specified cause: Trumpet Judgment #1— nuclear warfare.

A couple of chapters back I mentioned that there are two potential “natural” disasters just waiting to happen—the Cumbre Vieja volcano in the Canary Islands and the recently-discovered Apophis Asteroid. Either of these could potentially be described as the “**great millstone being thrown into the sea**” described in Revelation 18:21. But although the “**great star from heaven,**” i.e., the third Trumpet Judgment (Revelation 8:10-11) is described as “**burning like a torch,**” which is something any asteroid would do as it entered the earth’s atmosphere, its destination is described as “**a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.**” In other words, its landing zone is spread out over a goodly portion of the earth’s surface—it *won’t* be “thrown into the sea,” at least not all in one piece. And its *effect* is not the instantaneous destruction of cities, but rather the slow, prolonged agony of poisoned water supplies. The coming asteroid, then, does not fit the profile of the “Babylon killer.”

That doesn’t mean we should ignore it, however. This quarter-mile wide asteroid (initially called 2004 MN₄ and now officially designated 99942 Apophis—the Greek form of Apep, “the Destroyer,” the patron of evil and darkness in the Egyptian pantheon) was given its name because it’s so big and scary. In the context of Babylon’s demise, though, the interesting thing about Apophis is what we know of its *timing*. We can be reasonably certain that the events listed *within* each judgment series (seals, trumpets, or bowls) will happen chronologically in the order they were listed, even though the three series overlap each other to some extent. Therefore, if we know when Trumpet #3 is going to blow, we will have established an outer limit for the demise of financial Babylon, a date before which its destruction must come about. According to our established Tribulation timeline, Apophis will arrive sometime *after* the commencement of World War III and about a year *before* the abomination of desolation. NASA scientists have calculated the precise date: Friday, April 13, 2029.

Gee, that’s right around the corner, you say. Why haven’t I heard about this impending disaster in the news? Because of a bigger (and also scripturally significant) news story dominating the media at the time Apophis was discovered: The *Washington Post* (April 9, 2005) reported that “the tsunami in South Asia

pushed 2004 MN₄ out of the news.” The article went on to say, “The asteroid would miss, but only by 15,000 to 25,000 miles—about one-tenth the distance to the moon. Asteroid 2004 MN₄ was no false alarm. Instead, it has provided the world with the best evidence yet that a catastrophic encounter with a rogue visitor from space is not only possible but probably inevitable.... Asteroid 2004 MN₄ is a ‘regional’ hazard—big enough to flatten Texas or a couple of European countries with an impact equivalent to 10,000 megatons of dynamite—more than all the nuclear weapons in the world.” The *Post* promises a near miss, but don’t bet your life on it. (Initially, NASA gave it a 1-in-38 chance of hitting earth, rating it an unprecedented 4 on the Torino risk scale. Fine tuning their calculations, they too assure us that although Apophis will pass earth within the orbits of our geosynchronous satellites, it will miss the earth. But NASA knows nothing of God’s power and providence. This far out, *anything* coming in contact with it, no matter how small, could alter its orbit enough to make the prophecy a reality.)

So if Scripture wasn’t telling us a different story, we might well surmise that Apophis could be the bad boy that finishes off commercial Babylon, or conversely, will miss Earth altogether. But the whore will be history before the asteroid gets anywhere close. As we have seen, Babylon’s fatal wound was inflicted under the first Trumpet Judgment—nuclear war. But apparently, the *coup de grâce* will be administered through the *second* Trumpet. **“Then the second angel sounded: and something like a great mountain burning with fire [a precise definition of a volcano] was thrown into the sea [a precise definition of Cumbre Vieja’s unique threat], and a third of the sea became blood; and a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”** (Revelation 8:8-9) This appears to be the same event we saw when Babylon’s demise was being described: **“Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying ‘Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.’** (Revelation 18:21) The “Then” that begins the verse *follows* John’s description of how commercial Babylon had been destroyed in “one hour,” how she was mourned on earth, and how her demise was the cause of rejoicing in heaven. *Ding, dong, the wicked witch is dead.*

In both passages, the Greek word for “threw” or “thrown” is derived from *ballo*, which means either to throw or hurl, to let fall (allowing gravity to do its work), or to place something into position. Thus the word allows for Cumbre Vieja’s collapse to come at precisely the right moment, in precisely the right/wrong place. The Canary Islands are in the mid-Atlantic ocean, off the coast of Morocco. The definitive report on the subject, entitled *Cumbre Vieja Volcano—Potential collapse and tsunami at La Palma, Canary Islands*, by Steven N. Ward and Simon Day, states, “Over the last several thousand years, the distribution and orientation of vents and feeder dykes within the mountain have shifted from a triple rift system (typical of most oceanic island volcanoes) to one

consisting of a single N-S rift with westward extending vent arrays.... A future eruption near the summit of the Cumbre Vieja will likely trigger a flank failure.” When Cumbre Vieja plunges into the ocean, destruction from the biggest tsunami on record is assured for influential cities on both sides of the ocean—European financial and industrial centers like London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Lisbon, Amsterdam, The Hague, Brussels, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm, and American centers of power and wealth, like New York, Washington, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Norfolk. Starting to get the picture?

Though I’ve provided a likely scenario explaining how (and when) it might happen, Yahweh didn’t give us enough information to be dogmatic about the means by which financial Babylon will meet its demise, but there’s no doubt that it will—a worldwide financial meltdown. All the evidence points toward a sudden, shocking catastrophe that takes place well before the mid-point of the Tribulation. It will be seen among the world’s upper classes as a disaster of unprecedented proportions. It’s significant that the mourners of Babylon don’t seem to be lamenting its loss for its own sake or the sake of those who lost their lives there—but they’re really upset that they aren’t going to make any more money out of this scam. Nor do they recognize its destruction as God’s judgment upon a wicked thing. But it *is* judgment—not an accident, not a mistake, not a fluke of nature, not merely a big piece of bad luck.

The reasons for this judgment are threefold. First, Babylon’s **“merchants were the great men of the earth,”** which implies a greed-induced lust for power among the leaders of commerce, finance, and industry. These people should have aspired to be the servants of mankind, not its masters.

Second, **“by [her] sorcery all the nations were deceived.”** The word for “sorcery” here is *pharmakeia*, which is derived from *pharmakon*, a drug or spell-inducing potion, or by extension the one who administers it: a druggist, poisoner, or sorcerer. The point is that Babylon’s “sorcery” isn’t necessarily manifested in overt Satanic ritual worship, like sacrificing a goat to Lucifer in the lobby of the U.N. building. And although the Illuminati have documented ties to major illicit drug cartels, think beyond cocaine and heroin. We—and I mean the whole world—have become accustomed to the idea that there ought to be a magic pill to fix anything—even our own sin. We’re into masking symptoms, not preventing the sicknesses that cause them. We consider it our right to play with matches, and then we curse God when we get burned. As a case in point, 40 million people are currently infected with the AIDS virus. In response, the World Health Organization and two other UN agencies launched a program called the “3X5” campaign, designed to provide three million AIDS patients antiretroviral drugs by the end of 2005. Meanwhile, the Vatican’s recommendations of “fidelity, chastity, and abstinence” (which I heartily endorse) are roundly scoffed at in “enlightened”

circles, even though everybody who thinks about it for a nanosecond knows that AIDS could be obliterated in one generation if everyone in the world would simply restrict themselves to one sexual partner in their lifetime. That's God's design, but we seem to prefer Satan's sorceries.

Third, **"in [Babylon] was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."** This statement clearly identifies Babylon as a system, not a city, for the slain and martyred are from every "nation, tribe, people, and tongue" on the earth. More importantly, the blood of these people, saved and unsaved is laid squarely at the feet of this system. (The "all who were slain" reference is presumably to the Tribulation's dead, but in a larger sense, it could refer to anyone who had been murdered since Cain killed Abel, since *every* murder, at its core, is the result of failure to trust Yahweh and love one's fellow man. "Babylon" is the systematic expression of these failures.) The implications of this are staggering. Billions are dead—or will die—because of Babylon's evils. (The Antichrist, it appears, is not the only villain on the scene, though in this broader sense, the Antichrist is actually part of Babylon. Remember how we first saw him: "the woman *was riding* the beast.") False religions are part of it: from Islam's role in starting World War III to the subsequent gathering of lesser sects to worship the dragon and the beast, Babylon's culpability is undeniable. And religion's mirror image, atheistic materialism, the foundation of Babylon's commercial-industrial-financial complex being described here in Revelation 18, is equally guilty of the blood of prophets and saints.

Not everyone is dismayed to see Babylon go under. In heaven, where they see things more clearly than we do here on earth, this scene unfolds: **"After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! [Literally, "Radiate Yahweh's light!"] Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.' Again they said, 'Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!' And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, 'Amen! Alleluia!'"** (Revelation 19:1-4) "Alleluia" is a Greek transliteration of two Hebrew words, *halal* (praise) and *Yah* (a contraction of Yahweh), hence it basically means "praise Yahweh." *Halal*, however, has some interesting connotations. The primitive root means "to be clear," or "shine," so the word connotes the glory of Yahweh shining in and through us. *Halal* suggests celebration, boasting in Yahweh, going so far as to make oneself a fool of oneself in glorifying Him—there's an exuberance about the word that reminds us of King David dancing with wild abandon before his God. In today's vernacular we might say this heavenly multitude is "pumped." They're reacting to Babylon's fall as they would to the winning touchdown. (In a strange twist, *halal* is also the root of Satan's "name" *helel* (questionably translated "Lucifer") who was created as

Yahweh's most glorious angel. Choosing such a versatile moniker for him was no doubt Yahweh's intention, for we've come to know Satan as a boasting fool—not the angel of light he should have been.)

The phrase **“Her smoke rises up forever and ever”** should sound familiar to us. We heard something very similar in Isaiah 34, where the prophet was describing the ultimate fate of Edom (in today's Jordan). It's apparently a bad idea to systematically oppose the will of Yahweh. But don't jump to the conclusion that God enjoys punishing rebels in eternal fire. He would much rather see them repent and become His children. I've said it before, but it bears repeating: Yahweh's greatest gift to us is choice—He won't make our decisions for us. Thus the man known as the “weeping prophet” laments not only Israel but her oppressor Babylon as well: **“Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; for her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies.”** (Jeremiah 51:8-9) There it is again: **“Forsake her.”** Flee from Babylon. Get out while there's still time. This is the third time we've been given this advice. Is God trying to tell us something?

It is fitting, perhaps, that the final word against the ultimate Babylon should have been spoken by Habakkuk, a man who ministered when Nebuchadnezzar was breathing down the neck of a rebellious but still-independent Judah, when the Chaldeans were at the height of their power. **“For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry...”** This a warning to those who see the world operating as it always has—without the hand of Yahweh heavy in judgment upon it—and erroneously conclude that His wrath will never come. God is patient, but not infinitely so. He has promised to right the wrongs, and He never breaks his promises. Moreover, He has told us He's on a schedule—six “days” of work followed by a seventh “day” of rest. What is it about the Sabbath principle that we don't understand? Is it really so hard to comprehend that it is late in the afternoon on the sixth day?

“Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith. Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man, and he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, he gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples....” This is the heart of Yahweh's case against Babylon: they are drunk with pride because of the power they wield, yet with all the wealth they've amassed, it's never enough. So they bring nation after nation within the sphere of their influence. Remember what I said about national debt? Like the grave itself, they will never be satisfied until they own it all.

And what do their victims have to say about it? **“Will not all these take up a proverb against him, and a taunting riddle against him, and say, ‘Woe to him who increases what is not his—how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges’? Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken whom you oppress? And you will become their booty....”** I hate to gloat, but I told you so. Babylon will be hated because it holds the mortgage on pretty much the whole world. And who will the world be more likely to follow than the one who cancels their crushing debt? I have hypothesized that the Antichrist will do this very thing. Maybe I should downgrade my Speculation Factor.

Could it be that the survivors of World War III will finally figure out that the people who make the money by supplying the world with weapons might be the same people who start the wars? **“Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you, because of men’s blood and the violence of the land and the city, and of all who dwell in it. Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of disaster!...”** The bankers of Babylon intend to use their ill-gotten wealth to ride out the storm they’ve caused, hiding out until the protagonists run out of bombs and the will to carry on. The plan then calls for taking their ownership of the world’s assets to the next level, buying up the “distressed properties” of Europe, North America, Russia, and the Middle East at pennies on the dollar.

Even if no one else knows what they’re up to, Yahweh does. **“You give shameful counsel to your house, cutting off many peoples, and sin against your soul. For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the timbers will answer it, ‘Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, who establishes a city by iniquity!’ Behold, is it not of Yahweh Almighty that the peoples labor to feed the fire and nations weary themselves in vain? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea.”** (Habakkuk 2:3-14) Babylon’s plan is not to leave the rubble of war just lying there, of course. They intend to rebuild it into a utopia of their own imagination—with them in charge, as masters in the ultimate master-slave state. There’s only one slight problem. They’ve forgotten God. As another wise man once wrote, **“Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless Yahweh guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.”** (Psalm 127:1) Yahweh *will* build the house. He’s the only one who can.

Chapter 21

Somebody's Gotta Do It

Our timeline is still somewhere back in the middle of the Tribulation. We aren't done there yet. As you know, 144,000 young Jewish men have been spreading the Gospel among the world's populace (mostly the Jews) since the beginning of the Tribulation or even before that. We aren't told how long their ministry is to last, but we are informed in Revelation 7 that they will be sealed—protected from the Tribulation's lethality—before the nastiness starts; and later we'll see that all of them will live through the entire time of Jacob's trouble. We have also seen that angelic preaching will be a factor in bringing the earth the story about what's really going on—'cause they sure won't be getting the truth on the six o'clock news.

But the highest-profile of Last Days witnesses are two people who prophesy right in the Antichrist's back yard for the whole second half of the Tribulation. John describes them like this: **“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”** (Revelation 11:3-6)

In context, the speaker here doesn't seem to be Yahshua, though he certainly speaks with His authority. Rather, the “I” who gives power to “my” two witnesses is described as an angel, one whom we first meet in the previous chapter: **“I [John] saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.”** (Revelation 10:1-3) This “mighty angel” sounds like it might be a theophany (an appearance of Yahweh in human or angelic form, like Abram's visitor in Genesis 18). He's not the returning King *per se*, however: He is said to be **“coming down from heaven,”** something Yahshua the Messiah will not do until the very end of the Tribulation. In Revelation 10:6 he is heard *swearing by* Yahweh—something Yahshua does not normally do, but a theophany might.

Perhaps we should take this opportunity to dispel a common Christian myth. Yahweh is invariably characterized as a “Trinity,” that is, “God in three persons” (as the hymn puts it)—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But Yahweh describes

Himself as “One” in Deuteronomy 6:4 (Hebrew *echad*: one, first, unity, or only—i.e., one of a unique class or kind, distinctive). The concept of a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sounds a lot like *three Gods* to anybody who hasn’t been indoctrinated about the “Trinity” all their lives. And worse, the Scriptural depiction of Yahweh’s appearances among men suggest several manifestations that can’t be shoehorned into the Trinity scenario. Yahweh is indeed One, the Creator and Sustainer of everything we can (and cannot) perceive. But He is *holy*—His glory precludes Him from appearing in His true form to us, for the encounter would prove lethal. So He (Yahweh, the Father) has throughout history chosen to present Himself to mankind in a variety of *diminished* manifestations, tailored to various functions He wished to fulfill. There are six of them, not surprisingly—one more example of His ubiquitous six-plus-one pattern. The seven “forms” of God as presented in Scripture are as follows:

- (1) Yahweh: *God as Father*
- (2) The Angel of Yahweh/Theophanies: *God as Messenger*
- (3) The Shekinah: *God as Natural Phenomenon*
- (4) Visionary Manifestations: *God as Apparition*
- (5) The Son/Messiah—Yahshua of Nazareth: *God as Sacrifice*
- (6) The Holy Spirit: *God as Mother*
- (7) The Risen/Glorified Messiah: *God as King*

The Son and Spirit are indeed included, but the “Trinity” concept is totally inadequate to explain how God actually presents Himself in scripture. The principle is as it was stated in Louis Sullivan’s architectural credo: “Form follows function.” That is, the *form* Yahweh chooses to take as He interacts with men is dependent on the function He wishes to fulfill. When God wanted to inform and interact with us, He manifested Himself as a theophany. If His purpose was to make an impression (short of killing us), He came as the *Shekinah*. Sporadic visionary encounters required a different form altogether, but it’s not the same manifestation that’s needed now that He wishes to permanently indwell the souls of His children. And note that Yahshua as suffering servant and Yahshua as reigning King, though both blatantly predicted in the Tanach, are as different as night and day in the way they present Yahweh’s persona among men. For a far more detailed look at this “SeptiUnity” concept, please consult my book on Yahweh’s symbols: *The Torah Code*.

The two witnesses, then, are empowered and protected (and, one might say, supervised) by an especially mighty angel (the word *aggelos* simply means “messenger”)—or perhaps even “the Angel of Yahweh,” a theophany. (If not a theophany, the witnesses are the angel’s assignment, his responsibility.) Does this

mean that the two witnesses themselves could be angels? No, because unlike the “sealed” 144,000, these two will be slain when their ministry is completed. **“And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.”** (Revelation 11:8) Angels are immortal, spiritual beings—they do not have bodies that are susceptible to death like us mortals. Therefore we must conclude that these two are definitely men. This verse also pinpoints the place where they’ll be working: Jerusalem.

We next learn that their ministry will last for 1,260 days. There’s that number again, precisely half of the length of the Tribulation. (It is not directly specified when, within the seven-year span, their 1,260 days will fall. But for reasons I’ll explain in a later chapter, I believe they will prophesy from day 1,251 until day 2,511—nine days before the end—i.e., principally during the second half.) If this occurs in the year I think it will (which is a cat I’ll let out of the bag later) day number 1,251 will fall on Nisan 15. That’s significant, because it’s the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the day that’s symbolic of the removal of sin, symbolized by yeast, from the household of Israel. This remarkable happenstance is not something I seized upon in order to set the date, either, but rather something I discovered much later—a poetic confirmation.

The two men are clothed in sackcloth, a coarse fabric that indicates that they are in mourning. If I’m right about the timing, they’ll have good reason to mourn: they will begin prophesying precisely three weeks after the Antichrist **“sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that He is God,”** (II Thessalonians 2:4)—twenty one days after the Abomination of Desolation. By that time, virtually all of the believing Jews will have fled from Jerusalem, and the whole world will have been confronted with the devil’s own choice: receive the Mark of the Beast or embrace the headman’s axe.

John next informs us that **“these are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.”** I’ve got reservations about the translation of that last phrase, but before I address that, let’s deal with the source of the imagery. The prophet Zechariah saw a vision almost identical to this: **“And [the angel] said to me, ‘What do you see?’ So I said, ‘I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.’ So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, ‘What are these, my lord?’ ...So he answered and said to me: ‘This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says Yahweh of hosts....”** The olive trees are the source of the oil, a metaphor for the Spirit of God. In context, Zerubbabel and Joshua (the civil ruler and the high priest during Zechariah’s time) were being told through the prophet that their task, the building of the second temple, would be accomplished not through their strength or skill, but through the power of Yahweh’s Spirit.

But as Zechariah pressed for more details, the angel revealed that there was to be a later fulfillment—these two witnesses who would be spoken of by John, men who would also be anointed by God’s Spirit. **“Then I answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?’ And I further answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?’ Then he answered me and said, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ And I said, ‘No, my lord.’ So he said, ‘These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.’”** (Zechariah 4:2-4, 6, 11-14) Though Zechariah’s account is more detailed, the only significant difference in the two visions seems to be that John mentions two lampstands, while Zechariah speaks of only one. Upon reflection, this makes sense, because while Zerubbabel and Joshua were working as one toward the goal of Israel’s restoration, John’s two witnesses, by contrast, represent two different channels through which the Holy Spirit has done his work throughout the ages. But hold that admittedly enigmatic thought for a moment while I endeavor to point out a potentially important concept that our English translations uniformly miss.

We see parallel phrases in Revelation and Zechariah that explain the function or position of the two witnesses. John describes them as **“standing before the God of the earth.”** Zack says the two anointed ones **“stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.”** Through their use of capitalizations (which aren’t there in the original languages), the translators have implied that the two witness are standing before or beside Yahweh. While this is undoubtedly true in a metaphorical sense, considering their power and authority come directly from the Almighty, it may not be what these passages actually mean to say.

Because of the most common and most damaging systematic mistranslation in the Bible, we have become accustomed to seeing “the LORD” and mentally saying, *Oh, it means God*. But the word usually translated “the LORD” doesn’t mean “God” or “deity”; it doesn’t even mean “lord.” It’s a *name*—the personal name of the Supreme Deity—*YHWH*, transliterated Yahweh, Yahuweh, Yahveh, Yahowah, or Jehovah. It’s never proper to translate a proper name as if it were a word (YHWH means “I am”), yet we in our ignorance have done something even worse 7,000 times in our English Bibles. We have *substituted* it with a word with an entirely different meaning—6,868 times rendering Yahweh as “the LORD” and another 132 times substituting *adonay* (which means “lord”) for Yahweh in the actual Hebrew text. That’s something like going through all of our American history textbooks, taking out “Abraham Lincoln” and inserting the phrase “the Sixteenth President,” or worse, “The Commander in Chief of the Union Army.”

What word did Zechariah use? It wasn’t YHWH; it was *’adon*, from an unused Hebrew root meaning to rule. It is defined: sovereign, i.e., controller (human or divine): lord, master, owner. *’Adon* is properly used to describe human

“lords” or rulers. But if the writer wishes to ascribe lordship to Yahweh, he invariably uses the emphatic form, *Adonay* (as Ezekiel does so often, calling Him *Adonay Yahweh*—the Lord Yahweh or the sovereign Yahweh.) If Zack had meant to convey “God,” he surely could have found a better word to use (e.g. *el* or *elohim*). If he had meant “Yahweh,” my guess is that he would have *said* YHWH.

The story is pretty much the same in the Greek of the Revelation. There the word is *theos*, which can mean either God or god, that is, either the supreme Divinity or something that someone considers a substitute for Him. (Figuratively, even a magistrate can be called *theos*.) The word is used of false gods as well as the Real One; it’s even used of Satan: “...**The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not...**” (II Corinthians 4:4, KJV)

Now ask yourself this: when the two witnesses appear at about the middle of the Tribulation, who is “lord of the whole earth?” Who is the god of this world, the sovereign, the controller? In the ultimate sense, it’s Yahweh, of course. But at this particular moment, He has given man what he wanted: for the first time in six thousand years God has purposely taken his hands off the controls. Satan is steering now—through his ventriloquist’s dummy, the Antichrist, and his false prophet. This trinity of terror, for the moment, is the “god of the earth.” Granted, this is a recent and temporary development: the situation only became “official” on day 1,230 of the Tribulation. The two witnesses, then, are “prophesying” right in the face of the Antichrist, at the height of his power. They’re like mosquitoes at his picnic: he’d love to brush them away but they just keep buzzing around his head, making his life miserable, constantly reminding him that there really is a God, and he ain’t It.

So why doesn’t the Antichrist simply have them picked up and executed? After all, it’s not like these two have taken the Mark or anything: they’re clearly outlaws, and he’d have no qualms about setting an example by killing them. The answer is something of an embarrassment for the world leader: *he can’t*. It isn’t for lack of effort, you understand, but every time he sends his goon squad out to get them, they come back in body bags, burnt to cinders. John explains: “**If anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.**” (Revelation 11:5) It can be logically assumed that neither the Antichrist nor the false prophet will personally confront them (yet), because we find *them* still alive and causing trouble at the very end of the Tribulation. I can see hints of angelic protection into their time of ministry as well—the “mighty angel” from Revelation 10 and 11 protecting them while they sleep, shielding them from long-distance weapons, accidents, the common cold, etc. Or there may be another, more provocative explanation, something I’ll explain shortly.

What is the “fire [that] proceeds from their mouth?” I’ve heard of bad breath, but this is ridiculous. My guess is that this is simply a metaphor for their verbal pronouncements—lethal commands (or *prayers*, if you will) that their spirit messenger carries out. If you’re thinking that this seems a little harsh—administering the death penalty before the attackers have been found guilty in a fair trial before a judge and jury, remember the Mosaic Law: **“Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.”** (Deuteronomy 17:6-7) Two witnesses, and the angel makes three. Note that the whole point of them being there is to “put away the evil from among” the people.

What do these two witnesses do that makes people want to kill them? I get the feeling, though it isn’t explicitly stated in the text, that these two aren’t primarily there to preach the gospel, try to convert souls, or bring about repentance. Those functions are being nicely handled by the 144,000 and the angelic evangelists. No, these guys are there to pronounce God’s judgment on the Antichrist and his pet snake, Satan—and anybody who worships them. That’s why they’re seen **“standing before the ‘god’ of the earth.”** It’s like Moses and Aaron going in before Pharaoh—the most powerful single individual on earth at the time—and telling (not asking) him to let the Israelite slaves go or suffer the consequences. It’s the height of temerity, merely annoying at first, but then the plagues come, progressively inconvenient, frustrating, expensive, dangerous, terrifying, and deadly.

In modern and familiar terms, try to envision a couple of oddly dressed “Jesus people” appearing one day out of the blue—camped out on the south lawn of the White House. Nobody knows how they got there, but they’re telling the President and the rest of the country that the crops are going to fail and the economy is going to crash because of his evil policies. (I’m not speaking of any particular president here, but if the shoe fits....) It doesn’t matter who the President sends out there to make them stop—Marines, Special Forces, Girl Scouts—everybody who tries dies. So eventually they settle into a verbal war of attrition. The “most powerful man in the world” has no choice but to let them stay there in his back yard spouting their vituperative imprecations against him. He’s mortified and embarrassed, but he’s also powerless to do anything about it. Okay: now multiply that picture by a hundred and you have some idea of the kind of consternation the two witnesses will cause.

Normally such behavior would precipitate an instant cult following—the two witnesses would become heroes in the eyes of the self-styled free thinkers of the land. But not this time. The Antichrist won’t be the only one getting tormented.

The whole world will end up hating them because the two witnesses aren't just talking—they're *doing*: **"These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire."** (Revelation 11:6) Although we aren't specifically told, I believe that this drought will be worldwide, or at least extremely widespread in the eastern hemisphere. We shall soon be exploring prophecies that talk about both the Nile and Euphrates Rivers drying up. The Nile cannot dry up as long as Central Africa is getting rain, and likewise, the Euphrates drains a huge portion of the Middle East. You do the math.

I must save the discussion about the deaths of the witnesses (and what they do for an encore) for a future chapter, but consider this: **"And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them [i.e., their corpses], make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth."**

(Revelation 11:10) It's like a scene out of the *Wizard of Oz*: ding-dong, the wicked witch is dead. I don't care how unpopular you might be; that's not a normal reaction. Look at what happened when Yasser Arafat died: the godfather of modern terrorism was eulogized as the father of his country, a great and noble leader. The western media swept under the rug that he died of AIDS, that he had thousands of murders to his credit, and that he had stolen as much as six billion dollars from his own people. The two witnesses won't be similarly hailed in the press as "freedom fighters." Their deaths will be universally celebrated. The only rational conclusions I can draw are (1) the drought and plagues they caused *did* affect the entire world, and (2) **"those who dwell on the earth"** know and believe that these two guys were responsible for sending them.

What's absolutely clear is that being one of these witnesses is a thankless job—the worst career imaginable. Somebody's gotta do it, I suppose, but it's definitely not a job for the thin-skinned or timid. The lost world will detest them, and the new believers won't like them much better, for the equal-opportunity plagues they bring upon the earth will make life harder for everyone, the neoEkklesia as well as the lost. Though the Tribulation saints may appreciate God's reasons for sending his witnesses, they still won't like them very much.

To my mind, the least important fact we can try to discern about the two witnesses is their identity. But because the Bible definitely names one of them, there is automatically a raging controversy concerning the other. We aren't told who he is, so it may not matter all that much. Still, we were given lots of hints,

and I know you're dying of curiosity, so I'll tell you what I think (for what it's worth).

Let's start with what we know. Four hundred years before Yahshua's first-century advent, Malachi recorded this intriguing prophecy: **"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."** (Malachi 4:5-6) The Jews of Yahshua's day were well aware of this prophecy, and when it became apparent to some of them that Yahshua was indeed **"the Son of the Living God,"** (Matthew 16:16) the Messiah explained that if the nation of Israel had been willing to accept Him as their Messiah (though He knew they would not) the prophecy would have been fulfilled in the person and ministry of John the Baptist. **"Assuredly, I [Yahshua] say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come."** (Matthew 11:11-14) John was murdered before Christ's crucifixion. He was the last of the Old Testament prophets.

John's self-stated task was to prepare the hearts of the people of Israel to receive their Messiah. **"Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' [See Deuteronomy 18:18] And he answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself? He said: 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of Yahweh,' as the prophet Isaiah said.'" (John 1:19-23) The fact that John didn't realize he was potentially fulfilling the prophesied role of Elijah at the Messiah's first-century advent—as predicted in Isaiah 40:3—doesn't make it any less true.**

Here for the umpteenth time we see the Messiah being referred to as Yahweh, something today's neo-Gnostics choke on. In pointing this out, John the Baptist was following an old family tradition: truth. Zechariah the priest had prophesied at the birth of his son John, **"You, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord [He's talking about Yahweh—who would be incarnate in Yahshua] to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."** (Luke 1:76-79) Giving light and guidance is a role of the true Messiah; that's why Satan likes the name "Lucifer"—the light bearer—so much. John preached repentance, a change of

mind and direction from darkness to light that would surely “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children” and vice versa.

Like his prototype, Elijah, and his antitype, the first witness of Revelation, John was always careful to be as soft-spoken, diplomatic, and politically correct as any class-5 hurricane. **“He [John] said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.... I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”** (Luke 3:7-9, 16-17)

Needless to say, John’s preaching style tended to separate the room into two groups: (1) those who were ready to repent, and (2) those who were ready to kill him. He was saying what Yahweh had told him to—just like the prophets of old. But as Yahshua’s ministry progressed, John saw less and less of his own prophecies in Him. And he began to wonder, “Is Yahshua really the Coming One, or should I look for another?” The Messiah put his qualms to rest by demonstrating his divinity: curing the blind, deaf, leprous, and crippled, and even raising the dead. But he never did tell John what we now know: his prophecies were true, but they were for another time, when Messiah would return to rule His earth with a scepter of iron. John’s message, then, was indistinguishable from that of the two witnesses: *The Messiah is coming. He will separate those who are His from those who are not, and will punish those who reject Him. Repent!*

But in John’s day the nation of Israel did not change their mind, leaving Yahweh with no choice but to **“strike the earth with a curse,”** which is the message of the “third Elijah,” the first of the two witnesses of Revelation. As far as I’m concerned, though, it’s more coincidence than confirmation that Elijah performed one of the same miracles that the two witnesses will: the withholding of rain upon the earth. **“Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As Yahweh, God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.”** (I Kings 17:1) God is not restricted as to whom He can empower to do what. If He wants to send a drought, He doesn’t necessarily need Elijah; if He wants to turn water into blood, He doesn’t *have to* use Moses.

To my mind, the following passage is more to the point in explaining why Yahweh would bring Elijah back into the picture: **“So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow**

Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people answered him not a word. Then Elijah said to the people, 'I alone am left a prophet of Yahweh; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls [symbolic of the endeavors of man]; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Yahweh; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.' So all the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.'" (I Kings 18:20-24) The issue here isn't Yahweh's "answer by fire," something He did on that day and is perfectly willing to do again. Rather, it's forcing the world to make a choice, to get off the fence. *You're impressed with the Antichrist? Fine—follow him. If he's really god, like he says, let's see him bring you some rain.*

Okay, so we know from Malachi that Elijah is one of the two witnesses. Who's the other one? It seems obvious to many, but it isn't. Consider this: **"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him...."** Oooh! There's a clue, right? **"Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah....' And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."** (Matthew 17:1-4, 10-13, cf. Mark 9:1-13, Luke 9:27-36)

Here we are, getting a glimpse of the future glory of Yahshua. Moses and Elijah have been invited as honored guests, representing the law and the prophets—the heart of the Jewish scriptural experience. And naturally, knowing of the Malachi prediction, His disciples ask Yahshua about Elijah. Makes perfect sense: they'd just met him—which is something nobody had done for almost nine hundred years. It is at this point that many folks leap to a conclusion: Moses must be the second witness! He's seen here hanging out with Elijah. And remember, one of the plagues mentioned in Revelation 11 is that **"they have power over waters to turn them to blood."** That's something Moses did (Exodus 7:14-25). 'Course, so did Pharaoh's magicians, but who's counting?

The evidence that Moses is the second witness, then, is purely circumstantial (which is *not* to say it's neither compelling nor true). That's to be expected, since like I said, the Bible doesn't tell us who mystery guest number two is. But in the

interests of being thorough, we need to find out if there's anything that might disqualify the Great Liberator from consideration. And to my mind there is.

As we saw in our chapter on the rapture of the Church, Elijah is practically unique among men in one respect: he never died, but was taken up to heaven alive before the very eyes of his astonished protégé. Now, factor in this: **“As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”** (Hebrews 9:27-28) Just as it is patently absurd for Christ to die multiple times to atone for our multiple sins, so it is nonsense to suggest that Adam's curse should visit our mortal bodies more than once apiece. (I'm obviously not including miracles, medical resuscitations and “near-death experiences” here, but only actual physical death, the final separation of the soul from the body.) In Elijah's case, there's no reason Yahweh couldn't—without contradicting Himself—give the prophet the task of announcing God's judgment on the Antichrist, to his face. Not a fun assignment, but you've got to admit, there's no one in history better qualified to do it.

Moses, too, was pretty good at getting into the king's face, but there's one slight problem with him: unlike Elijah, he died. **“Moses the servant of Yahweh died there in the land of Moab... Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died.”** (Deuteronomy 34:5,7) Yes, but couldn't Yahweh dig him up, give him a new mortal body, and send him back into the fray? Sure He could, but you'd think that if He were going to make that kind of departure from His standard operating procedure, He might have given us some sort of hint. Besides, if He did, the “you're-gonna-die-once” passage in Hebrews would be rendered moot. God would have been goofing up His own illustration—not likely.

Fans of the Moses theory point out that there will be a whole generation of Christians who will not taste physical death, but who will instead be raptured. And they're right, of course. But take a closer look at the Hebrews 9 passage. The context emphasizes not that mortal men must die, but that that they will *not die more than one time*—just as Christ was **“offered [only] once to bear the sins of many.”** In other words, nobody's mortal body dies twice.

So once again I find myself at odds with the majority of expositors, godly and learned people who insist that witness number two is Moses. But at least this time there's a sizable minority who have come to the same conclusion I have: the second witness isn't Moses, but he *is* named in scripture. His name is Enoch.

Who? Enoch doesn't have a terribly big role in the Bible, just a couple of walk-on vignettes. But they're more significant than their brevity might lead you to believe. He was the father of the oldest man in the Bible, but more important to our present line of inquiry is the fact that he, like Elijah, did not die, but was “translated.” **“Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So**

all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." (Genesis 5:21-25) This was at a time (before the flood) when men were routinely living to 800 or 900 years of age. As in Elijah's case, we can safely assume there were eyewitnesses to Enoch's departure, because if he'd just turned up missing, his contemporaries would have naturally concluded that he'd either died somewhere else or packed up and moved away. The cryptic language is just what you'd expect, however, if Enoch were "raptured." It was a unique event—there wasn't even a word for it.

Enoch wasn't known for Elijah-style miracles, but for his words and his walk. Jude (the brother of James and half-brother of Yahshua) records this sound bite (and I do mean *bite*): **"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, Yahweh comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him...."** A last-days prophecy from an antediluvian patriarch! And *you* thought God was making this up as he went along. (Just kidding.) Jude wasn't quoting from the Old Covenant canon, but apparently from an apocryphal work called *The Book of Enoch*, an influential Hebrew-language text of which no less than eleven fragments were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although considered pseudepigrapha (or "false writing") today, it was held in high regard—maybe even inspired—by such early Church fathers as Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria. Makes you wonder if maybe we missed something. (My own theory, having read the Book of Enoch, is that the first few chapters (those from which Jude quoted) seem genuine, but later chapters bear the marks of tampering by scribes of another era. There you'll find lots of folklore-like material about angels and demons that is very unlike anything else you'll find in Scripture.)

Anyway, Enoch sounds upset, doesn't he? (Just like you and I should be.) The content of his message—first delivered to the sinful multitudes a generation before Noah—is precisely what we might expect from the second witness of Revelation. First, he warns that Yahweh is coming (in the person of Yahshua, the Messiah). Second, God is bringing his saints (*hagios*: set-apart ones) with him (there's another nail in the post-trib coffin). These saints are gathered in groups of ten thousand. (Considering how many people have inhabited this planet thus far, I was kind of hoping for "millions." On the other hand, we aren't told *how many* ten-thousands. To Enoch, this probably sounded like a huge number.)

Third, the purpose of his coming is to "execute judgment." Upon whom? Upon "all who are ungodly." The word rendered "convict" ("convince," in the KJV) is the Greek *exelegcho*, from *ex*, "out of," and *elegcho*, meaning to confute, admonish, convict, convince, tell a fault, rebuke, or reprove. *Exelegcho*, by implication, means to punish. I take that to mean that the two witnesses will tell

the world—everybody who’s “ungodly” from the Antichrist on down—why they’re being punished: the ungodly things they do, the ungodly way they do them (even “religious” things), and their blasphemies against Yahweh. Then they will announce whatever plagues strike their fancy, and the angels of the Bowl Judgments will cause them to come to pass (stopping the rain, turning water into blood, and unleashing a variety of unnamed afflictions—see Revelation 11:6).

Enoch goes on to describe the ungodly. **“These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.”** That sounds exactly like Daniel’s description of the Antichrist. Jude then provides the lesson for our times: **“But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.”** (Jude 14-18) When we are confronted with people in increasing numbers who mock God and flaunt their sinful lifestyles, we shouldn’t be shocked or dismayed; it is merely a reminder that the end is approaching, that the time is short. These things should be the strings around our fingers, helping us remember that we are but pilgrims in this unholy land. Don’t get too comfortable.

And before I forget, let’s revisit John’s and Zechariah’s “lampstand” metaphor. Whether we’re talking about Zerubbabel and Joshua or the two witnesses of Revelation, the lampstands are vehicles which provide illumination—truth—in the world; their energy source is the Holy Spirit, symbolized by olive oil. But if you’ll recall, while Zechariah saw one lampstand, John’s witnesses are described as *two* lamps: **“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands.”** (Revelation 11:4) Unless I’m mistaken, this is confirmation of the Enoch hypothesis. Zerubbabel and Joshua were one lampstand: they shined forth truth together from the perspective of Israel. But though Elijah was a Jew, Enoch was not. Though in the godly line leading from Seth to Noah, he lived before Abraham. Enoch thus represents the other “olive branch” or conduit through which the Holy Spirit provided light to the world—the gentiles. While God brought salvation to mankind through the Jews, He never turned His back on us who were not born children of Abraham. We were always part of His plan. Granted, we gentile believers are only wild branches that have been grafted into the trunk, but we are drawing our sustenance from the same holy source. These two lampstands are, perhaps, the equivalent of giving the Antichrist “both barrels.” The prophecies and plagues being pronounced against his kingdom cannot be dismissed as some kind of “mere Jewish sorcery.” The two witnesses, a Jew and a gentile, represent all of mankind when they curse the “god of this world.”

By the way, why do you suppose Yahweh arranged for two godly men (and only two) to be translated (raptured) without suffering death, to “exit stage right”

from history, as it were, to wait in the wings for their last and greatest scene? It's because of the last-minute timing He has planned for the rapture. Think about it. If the rapture of the Church had taken place sometime early within the two thousand year span of time between the first advent of Christ and the second (something Yahshua never specifically ruled out), there would have been (theoretically) plenty of time for a new generation of saints to discover Yahshua, search the scriptures, and mature enough for two of them to be chosen for the incredibly tough role the script calls for. But now we're out of time. At this late date it seems to me that if the rapture were to take place as soon as the next Feast of Trumpets there would hardly be enough time left to convert, educate, and grow a sufficiently thick skin on two new believers. And the closer we get to the beginning of the seventh millennium—at the Feast of Tabernacles 2033, if my observations are valid—the more unlikely it becomes that anyone converted after the rapture could look the devil straight in the eye without flinching, as the two witnesses will have to do. Don't get me wrong; it's not that Yahweh *couldn't* do it like that. It's just that He's told us He's going to accomplish His purposes another way—with Elijah and (if I'm right) Enoch. It puts a whole new wrinkle in the saying "**He has made everything beautiful in its time.**" (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

There's also another intriguing line of inquiry bound up in the idea that only two "old timers" were raptured. It's possible (SF8) that the "ministry" of Elijah and Enoch is performed while they're clothed in their immortal, "spiritual" bodies, such as the one in which Yahshua spent forty days, after His resurrection. That would help to explain how no one could kill them, no matter how much they wanted to. This theory would of course require that they re-assumed the mortal state when their task was done, so that they might be "killed" for a few days. Rotten job, but like I said, somebody's gotta do it.

By this point, at the fulcrum of the Tribulation, all the secrets have been divulged, all the subterfuges have been revealed, all the lines have been drawn in the sand. Satan has been evicted from heaven. He knows he's got only a short time left. And now the hapless inhabitants of planet earth are going to receive his personal and undivided attention until Yahweh says, "Enough."

The Antichrist's one-world government is a reality, in theory if not quite in practice. Every nation on the globe (save one) officially acknowledges his suzerainty, though their "local" governments still function much as they had previously. Just as Colorado and Maine have state governments that function independently while they acquiesce to the Federal Government of the United

States of America, so will Canada and Mozambique and hundreds of other nations owe their allegiance to the United States of Earth. Since this is the stepchild of the United Nations, one might have expected its world headquarters to be located in New York, but the Antichrist will find this city completely unacceptable—especially considering America’s post-war status as a second-rate power, broken as much by internal dissent as by nuclear devastation. No, there is only one suitable place for the Antichrist’s capital: Jerusalem, the most coveted city on earth. But the Palestinians are dead and the Jews have fled, making the place a no-man’s land of sorts, fit only for politicians and warriors. Considering the recent history of the place, the irony is stunning.

Here and there all over the globe, small pockets of new believers have gone “underground” (sometimes literally) in hopes of avoiding the Antichrist’s state police and outlasting his reign of terror. The only remotely organized resistance, strangely enough, is occurring right under the Antichrist’s nose. The duly elected government of Israel is alone in the world in refusing to sign the accords making him king of the world. Or more accurately, the government is unable to raise a quorum—the vast majority of the Knesset members who are still alive are AWOL, having joined the impromptu rebellion. This doesn’t stop the Antichrist from achieving official unanimity, of course: he simply appoints a new government reminiscent of Hitler’s Vichy France. It’s not real, but the reality of the situation never makes the six o’clock news: with no apparent leader and no stated agenda, a large contingent of the Israeli populace has instinctively refused to honor the new world leader, refused to receive his Mark of allegiance, and refused to bow to his image. The moment the Antichrist announced his divine aspirations, millions of Jews, as if on cue, spontaneously grabbed their families and fled from their homes in Israel. They’re now hiding out in the Negev, the Gaza strip, in the badlands of the newly-depopulated Jordan, or who knows where. Even with all their sophisticated electronics, the Antichrist’s technowizards don’t really know where they are. The army he sent out in pursuit were never heard from again—they were simply swallowed by the desert.

The Jews have fled simply because they have come to terms with the reality of Yahweh. They now realize that they have kept themselves estranged from Him for the last two thousand years, and they long to reestablish the relationship their nation once had with their God. Like the Israelites under the Judges, they are crying out to Yahweh to deliver them. And deliver them He shall.

But since much of the prophetic detail concerning this time is recorded in the New Covenant scriptures, the Jews are only dimly aware of what to expect. Of course, that doesn’t stop them from cheering for the two witnesses who have suddenly shown up like ants at the Antichrist’s picnic. The media will drool over the chance to “expose” these two horrible men. They’ll air TV documentaries

about the plagues they cause and the gruesome fiery deaths of the poor unfortunates who try to apprehend them. But they'll do their best to suppress part of the story: these two enemies of political correctitude incessantly talk about Christ, the Messiah, Yahshua, Jesus—and His impending return. The editors have to work overtime to glean usable sound bites from these two uncooperative weirdoes.

Even then, some of their seditious propaganda will get through. Some leaks out because the newsies simply don't understand what the witnesses are talking about. For example, when asked point blank by the world's most respected news anchors how their God (a deity the witnesses refer to as Yahweh or Yahshua—names with which the correspondents are unfamiliar) fits into all this, they quote: **“As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”** (John 1:12-13) What does that *mean*, anyway? It's utter gibberish to those aligned with the new world order. But to the Tribulation saints—people who want to follow Yahweh even if they don't quite know how, even if His name is a new and unfamiliar epiphany to them—it means hope and inner peace in a time of madness and death. To **“believe in his name”** is to be born anew into a divergent reality—not into the human race but into the very family of God.

The media monarchs are proud as peacocks for having summoned the courage to talk face to face with these religious terrorists (a phenomenon I call the “Geraldo Effect”), and thrilled with their subsequent Nielsen numbers. In reality, they're in no particular danger as long as they don't try to assassinate anything more tangible than the witnesses' character. After patiently explaining who Yahweh/Yahshua is to the ignorant elite, Elijah and Enoch—in the same tactful and diplomatic way they had when they'd walked the earth in centuries past—announce that unless the world repents, it will receive no rain. And only their word will bring it back. This, of course, is brushed off as the ravings of a matched pair of lunatics for a few weeks—until it becomes apparent that all over the globe, no precipitation is falling. That can't happen, the experts insist, because it has *never* happened. When the news people confront Elijah with that bit of information, he smiles, shrugs, and says, “If you say so.”

Months pass with no rain, and the world turns desperate. But the scientists have discovered the source of the problem, and it *isn't* these two nutcases in Jerusalem: the sun's energy output has suddenly and inexplicably increased, they say, and that, combined with an ozone layer torn to shreds by the recent nuclear holocaust, has changed the earth's weather patterns. *You two are frauds! You have no power to curse the earth. And there's no @#!\$%& reason we should repent from anything!* The indomitable human spirit announces an all-out push to

develop new sources of fresh water. The main thrust, ironically, is something of which Israel was the world's foremost supplier until the war began: water desalination technology.

This time it's Enoch who answers (that's *Mister Enoch*, to you). *You can deny our signs all you want, but you cannot deny the power of the Living God. Because this ungodly generation has refused to turn from its ungodly ways, I declare that all the fresh water in Europe this week will turn to blood. Next week, the same thing will happen in South America. The week after that, let's say...Asia—no, North America. East of the Rockies. We'll save Asia for week number four, and America west of the Rockies for week five. There is blood on your hands, O Earth. Now there will be blood on your lips as well. Repent—turn to Yahweh!*

The scientists' skepticism is shaken somewhat when the next month plays out exactly as Enoch had said it would. They immediately set out to pinpoint some natural explanation for this latest round of ecological disasters—and try to figure out how these two ecstasies could guess what's coming with such uncanny accuracy. *One thing's for sure: this isn't the judgment of God, as they claim. It can't be. Everybody knows there is no God but Lucifer!*

Sorry to pop your bubble, guys, but actually, the Creator's name is Yahweh. Lucifer is nothing but a creature. And Yahweh's patience with a world that refuses to return His love—that even refuses to acknowledge His existence—is wearing thin. But there are a few bright spots. Gentiles are beginning to wake up from the nightmare they invited into the world, and many of them are turning to Yahshua as a result—even though they are bringing down a death sentence upon themselves for doing so.

And what about the Jews, this miniscule fraction of one percent of the earth's population, this minority that looms so large in the mind of God and man alike? It is as Yahshua said less than a week before He offered Himself up as their perfect Passover Lamb, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of Yahweh!'"** (Luke 13:34-35) Israel has *never* said those words in the entire two millennia since **"He who comes in the name of Yahweh"** came—and left. But as they hide in the wilderness from the wrath of Satan and the Antichrist, as they ponder the implications of all that has come to pass, they will slowly, inexorably, come to the realization that they were wrong. The time *will* come when they will say with a whole heart: **"Blessed is Yahshua, who comes in the name of Yahweh!"**

Chapter 22

The Great Awakening

It is a bitter moment for Israel. It had taken decades of sacrifice and joyful labor to build their tiny nation. They had seen it preserved through miracle upon miracle—from the very first day of its existence. The prosperous homeland the Jews had forged from rocky soil and immigrant blood had been fueled by hope—no, *desperation*—for this was understood to be their race’s last and only chance for long-term survival in a world that irrationally and universally hated them. Only a year before, their historic foe, *dar al-Islam*, had been slain by the tens of millions upon their hills in a deliverance that only a fool or a blind man could have attributed to the hand of chance or the arm of man. But now, only now when they as a nation are awakening as from a coma to the reality of their God, a horrible alternate reality is coming into focus: they must flee.

Their greatest king, David, had seen it all—three millennia before this. But no one had understood his words until now. **“I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. Destroy, O Yahweh, and divide their tongues, for I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go around it on its walls; Iniquity and trouble are also in the midst of it. Destruction is in its midst; oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets....”** David prays that as in the days of the tower of Babel, no one would comprehend the sinister speech of those who now trouble Jerusalem. Israelis have weathered storms before, but this tempest is different. It has been conjured up by Satan’s minion and his false prophet, all the more destructive because they had pretended to be Israel’s friends. **“For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng....”** Yes, the Antichrist and his prophet had played the part of Israel’s protectors; they supported the reinstatement of the temple worship (or seemed to) when the weight of the world’s opinion would have gladly let the Jews go to hell. Like Judas Iscariot before them, their betrayal is all the harder to bear because of their close but feigned relationship with God’s chosen.

But their true colors have now been raised. With friends like this, who needs enemies? The Antichrist has demanded to be worshiped in Yahweh’s stead, sitting in the holy of holies as if he were God himself—the ultimate blasphemy, the abomination that causes desolation. **“Let death seize them; let them go down alive into sheol, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them....”** Death, he says, is too good for them (i.e., the Antichrist and the False Prophet). It seems a strange thing to pray for, but as we shall see (in Revelation 19:20), David’s request will be

granted—literally—even though few in history have ever suffered this horrible fate. There *was* one guy, Korah, back in Moses' day (see Numbers 16) who went out the same way—and not surprisingly, it was for roughly the same reason: challenging God's anointed and attempting to usurp his authority.

The deceitful nature of the Antichrist's charade was not hidden from David: **"He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; he has broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords."** (Psalm 55:8-15, 20-21)

Lest you come to the conclusion that the Jews are overreacting to a simple "broken covenant," one among thousands that have been breached by nations large and small since the dawn of diplomacy, listen to the words of Yahshua: **"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened...."** As bad as things have gotten in the past, they are nothing compared to what's coming. And it's all because Satan wanted to be "like God," and because Satan's man wanted to be accepted as the Messiah. Well has Yahweh commanded: *You shall not covet.* **"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. [Luke reports it like this: "They will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them." Luke 17:23] For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."** (Matthew 24:21-27) Nobody will be able to say they weren't warned. When the Tribulation gets under way (trust me, you'll know) then it doesn't matter how slick a performance the wannabe Messiah puts on: don't believe him. Even if he's got a statue that miraculously comes to life and demands your obedience, tell him to go to...well, his final destination is already determined, but don't follow him. The real Messiah won't be found preaching in the wilderness like John the Baptist, nor will he be seen planning his world-conquering strategies in a palace in Jerusalem. His arrival will be so sudden you won't even be able to see it. *Ready or not....*

This same period of time was described to Daniel: **"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book."** (Daniel 12:1) Good news, bad news again. The worst period of trouble in the history of man is predicted, a time so bad that the archangel himself has to be brought in to save Israel's bacon (so to speak). Michael is identified in Jude 9 as the angel who had to "contend" with Satan over the body of Moses. He's also the

one seen in command of the angelic armies that threw Satan and his demonic host out of heaven in Revelation 12:7-8. In other words, Michael is no lightweight—he’s probably the mightiest angel there is, which explains why Yahweh has him “standing watch over the sons of [Daniel’s] people,” the Jews.

The good news here is easily missed. Yes, it says that Daniel’s people “**shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book,**” something every Christian counts on, though we all know that physical death is part of the journey. But the context here is earthly Tribulation, not heaven vs. hell. We’re talking about bodies, not souls. This seems to mean that the redeemed Jews will all (SF3) make it through the Tribulation and into the Millennium—despite the Antichrist’s efforts to kill them. We saw in a previous chapter how the “woman” (Israel) fled from the dragon into the wilderness, who sent a flood after her that was swallowed by the earth (Revelation 12:6, 13-17). This is a confirmation of the truth related there. John and Daniel often seem to see the same things from different angles. We also saw how the 144,000 Israelite messengers would be “sealed” from harm during this time. These Jews who are “found written in the book” are the very ones to whom the 144,000 have been ministering. Apparently, being “sealed” by Yahweh can be catching.

After a few words about resurrected souls (something we’ll get to in due time), Daniel goes on to write, “**Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, ‘How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?’ Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, ‘My lord, what shall be the end of these things?’ And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.’**” (Daniel 12:5-9) Daniel’s encounter with these angels (the vision starts back in chapter 10) was so terrifying he had to be resuscitated before he could receive the message, and even then he freely admits that he didn’t have a clue as to what it meant. But he was a faithful servant of God, and wrote down what he had seen and heard so that we living at “the time of the end”—for whom the message was intended—*could* understand. Here we see (again) that the last three and a half years will be a time when the power of “the set-apart people” will be “completely shattered.”

I believe that the angel is referring primarily to Israel here, not the Church (i.e., the new Laodicean believers). It’s true that the Antichrist will be making war with the “rest of [Israel’s] offspring” during this last three and a half years (which would be defined by the church of neo-Laodicea)—with more than a little success, if all you’re counting is corpses. Christ promised us that the gates of

hades—not “hell,” but sheol, the abode of the dead—would not prevail against His church. In other words, resurrection was promised to those who put their trust in Him. But Daniel is referring to the *temporal* power of the nation of Israel, not the Jews’ mortal lives. It is *this* that is said to have been “completely shattered.” That being said, were it not for the miraculous provision of Yahweh as she flees to the wilderness, the Antichrist would track down and kill every last Jew on the planet.

Why, we must ask ourselves, has Yahweh arranged it like this (or at the very least, allowed it to happen like this)? Why must Israel be rendered completely incapable of helping herself? It’s something every Christian should know already: that in reality, we are *all* completely incapable of helping ourselves. Israel (like the rest of us) must be broken completely of her self-reliance, her intrepid inbred stubbornness, her pride. Israelis are so used to taking on the world single handedly—and winning—that it’s easy for them to miss the hand of God guiding their destiny. Now, because Yahweh loves them so much, He is going to go to the trouble of letting them see just how vulnerable they would really be without His protection.

They will be graphically reminded of Yahweh’s sanctuary, of course, when He destroys the armies of Gog. His provision will be fragrantly obvious as they spend seven months cleaning up the rotting carnage: few bullet wounds, no shrapnel, just millions upon millions of dead soldiers struck by lightning, burned with brimstone, poisoned with the bio-chemical weapons they brought with them, crushed by hail, drowned in floods, and buried under the rubble of the biggest earthquake anybody could remember. But it’s a significant leap from the surprise and relief that will inevitably flow from such an experience to relying on Yahweh the way a small child relies upon his father.

The crisis of conscience will occur with the grand unveiling of the Antichrist’s satanic agenda, the abomination of desolation. At this time, precisely 1,230 days into the Tribulation, he will apparently (SF4) set a thirty-day deadline: within that window, all residents of Israel must pledge their loyalty to the Antichrist’s one-world government, an act which openly aligns the inductee with Lucifer, by “bowing” to the image of the beast that the false prophet has erected (or installed or downloaded, as the case may be)—the image animated by Satan’s spirit. They must also receive the Mark of the Beast in their right hands or their foreheads.

All of this will be presented in the most positive of lights, of course. *It’s a privilege to be chosen to inaugurate System 666. The whole world is watching, because the Israeli program will serve as the prototype for every other nation. You are at the cutting edge of the brave new world—the first people on earth to step through the door to utopia!* I believe that the Antichrist and his false prophet will actually think that the Jews’ acceptance is a *fait accompli*—especially since

they've made it quite clear that they've got no qualms about using force and intimidation to get the job done. No one will be more surprised than they when the Israelis stay away from the sign-up centers in droves. By the end of the first week, when roughly a quarter of the population should have been Marked, only two or three percent have shown up. Television commercials and radio spots are hastily thrown together urging the populace not to wait until the last minute—*avoid the crowds*.

As the second week wears on with the same pitiful turnout, it begins to dawn on the authorities that they may have a problem on their hands. They begin to put two and two together: low turnout at the sign-up centers; lots of reported absenteeism from work—people calling in sick but not seeing their doctors or buying medicine; much more traffic than usual, especially in the outlying areas; grocery stores experiencing shortages of canned goods and other imperishable foods. Gradually it becomes apparent to the hapless workers tasked to implement the Mark and the Oath: Israel is not buying it. Worse, they're not just staying away from the sign-up centers, they're running away, leaving their homes and businesses, packing up what they can in their little cars and scattering to the four winds. Soldiers are dispatched to direct them back to their homes, but this proves to be harder than herding cats. Civil disobedience is rampant, and the soldiers, whether IDF or U.N., are as likely as not to be in sympathy with the fleeing multitudes.

By the beginning of the third week, the Antichrist knows he has a full-scale civil meltdown on his hands. It's not an organized rebellion, though—he can't arrest the leaders; there *are* no leaders. Nobody's standing on street corners or gathering crowds at the Wailing Wall making fiery speeches and implanting the seeds of sedition. Nor is the Knesset fomenting this uprising—eighty percent of *them* are missing in action too, as it turns out. The Antichrist issues orders that people fleeing the cities are to be detained, and if they resist, they are to be shot.

What has happened? What would make millions of law-abiding Israeli citizens leave their homes and business and run away in panic? It's a warning that they've been hearing for the past several years from 144,000 young Jewish zealots. The warning is recorded in the Christian scriptures, in the New Testament, but the message is for *them*; the message is for *now*. The warning, they said, is from the Messiah Himself: **“When you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.”** (Matthew 24:15-20) Now we know why all the haste is necessary.

When the Antichrist perceives that his plan isn't working, he will try to slam the door shut on all this do-it-yourself emigration. Those who know what to expect, those who have heeded the words of Yahshua, will get out immediately. Those who hesitate like Lot's wife, those who wait for two or three weeks to make their move, will be far less likely to successfully escape.

And where will they go? I'm going to go way out on a limb here (I know; you think I live there). We have seen how the nation of Jordan (ancient Edom, Moab, and Ammon), is reduced to a severely depopulated pile of rubble during the War of Magog—probably due to a combination of factors—perhaps by VX nerve gas from Syrian missiles, redirected by hand of God (see chapter 17), then by Gog's armies devouring the land like locusts on their way to the killing fields of Israel, followed by nuclear devastation at the hands of the Antichrist. In the end, Israelis will end up exercising *de facto* control over Jordanian territory: **"They [Israel] shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab; and the people of Ammon shall obey them."** (Isaiah 11:14) Or how about this one? **"I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the insults of the people of Ammon, with which they have reproached My people, and made arrogant threats against their borders. Therefore, as I live,' says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Surely Moab shall be like Sodom, and the people of Ammon like Gomorrah—overrun with weeds and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, and the remnant of My people shall possess them."** (Zephaniah 2:8-9) But perhaps the most compelling clue is this snippet: **"Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler."** (Isaiah 16:4)

Therefore I believe that many if not most of Israel's fleeing multitudes will hide out in Jordan, specifically in its more mountainous regions east and south of the Dead Sea. (Yahshua, after all, said to those in Judea, "flee to the *mountains*.") This would explain several things about the enigmatic Olivet discourse passage. The Jordan River (usually a trickle) is considerably easier to ford in the dry season, summer or fall, than when it's swollen with rain in the winter or spring. ('Course, it's *never* swollen these days because most of the water is drawn off for agricultural irrigation, but things might be different after the Jordanian and West Bank Palestinian farmers are dead.) And pregnant or nursing mothers? They'll be entering a land that has seen the ravages of nuclear and/or biochemical war. Between fallout, pollution, and famine, it won't be the ideal time to be faced with caring for little ones. And the Sabbath? In Israel, nothing much works on the Sabbath, and besides, if you're a Jew piously trying to keep the rabbinical law, you won't be able to flee very far within the confines of a Sabbath-day's journey (2,000 cubits, about half a mile).

Some, of course, won't flee at all. Some Jews will stay in Jerusalem, out of confusion, inertia, or fear of the unknown. Some will actually believe in the Antichrist. Others, atheists to the end, will remain in the city hoping to cash in on

the financial opportunities that will surely arise in the capital of the new world order. But Satan and the Antichrist are learning by experience what Yahweh has known from the beginning: the Jews are a stubborn and stiff-necked people.

That's why Zechariah predicted: **"The city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city."** (Zechariah 14:2) The Hebrew word *golah* doesn't necessarily mean "captivity." Its primary meaning is exile. Its root word, *galah*, means to denude (especially in a disgraceful sense), hence it is properly used of both being sent into captivity (captives were usually stripped) or of being driven into exile without one's worldly possessions (as when Muhammad drove the Banu Qaynuqa Jews out of Yathrib after stealing their possessions). The latter meaning is the precise description of the Jew's flight from the Antichrist following the abomination of desolation. Yahshua specifically told them not to go back to their homes and pack up their stuff. He didn't actually say they wouldn't have time, though that's what we all tend to think when we read the Matthew 24 passage we just quoted. But that's not exactly true—they've got a month to comply with the order. The real problem is that the Antichrist, knowing the Jewish propensity for rebellion, will be leaving nothing to chance (SF4). He could easily have their homes watched, with roving U.N. goon squads tasked to make sure the Israelis "volunteer" to take the Mark of the Beast. If they go back to their homes to gather their belongings, they'll run the risk of being caught.

So Zechariah is telling us that half the Jews in Jerusalem will escape with little more than the clothes on their backs, and the other half will stay—only to suffer a new pogrom: being robbed, beaten, and raped. The city will once again be "trodden down by the gentiles."

More evidence: **"Behold, the whirlwind of Yahweh goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of Yahweh will not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart. In the latter days you will consider it."** Israel will indeed "consider" the furious whirlwind Yahweh has unleashed against the wicked Muslim invaders in their land. That is precisely why they must now flee: they know the Antichrist's claims are bogus. **"At the same time," says Yahweh, 'I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.' Thus says Yahweh: 'The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness—Israel, when I went to give him rest.' Yahweh has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel!'"** (Jeremiah 30:23-31:4) Beginning with a recap of the judgment meted out in World War III, Jeremiah reiterates Yahweh's promise that the Israel that sees and survives the War of Magog will return to Him, and will be sheltered **"in the wilderness."** He finishes by assuring His chosen people that He will rebuild their nation. I presume

He's talking about more than infrastructure, but also lives and relationships—especially their relationship with Him.

Hosea knew something about rocky relationships, for Yahweh had told him to marry an unfaithful woman, just so he'd know and communicate what it felt like to be the God who loved Israel. **“She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband.’”** (Hosea 2:7) He's talking about Israel. The Jews took pride in their Laws, their superior “chosen-people” status, their position and place. And even when it became gruesomely obvious that Yahweh had separated Himself from her because of her spiritual adulteries, Israel continued to chase gods of her own making, a god of intellect and reason or one of religious exactitude—hoping she would be able to either think or work her way back to Yahweh. But pride of intellect and true faith are like oil and water, substances that can enjoy no lasting relationship.

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt....” The parallel between the rescue of Israel under Moses and that at the middle of the Tribulation will be lost on no one. As we have seen, the destruction of Pharaoh's armies in the Red Sea will have its direct counterpart when the desert swallows the Antichrist's pursuing forces (Revelation 12:16). Will the Valley of Achor (which leads to the Dead Sea from the west) be the scene of this deliverance? Will archeologists a thousand years from now find the Antichrist's tanks and armored vehicles strewn like broken toys through the Valley of Achor, just as they have found Egyptian chariot parts scattered across the floor of the Gulf of Aqaba? One can only speculate. Perhaps it will happen some other place. But it *will* happen.

“‘And it shall be, in that day,’ says Yahweh, ‘That you will call Me “My Husband,” and no longer call Me “My Master,” for I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more.’” (Hosea 2:14-17) The relationship Yahweh seeks is that of a husband to his wife, not that of a master to his slave. This is reflected in a play on words here that's lost in the English. “Master” is the Hebrew *Ba'aliy*, a variation of the noun *ba'al*, an owner, husband, lord, ruler, or master—and used, not coincidentally, as the name of a Canaanite deity. But “Husband” is *'ish*, the word for man (i.e., mankind), an adult male, and especially the male spouse in a marriage—a husband. Picture moving away from the kind of relationship shared by a Muslim man and his wife—whom he considers to be his property to use and abuse as he wishes—and that (ideally) of a godly Christian husband toward his wife, a relationship of respect and unconditional love. In the same way, the relationship Yahweh seeks with Israel is one of mutual

companionship, love, and intimacy, not of fear or intimidation—the mark of all satanic religious counterfeits. Note that for the umpteenth time He stresses the importance of names. Whereas they had purposely forgotten His (though “YHWH was referred to by name seven thousand times in their scriptures) they will at last know Him—*by name*—and conversely, the names of all the false gods they had ever worshiped will be lost through neglect.

How Israel came to “lose” the use of Yahweh’s name is telling. During their Babylonian captivity (imposed because of their infidelity to Yahweh), the Jews’ captors called them by the name of their God: “Yahudim,” Yahweh’s people. But because they were conquered exiles—slaves—the name was naturally used not only as a national moniker but also as an epithet. This, of course, grated on the collective Jewish psyche. A generation or two of this and what should have been a blessing became a curse. Calling a Jew a “Yahudi” in Babylon would have been like calling an African American a “nigger” or a Mexican American a “wetback.” It was taken as an offensive slap in the face, an insult. Rather than acknowledge their guilt and return to Yahweh, however, these Yahudim simply retreated into a deeper state of denial. Though they left their scriptures more or less intact (for the moment), they refused to pronounce or write the name Yahweh. In time, it became illegal—a blasphemy punishable by stoning—to utter the name of God. When they came across it in oral scripture recitations, they substituted the word “Adonay,” meaning lord or master. This was precisely as Satan had planned it, for the name of the prototypical false god, Baal or Bel, meant that very thing. The priests and rabbis of Babylon had in their stubbornness been deceived into substituting a loving Husband for a cruel and capricious master. Hosea is saying that this fatal error will be undone in the end.

The prophet continues: **“In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely. I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know Yahweh....”** Warfare of the sort described by the prophets—nuclear, chemical, and biological—is not only lethal to men. All living things suffer. But Yahweh here is making a promise to the beasts of the earth: when this is all over, He will abolish war forever (that is, for as long as mortal men tread the earth) as His people come to know him. It’s as if He’s giving this permanent peace to his beloved Israel as a wedding present. He *is* the Prince of Peace, after all.

“‘It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer,’ says Yahweh; ‘I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer ‘Jezreel.’ Then I will sow her [Israel] for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were

not My people, “You are My people!” And they shall say, “You are my God!”” (Hosea 2:18-23) Jezreel (the name prophetically given Hosea’s eldest son) means “God sows.” We’re taking a peek at the conclusion of the matter here. We shall soon learn that rain will be withheld from the earth during the last three and a half years as the Jews flee from the Antichrist. But when Yahweh has fulfilled his purposes, He will again command the heavens to “**answer the earth**” by sending rain, which will in turn “**answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil.**” When God sows seed, the earth must yield its bounty—and the seed He is sowing here is Israel itself, who will flourish under His blessing like a fruitful vine.

But first, Israel must flee, her power “completely shattered.” She must become reliant on Yahweh, utterly powerless to help herself, for this is the day of which the prophet spoke: “**We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it. And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.**” (Jeremiah 30:5-7)

Like I said, good news, bad news.

“**The time of Jacob’s trouble?**” If I were an Israeli Jew living in these days, I would be calling it the time of Jacob’s *confusion*. I’d be saying to myself, *Wait a minute. Less than a year ago, we finally figured out who Yahweh was. Gog and his armies came in here looking for blood, and when our backs were up against the wailing wall, our God saved us. And we all suddenly understood: His mercy endures forever, just like David said. He’s more than Laws and feasts and traditions—He’s the true God, the Creator of the Universe...*

So what’s with that European imposter up there on the temple mount, telling the world that he’s responsible for our deliverance, that he’s our Messiah? He’s not even Jewish. He doesn’t fit the profile. There are hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah, and he doesn’t fit any of ’em. But if we don’t buy into his scheme and worship him, the penalty is death, and he’s just the guy to do it. So now we’re on the run. We’re being forced to abandon Jerusalem, to leave Israel. Everything we’ve worked for is gone—which begs the question: now that we finally recognize Yahweh, where is He? And where is His Messiah?

This is one of the things I love about Biblical prophecy. Time and again it presents a seemingly insoluble conundrum, and then shows us how Yahweh will prove (or has proved) His glory with the solution. At the risk of wandering off the subject, that, in the end, is the whole purpose of prophecy—to demonstrate the

power of Yahweh. For if we comprehend his glory, we are that much closer to understanding His love.

As if to make my point for me, Ezekiel provides this wrap-up for his revelation of the War of Magog: **“I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God from that day forward....”** The role of God in Magog’s defeat will be evident to all, not just Jews but also the gentile bystanders—especially the ones who have felt Yahweh’s “hand laid on them.” Denying the obvious truth will require willful defiance and purposeful suspension of logic (which is not to say it won’t happen).

“The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them....” This, of course, is something pre-rapture Christians intuitively understand about the Jews, whether or not they understand Yahweh’s plans for their restoration. God’s protection of Israel will be the only logical explanation for the lopsided outcome of the Battle of Magog, but if Yahweh is providing refuge now, why has He been “hiding His face” from them for the past nineteen hundred years? Could it have something to do with their national rejection of Yahshua of Nazareth? Frankly, I don’t know if the Tribulation gentiles will be able to do the math on this, but the fact of prophecy remains: they will recognize that God’s mighty hand has everything to do with Israel’s fortunes.

“Therefore thus says Yahweh: ‘Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name—after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid. When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am Yahweh their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says Yahweh.” (Ezekiel 39:21-29) The prophet here gives us a snapshot of a work we see in process: the regathering of Israel. It has begun, but it is by no means complete, for Yahweh has not yet **“poured out His Spirit”** on them as a nation. Since the reign of David, rare have been the moments when Israel has been faithful to Yahweh; thus equally rare have been the times when **“they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid.”** And yet, for His own name’s sake, Yahweh in these last days will bring them back to Himself.

So it's ironic in a way that David should have such a clear view of Israel's predicament in these strange days: **"I will call upon Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies. The pangs of death surrounded me, and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon Yahweh, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears...."** There's nothing like having your back to the wall to give you a fresh perspective on your need for a close relationship with God. David, like the Jews of the last days, knew what it was like to have to leave town in a hurry because the authorities were trying to kill him.

But He also knew Yahweh's provision and protection: **"Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth; coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His secret place; His canopy around Him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him, His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire...."** Is it just me, or do you too hear echoes of the Battle of Magog in David's poetry? As a matter of fact, it sounds a whole lot more like Yahweh's dealing with Gog on the mountains of Israel than it does His protection of David from a delusional King Saul. I mean, **"hailstones and coals of fire?"**

In the prophetic context, yes. Read: brimstone (cf. Ezekiel 38:22). To make sure we'd get it, David said it again: **"Yahweh thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe, lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered at Your rebuke, O Yahweh, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils...."** We've heard something like this before (II Samuel 22—in chapter 17 of this volume). Again we are reminded of the scope of the devastation that will take place during World War III. And although it's a "man-made" war, passages like this make it abundantly clear that Yahweh is not a passive bystander but an active participant.

"He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support." (Psalm 18:3-18) David knew what it was to depend on Yahweh. Israel has forgotten, so their God is going to give them a three and a half year refresher course. What will that be like?

Jewish self-reliance (something we Americans naturally tend to admire) has been crafted and perfected over the years into a subtle form of idolatry. Yahweh intends to break the idolatrous pride that has emerged from being on the winning

side of too many battles: **“In that day a man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel. He will not look to the altars, the work of his hands; he will not respect what his fingers have made, nor the wooden images nor the incense altars.”** (Isaiah 17:7-8) Having to rely on Yahweh instead of upon their vaunted IDF (the Israeli Defense Force, many of whose superb weapons are manufactured right there in Israel) will no doubt be a hard lesson for the Jews. (And don’t look so pious: many of us Christians never really learn to rely on Him either.) But though their pride may still be intact after the Battle of Magog (since they will participate with valor and achieve hard-won successes of their own), they will be reduced (actually, *elevated*) to a place of complete dependence on Yahweh when the Antichrist implements his grand satanic scheme.

Isaiah foresaw the confusion of these times: **“They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing; for the majesty of Yahweh they shall cry aloud from the sea. Therefore glorify Yahweh in the dawning light, the name of Yahweh, God of Israel, in the coastlands of the sea...”** Whether the prophet’s references to “the sea” are literal or metaphorical, it is clear that in the wake of World War III (the overall context of the passage) Israel once again finds itself in exile among the gentiles. And once again we see this unsettling dichotomy of Israel finally coming to know Yahweh, only to find themselves in the Antichrist’s gun sights as a result. **“From the ends of the earth we have heard songs: ‘Glory to the righteous!’ But I said, ‘I am ruined, ruined! Woe to me! The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously, indeed, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously....’”** What else would you call it when the one to whom you had virtually surrendered your national sovereignty in the interests of peace turns around and demands your submission, your worship, your very soul. It’s treachery, pure and simple.

Israel is not alone in their dilemma, however. The whole world is in the same basic pickle, and there’s nowhere left to hide. Isaiah continues: **“Fear and the pit and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken. The earth is violently broken; the earth is split open; the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; Its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again.”** (Isaiah 24:14-20) Throughout the scriptures, we see earthquakes playing a starring role in the last days. My impression (admittedly an extrapolation) is that they will continue gaining in frequency and intensity until a seismic climax near the very end of the Tribulation, as if the earth itself is groaning under the strain of our sin. Does “it will fall, and not rise again” mean that the earth’s crust will as some point (presumably upon Yahshua’s return in glory) reach a state of equilibrium? We have seen a spate of violent temblors that began gaining momentum in the late 20th century. Will Christ’s coming cause it to abate for a thousand years? We

aren't specifically told, so I can't be dogmatic, but a peaceful geology seems to fit the Millennial picture the Bible gives us. However, I'm getting ahead of myself again. (Don't blame me. It's Isaiah's fault.)

Hosea, as I have observed, was God's designated prophetic expert in betrayal and forgiveness. Through him, Yahweh told Israel what would happen to them, and what it would take to undo the damage. **"For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue. I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense...."** In response to their "offense," Yahweh would treat them like a lion treats supper—and then he would leave them alone without the comfort only He could provide. Why? So that **"Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."** (Hosea 5:14-15)

If I were a Jew searching for the answer to Yahweh's carrot-and-stick conundrum, I would be desperately trying to figure out what "offense" I was supposed to acknowledge. *Was it one of those 613 laws that we forgot to observe? Was it all of them? Or something else? This is hardly fair, Father. After all, we haven't been able to atone for our sins since the Romans tore down the temple—Your temple—and scattered us to the four winds. Oh, wait! That was when you "tore us," isn't it? So our "offense" was something we did, or did not do, before that. What could it have been?*

Hosea gives the searching Jews another tantalizing clue a bit later. **"Come, and let us return to Yahweh; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of Yahweh. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth."** (Hosea 6:1-3) Both the Old and New Testaments talk about a thousand years being as one day to Yahweh, and one day being like a thousand years. I have reason to believe that the truth will hit the Jewish people like a thunderbolt—all at once and with a great deal of noise. Read: "After two *thousand years* He will revive us...." Some sharp Israeli will be reading Hosea, and the timeline will jump up and bite him (or her): *It has been almost exactly two thousand years since we rejected the Messianic claims of Yahshua of Nazareth. We turned Him over to the Romans to be... Oh my God! We crucified the Messiah!*

As shocking a revelation as that will be, it will at least explain how Yahweh could have turned His back on his own chosen people, the "apple of His eye," for two millennia. *This is not about messing up the Rabbinical minutiae about how far we could walk on the Sabbath or somehow doing the wave offerings all wrong. This is about God coming to us in the flesh—and us killing Him. He wasn't what we expected, only what we needed.*

Jews today have a problem with Yahshua because He didn't fulfill *all* of the prophecies concerning the Messiah during His first-century advent. But Hosea clearly states that the Messiah's mission will be fulfilled in stages: **"He [once again, Yahweh and the Messiah are seen as identical] will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth."** The former rain fell in 33 A.D.; the latter is His return in glory—coming soon to a planet near you.

This national epiphany is not an insignificant glitch in the course of Israel's long and turbulent history. It is, rather, the whole point. Yahweh commemorated the great awakening with the sixth of His seven designated "holy convocations." (They're normally characterized as "feasts," but this one's different.)

The short version is this summary: **"And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 'Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls and offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before Yahweh your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people.'" Remember that last sentence. It's important. "And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."** (Leviticus 23:26-32)

The Day of Atonement, or *Yom Kippurim*, is considered by observant Jews to be the most sacred day on the calendar. Scheduled on the tenth day after the Feast of Trumpets (which, as you'll recall, is prophetic of the rapture of the Church), it is the second of the three autumn festivals, falling in September or October by our pagan calendar reckoning. Though it lasts but one day (from sundown on the ninth of Tishri until three stars could be seen in the evening sky on the tenth), it is the culmination of the ten "days of awe" that began on the Feast of Trumpets. As we saw previously, the days between the Feast of Trumpets (*Yom Teruah*, also erroneously referred to as *Rosh Hashanah*) and Yom Kippurim are a time of serious personal reflection (as they most certainly will be the period of time between the rapture and the Yom Kippurim near the end of the Tribulation, especially for the Jews). During the ten days of awe, pious Jews examine their lives and repent of the shortcomings they find. These days, that is considered the essence of being **"afflicted in soul."** Fasting has become part of the tradition as well (though it is not specified in the Torah), as is enduring all sorts of contrived

personal discomforts for the day, such as forsaking any footwear that actually protects the feet. The typical Rabbinical minutiae obfuscate the meaning—as usual.

This monastic self-denial for a day is not exactly what Yahweh had in mind, however. The ritual that was prescribed for the Day of Atonement was a poignant and detailed picture of the salvation of mankind from the penalty of sin through the sacrifice of the Messiah. More than any of the seven holy convocations, the rehearsal of this Day's events depends upon the Tabernacle or Temple to tell its story. And as with all of the other holy days, its literal fulfillment in the person of Yahshua is essential to understanding its significance. Without the sacrifice of Immanuel, none of this makes any sense. In the light of that sacrifice, however, Yahweh's plan emerges like a beautiful butterfly rising out of its cocoon. God does not institute ritual for ritual's sake. He does *nothing* on a pointless whim.

So while it's not strictly "prophecy," and though it's kind of a lengthy passage, let's take a closer look at the Day of Atonement. **"Yahweh said to Moses: 'Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering. He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These are holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on. And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering....'"** Note first that salvation is on God's terms and schedule, not ours: the High Priest could only enter the Holy of Holies on one day a year—this day, the tenth of Tishri. The normal priestly garb is insufficient for this day, for on this day the High Priest is to stand before Yahweh. He must therefore bathe and don special linen garments, signifying the righteousness provided by the Messiah; his own good works cannot bring him into the presence of a Holy God.

"Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall take the two goats and present them before Yahweh at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for Yahweh and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which Yahweh's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before Yahweh, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness." (Leviticus 16:2-10) Because he is not the sinless Messiah himself, the High Priest first offers a sacrifice, a bull, to atone for his own sins and those of his family. Then two goats are chosen: one of them is selected by lot to bear the sins of the people through his sacrificial death. He is

slain to cover the sins of the people (for one year, anyway). That goat dies so the other one might live.

The second goat is set free. But it's not allowed to run around loose in the camp or the temple environs; the "scapegoat" is released in the wilderness (read: the place of preparation and decision), where it would surely die without Yahweh's provision. This same principle was acted out again at Yahshua's crucifixion. There, Barabbas—a man who clearly deserved his punishment (just like you and me)—was set free, while the Messiah was executed, quite literally, in his place. But was Barabbas free, really? His ultimate freedom depended wholly on what he did with the One who had died in his place, for until and unless his sins were covered by the blood of Yahweh's sacrifice, Barabbas would remain a "dead man walking." Thus on the Day of Atonement the priest was to **"confess over [the scapegoat] all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning their sins, putting them on the head of the goat.... The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land...."** Likewise, we have been set free because Yahweh chose to accept the sacrifice of Yahshua in our place, but we still bear our own sins until we choose to avail ourselves of God's provision for us—in the goat's case, it's the food and water Yahweh provides for him in the wilderness; in our case, it's the atoning sacrifice of the blood of Christ.

Is this ringing any bells? It should. It's the exact picture of Israel being sent to the wilderness under God's protection in the Last Days. They are an echo of the scapegoat—still bearing the sins of Israel on their head. What they do with God's provision there in the wilderness will make all the difference between life and death.

"Then [the High Priest] shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before Yahweh, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die. He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times...." The incense represents our prayers, through which we may now enter into the very presence of Yahweh—via the agency of our final High Priest, Yahshua. The bull is symbolic of the endeavors of man: our solutions to the human condition must be "slain" and placed under submission to Yahweh's plan if we wish our sins to be atoned.

"Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness...." No atonement could be made for sins

unless the blood of a suitable sacrifice was shed. This prescribed sacrifice would symbolically cover the people's sins for one year. Furthermore, that blood had to be applied to the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant if it was to be efficacious. And it bears repeating: that fact continues to pose a tremendous problem for the Jews. The mercy seat has not been available for its proper annual service since before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. But as we discovered in chapter 13 (if you're willing to take the contemporary folklore at face value), Yahweh saw to it that the blood of His Perfect Sacrifice, the Messiah, *was* sprinkled upon the mercy seat as Yahshua bled and died at Calvary. That facet of the Day of Atonement has therefore been fulfilled. But it did not occur on the tenth day of Tishri, in the autumn; Yahweh has something else—something wonderful—planned for that day.

Moses goes on to describe in great detail how the ritual atonement is to be performed, and he ends by summarizing the when, where, why, and how of it: **“This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before Yahweh. It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever. And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.”** (Leviticus 16:12-16, 21-22, 29-34) Now go back and read that again, but whenever the text refers to “the priest,” think of the ultimate High Priest, Yahshua our Messiah. And note that just as Aaron's descendents were to perform these solemn rehearsals in his place throughout their generations, so Yahshua would be our perpetual High Priest, **“anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place.”**

This last section refers twice to the Sabbath aspects of the Day of Atonement, and twice it commands, **“you shall afflict your souls,”** an emphasis that was repeated *three times* in the Leviticus 23 passage above. Yahweh repeated this theme time after time because it's at the heart of what the Day of Atonement is all about—the great awakening of Israel to the reality of their God and the identity of their Messiah. We should therefore take a very close look at the word translated “afflict.” *Anah* is a Hebrew verb that carries two very different connotations, both relevant, and both essential, to the observance and fulfillment of *Yom Kippurim*. First, as we might expect, it means to be afflicted, humbled, or bowed down, to be occupied or busied with, or to be depressed, downcast, or in a state of

oppression. This is how it's invariably handled (in our English translations) in passages relating to the Day of Atonement.

But in contrast to this, *'anah* also means to answer, respond, testify, speak, or to reply as a witness. Both definitions apply to the fulfillment of the convocation, for it doesn't help to be sorry for something that, let's face it, happened a long time ago—even if it were a crime perpetrated by your own ancestors—if your humbled demeanor doesn't engender a fundamental change in your relationship with the God whom your ancestors rejected. What's required is not only an introspective, afflicted state of personal grief at the travesty that has been perpetuated for the past two thousand years. It is also necessary that the afflicted Israelites respond to the new revelation to which they're awakening—that Yahshua was the Messiah after all. The *'anah* requirement (and remember, the penalty for non-compliance was to be “cut off from his people”) implies that one's epiphany concerning the Messiah's identity must be made public: he must respond and answer, testify and reply as a witness, that Yahshua of Nazareth—the “Christ” of Christianity—was and is Yahweh's promised Redeemer, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And the Sabbath rest requirement? As we begin to explore other scriptures that help illuminate the Day of Atonement, please keep in mind Israel's plight during the Great Tribulation: utter helplessness to effect their national salvation, and agony over the seeming dichotomy between Yahweh's recent miraculous victory over their Muslim tormentors and their present precarious predicament. Doing “**no work at all**” is an essential concept in the doctrine of salvation, one that is particularly hard for most Jews to grasp. But during these Last Days, a Sabbath rest will be imposed upon them; they will be forced to sit back and watch Yahweh achieve their final salvation—without their help (gasp!). And this, as we shall see, will inexorably lead to a profound national repentance, an affliction of Israel's collective soul, the final step in their journey toward the light: the recognition and response to Yahshua, their Messiah.

The fact that the Day of Atonement as presented in the Torah is impossible to keep—and has been for over 2,500 years—ought to have sent hordes of Jews back to their scriptures to try to figure out what happened. The prophet Jeremiah, writing at the very time when the ark of the covenant went missing from the temple, tells them where they went wrong: **“Behold, the days are coming, says Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took**

them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says Yahweh. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Yahweh: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know Yahweh,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Yahweh. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34) Israel (the remnant who hasn't given up) is still trying to operate under the Old Covenant—the Law. But their own scriptures plainly state that a New Covenant is in effect, one in which the law of Yahweh is not an outward regimen of rule-keeping, but an inward relationship with their God. In reality, it's a *renewal* of the original covenant. The rules were never the point, exactly. They were designed, rather, to point toward Yahweh's solution to mankind's universal predicament: estrangement from and enmity with the God who made them—the result of our sin. Nothing has changed but our point of view.

By the way, those who are still laboring under the illusion that the Church has somehow taken the place of Israel in the heart of Yahweh need to read this passage carefully. The New Covenant is *not* between God and the believing gentiles—it is between Yahweh and Israel, or more precisely, "the house of Israel *and* the house of Judah"—all twelve tribes. Gentile Christians are only *incidentally* beneficiaries of this Renewed Covenant. We are but wild branches that have been grafted into the olive tree of God's Kingdom, orphan children who have been adopted into Yahweh's family, prodigal sons who were dead but were given new life. In the context of our discussion of the Day of Atonement, note that all seven of Yahweh's holy convocations are to be fulfilled *in the precise order* in which they were mandated in the Torah. As the Feast of Weeks introduced the Church, the Feast of Trumpets will herald its exit, at least as far as Yahweh's plan of redemption is concerned. So as the Feast of Trumpets precedes the Day of Atonement, so must the rapture of Yahshua's called-out assembly precede the "new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...[when Yahweh] will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more."

Ezekiel says more or less the same thing, stressing that the choice of whether Israel follows Yahweh or not carries consequences with it (not coincidentally, something that was also stressed in the rites of the Day of Atonement). **"Thus says Yahweh Our God: 'I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I**

will recompense their deeds on their own heads,' says Yahweh." (Ezekiel 11:17-21) The Jews, in trying to rigidly adhere to the Law (or more precisely, the bloated caricature of the Torah they had constructed in its stead), had developed a heart (not to mention a head) of stone by pursuing the letter of the law to the exclusion of its spirit—a spirit of love, mercy, and gratitude. Understand, of course, that *nobody* successfully kept all of the actual Instructions of Yahweh. But the Jews didn't even try. Their scheme was to observe a set of rules that were only *based on* Yahweh had said to do: He said, for example, "Don't do your regular work on the Sabbath day." They said things like, "If you walk farther than 2,000 cubits on the Sabbath you've broken the Law." Their law, maybe. Not Yahweh's. Here in Ezekiel, Yahweh says that they'll *never* be able to **"walk in My statutes and keep My judgments"** until they've had a change of heart.

David foresaw a day when his people's heart of stone would be traded in for something a bit softer. **"Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us...."** Notice that it's Yahweh doing the pulling, not Israel doing the pushing.

"As a father pities his children, so Yahweh pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more...." David knew what it was like to disappoint his Creator. But as a father himself, he understood God's perspective on His children: we're all going to screw up now and then. And though the wages of our sin is death, Yahweh wants nothing more than to restore fellowship with His kids as early and as often as possible. **"But the mercy of Yahweh is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them."** (Psalm 103:8-18) Children who love their fathers make an effort (however imperfect) to do what they ask, for they trust them with their very lives. But Israel is like a runaway teenager; they have been estranged from Yahweh so long they have forgotten how to trust. The day is not far off, though, when their national memory will get jogged. Faced with the reality of their Messiah, their souls will be humbled, and they will respond at last to their Redeemer.

Then **"they shall walk after Yahweh. He will roar like a lion [the voice of authority]. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses."** (Hosea 12:10-11) The gathering of Israel to their own land is

the first step toward their great awakening. This process has already begun but it is far from complete.

The next step will be their cleansing: **“They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”** (Ezekiel 37:23) Carved idols aren’t a real big problem any more, of course, but Israel still serves its false gods: money, pride, tradition, intellect. (And don’t look so smug; Christians have their own unique—and stupid—golden calves. How many churches have split over music style or the color of the new sanctuary carpet?) The cleansing—the softening of Israel’s national heart—will occur when Yahweh destroys the armies of Gog, Israel, and much of the rest of the world for that matter, will finally be ready to listen: **“So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One in Israel. Surely it is coming, and it shall be done,”** says the Lord Yahweh. **“This is the day of which I have spoken.”** (Ezekiel 39:7-8)

Looking ahead, Hosea gives us a peek at the bottom line: **“I will heal [Israel’s] backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived like grain, and grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, ‘What have I to do anymore with idols?’ I have heard and observed him. I am like a green cypress tree; Your fruit is found in Me.”** (Hosea 14:4-8) But not yet. We still have the hell on earth of the remainder of the Tribulation to endure. I’ve included that passage here (instead of including it with scores of similar passages in the chapter on the Millennial reign of Christ) because what’s coming in the short run is unbelievably grim. It’s light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak.

Asaph voiced what has become Israel’s recurring nightmare. Now, for the last time, the Jews will pray with the psalmist: **“O God, the nations have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps. The dead bodies of Your servants they have given as food for the birds of the heavens, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth. Their blood they have shed like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them. We have become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to those who are around us....”** Successive waves of invasion, beginning with Babylon’s, have brought Jerusalem to its knees time after time after time. And the latest, the grand expedition of Magog, had gotten to the very gates of the city before Yahweh had lethally intervened. The Muslims did not succeed in taking Jerusalem, but Israel’s celebration over their annihilation is

proving premature: what Islam had failed to accomplish with military might, the Antichrist has apparently achieved with stealth and treachery.

And the Jews, seeing the elusive dream of “the peace of Jerusalem” slip from their grasp once again, cry out, **“How long, Yahweh? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire? Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You, and on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name. [By this time, that’s everybody.] For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place. Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us! Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us, for we have been brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, for Your name’s sake! Why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’ Let there be known among the nations in our sight the avenging of the blood of Your servants which has been shed.”** (Psalm 79:1-10) If God were like a man, He *would* be angry forever! The Jews plead with Him to **“provide atonement for our sins.”** *I did that, Yahweh could rightfully proclaim. You had Him crucified. I raised Him from the dead but even then, only a handful of you followed Him. So what do I care if “they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place?”* But Yahweh is not a man, nor are His thoughts petty and vindictive like ours are. He dreams of one thing above all others: restoring His chosen people to fellowship. He *does* care.

Yahweh will not be angry with Israel forever. Their time of spiritual exile will end—but not until God has given the gentiles all the time they need to make up their minds whom they will serve. We’ve had our two thousand years; it’s the Jews’ turn again. As Paul wrote, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”** (Romans 11:25-27)

Paul was quoting from the writings of Isaiah, but somewhere between the Hebrew text, the Septuagint Greek translation Paul probably used, the Koine Greek he wrote in, the Latin through which it was transmitted, and the English text we now have, there was a slight shift in the meaning (though both permutations are doubtless true). Isaiah put it this way: **“The Redeemer will come to Zion [not “out of,” as in Romans], and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,’ says Yahweh. ‘As for Me,’ says Yahweh, ‘this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,’ says Yahweh, ‘from this time and forevermore.”** (Isaiah 59:20-21) Since it’s painfully clear that Yahweh’s promise of sending His Spirit upon Jacob/Israel is yet future, this passage must refer to the coming Millennial blessings of the

Jews. But the process by which this happens is clearer in the Isaiah passage: the risen Christ will come *to Zion*—He will come *to* the repentant Jews.

We're being given a glimpse at the *real* Day of Atonement—the actual day upon which the prophetic holy convocation described in Leviticus will be literally fulfilled, just like all five before it were. (Of course, the Feast of Trumpets, prophetic of the rapture, is yet future as I write these words.) The process of Israel's return to fellowship with their God will not be complete until they recognize and accept their Messiah, the risen Yahshua—personally.

Remember Yom Kippur's requirements: First, Israel must observe the Sabbath rest, that is (in this context), they must not work for their own salvation, but rather accept the sacrifice provided by Yahweh. And second, they must "afflict their souls" and "answer, respond, testify, speak, or reply as a witness" to Yahshua's Messianic credentials—both of which concepts are encapsulated in the salient verb *'anah*. *Nothing* could afflict the souls of Israel like a sudden personal confrontation with their Messiah, still bearing the marks of his crucifixion, not coming but *returning* to reign in glory. *Nothing* could elicit a positive response to Yahweh's offer of redemption through the grace afforded by Yahshua's sacrifice like a personal encounter with the risen Christ, descending majestically and unopposed onto the Mount of Olives—just as the prophecies had promised. At that moment they'll all know exactly what it was like for Joseph's older brothers (Genesis 45) when they found out that he was still alive—and now in charge. I mean, what do you say at a time like that? "Oops?"

Zechariah describes the moment: "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family by itself...all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves." (Zechariah 12:10-12,14) Hadad-Rimmon (in the plain of Megiddo) is where Josiah, the last good king of Judah, was slain in a battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt (see II Chronicles 35:20-25). The mourning that followed his death was legendary and unprecedented. *That's* what it means to be "afflicted in their souls." It has nothing to do with ritual fasting or uncomfortable shoes—and everything to do with the realization that the whole nation has been living a horrendous lie for the last two thousand years. Oh, they'll fast, all right. Nobody will have an appetite. They'll weep. They'll pray. A little vomit won't be inappropriate. Everybody will want to just be alone with their thoughts: *affliction of the soul*.

What else do we know for sure about the Day of Atonement? The date: the tenth day of the month of Tishri on the Hebrew calendar, which falls in

September or October. But what year? For several rather obvious reasons, I'm convinced that the ultimate Day of Atonement will happen very near the end of the Tribulation—*five days* from the end, to be exact. To explain, I'll have to let a cat from a future chapter out of the bag a little early: the seventh and final holy day on the Hebrew calendar is the Feast of Tabernacles. It commemorates, among other things, the day when Yahshua will begin His earthly reign. This Feast begins on the fifteenth day of Tishri—five days after Yom Kippurim.

So why do I think *this* Day of Atonement will be in the same year as the definitive Feast of Tabernacles? First, look again at the Zechariah 12 passage above. The mourning—the affliction of the soul—occurs when the Jews **“look on Me whom they pierced.”** When Christ comes, He will “touch down” on the Mount of Olives—i.e., in Jerusalem. The believing Jews (i.e., those who have thankfully recognized Yahweh's mighty hand in their deliverance from Magog) have been living in self-imposed exile since a month before the middle of the Tribulation, i.e., day 1,230. But Revelation 12:6 specifically states that **“The woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”** That leaves a thirty-day window at the very end in which some of them will return to Jerusalem. As you might imagine, things will be utterly chaotic by then, and the Antichrist will have long since given up on the idea of controlling Israel or dealing with individual Jews; now he's bent on destroying the whole nation, but his iron grip on the world had degenerated into palsied spasms by now. And the “times of the gentiles”—as measured by their ability to “tread the holy city under foot” for a period of “forty-two months” (Revelation 11:2)—are just about over.

The bottom line for our current inquiry, then, is that the specific Yom Kippur of prophetic significance must occur in the final year of the Tribulation, for the Jews could not **“look on Me whom they pierced”** when Yahshua returns to the Mount of Olives if they were still hiding out in the wilderness. But why must the *Messiah's* final return come at the very end? Are we making an unwarranted assumption when we say that? Couldn't Yahshua show up, say, a year before the Tribulation winds down? No, unless fighting the dragon and his Antichrist prove to be an uphill battle for Him (which is, since Yahshua is God incarnate, a patently ludicrous concept). For **“it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.”** (Daniel 12:6-7) How could Messiah be physically present while the “power of the holy people” remains “completely shattered?” It doesn't compute, especially when you realize that the Zechariah 12 phrase, **“They will look on Me whom they pierced”** is in *Yahweh's* voice. (The passage begins, **“The burden of the word of Yahweh against Israel. Thus says Yahweh, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him...”** Zechariah 12:1).

Those who insist that Yahshua was something less than God need to deal with that. It was *Yahweh* whom they pierced when they crucified Yahshua the Messiah.

Israel's awakening is a process, like the one Ezekiel saw in his vision of the dry bones. It's like dying in reverse gear—moving in stages from death toward life. Yahweh said to a valley full of bones, **“Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh....”** As Ezekiel watched, **“There was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them....”** Then God said, **“Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live...and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.”** (Ezekiel 37:5-10) The “breath” that came upon them is the very spirit of Yahweh!

After the Romans dispersed Israel in A.D. 70 and then came back to finish the job in 135, the Jewish nation was nothing but dry, scattered bones. They were “there,” but so far gone they could only be identified by dental records, so to speak. In the mid-nineteenth century, though, the bones started to rattle and come together to form complete skeletons. By 1948, flesh had enclosed the skeletons; then skin covered the musculature during the Battle of Magog; I imagine their eyes were wide open by this time, too. About this time Yahweh put Israel on life support in the isolation ward of the wilderness and began CPR in earnest. And like the Great Physician He is, He kept working on the lifeless corpse of his beloved nation for three and a half years. There were encouraging flickers now and then, but Israel was still essentially flat-lined. But now, at the last possible moment, God brings in the “crash cart.” It's code red—a critical situation, now or never, do or die. At the sight of Yahshua setting foot on the Mount of Olives, Israel's heart starts pumping on its own for the first time in two thousand years, and they finally realize the life-giving truth: Yahshua *is* Yahweh. For the nation of Israel, the Day of Atonement in 2033 will be the ultimate wake up call, the epiphany of epiphanies. It's the Great Oy Vey.

When Yahshua had said, **“I and My Father are one,”** (John 10:30) he hadn't been merely speaking metaphorically, as if to say, *God and I see things eye to eye*. When He had told Philip, **“He who has seen Me has seen the Father,”** (John 14:9) He was speaking the literal truth. When Paul informed us that in Yahshua **“dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,”** (Colossians 2:9) he was saying the same thing: Yahshua is Yahweh. The very Creator of the universe has come to live among us in a human body. I can't pretend to fully understand this, of course. It's well beyond my feeble powers of comprehension. But that doesn't mean it isn't true.

You've got to appreciate the drama of this whole thing. It's like in the movies, where the bomb's timer is ticking down the final seconds. In this case, after

almost 6,000 years, we're down to the last five days—on a twenty-four hour clock, there are only five seconds left. Our hero, Israel, has to decide whether to cut the black wire or the white wire—to eternally sever ties with Satan, or with Yahweh. But unlike in the movies, we in the “audience” are personally involved as well. If Israel cuts the white wire (as their fathers tried to do in A.D. 33), or even if they do nothing, the whole thing will blow up not only in their faces, but ours as well: the God upon whom we are depending for our salvation will have been proved a liar—something that would cause a “fatal paradox in the space-time continuum” (as long as we're using movie lines). But Yahweh is not a liar. Israel *will* cut the black wire, short-circuiting Satan's bomb and bringing to fulfillment a thousand promises of redemption and reconciliation scattered throughout scripture.

It's enough to make you spill your popcorn.

Chapter 23

Days Of Wrath

Now that the Satan-empowered Antichrist has actually achieved what only the most insane of megalomaniacs have even dared to dream—total world domination—we see a shift in Yahweh’s *modus operandi*. Up until now, God has been content to work primarily through the agency of His creation. With the exception of His normal behind-the-scenes provision and the occasional overt miracle, He has opted to let men run things here on earth—to exercise the power of choice He gave us. Occasionally we have chosen wisely; more often, we’ve chosen poorly. But now, with man’s ultimate poor choice a *fait accompli*, and with those who have belatedly chosen to follow Yahweh so powerless to effect change, He takes matters into his own hands.

Don’t get me wrong. The change is not due to desperation on the part of Yahweh. He has always known He would do this, and He told us as much. But from the beginning, man has had the ability to make choices—it’s a natural byproduct of God’s love for us. And Satan’s stranglehold upon the earth, if left unanswered, would create the impression that this ability has been curtailed. It has not, even now.

As if urging Tribulation saints not to abandon hope, John reminds us of God’s glory and power, undimmed by the darkness of these times: **“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them....”** There are many recorded incidents where angelic messengers appeared as men. Even so, they tended to be so astonishing in their appearance that their first words invariably had to be, “Don’t be afraid.” *This* angel makes no attempt to calm his audience down; he lets his magnificence show through. We can take some educated guesses at the symbolism we see here: his shining countenance, feet of flame, and roaring voice all speak of having come in the power and authority of Yahweh. The cloud and the rainbow are a token of God’s promise not to destroy the earth again with a flood—and a gentle reminder that He alone has the power to do that and more. His stance, with one foot on the sea and one on the land, indicates that he is dealing with—and exercises power over—all of mankind, Jews and gentiles alike.

The seven thunders are a puzzle. It is as if the angel is conversing with the earth itself, and John is given the ability to understand how this once-pristine planet God made for us feels about having been treated so badly. As we are about to see, this period of time will witness conditions that, without Yahweh's intervention, would spell the end of all life on earth. And since seven is the number of completion, I presume that John heard the whole story. Polycarp, among others, thought that the thunders had something to do with judgment, which is a reasonable, if not terribly enlightening deduction. I have also heard it said that the seven thunders represent levels of persecution endured by the Jews (cf. Leviticus 26:18, 21, 23-24, 27-28), that they are seven specific periods of persecution that Israel has endured (or will), or that they are seven Last Days wars (conveniently unspecified in scripture). John thought what he'd heard was significant enough to write down, and he clearly understood what was being said, though he described the sound as "thunders." But because John received instructions from heaven not to record what he heard, we're left to ponder what the thunders actually said. I'll bet it wasn't good.

"The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets..." The seventh trumpet judgment introduces the seven bowl judgments, the most detailed description of God's wrath recorded in Revelation. Because the seventh trumpet signals the finalization of the "mystery of God," we have proof that the trumpet judgments don't precede the bowls chronologically, but are rather a more generalized view of an overlapping period of time. We are about to see things up close and personal. Yahweh has been delaying this inevitable judgment for two thousand years. The time has come for Him to say, "Enough. Let's finish this."

But we have a few things to cover before we get to the most gory and intimate details of the Great Tribulation. Remember the little book the angel held in his hand? It seems to represent the rest of the events that are to happen before Yahshua returns to set things right. Fortunately, it's a short little book—there's very little left of the story of man's rebellion against God. **"Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, 'Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.' So I went to the angel and said to him, 'Give me the little book.' And he said to me, 'Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.' Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.'" (Revelation 10:1-11)**

Prophecy is like that. I love to study these scriptures because they reveal the glory of Yahweh. They strengthen my faith and renew my hope. This discipline is truly sweet while it's on the tongue. But there is a downside. I cannot blithely ignore the plight of the unsaved multitudes, for I know that the end—their end—is fast approaching. And as thankful as I am for my own salvation, I'm frustrated at the indifference—or antagonism—of the lost world toward the things of God. The same scriptures that reveal the awesome power of God tell me that billions of souls are about to perish without Him. And so, like John, I am in agony.

But I too must plow ahead, speaking **“about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”** Isaiah, in this partially fulfilled passage, gives us what amounts to a synopsis of the last half of the Tribulation: **“Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela [literally “rock” or “cliff,” a word often used to denote the rock city of Petra] to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion. For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; so shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon [a river that enters the Dead Sea from the Jordanian side].”** As we have seen, Moab (in Jordan) will be virtually annihilated during World War III. It seems that they will appeal in their distress to the Jews. But the Israelis will have troubles of their own. **“Take counsel, execute judgment; make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day. Hide the outcasts; do not betray him who escapes. Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler....”** We have seen that some of the Jewish refugees fleeing the Antichrist will seek shelter in Jordan. That is confirmed here. This passage has led not a few commentators to conclude that the Jews will seek shelter in Petra (in what is now a desolate wilderness south of the Dead Sea).

The prophet then jumps ahead to the conclusion of the matter. **“For the extortioner is at an end, devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”** (Isaiah 16:1-5) If you can't stand the suspense, sometimes it's good to peek ahead and see who makes it to the end of the story—and who doesn't. Thanks, Isaiah.

As we have observed, the judgments presented in the Book of Revelation are arranged in three levels of increasing detail and complexity. The most general level, the “seal” judgments, cover the whole seven-year time period. The seals are opened by Yahshua Himself. The first four seals, as we saw a few chapters back, cover the period of time through World War III: the Antichrist appears, looking

like a winner; then in quick succession we see war, famine, economic ruin, disease, and death. I guess looks can be deceiving.

The fifth seal shows us the cry of the martyrs—those who were slain for their faith. **“When He [Yahshua] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord [Greek *despotes*: owner, possessor, ruler, or master], holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”** (Revelation 6:9-11) The context seems to imply that these martyrs are those who come out of the Tribulation, though the text doesn’t actually restrict the group to believers who lost their lives for their faith during this time: the definition could be far more wide-ranging. That being said, the roll is definitely inclusive of the Tribulation martyrs. Note, however, that although the carnage during the first half of the Tribulation will be unbelievably gruesome, it will not to any great degree be caused by religious persecution. (Yes, it will be triggered by Muslim hatred of Jews, but that’s not the same thing. The Jews are a target because of biological bigotry, not beliefs.) The war and its attendant plagues will kill a quarter of the earth’s population—over a billion and a half people. But until the Antichrist gains total control at around the mid-point, there will be relatively few who are **“slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.”** The scene depicted in the fifth seal, then, apparently takes place during the second half of the Tribulation. The reason for the mass martyrdom is that the Antichrist is systematically hunting down and killing anyone he can find who refuses to take his oath and his Mark.

A couple of things bear pointing out. First, the martyrs’ cry for vengeance is not exclusively against the Antichrist, but against **“those who dwell on the earth.”** This leads me to the sad but inescapable conclusion that the saints are relatively few and far between. Like Elijah on the run from Ahab and Jezebel, it seems to each believer that he or she is practically alone, that there is no one left whom they can trust. But as Yahweh informed Elijah, there were “yet 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal”—this in a nation of perhaps seven million at the time: in other words, only one Israelite in a thousand followed Yahweh. The Tribulation saints (or at least those who’ll live to tell the tale) are a similarly small minority, worldwide, but they are not alone, nor are they forgotten.

These martyrs are apparently comprised of both Jewish and gentile believers, for they are asked to wait for **“both...their fellow servants and their brethren.”** Note also that each martyr receives a **“white robe.”** This is a symbol of imputed righteousness; it indicates that their sins are forgiven, just like the sins of the

saints of every age preceding them. Their souls were seen “**under the altar,**” a confirmation that they’re covered by the atoning blood of Yahshua.

I get the feeling that the fifth seal represents a process, not an event, for temporal judgment—God’s avenging wrath—against the unrepentant inhabitants of earth will have begun long before the final saint is slain. Indeed, the Antichrist’s goons will be murdering them right up until the last few days of the Tribulation. But as we shall see, the Antichrist and his false prophet will elude punishment until the very end. They will not be dealt with until the last of the martyrs is killed, just as the passage hints.

The sixth seal takes us right up to the last week of the Tribulation: **“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place....”** This isn’t just any earthquake. It’s a specific whopper quake spoken of several times in scripture punctuating several important events within a few days of the end (most notably the return of Yahshua to the Mount of Olives). It is described in even more detail during the seventh bowl judgment, which we’ll cover later. For now, notice that it is quite likely the strongest, most destructive earthquake ever felt, for mountains and islands in distant lands will stagger when it hits. It will be accompanied by other signs, some related, some not. The sun, so recently dimmed by the debris of a thousand nuclear detonations during World War III, will again be darkened by clouds of airborne dust and ash, and the moon will turn blood red due to the airborne pollution. I recently witnessed this very phenomenon during a total eclipse. The moon didn’t fully disappear from view when the earth blocked the sun’s rays; instead, it turned a ghastly shade of red, an effect caused by the refraction of light. Another sign, independent of the earthquake but occurring simultaneously, is apparently a spectacular meteor shower, a devastating multiple direct hit on an already beleaguered planet.

The inhabitants of the earth have mostly proven reticent to respond to the love of God—His sacrifice and provision, offered over a period of six thousand years. How will they react to the one-two punch of the sixth seal? **“And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’”** (Revelation 6:12-17) Oh, swell. *Now* they believe there’s a God in heaven. What would have been so hard about turning to Him before this? Why does Yahweh have to make the ground shake and the sky fall before anybody

listens? This is eerily reminiscent of an Old Testament passage describing the fall of Israel's idolatry, which in the end is this same climactic event being described in Revelation: **"The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars. They shall say to the mountains, 'Cover us!' and to the hills, 'Fall on us!'"** (Hosea 10:8) There's nothing like the end of the world to get your attention.

Appearances can be deceiving, of course. This *isn't* the end of the world, and we *aren't* seeing repentance from the followers of the Antichrist. What we've got here is, **"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"** (James 2:19) It's abundantly clear that although God's mercy endures forever, His patience does not. There is a point at which Yahweh says, "Okay, you've made your choice. Live with it. Die for it." Don't complain that it's not fair. It's the only thing that *could* be fair. Yahweh never makes our choices for us. But one of the worst choices we can make is choosing to believe that our choices don't have consequences.

"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." That sounds ominous: there's nothing left to say. **"And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand."** What prayers? How about, "Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." **"Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound."** (Revelation 8:1-6) Remember the fifth seal? The Tribulation martyrs asked God, "When are You going to avenge our murders?" Here He answers them: "Now." The censer that brought their prayers to the throne of Yahweh metaphorically becomes the weapon of God's retribution. Yahweh in the end will let no injustice go unpunished.

The narrative does not proceed forward from this point. Rather, it digs to a deeper level of knowledge about the days of John's vision. The seventh seal introduces the trumpet judgments, which will in turn reveal the bowl judgments. We have much more to learn about the time of Jacob's trouble. But first, **"there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."** It is recognized, even here in heaven where God's omniscience makes angelic epiphanies hard to come by, that a significant crossroads has been reached. All of human history has been leading up to this moment: it is the last opportunity for mankind to voluntarily walk in peace with his Creator.

As we saw with the seven seals, the seven trumpet judgments as a group appear to be roughly chronological. (The bowl judgments will follow this pattern as well.) And as before, we have already seen the way the first few of them could be fulfilled during the Battle of Magog. The first trumpet brought hail, fire, and blood, and with it blazing devastation to the flora of a third of the earth's land surface—in other words, nuclear war on a grand scale. The second trumpet brought the death of one third of the world's oceans—my guess was that the Atlantic (with its smaller neighbors like the Caribbean and North Seas) is meant. Next, with the third trumpet, we saw what sounds like a first-century description of the effects of a catastrophic asteroid upon the fresh water supplies of the earth.

The fourth trumpet continues the theme of specific war-related plagues, since (presumably) the same one-third portion of the earth is affected. **“Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night...”** Nothing has been done directly to “strike” the sun, moon, and stars, of course. The *effect* is what's being described. The nuclear blasts and subsequent “natural” disasters have blown millions of tons of debris into the atmosphere. At first, this will naturally block the sunlight primarily in the portion of the planet's land area that was directly involved. But as time goes on the pollution can be expected to dissipate, blocking less of the light to more of the earth. Either way, the net result will be crop failure, famine, and general grumpiness on the part of those still alive.

And the prevailing mood isn't calculated to improve when this happens: **“I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!’”** (Revelation 8:12-13) The single Greek word for “midst of heaven,” *mesouranema*, makes it clear that this is not something that happens in “heaven,” (the abode of God) but rather in “mid-sky,” up in the air. In other words, the survivors of World War III are being told—audibly warned—by an angelic messenger that if they like the way the Tribulation is going so far (war, famine, misery, and death on an unprecedented scale), then they're going to *love* what's coming.

This angelic warning signals the arrival of the subtle shift in God's *modus operandi* that I noted at the beginning of this chapter. Up to this point, one could reasonably point to sinful man as the primary source of the world's grief. But that's about to change. **“Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit...”** The “star fallen from heaven” is none other than Satan himself. We have already seen how Satan

fighters a losing war in heaven against the Archangel Michael. This is the same event, and its aftermath. He's thrown out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-10) and all his "angels" are thrown out with him. So Satan has lost his access to God's throne room, but he didn't leave empty handed. Yahweh made sure that he took the "key" to the abyss with him, for it suits His purpose.

We have also seen that the demon who inhabits the Antichrist (as he did Nero) has been confined to this bottomless pit, or abyss. It is clear, then, that the demonic spirit who personally possesses the Antichrist is not Satan, though he *is* so nasty he has to be kept under lock and key most of the time. My guess is that this bad boy is the first demon Satan will let out of the pit. He has a job to do. Our timeline is therefore established: Satan is cast out of heaven just before the abomination of desolation takes place: 1,230 days into the Tribulation. The demon of Nero is freed at that time, taking up residence in the sorry carcass of the Antichrist.

But he won't be the last demon to be loosed on the world. **"And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit..."** It would appear that this abyss is located someplace beneath the physical surface of the earth, as opposed to existing only in the "spiritual realm," whatever that might be. It matters not where on earth this "pit" is; there is absolutely nothing anyone can do to prevent the fifth trumpet from being blown. It is seen belching smoke like a volcano when it is opened—one more thing to darken the sky.

"Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads." (Revelation 9:1-4) The inhabitants of the abyss are described here as locusts (but poisonous, like scorpions—yikes!). They are not actually grasshoppers of the family *Acrididae* (although they may look something like real locusts if they can be seen by men). These are demonic beings who exhibit locust-like tendencies: they're destructive, voracious, and operate in swarms. Fortunately, they have limits placed upon them by God. It's fascinating that demons—though rebels against Yahweh—still know that they must obey Him. These destructive little devils are prohibited from harming *anything* except people who are not under Yahweh's explicit protection—and as spiritual beings, they know who these are. The 144,000 Jewish evangelists and the two witnesses are specifically excluded from their attentions. The big question is, are other Tribulation believers exempted? My guess is that they are, even though they may not necessarily be "sealed" in the same way the 144,000 are—in the sense of being spared a martyr's fate. But as "saints" who are part of the Church of Laodicea—that is, the component of it who took Yahshua's advice to repent,

however belatedly—the words of Paul presumably still apply to them: **“In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”** (Ephesians 1:13) **“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”** (Ephesians 4:30) **“It is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”** (II Corinthians 1:22) Remember: this isn’t persecution of saints—it’s punishment of sinners.

John’s description continues. **“And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.”** (Revelation 9:5-6) Ever hear the expression “a fate worse than death?” This is it. The pain, compared here to a scorpion’s sting, will be so intense, people will decide death is better. Suicide will look like a sane and rational option. *After all, there’s no heaven and no hell, right? There’s only Nothing after you die, and that sounds pretty good right about now.* There’s only one problem: suicide no longer works. You take the pills—nothing happens. You pull the trigger—the gun misfires. You jump off the bridge—you break your leg, but you don’t die. You *can’t*, not for five of the longest months in your life, months of agony, sleeplessness, and unending pain. But hey! Look on the bright side. You’ve never been this thin before.

As usual, the Old Testament provides insight on the New (or is it the other way around?). What’s it like to be in so much pain that death seems preferable to life, only to discover that death is as elusive as relief? Job knew: **“Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, who long for death, but it does not come, and search for it more than hidden treasures; who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in? For my sighing comes before I eat, and my groanings pour out like water. For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes.”** (Job 3:20-26) The locusts from hell will teach man what Job’s torment was like. In fact, Job’s torment had been inflicted in a similar way, by similar demonic spirits who had been placed under similar limits by Yahweh. But this time Satan’s troops are inflicting pain on *Satan’s* followers. Those who cling to the odd notion of fairness and loyalty on the part of Lucifer are doomed to disappointment. The wages of sin is death, and in this life, the devil is the paymaster. How much of this is designed to encourage repentance (since you can’t repent after you’re dead), and how much is pure punishment, is left unsaid.

John goes on to describe these little buggers in detail. I’m a trained artist, but I confess, no matter how I try, I can’t envision what this must have looked like: **“The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns**

of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months...." This is a straightforward description of something John actually saw in his vision. Only time will tell if their attributes are visual or metaphorical. I suspect it's the latter—these are demonic beings; they are not known to have physical bodies in any sense we'd recognize. The beasts John described have no counterpart in the known world. But that doesn't mean they're not real.

"And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things." (Revelation 9:7-12) Abaddon and Apollyon both mean "destroyer." Seriously this time, let's look on the bright side. Yahweh is still in control. He has placed limits upon these most foul of demonic beings—limits which they have no power to exceed. They may torment, but not kill; they may not hurt any but a select group, and they may only do it for a limited time. When does this five-month period occur? Considering what must precede it and what must follow, I place it (SF4) early in the second half, from approximately day 1,350 to day 1,500. Just a guess, of course.

One woe down, two woes to go. **"Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them."** (Revelation 9:13-16) The four *angels*? John used the very same Greek word that's used throughout the New Testament for the spiritual servants of Yahweh, *aggelos*. It simply means "messenger." But Yahweh's "angels" are never spoken of as having to be "bound." In Revelation 12:9, when Satan's followers were thrown out of heaven with him, they are referred to there as angels. I believe, therefore, that these too are fallen angels, a.k.a. demons, who have been restrained in an unusual place (i.e., not in the abyss with everybody else nasty enough to need locking up) in anticipation of their unique role.

Strong's suggests that *aggelos* is probably derived from *ago*, meaning "to lead." And that's exactly what we see these four doing. They lead an army of

200,000,000 soldiers on a rampage that ultimately kills “**a third of mankind.**” This is the second and final time in Revelation when the death of a specific percentage of the earth’s population is prophesied. The first time was under the fourth seal judgment, when one quarter of mankind was slated for destruction by the warfare, famine, and disease directly associated with World War III. Starting from a baseline of a nice round seven billion (though earth’s population already exceeds that today), that means the fourth seal judgment will kill off over 1,700,000,000 people. The sixth trumpet will see the death of one third of the remaining 4.5 billion—*another* 1.7 billion souls. These two “events,” then, will kill off half the world’s population between them—over three and a half billion people!

Does this mean that the remaining three and a half billion or so will survive until the end of the Tribulation? Alas, no, it doesn’t. The cumulative fifty percent death toll is due to two well-defined causes, the Magog war, escalating into World War III, and the horde of the sixth trumpet (who are located beyond, that is, east of, the Euphrates River), something I’d characterize as “World War IV.” Easily another couple of billion could die from other causes: executions for refusing to take the Mark of the Beast; smaller regional (or neighborhood) wars fought over dwindling food and water supplies; the general anarchy and violent crime that inevitably follows the collapse of established human government (see Romans 13:1-7); punishments meted out by the central authority for sheltering believing Jews and Tribulation Christians; infections and complications from the “**foul and loathsome sores**” that afflict the recipients of the Mark of the Beast; thirst due to a worldwide drought and an accompanying shortage of drinkable water; disease left untreated because of the breakdown of medical services or the increased virulence of the germs that cause it; “**men’s hearts failing them for fear**” (Luke 21:26)...you get the idea. There will be no shortage of ways to die that aren’t included in the fourth seal or the sixth trumpet judgments.

Another observation: the voice that sent the sixth trumpet’s angel on his way came from the “**four horns of the golden altar which is before God.**” In other words, the blood of Yahshua (if I’m reading this right) is demanding that justice be served to those who have refused to avail themselves of its atoning power. By doing so, these people are saying to Yahshua in effect, *Your sacrifice was pointless—we have no need of forgiveness or salvation. Go away and leave us alone—forever.* Okay, if that’s what you really want. It’s your choice.

And what’s that about preparing the demons for “**the hour and day and month and year?**” Is John saying merely that they are being readied for this precise moment (which is pretty obvious), or is he giving us the timeline? If the latter is intended, my guess would be that the clock starts ticking on day 1,230—at the abomination of desolation. An hour, day, month, and year later would put you at day 1,621—a plausible conjecture at the very least for the timing of this part of

the second “woe.” Of course, it doesn’t matter, on this side of the rapture anyway, whether my speculations about the timing of this or anything else are particularly accurate. What matters is that God’s Word is true—these things *will* happen, precisely on Yahweh’s schedule. On the other hand, we’re given these specific time markers and odd phrases like “a time and times and half a time” and “the hour and day and month and year” for a reason. It is incumbent upon us to at least try to figure things out. The details could be a matter of life and death to those trying to make it through these times, and one gets the feeling that the Tribulation saints aren’t going to have the time and resources needed to study this through like we do.

John isn’t done. **“And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow....”** The description of the breastplates is a clue. If you look at this in the old King James, they sound almost like weapons (“fire,” “jacinth,” and “brimstone”). But I believe the NKJV renders them correctly as colors. None of the words in the Greek are the usual nouns for the things represented, but are all adjectives; in the case of “hyacinth blue,” it definitely describes a color. Other clues we need to factor in are that (1) these people are probably not primary participants in World War III (i.e., Russia, *dar al-Islam*, Europe, or America)—since they can still field an army of two hundred million men; and (2) they are said to be from the “east” in Revelation 16:12—the sixth bowl judgment. Remember, in scripture, directions are given in reference to Israel, so our modern conception of East and West, separated by the Pacific Ocean, is still in line with ancient Biblical terminology. So whose national colors are red, yellow, and blue? The only Eastern nations populous enough to be remotely in the running are India, Indonesia, Australia, China, and Japan. Of those, only China fits the color profile: its own flag is red and yellow, and its northern vassal, Mongolia, supplies the blue component. Japan, Australia, and Indonesia include white—so I’d say they’re ruled out. For what it’s worth, Vietnam also fits China’s color profile.

While the color thing proves nothing, it’s strong circumstantial evidence that China is the home of this huge Eastern army. It’s noteworthy that as far back as 1965, China boasted of its ability to field a military force two hundred million strong. And they haven’t gotten any less numerous in the intervening years, despite their brutal attempts at “family planning.” In fact, population growth rates may prove to be one of the keys to this conflict. Since 1950, the total fertility rate in China has dropped from 6 births per woman to 1.6 (2.4 a decade ago). India’s, by comparison, has only been reduced from 6 to 2.6 (4 BPW ten years ago). These two nations are still expected to have the world’s largest populations in the early twenty-first century, though the rates of increase are considerably higher in many smaller developing nations. But these statistics are a time bomb, especially for China: the average age of their population is rising. It will eventually reach the

point where China will fear becoming too old to provide for or defend itself, at which point they could, for the first time in their long history, decide to strike out imperialistically beyond their own borders. And at these rates, India's population could someday pass China's—potentially making them a perceived threat.

China's cruel "one-child" policy has, perhaps unintentionally, added another time bomb to the population arsenal. Traditional Chinese culture strongly favors sons, who can be expected to look after their parents in their old age. In families with three or four children, the "male heir" problem usually sorts itself out naturally. But when the state is demanding that you have only one child, and is at the same time making abortion available as an easy form of retroactive birth control, baby girls are aborted in far greater numbers than boys. Fast forward twenty or thirty years, and the imbalance will have begun to reveal its fatal flaw: you've got a generation of Chinese men, half of whom can't find wives—who therefore can't marry, settle down, and raise a family as their parents and grandparents did for a hundred generations back. The women, so crucial to the stability of a culture, are just not there in sufficient numbers. It's a recipe for cultural volatility and uncertainty—and probably violence. One predictable result of such a policy is the emergence of a warrior class, in which too much testosterone is channeled into military discipline and preparedness. It doesn't take a prophet to foresee the potential for national aggression inherent in such a thing. Once such a military subculture exists, it's only a matter of time before someone finds a reason to use it. The excuse for China's belligerence, as predicted in Scripture, could simply be a good old fashioned genocidal land grab designed to cope with ever-decreasing harvests—a direct result of the diminished sunlight caused by World War III.

As we have seen before, John had no vocabulary with which to deal with twenty-first century weaponry, so he was shown his vision with images he could understand and communicate. **"And the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm."** (Revelation 9:17-19) This passage does not require millions of horses with birth defects. It's symbolic (I hope) of an army that's, swift, fierce, and deadly. They're well armed, using three specific classes of weapons, symbolized by fire, smoke, and brimstone. If I had to guess, I'd say that represents nuclear, conventional, and biochemical warfare, things the Chinese have spent decades developing, but have never used in open warfare.

And the bit with the tails like serpents, with heads on them? That's a tough one. Perhaps the key is in the word "serpent." The Greek *ophis* means snake, but as in English, the word can be used in the sense of a sly, cunning, malicious

person. Indeed, this same word is used of Satan himself in Revelation 12:9 and elsewhere. So the passage seems to mean that while the Chinese hordes are fighting a “public” war in one theater with “fire, smoke, and brimstone,” they are also fighting a private, sneaky war in the rear—maybe on a different front or fought in a different way (e.g. undermining rival governments from within with political intrigues).

At present, China’s military is a sleeping giant if ever there was one. But all it will take to wake them up is four demons from out of town. Once awake, the purpose of their aggression will be to severely depopulate their neighbors, providing room for China’s population to expand—*Lebensraum*, as the Nazis would have called it. If China has any kind of national memory, they will be especially brutal toward Japan—who did precisely the same thing to them a century previously. India, Australia, and Southeast Asia—the most populous regions to survive World War III—will also be hit hard. Taiwan is toast. Korea is unified—and promptly swallowed whole. The Philippines are overrun, and this time there’s no MacArthur melodramatically promising to return and save the day. Malaysia, Indonesia, and the rest of Southern Asia are goners: specifically, the Muslim populations that weren’t obliterated as the Middle East perished under the folly of Gog, are wiped out. And as in the oh-so-recent world war in the west, over 1.7 billion lives—one third of the earth’s remaining population—will be lost.

“But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” (Revelation 9:20-21) Genocidal wars will seem so common by this time that the survivors in the West will greet the news of World War IV with yawns and shrugs. *Gee, that’s too bad, but I’ve got problems of my own to deal with.* One gets the feeling from these verses that the general populace doesn’t make the connection between the disasters they’re experiencing and the displeasure of God. If the bombs are no longer falling in their own backyard, then life is good, relatively speaking. In a world without moral absolutes, World War II-style holy indignation against the evil aggressors will be a meaningless concept. But even if the West wanted to get involved (which they won’t) there’s not enough infrastructure left to mount any kind of sustained military response.

So for everybody east of the Euphrates who wasn’t killed in the War of Magog, a new peril has arisen. John saw them, heard their number, and saw their battle flags. The prophet Joel saw them as well: **“A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations....”** The next time an army even remotely this large marches, a thousand years will have passed—but that’s a story for another chapter. (The

Battle of Armageddon, which we'll discuss in due time, is in reality merely the final engagement of World War IV.) **"A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness. Surely nothing shall escape them...."** If an army two hundred million strong wants what you've got, they're going to take it, and there's not a lot you can do to stop them. Part of the strategy seems to be to consume or destroy whatever crops and infrastructure they find (like Sherman's March to the Sea, only on steroids), leaving no way for their hapless victims to fight back or even survive. They don't want to subjugate people (like the Muslims did): they simply want to kill them.

"Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array...." Joel, like John, sees them as a mighty, state-of-the-art military machine. Leaping over mountaintops sounds like close air support to me; the noise he describes is jet aircraft engines. **"Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color...."** No kidding, Joel. Anybody in their path who has a clue of what's about to happen to them will be scared spitless. **"They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down. They run to and fro in the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter at the windows like a thief...."** This is the picture of a modern well-trained, well-equipped army, in superb physical condition, drilled, disciplined, and skilled in the tactics of both open field and urban warfare—completely unlike the Muslim hordes of the Battle of Magog. As usual with huge armies, their very presence brings with it environmental disaster: **"The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness...."**

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this mighty army is that although they are led by demonic forces, and regardless of the fact that they have no relationship at all with Yahweh, they are still performing His will, in His time, for His purposes. They just don't know it. **"Yahweh gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of Yahweh is great and very terrible. Who can endure it?"** (Joel 2:2-11) Joel wrote primarily to warn ninth century B.C. Judah that there was a Babylonian horde in their future if they didn't repent. Nebuchadnezzar's army would function in exactly the same way—as the unwitting hand of God's wrath—albeit on a much smaller scale than this future Far Eastern military machine. So I would be remiss if I didn't include the admonition that accompanied the prophecy: **"Now, therefore,' says Yahweh, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.' So rend your heart, and not your garments. Return to Yahweh your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm."** (Joel 2:12-13) The call

for repentance was not for Judah alone, but for every one of us, in every age. Note that “turning to Yahweh with all your heart” and “rending your heart” are pretty good descriptions of the central requirement of the Day of Atonement: *'anah*—the “affliction of soul” and the response, answer, and testimony to which this affliction leads: reconciliation with God.

There is one more interesting and important question. What’s the Antichrist’s position on the Eastern holocaust? Two scenarios are possible. He could see China’s move as a threat to his own power, perceiving that once their position is unassailable in the Far East, the Chinese will turn their acquisitive attentions toward him. Scripture, however, seems to support the opposite view: China’s war of expansion is being done with the Antichrist’s blessing, supervision, and support. Like 1930s Italy under Mussolini (behaving like a bully in its own backyard while in reality being little more than the puppet of the far more powerful Third Reich) China will defer to the Antichrist in matters of their own regional interests. Remember: **“Authority was given [to the Antichrist] over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him.”** (Revelation 13:7-8) Nobody challenges the big dog (well, nobody but Israel). We’ll see this destructive horde again—at the very end of the Tribulation. He whistles. They come. Everybody dies. Film at eleven.

Isn’t the Antichrist concerned that the world under his control is dying off faster than butterflies in a blizzard? Apparently not. He works directly under the authority of the dragon, Satan (Revelation 13:2), and *his* agenda is to kill as many humans as he can before they turn in repentance to Yahweh—dooming the object of God’s love to an eternity of separation from Him. That’s the devil’s idea of “winning.”

The sixth trumpet, then, takes us into the second great war of the Tribulation, a war that’s every bit as devastating (though somewhat more lopsided) as the first one. It will claim the same horrendous number of victims but will be played out in a different theater. World War III starts in Israel and spreads east and north toward Siberia and westward through Europe and Africa to the Americas. World War IV spreads outward from China, consuming the most densely populated nations left on earth. It is a war that by itself would surely seem to qualify as the second “woe” that was pronounced upon the earth after the fourth trumpet. But it’s only the beginning.

We are told precisely when the second woe will be finished. Revelation 11:14 states, **“The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”** What is the

context of this telltale verse? It comes at the very end of the discussion about the two witnesses—after their deaths, even after the things they did *following* their martyrdom. We'll cover this bizarre material a bit later. For now, I just want to acquaint you with the idea that the second woe is intimately associated with the activities of the two witnesses, and it stops when they do. As we shall see, everything within the bowl judgments until the actual arrival of the Messiah fits perfectly within the description of their “ministry,” which we reviewed in a previous chapter—stopping the rain, turning lakes, rivers, and ground water into blood, and generally striking **“the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”** (Revelation 11:6)

As these plagues progress, the inhabitants of earth will begin to wonder how it will all end—how long the agony will continue. Although God's Word clearly teaches that the end will come precisely 1,290 days after the Antichrist declares himself to be God, virtually no one will be aware of this. Biblical knowledge, even for most believers, will be rudimentary at best during these dark days. And that's a pity, for God has provided reason for hope in the structure of the judgments of Revelation. As we have seen, the “seals” are administered by Christ Himself—they recapitulate the entire scope of the Tribulation. The “trumpets” are administered by seven angels. They too span its entire seven-year duration: the first four transpire in the first half, and the last three, the three “woes,” define the second half, known as the “*Great* Tribulation.” These woes are described in detail by the seven bowl judgments.

Notice that both the trumpets and bowls are specifically said to wrap up the Tribulation: **“The angel...swore...that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound [his trumpet], the mystery of God would be finished.”** (Revelation 10:5-7) Compare that to: **“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete....”** The word “last” is the Greek *eschatos*, from which “eschatology,” the study of last things, comes. It doesn't necessarily mean final in terms of time (though it can), but can also denote “uttermost,” or “farthest.” John is describing the bowl judgments as the seven ultimate plagues.

So in preparation for the revelation of these seven ultimate bowl judgments, John is shown this scene in heaven: **“And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.’”** (Revelation 15:1-4) Again, we see the martyrs of the Tribulation, but this time,

they're not praying, "How long until You take vengeance on them for our murders," as they had under the fifth seal. This time they're praising God for having done precisely that. They now have **"victory over the beast."** It is only a matter of time until **"all nations shall come and worship before [Yahweh]."** We're getting a glimpse forward at the conclusion of the matter; the matter itself will be explained in the following few verses. (I know this jumping back and forth in time is hard for us to get a handle on, but that's because our minds work like video cassettes—one frame after the other, in sequence. God's mind, however, is more like DVD: you know, random access.)

It's interesting that John should bring up Moses here. Is he hinting that Moses is the second of the two witnesses—that my "Enoch" theory is all wet? No, I don't think so. The two witnesses are all about judgment, about proclaiming the wrath of God upon an unrepentant world. Moses sang a different song, one of deliverance. One is the flip side of the other: in the end, you can't have deliverance without judgment. The Israelites would never have been truly free of the bondage of Egypt had not Pharaoh's armies been obliterated—they would have been constantly looking over their shoulders, not pressing forward toward the ultimate goal (or wandering around in the wilderness like sitting ducks). Nor could we have been truly freed from the penalty of sin without the judgment that Yahshua suffered as He took our sins upon himself. Without his sacrifice, we could never have been sure that our sins were forgiven—we would have been constantly looking over our shoulders for signs of God's inevitable wrath.

Thus Exodus 15:1-21 records Moses' song of praise to Yahweh for Israel's deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh. Here are some highlights, still germane to our present discussion: **"Yahweh is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.... Who is like You, O Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful [i.e., awesome] in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them."** Note: it's the *earth*, not the Red Sea—this is a prophecy (see Revelation 12:16). **"You in Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.... You will bring [the people you have purchased] in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Yahweh, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Yahweh, which Your hands have established. Yahweh shall reign forever and ever."** (Exodus 15:2, 11-13, 17-18) By contrast, Enoch talked about God coming **"to execute judgment on all."** (Jude 15) Different men, different messages.

The story of the seven ultimate plagues begins in heaven. As with the trumpet judgments, the bowls of wrath are administered by angels. **"After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Then one of the four living**

creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever....” If you’ll recall, the four living creatures (better translated “beings”—they’re not created; they’re “living ones”) are representative of the attributes of Christ: the lion is symbolic of power or authority; the calf (or ox) speaks of service; the third living One presents Yahshua in his humanity; and the fourth, the eagle, is lord of the heavens. I would guess that the “living being” that John saw here was the first one, the lion. **“The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.’”** (Revelation 15:5-16:1) The angels, then, are taking their instructions (as always) directly from Yahweh. And he is apparently saying, *I’m through talking about this. The time for My wrath has come. I will not entertain any more petitions from men or angels until My will has been accomplished on the earth.*

I probably read that a thousand times before I caught it. If my take on it is correct, it’s one of the scariest verses in the Bible: **“No one was able to enter the temple [in heaven]”** where the Shekinah—the glory of God—had manifested itself. For the first time since the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom as Christ took our sins to the cross, access to the throne of grace is curtailed. Does this mean that it’s too late to repent when the bowl judgments begin? I honestly don’t know, but I fear that it might. It would certainly have given Isaiah good reason for writing, **“Wail, for the day of Yahweh is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will be limp, every man’s heart will melt, and they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them: they will be in pain as a woman in childbirth. They will be amazed at one another; their faces will be like flames. Behold, the day of Yahweh comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it.”** (Isaiah 13:6-9)

The bowl judgments commence, it seems, as the two witnesses begin their ministry, a 1,260-day period of time described as the second of three “woes.” **“So the first [angel] went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.”** (Revelation 16:2) If my timeline is anywhere near correct, the two witnesses start making trouble for the Antichrist a few weeks after he announces he’s God and institutes the Mark of the Beast. It therefore seems an appropriate place to start to whittle away at his pretensions. The Bible never explicitly states that the two witnesses announce these bowl-judgment plagues, you understand, but the coincidences are too delicious to ignore. As I see it playing out, time after time the witnesses react to an affront to God’s will or authority by pronouncing the appropriate judgment against it. The angels with the seven bowls then

administer the predicted plague. Bowl Number One: man wants a Mark—okay, they’ll get marked.

We discussed these sores at length a few chapters back, though the two witnesses’ role was not factored in. The timing is significant: my sense is that when this plague is announced, few people will have actually received the Mark—the Antichrist’s machine is still gearing up for his worldwide program on day 1,251, when E&E show up and start making themselves odious to the powers that be. Apparently, the first thing out of their mouths is a warning to the world not to take the Mark. The inhabitants of earth are given a clear choice, both spiritually and physically: *If you take the Mark and worship the Antichrist’s image, you will not only be worshiping a false god, your foolishness will be displayed to the world through painful, stinking pustules all over your body. You can’t say you weren’t warned.*

It is entirely consistent with God’s merciful character to issue warning after warning, for He doesn’t *want* anyone to perish. But He’s done that already. If Yahweh is honest (and He *is*), there must be an end to it—the thing He warned about must ultimately come to pass. Thus did He tell us through the prophet Isaiah, **“I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible [Hebrew *ariyts*: terrifying, ruthless, mighty, or awesome]. I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir...”** He’s talking about the whole world, not just Israel or some other nation. The earth is to be severely depopulated. We have already reviewed two events that will kill off one half of the world’s inhabitants between them—and these aren’t remotely the only causes of death we can expect during the Tribulation. How many men will die before those remaining are considered “rare?” I don’t know, since we aren’t told, but this can’t be good. It may or may not be significant that the Hebrew word for “annihilate” (*shawshaw*) literally means, “to leave but the sixth part.”

As we have seen time after time, the one thing that God really hates is our pride, “the arrogance of the proud...the haughtiness of the terrible.” It is what keeps us from having any kind of relationship with Him. As long as we pompously see ourselves as the top of the food chain, the magnificent end product of eons of evolution, we will never thankfully acknowledge that we owe our very existence to a loving Creator. **“Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of Yahweh almighty and in the day of His fierce anger. It shall be as the hunted gazelle, and as a sheep that no man takes up; every man will turn to his own people, and everyone will flee to his own land. Everyone who is found will be thrust through, and everyone who is captured will fall by the sword. Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes. Their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished.”** (Isaiah 13:11-16) Here we are reminded that the wrath of God has been

before, and will be again, delivered through the hand of sinful man—all Yahweh has to do is remove His protection. No matter how fierce the anger of God is, no matter how scary his signs (like the earthquakes so frequently associated with His wrath), Yahweh is never cruel. But the inhumanity of man against man is another story. Man—especially when purposely following the whims of Satan—is a brutal and malicious animal.

Revelation 11:6 informs us that the two witnesses “**have power over waters to turn them to blood.**” The second bowl judgment seems to confirm their instigation of the plague: “**Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.**” (Revelation 16:3) Since the 1970s, environmentalists have been gloomily predicting the death of the oceans. (When it didn’t happen according to their schedule, they switched to bemoaning the imminent demise of the earth’s ozone layer. We’ll have more to say about *that* in a moment. Then, they focused on global warming, and when that didn’t pan out, they became hysterical about “climate change,” something that’s been going on since the planet was young.) Here in the second bowl judgment, Greenpeace’s *original* worst nightmare has come to pass.

Our attitudes toward the ecology tend in the long run to reflect our spiritual position. The natural man sees the world around him as a resource—something to use, and use up, for his own advantage. He doesn’t pay much attention to its overall health until—and unless—it starts showing signs of stress: overcrowding, pollution, and the apparent inability to repair itself. The typical environmentalist is actually just a subset of this group (the majority of whom, ironically, he considers his mortal enemy). Not knowing why the earth is here, Who built it, or what Yahweh has planned for it, he assumes that its delicate balance is the work of an endless string of incredible cosmic coincidences—that it just happened by accident to be the perfect environment for the flora and fauna he finds here—including himself. (This, by the way, is ultimately blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.) Hence, if mankind screws it up, the “accident” will never—indeed, *could* never—happen again; the odds are impossible enough already. Bottom line: we need to take care of the ecology of the planet.

Strangely, that puts the typical atheistic environmentalist (granted, not all of them are) in agreement with believers in the true God, though not for the same reasons. Christians see (or *should* see) the world as a beautiful gift from God. As far back as the Garden of Eden, Yahweh gave man the responsibility to care for this planet we live on. Like any loving father giving a wonderful gift to his child, God expects us to look after it. What father wouldn’t be upset when we carelessly leave the shiny new bicycle he’s given us out in the rain, six blocks away, unlocked (or worse, trade it to the neighborhood bully for bite of forbidden fruit). Of course, until the twentieth century it never occurred to anybody that we could

actually ruin the earth. But the advent of atomic weapons, a population explosion (the world *doubled* in population between 1957 and 1990), and a string of technological revolutions have brought us to the brink of disaster, ecologically speaking. It will not, however, be the normal progress of man upon this planet that brings it to its ecological knees. In the end, it will be his stubborn refusal to honor the God who made it—and made us.

Under the judgment of the second trumpet (Revelation 8:8-9), *one third* of the sea **“became blood,”** killing every living thing in it or on it. (I have offered a plausible scenario as to how this might come to pass: the Cumbre Vieja volcano in the Canary Islands and trapped oceanic methane are two ticking environmental time bombs.) But the ocean doesn’t just lie there like a child’s wading pool. As the earth continues to rotate upon its axis and warmer water rises above cooler, the oceans’ currents gradually circulate their contents throughout the waters of the earth. As David so eloquently put it, **“Then the channels of the sea were seen; the foundations of the world were uncovered.”** (II Samuel 22:16) The total death of the Atlantic must eventually spell the demise of the rest of the world’s oceans as well.

We can only speculate as to the nature of this “blood.” Is it real blood, something you could do a DNA profile on? Or is it a substance that merely looks and acts like the “blood of a dead man,” a thick, dark red liquid, stinking, putrid, and bereft of available oxygen—incapable of supporting marine life? I don’t know. Does it matter? The world is up a creek without a paddle either way.

We are told that the two witnesses **“have power over waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues as often as they desire.”** (Revelation 11:6) Thus we should not be surprised to see the plague of ocean water becoming blood extended to the world’s fresh water supplies: **“Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.”** (Revelation 16:4) As Yogi Berra once said, “This is like *déjà vu* all over again.” The first of the ten plagues upon Egypt in the days of Moses was this very thing, but on a smaller scale. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, **“Thus says Yahweh: “By this you shall know that I am Yahweh. Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that are in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river....”** This sounds very much like what will happen on a *worldwide* scale as a result of the second bowl judgment, just as it had to a third of the seas during the second trumpet judgment.

“Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron, “Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.” And Moses and Aaron did so, just as Yahweh commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were

in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt....” Yesterday, Egypt. Tomorrow, the world. As we proceed, expect to see quite a few parallels between the plagues of Egypt and the tribulations inflicted upon the earth during the Last Days. The liberation of Israel (like Israel itself) is proving to be a prophetic microcosm of the deliverance of mankind in general.

“Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as Yahweh had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this. So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river. And seven days passed after Yahweh had struck the river.” (Exodus 7:17-25) If you replace Moses and Aaron with Elijah and Enoch, Pharaoh with the Antichrist, and Egypt with the world, the second bowl judgment in Revelation could be an instant replay of the first plague of Egypt in Exodus. The lesson: don’t expect the Antichrist to soften his stance or rethink his position in the face of utter disaster. Especially now that he’s being driven by the demon of Nero. Facts, setbacks, and unfathomable body counts will mean *nothing*: Luciferian ideology alone will plot his course of action.

Note first that in Egypt, if the substance wasn’t blood, it was similar enough to fool those who saw it. The magicians (actually, illusionists) of Pharaoh’s court were with sleight of hand and creative chemistry able to conjure up something that looked just like it—which naturally made Pharaoh think Moses’ transformation of water into blood was a cheap parlor trick as well.

Next, notice that the blood was not confined to the river, but water in vessels—water that had already been drawn—became blood as well. The implication for the Revelation plague is that something other than the normal hydrologic cycle is in action—it’s not just “blood” being evaporated from the oceans and sent back to earth as bloody rain. For one thing, there *is* no rain, bloody or otherwise. Note that the “**rivers and springs**” are said to be affected. I take this to mean that not only streams, rivers, and lakes, but also ground water—wells—will be bloody. Indeed, if the plague extends like it did in Exodus to “**buckets of wood and pitchers of stone,**” one could expect stored water—in holding tanks, cisterns, bottles, water heaters, etc.—to be affected as well. “Preppers” are in for a rude awakening.

The Egyptians were able to dig around the river and find water good enough to drink. This indicates that filtration—through soil, in their case—may be at least partially effective in making the bloody water potable. We notice, too, that people will somehow survive the second bowl judgment, since there are still five more to go. As nasty as the water is, it evidently doesn’t cause the death of all mankind.

Perhaps Yahweh will put a time limit on the plague, as he apparently did in Egypt: **“seven days passed.”**

The official explanation will no doubt have something to do with “natural causes.” In the angelic realm, truth is easier to come by. **“And I heard the angel of the waters saying: ‘You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.’ And I heard another from the altar saying, ‘Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”** (Revelation 16:5-7) The “blood of saints *and prophets?*” Yes, prophets—forth-tellers if not foretellers. These dark times will see the culmination of something that began on the Day of Pentecost: **“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”** (Joel 2:28-29) Evil men have always done what they could to silence those who tell the truth, beginning with prophets of Yahweh, and the paranoid hatred shown to these last-days servants of God will be no exception. Yet even in their martyrdom, they are congratulated in heaven because they **“overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”** (Revelation 12:11) The really disturbing thing to me is that the plague was apparently inflicted all over the earth in retribution for the shedding of **“the blood of the saints and prophets.”** That means that the whole world—not just a few megalomaniacs in the upper echelons—were guilty of the murder of God’s people.

The fourth bowl judgment comes as something of a surprise. The theoreticians predicting a “nuclear winter” are proved wrong (at least temporarily). World War III has blown millions of tons of debris into the atmosphere, either through the atomic blasts themselves or the resulting fires. In addition, there have been meteor showers and earthquakes on an unprecedented scale, not to mention the appearance of a huge crater somewhere on earth belching smoke and locust-like demons—all contributing to a darkening of the sky. As we saw in our study of the fourth trumpet, the sunlight reaching the earth’s surface was cut by a third (though we aren’t told for how long), causing crop failures and famine. And the scientists who study such things expected to see a corresponding worldwide drop in average temperatures, possibly resulting in a new mini-ice age.

But the nuclear winter fails to turn our planet into “snowball Earth.” Instead, we see roughly the opposite phenomenon. **“Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.”** (Revelation 16:8-9) The effect of the sun’s rays, in spite of being blocked to a significant degree by the pollution in the air, are intensified on the earth. What has happened?

Hold that thought for a moment. I need to explain something. Time after time, you’ll notice, I’ve offered plausible twenty-first-century explanations for what the prophecies of Revelation describe in first-century language. Often they involve connecting the dots between known human behavior (as predicted in context or elsewhere in scripture) and the likely—or merely possible—result. John sees fire and brimstone; I see nuclear war and the use of biochemical weapons. (That thing with the locusts, though—you’re on your own there.) I may have inadvertently been sending the message that Yahweh is playing no part in all of this except to inform us of what He’s seen in our future. So I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that none of this is accidental or coincidental. Rather, Yahweh is using the decisions and actions of men (in addition to natural weather and seismic phenomena) to bring about His own will—on His schedule and for His purposes. He will not infringe upon Man’s ability to choose, but He most certainly reserves the right to focus or direct the outcome of those choices. However—and this is important—there doesn’t have to be any natural chain of events for His judgments to be carried out. Miracles are still within His purview—He doesn’t owe us an explanation.

That being said, several perfectly “natural” explanations for what we see in the fourth bowl judgment are possible, and one of them might actually prove to be correct. If you’re like me, you tend to read passages like this from the point of view of those suffering from the plagues. Men are getting “scorched.” What does that mean? The logical place to start looking for an explanation may be in the thing that normally *prevents* us from getting scorched: the ozone layer.

Ozone is an unstable pale bluish gas (so now you know why the sky is blue) formed when oxygen is subjected to an electrical discharge (such as in lightning storms). A layer of ozone (O₃) molecules in the stratosphere (10 to 50 kilometers above the earth) serves as a barrier to protect the earth from harmful radiation, especially ultraviolet rays. A five percent depletion of the whole ozone layer at temperate latitudes will cause an average rise of *ten* percent in ultraviolet radiation intensity at ground level. This can result in a variety of problems, such as eye cataracts, skin cancers, and reduced immune function. Humans, of course, aren’t the only things to be affected. UV rays can also kill small fish and plankton near the ocean’s surface, and the harvest volume of some agricultural crops is

apparently reduced in inverse proportion to rising UV levels. Soybeans, for example, are especially vulnerable.

Okay; back to our Revelation scenario. Could a nuclear war damage the ozone layer? Maybe. Scientists tell us that a large number of multi-megaton warheads exploded in the atmosphere could conceivably deplete the ozone layer by as much as thirty to forty percent. (The ozone layer is constantly being regenerated, so it could theoretically recover to nearly normal density and thickness within two or three years, given the normal amount of thunderstorm activity—something that will be conspicuously absent during the Great Tribulation.) The trend among the major atomic powers, however, has been to stockpile larger numbers of smaller devices, and these smaller kiloton-range bombs may not be capable of launching the requisite harmful nitrogen oxide materials high enough to damage the ozone layer. (It's all theoretical, you understand. Nobody's doing atmospheric nuclear weapons testing these days.)

The real Achilles heel of the ozone layer seems to be chlorine. It is believed that one chlorine atom, through a series of reactions, can lead to the reduction of tens of thousands of ozone molecules to more stable forms of oxygen. Chlorofluorocarbons, chemically stable compounds that can hold together for years after being discharged into the atmosphere, have been the biggest ozone-layer destroyers in recent decades. Being lighter than air, they rise to the stratosphere, where strong ultraviolet rays eventually break them down, releasing their chlorine atoms. These in turn strip oxygen atoms from the unstable O_3 molecules, leaving the more stable O_2 , an allotrope of oxygen far less efficient in protecting the earth from UV rays. Hence the problem.

So here's the question: does the prophetic record suggest a scenario in which massive amounts of chlorine compounds could be released into the atmosphere? We have to read between the lines of course, but I'd say that the numerous references to "brimstone" suggest a widespread use of chemical weapons. Although brimstone is technically sulfur, it could easily be a metaphor for a whole range of noxious substances brought into play during the last days. And since the First World War, chlorine has been one of the elements most likely to show up in chemical weapons.

That still doesn't prove that the widespread use of chlorine-based chemical weapons could destroy the ozone layer, though. The fact is, it takes industrial chlorofluorocarbons seven years or more to float high enough to do any damage. No one knows if chemical weapons released into the atmosphere can remain intact long enough to reach the stratosphere. For that matter, chlorine gas by itself is heavier than air—it crawls along the ground neutralizing infantry troops with great alacrity, as they found out during WWI.

So it's quite possible we're on the wrong track with the man-destroying-the-ozone-layer line of inquiry. Let's look again at the passage in question: **"The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat."** We (okay, *I*) have been operating under the assumption that the *effect* was the key: men were scorched. But the verse plainly says the angel poured out his bowl *onto the sun*. So the sun itself would seem to be the source of the increased heat on the earth's surface.

We've all heard of solar flares, the sudden, intense variations in the sun's brightness that can affect our weather patterns and communications. These hour-long events occur when magnetic energy that has built up within the solar atmosphere is suddenly released, like rubber bands pulled too tightly—recoiling with explosive results. Physicists call this effect "magnetic reconnection." When this happens, radiation is emitted across virtually the entire electromagnetic spectrum, from radio waves at the long-wavelength end, through visible light to x-rays and gamma rays at the short end. The amount of energy released is equivalent to millions of hundred-megaton hydrogen bombs exploding at the same time (which, to put it in perspective, is still less than one-tenth of the total energy normally emitted by the sun in any given second). If a good-sized flare is emitted from the portion of the sun that's facing Earth, catastrophic damage can be done to electric power grids and communications networks. The last time a really big one hit, our electricity-dependent way of life was in its infancy: in 1859 a geomagnetic solar storm called the Carrigan Event did serious damage to telegraph equipment all over the world, shocking operators and starting fires. We've gone a wee bit past telegraph lines now: there is the potential for a trillion dollars in infrastructure damage next time this happens.

Scientists have determined that solar flares occur near sunspots, usually along the dividing line between areas of oppositely directed magnetic fields. By constantly measuring magnetic shear in and around sunspots, they have learned how to predict large solar flares. Sunspot activity (the sort of thing that leads to flares) tends to ebb and flow in cycles averaging about eleven years long. So after the 2013 solar maximum, the next natural peak will hit in 2024—two years *before* the Tribulation begins (assuming my observations are correct). This would place the sun near the solar *minimum* phase at about the time we could expect the fourth bowl judgment. The solar phases don't always "follow the rules," however. The last few of them have had double peaks, hitting both before and after the "target date," and each weaker than a single intense sunspot season. While that's good news for those living under the threat of solar flares, it does make our ability to predict solar activity that much less certain. But in the context of the Last Days, it doesn't matter. We have been warned up front that this massive solar flare (if that's what it is) is no natural occurrence. Rather, the prophecy says to expect the

unexpected. We've specifically been told that an outside agency is responsible: **"the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun."**

Normally, the biggest of our sun's geomagnetic events are called "X-class" flares. Our atmosphere (including the ozone layer) is ordinarily quite effective in defending the earth's surface against their effects. (Thank You, Yahweh.) And as far as scientists can tell, there has never been a flare intense enough to cause the kind of heat spoken of in the fourth bowl judgment of Revelation. Not on the sun, anyway.

Distant stars are another matter. "Superflares" have been observed for years emanating from young stars, fast-rotating stars, or twin stars—places where the magnetic fields are presumed to be totally haywire. But in 1999, a team of Yale University researchers announced that they had observed superflares—anywhere from a hundred to ten million times as powerful as ordinary X-class solar flares—coming from nine stars described by astronomer Bradley E. Schaefer as "disturbingly similar to our own sun." He was quick to point out, of course, that we are in no immediate danger, saying "Our sun does not do this, as far as we can tell." These superflares are theoretically triggered by interaction between the stars' magnetic fields and those of nearby gas-giant planets like Saturn or Jupiter—which in the case of our solar system are far too distant from the sun to have the requisite magnetic influence.

Schaefer, however, did speculate on what would happen if such a superflare were to occur here. A powerful one could create "a complete global ozone hole that would last a couple of years." And we know what that would do, don't we? Such a superflare, he said, "could turn a cold winter day into a hot summer day." Does this sound familiar to anybody but me? It's a perfect description of the effects of the fourth bowl judgment.

It would take a miracle, of course, for the magnetic forces on the sun's surface to build in just the right way and let go at just the right moment to cause such a phenomenon. I've got no problem with that. To my mind, the far greater miracle would be the sort of thing Yahweh did a thousand times over when He created this earth for us to live on: achieving perfect balance. The superflare would have to be strong enough to get men's attention (an ordinary X-class flare wouldn't even be noticed after a nuclear war) but weak enough to avoid turning planet Earth into a charcoal briquette. God's not done with the world yet. People are still going to have to live here after bowl number four. Belief here is a package deal: either Yahweh is the Creator of the whole universe and thus capable of controlling such things, or He isn't.

The fifth Bowl Game, continuing the pattern, looks a lot like the fourth quarter of a scrimmage played out 2,500 years previously in Egypt. And even with the home field advantage, the Antichrist's team remains scoreless. **"Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds."** (Revelation 16:10-11) This is the fifth time we've seen specific moves from Moses' plague-book used against the Antichrist and his followers. We saw how water was turned into blood—this was the first plague upon Egypt. We've seen boils or sores (the sixth plague), hail (number seven), and locusts (the eighth plague, though those in Revelation were clearly demonic). We're also going to meet some demonic frogs shortly. Considering the unsanitary conditions that will prevail following World War III, I wouldn't be the least bit surprised to find flies and lice tormenting the inhabitants of earth, though these things aren't specifically mentioned in reference to the last days. Darkness was the ninth—and most terrifying—of the Egyptian afflictions. The only thing left after that was the death of their firstborn sons: can you spell "Armageddon?"

Darkness meant something special to the Egyptians of Moses' day—and it ought to mean the same thing to the Antichrist's people. Since the time of Tammuz, Satan has been trying to pass himself off on the human race as "Lucifer, son of the dawn," as he's called in Isaiah 14—the "sun god," the source of all life. The Egyptian permutation of this lie was named Ra. Thus when darkness fell over the land of Egypt, it was an unmistakable sign to them that their revered solar deity—the head of their pantheon—had been defeated by the Hebrew God, Yahweh. Fast forward to the twenty-first century. Lucifer is still trying to get us to believe that he's the great illuminator, the light-giver. So God instructs the angel with the fifth bowl to demonstrate what Satan is really all about—darkness and pain.

This black sky doesn't happen over the entire earth, but is specifically said to be within the Antichrist's kingdom and upon his throne. It could be argued that his kingdom is Europe, since that is where he originally rose to power. But as we have seen, the Antichrist will set up his world headquarters in Israel (**"He will plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain"**—Daniel 11:45). So which is it, Europe or Israel? The prophet Joel provides the answer: **"Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of Yahweh is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains."** (Joel 2:1-2) The prophet has not only pinpointed the location of the darkness, but identified its cause: thick, heavy clouds—so black that you'd swear the sun was going down. **"And it shall come to pass in that day," says Almighty Yahweh,**

‘That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight.’”
(Amos 8:9)

As if to shake a stern finger of correction at those Christians who are gleefully anticipating a post-tribulation rapture so they can prove their devotion to God, Amos points out that the day of Yahweh is not for them, but for those who have chosen to live in darkness. **“Woe to you who desire the day of Yahweh! For what good is the day of Yahweh to you? It will be darkness, and not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him! Is not the day of Yahweh darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?”** (Amos 5:18-20) This is the real “dark ages.” Safety is an illusion. There will be no place to hide.

Isaiah concurs. **“For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light. The sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.”** (Isaiah 13:10) Time after time we see God tailoring the nature of His judgment to a specific sin of mankind. Not only does man insist on following a false light, Lucifer, he is totally ungrateful for Yahweh’s provision of our sun, moon, and stars, things He put in place for our benefit, our survival, our very existence. As the creation account puts it, **“Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament [i.e., expanse] of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth’; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.”** (Genesis 1:14-18) If our kids were rude and unthankful for the gifts we gave them, we’d no doubt be tempted to return the stuff to the store and get our money back. But if the gift was something really wonderful that we’d lovingly made with our own two hands, we’d feel deeply hurt, betrayed, and unappreciated—and we’d put the gift away, out of sight. Is this any different? I think not. Here Yahweh seems to be saying, *If you people don’t like the good things I’ve given you, I certainly won’t force you to look at them.*

The general level of sunlight will be diminished all over the earth for many months during the Tribulation, as we have seen—the result of nuclear detonations, volcanic activity, you name it. But this plague is different: it’s a localized blackout, a specific and undeniable sign from God (which men will deny anyway). We aren’t told how long it will last, but Yahshua gives us a clue about the timing: **“In those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.”** (Mark 13:24) The phenomena to which our Savior is referring here are a perfect fit for the sixth seal judgment, delineated, as we have seen, in Revelation

6:12-17, especially verses 12 and 13, where **“the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth.”** It therefore seems likely that the period of darkness will occur very near the end of the seven years (i.e., *after* most of the Tribulation is past—specifically, within the last thirty days, after the Antichrist’s forty-two months are up) and won’t persist longer than a week or two.

It might only last a day, if Zechariah was talking about the same phenomenon. Right after a lengthy discussion of the great final earthquake—something we’ll look at shortly—he says, **“It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to Yahweh—neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light.”** (Zechariah 14:6-7) It seems that the plague of darkness will be followed by an equally strange period of light in the evening, demonstrating once again that nature is subservient to Yahweh, not the other way around.

There’s more to the fifth bowl judgment than just darkness. **“They gnawed their tongues because of the pain....”** We aren’t told if the pain is somehow directly related to the darkness, but there will be no lack of residual causes for physical discomfort: the sores from the Mark of the Beast, the work of the 5-month locust plague of the fifth trumpet, sunburn from the fourth bowl judgment—need I go on?

We need to pause for a moment and consider the phenomenon of pain. Since we usually go out of our way to alleviate and avoid it, we often regard pain as a bad thing. But it’s not. Pain is essential to our long term well being, even to our survival. Early in life we learn to use caution around fire and sharp, pointy things. How? Why? Because of pain. Technically, when a skin cell is injured, it secretes a chemical called *bradykinin*, which irritates nearby nerve endings, causing a sensation our brains interpret as pain. So what happens then? We flinch—we reflexively pull the offended appendage away from the source of pain. But what would happen if we didn’t feel the pain that warns us that something’s wrong, or if we trained ourselves to tune out the pain? We would suffer injury and debilitation far beyond what we actually experience in the normal course of living our lives—much more injury than our bodies were designed to cope with in the normal course of healing. This and a thousand other intricate “feedback loops” built into our physiology are incontrovertible proof that we were *designed*—we didn’t just evolve.

But back to the point: we tend to look at the Tribulation unsaved, note the pain they’re suffering, and say, “How cruel! Why doesn’t Yahweh do something to alleviate their pain?” We’ve missed the whole point when we think like that. The pain—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual—is there to warn them that something’s wrong. The pain says, *Take your hand out of the fire! Flee from the*

danger! If we're told that the Tribulation unsaved didn't react to the pain they felt, if **"they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds,"** is it Yahweh's fault? No. The pain was designed to alert them to the danger of following Satan.

While a sad commentary on the times, this is a clue as to Yahweh's purpose in allowing mankind to suffer: He wants them (and us) to wake up and repent—to flinch away from the source of their pain. He's tried everything else to get their attention, and nothing's worked all that well. Plan A was kindness: **"Do you think...that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil."** (Romans 2:3-9) Plan B, on the other hand, is what we see here in Revelation 16. That isn't working either.

Plan C would have been to force mankind to repent, to take away their freedom of choice. But Yahweh refuses to do that. After all, choice is our defining attribute. It's essential to the way He made us, and it's an essential component of the love He wishes to share with us.

If you're not terrified yet, it means that you're either secure in your salvation or you're asleep. If the latter is the case, I offer the following wake-up call: **"The great day of Yahweh is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of Yahweh is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Yahweh. Their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse [the translators are *so* polite: the word really means excrement—dung]. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Yahweh's wrath; but the whole land [the Hebrew *araq* means earth, not land] shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land [*araq*=earth]." (Zephaniah 1:14-18) Don't roll over. Don't hit the spiritual snooze button. You're running out of time. Wake up!**

Chapter 24

Armageddon!

It's coming down to this: a final confrontation between a human race that refuses to walk with God and the God who created it for no other purpose. A passage that originally foretold Babylon's coming invasion of Judah also appears to describe the final battle. Isaiah describes this gathering of the nations: **"I have commanded My sanctified ones; I have also called My mighty ones because of My anger—Those who rejoice in My exaltation...."** The English totally misses it here. This literally means: **"Those who exult in their arrogant pride."**

God has set apart those who would trouble His people for His own purposes—in this case, destruction. **"The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like that of many people! A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together! Yahweh of hosts musters the army for battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven—Yahweh and His weapons of indignation, to destroy the whole land."** (Isaiah 13:3-5) The word "land" here is our old friend *eretz*, which if you'll recall, has a broad range of possible meanings—earth, world, country, land, country, or ground. Two armies are being gathered: one from the "kingdoms of nations" and another from "the end of heaven"—i.e., the previously raptured saints (see Matthew 24:31). The Antichrist and his "world army" are here to annihilate Israel once and for all; Yahweh is here to destroy the world that has rebelled against Him. It's time for a showdown.

John saw the same thing, focusing on the armies of the East. **"Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."** (Revelation 16:12-14) If you'll recall, a severe drought has been plaguing the earth ever since the two witnesses were given the **"power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy."** (Revelation 11:6) As that time progressed, the major rivers of the world (or at least the region) have been reduced to rivulets. Now, when it suits God's purpose, the Euphrates dries up altogether.

Yahweh's primary purpose for this is to summon the nations who want to confront Him. But there's more to it, in the grand scheme of things. **"Yahweh will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; with His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River, and strike it in the seven streams, and make men cross over dry-shod. There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for**

Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.” (Isaiah 11:15-16) Another part of His plan is to facilitate the return of the Jews to the land of Israel—now that they know who they are—especially from Assyria and Egypt. Here we see both the Nile and the Euphrates being dried up enough to cross over without getting your feet wet. Between the lines, we can almost smell the anti-Semitism that’s driving this last Jewish migration. The “tongue of the Sea of Egypt” is apparently the Gulf of Suez.

The prophet Nahum sheds more light on the connection between Yahweh’s anger and a drought so severe that rivers and seas dry up. **“God is jealous, and Yahweh avenges; Yahweh avenges and is furious. Yahweh will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; Yahweh is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. Yahweh has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the flower of Lebanon wilts.”** (Nahum 1:2-4) Even the areas known in Nahum’s day as the garden spots of the Levant, Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon, will “wither” under God’s fury. There’ll be a super-drought, but it’s not like there won’t be any “weather.” Violent whirlwinds will stir up great clouds of dust, but no rain will fall.

As I said, Yahweh’s primary purpose in drying up the rivers is to bring the armies of the world to Israel for the ultimate showdown. The “kings from the East” mentioned in our Revelation 16 passage are the same Chinese warlords who’ve been tearing up the Far East ever since the sixth angel blew his trumpet. This army began its march some months previously at an unheard of strength of two hundred million soldiers. They have now achieved their demon-inspired goal of subduing the entire East—ostensibly for the greater glory of the Dragon, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet, as well as for their own temporal advantage.

By the way, have you ever noticed the undying connection between Chinese culture and dragons? The Chinese have been known to refer to themselves as *Lung Tic Chuan Ren*, or “descendants of the dragon.” This is the outgrowth of a legend that the *Huang Di* (Yellow Emperor) used a serpent in his coat of arms, and whenever he conquered a neighboring tribe, he would incorporate the defeated enemy’s symbol into his own. This explains why the dragon is said to have the head of camel, the face of a [qilin](#) (a [deer](#)-like mythical creature with a body of fire), the eyes of a demon, the ears of a cow, the antlers of a stag, the neck of a snake, the belly of a clam, and the claws of an eagle on the feet a tiger. The whole thing is supposedly covered with 117 scales from a carp. If you’re attuned to clues of its satanic identity, it gets even more interesting: the dragon is said to be able to fly through the sky. (Does the phrase “prince of the power of the air” ring any bells?) The dragon is also associated with weather and water—he is the bringer of rain. The three and a half year drought during the great Tribulation,

therefore, is quite possibly sent by Yahweh (in part) to prove that the dragon has no real power. Chinese dragons are said to be able to transform their shape and size, and they are invariably pictured in association with a flaming pearl, which I take to be a permutation of Luciferian sun worship—the symbology is identical. This “pearl” is supposedly what gives the dragon his ability to ascend to heaven.

Anyway, we were talking about the demon-led Chinese army of Revelation 16. They’ve been waging war on greater Asia, and in the process, they’ve killed over 1.7 billion people. Now the unholy trinity is beckoning them to come west—to the land of Israel—to face one final foe. The Eastern Horde won’t have to face this dangerous enemy alone, however. Virtually every nation on earth who can put together a fighting force is summoned by the Antichrist, via his one-world government, to join the fight—and they all answer the call. It’s a coalition the likes of which the elder President Bush could only have dreamed in 1991. Actually, the first Gulf War will serve nicely as a prototype for the build-up: the nations of the earth will rise up in unified rage against a common foe. Of course, after the horrendous carnage of the past seven years, convincing the world that they all of a sudden have a common all-powerful enemy to fight might be a bit difficult. But three frog-like demons help to deliver the message, showing signs and wonders to the “kings of the earth,” persuading them that the threat is real. *Ribbit.*

Yahweh is anticipating this last confrontation as well, commanding the Euphrates to dry up so that the mighty Eastern army may advance without hindrance. Nothing must stand in the way of their “glorious destiny.” Do the armies of the earth know Who they’re taking on? Will the demon-frogs croak out anything resembling the truth? Don’t bet on it; they’re working for the father of lies. I would be extremely surprised if they said something like, *You must come to Israel with your army because Yahshua, the risen Son of Almighty God—Yahweh in the flesh—is about to return to earth to reign in glory, just like the Jewish and Christian scriptures said He would. So we’ve gotta stop Him! It’s a long shot, but if we put together a big enough coalition, we might be able to persuade Him to go away. What do you say? Are you with us?*

No, the truth clearly isn’t going to cut it. So what will the official line be? Who will be identified as the enemy? I can envision two possible scenarios, neither of which is actually possible (never mind rational), but either of which might be swallowed whole by a lost and gullible world if delivered with the right spin—which is precisely the job description of the three bad froggies.

Scenario #1. “We’re not alone.” In an attempt to explain all the recent weirdness—the rapture (though they won’t call it that), the still-unexplained destruction of Gog’s Muslim hordes, the mysterious lack of rain, dead oceans, scorching sun, and darkened skies, etc.—the Antichrist’s people will blame *space*

aliens for the earth's unprecedented troubles. They'll dredge up persistent legends from generations of "UFOlogists" and offer convincing proof that it was all true after all. Wrecked flying saucers, cryogenically preserved corpses of alien crash victims from Area 51, and newly revealed "evidence," supposedly suppressed for decades by the American and Russian military establishments, will mysteriously surface. Strange lights will appear in the sky, seen not by a handful of UFO enthusiasts this time, but by millions of ordinary people. And through a series of televised addresses, the Antichrist will explain with candor and forthrightness (choke) that he's discovered that the world's previous governments had been holding out on them: an alien force from a distant solar system has arrived with the express purpose of colonizing earth for themselves. It's a hostile takeover on a global scale. The inhabitants of earth must therefore band together to fight them. It's the only chance for the survival of mankind.

Okay, it sounds stupid. But with half to three-quarters (or more) of the earth's population already dead, and those remaining already primed for the next worldwide disaster, this explanation just might fly (if you'll pardon the expression). However, since Satan's up to his eyeballs in this thing, a second scenario, even dumber than the first, is more likely to be foisted upon the populace, a hypothesis that could only be hatched by someone who envies Yahweh with every fiber of his being.

Scenario #2. "Hitler was right." *It's those @!#\$%&* Jews!* The Antichrist will announce that because he had the foresight to set up his world headquarters in the Holy Land, he was in a unique position to discover what the Jews, especially the Israelis, have *really* been up to since the Zionists had their moment in the sun in 1948. They've been developing, he will claim, secret weapons, WMDs whose ultimate purpose is to wipe the goyim off the face of the earth! *How were they able to overcome sixty-to-one odds, defeating the Arabs on their birthday in '48—and again in 1967—and again in 1973?* (The fact that they had come within a whisker of losing that last one will be conveniently forgotten.) *They had secret weapons, that's how. These people may be evil, but they're not dumb: Einstein was a Jew, wasn't he? Ever since Adolph Hitler failed to wipe them out in the 1940s, they've been plotting their revenge on the world. Now they've got weapons that can destroy the ozone layer, kill off every living thing in the oceans, stop the rain, and turn the sky to smoke. You saw what they did to the poor Muslims when they heroically tried to come to the aid of their oppressed Palestinian brothers. I don't know how the Jews killed them, but they murdered so many it took 'em seven months to bury the dead. Now their bioweapons have infected the whole world, causing these cursed boils to infect all the good, law-abiding citizens who received my Mark of Loyalty. They refused to sign on—preferring to hide in exile like cringing cowards. But that was more than three years ago. I now have indisputable evidence that they're planning their return to Palestine—and that*

they intend to use this land as a base from which to annihilate the whole gentile world! We must stop them while there's still time!

The Jews, of course, will be quite surprised to hear all this. As far as they can tell, they're hanging on by their fingernails. They've got no power at all—no government, no weapons, no supplies except the stuff they were able to hastily salvage from the armies of Gog. What they *do* have is a newfound relationship with Yahweh, for they have been living every day of the last forty-two months in the knowledge that without His constant protective hand, they would have been ground to powder in the Antichrist's machine. Every new sunrise is a miracle.

When does all this happen? It takes months for any good-sized fighting force to be assembled and moved into position, so it may be assumed that the sixth bowl is not so much an event as a process. The Antichrist could well issue his worldwide call to arms six months or even a year before the actual battle. But I suspect the Euphrates will only be dry enough for a major army to cross dry-shod right around day 2,490 of the Tribulation. That's 1,260 days (forty-two months) after the Jews began their flight from their homeland in panic after witnessing the abomination of desolation. It's thirty days from the end, though they doubtless won't know that. The Jews will begin to return to Jerusalem at this same time, but the Antichrist, having seen what happened to those who attacked them in the past, will do nothing to stop them. On the contrary, he's hoping they *all* return—it's his only chance of wiping them out in one decisive move—with the odds not sixty to one this time, but *six thousand* to one. He's still smarting from the spanking he got as his troops pursued the Israelis into the wilderness only to be swallowed by the desert (Revelation 12:16), and he'll never completely come to terms with the defeat of Magog in Israel, something he tried to do and failed miserably.

Precisely what kind of offensive is he planning this time? Let's pick up the narrative back in Revelation: **“Behold, I [Yahshua] am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.’ And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.”** (Revelation 16:15-16) The “they” in the last sentence are the three demonic frogs we met in verse 13 above. Persuasive little vermin. The “them” are, as it says in verse 14, **“the kings of the earth and of the whole world.”** “Earth” and “world” are two separate and unrelated words in Greek (*ge* and *oikoumene*). I believe John's purpose in this rather odd-sounding phrase was to communicate that the men who control both the habitable land mass of earth *and* the people who live there will be represented by their armies at Armageddon—the implication is total commitment to the Antichrist's cause.

“Armageddon” is a word that has picked up a lot of baggage in its long and colorful life—most of it belonging to somebody else. This is the only time in all of scripture the word is used, and as the text implies, it is actually derived from

two Hebrew words. *Har* is a mountain or range of hills. *Megiddo* is an ancient city in northern Israel (Megiddo), midway between Mount Gilboa and Mount Carmel, about twenty miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee. It overlooks the Valley of Jezreel, a.k.a. the Plain of Esdraelon, which is about fourteen miles wide and twenty miles long. It has been the scene of many battles in the past, as far back as the Biblical era of the Judges, when in 1480 B.C. Thutmose III of Egypt met and defeated the King of Kadesh (in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley). The intriguing thing about *Megiddo* is its etymological origin—the word from which it is derived means “rendezvous.”

Armies from all over the world are converging on Israel—summoned by the Antichrist but *persuaded* by three frog-like demons. They're apparently very good at their jobs, for in common parlance, the word Armageddon has come to mean a doomsday war—the end of the world. If you were a military commander living in such weird times and you were told to ship your troops out to someplace called “Megiddo,” wouldn't that give you pause? Millions of people on this side of the rapture know precisely where the Battle of Armageddon is supposed to take place and what will happen there. Will that information be lost to *everyone* when the Church is taken out?

Then again, I wouldn't be surprised to see the Antichrist cleverly sucking the terror out of the word by actually naming his plan “Operation Armageddon,” as if it were just one more grandiose plan foisted on a jaded populace with marketing savvy and fancy political footwork—like Saddam's “Mother of all Battles.” All I know is that the armies will come—vast, teeming hordes single-mindedly determined to defend the earth against a common enemy—the ultimate enemy. How many will come? The Bible doesn't say, but if each soldier were allotted thirty square feet, a quarter *billion* of them would fit in the Plain of Esdraelon alone. Scripture, by the way, doesn't say that all the combatants will be squeezed into the valley, or even that Armageddon is where the battle will occur. It only suggests that *Har-Megiddo* is the primary destination—the rendezvous point. The assembling armies could well spill out onto the coastal plains to the north and south, or even farther.

And what was that enigmatic admonition we saw shoehorned in sideways there? **“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”** I once heard an intriguing explanation for this verse. (I think I remember reading it in Alfred Edersheim's 1880 classic, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, but I couldn't verify it, so take this with a big grain of salt.) In Yahshua's day, one of the priestly duties, assigned by lot, was to tend the temple altar fires at night (see Leviticus 6:9). Since there was nothing else going on, it was not unheard of for the priest on duty to shirk his responsibilities by napping on the job. But occasionally, a senior

priest would pull a “surprise inspection,” so to speak—he would come “as a thief,” unexpectedly. If the junior priest was awake, alert, and attending to his chores, well and good; but if he had fallen asleep, the supervisor would sometimes dump hot coals from the altar into the lap of his robe, burning a big hole just where a guy would tend to want it least. The shame involved was doubled. It wasn’t just the exposure of the body, it was also the exposure of the slothfulness of the errant priest. The lessons are obvious: whether on this side of the rapture or afterward, don’t get caught napping when Yahshua comes. Be alert to the events He’s warned us about; be engaged in the work He has given you to do. Wake up!

Yahweh also offered a word of back-handed advice to those called by the Antichrist to this last great battle: **“Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, before the decree is issued, or the day passes like chaff, before Yahweh’s fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of Yahweh’s anger comes upon you! Seek Yahweh, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of Yahweh’s anger.”** (Zephaniah 2:1-3) Make your choice: life or death.

The two witnesses will still be doing their thing in Jerusalem as this unprecedented military build-up shifts into high gear. By this time, the whole world is in agreement about these two emissaries of God: they’re nothing but trouble. They said it wouldn’t rain, and sure enough, there hasn’t been any rain for almost three and a half years. They said the lakes and rivers would turn to blood, and that happened too. Plague after plague has come to pass just as these two predicted. They’re getting to be a royal pain in the aspirations of man. But every time somebody goes out to “neutralize” them, they end up extra crispy. Is no one able to stop them?

No one, of course, wants them killed worse than the Antichrist does. But demon possessed or not, he’s been reticent to put his life on the line in an effort to do personally what he’s been unable to do vicariously for the last forty-two months. Like Muhammad before him, he’s been reluctant to risk his own neck for his own cause. But that’s about to change. We pick up the narrative in Revelation:

“When they [the two witnesses] finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them....” Here we see the “beast,” a.k.a. the Antichrist, equated with the demon that inhabits him. It’s not Satan, strangely enough. The one who “ascends out of the bottomless pit,” is a demon (probably the first) that Satan released into the world when he was kicked

out of heaven and given the keys to the abyss. This “beast” promptly took up residence in the sorry carcass of the Antichrist—possibly at the very moment of his assassination, reanimating his corpse and empowering him to feats of unheard of power, of unprecedented evil. He’s the same evil spirit who inhabited the body of Nero (as we discussed back in chapter 14), and perhaps a few other of history’s baddest bad boys as well.

After 1,260 days of ministry, the witnesses are finally overcome and murdered in the streets. It’s not that Yahweh can’t protect them anymore; it’s just that their job is done. The Antichrist and the Dragon would have killed them years before if they could have, but Yahweh had not permitted it. But now that the witnesses’ mission is accomplished, Yahweh finally allows the beast, the demon of Nero, operating in the body of the Antichrist, to slay them.

Allowing their death isn’t disloyalty on Yahweh’s part. It’s a gift, a merciful exit strategy from the admittedly horrible task these two guys have been faithfully performing for the past three and a half years. Besides, in a very real sense, these two faithful martyrs have the same deal any believer has. God reserves the right to call us home anytime He pleases. If you think about it, that’s an incredibly liberating thought—the *worst* the world can do to us is to free us from the prison of our mortal bodies, sending our souls to a far better place. It is also a sobering reminder that we should not procrastinate in doing God’s will. We, unlike the two witnesses, never know how much time we’ve got left.

“And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” That’s Jerusalem, in case you missed it. Yahweh loves the place, but He’s also very disappointed in it sometimes. Sodom and Egypt speak of perversion and worldliness—the antithesis of holiness. **“Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth....”**

This describes a phenomenon that wasn’t possible until the early 1990s, when the first satellite television networks went on line. All over the world, people will watch the “live” (so to speak) television or Internet coverage and celebrate the death of these two men who had called down plagues “of biblical proportions” upon them. (This is also an indication that much of the world’s electrical grid and communications infrastructure is back up and functioning, perhaps five years after the nuclear war.) I imagine there’ll be interviews with the Antichrist, the hero of the hour who, empowered by Nero’s demon, had *personally* killed them when no one else could. He’ll say things like, “Yes, sometimes if you want something done right, you’ve got to do it yourself.” He will once again be hailed all over the world as the hero of the hour, though his kingdom is in shambles.

The idea of leaving their two mangled bodies lying there in the street may seem odd to us today, but it won't be to those who have grown used to the carnage of the past seven years. These corpses will be left not because there's no one to bury them, but because, like Romans leaving their crucifixion victims hanging beside the roadway, their fate is meant to be a warning to those who might be tempted to follow in their footsteps or heed their admonitions. The Antichrist intends to keep the television cameras trained on the two witnesses until the flesh has rotted off their bones.

But Yahweh has other ideas. **“Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them....”** When Yahshua ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He was seen only by His friends (Acts 1:9-11). But these faithful servants will be seen by everyone left on earth who still has a television or Internet access. As impressed with the Antichrist's signs and wonders as these people have been in recent years, I wonder how they'll feel when they see signs and wonders from Yahweh? Will it occur to them that maybe they bet on the wrong horse? I don't know, but I do know human nature: we have a tendency to defend our poor choices to the bitter end. It's a pride thing. Even an undeniable demonstration of God's power over death won't bring the world to repentance. It didn't the first time, and it won't now. Besides, didn't the Antichrist suffer a mortal wound and come back to life? As in the days of Moses, sleight of hand and satanic trickery will serve quite nicely to obfuscate the truth.

When the world sees the two witnesses come back to life, they'll be afraid, but that doesn't mean they'll repent. The Jews, however, those who have begun to return to Jerusalem, will see this sign as a confirmation of Yahweh's greatness. The timing here is tricky: we need to be cognizant of God's revealed timeline. Remember, Israel was to be protected in the wilderness for precisely 1,260 days (i.e., “time and times and half a time,” three and a half prophetic years—Revelation 12:14). They fled from Jerusalem on or shortly after day 1,230, on the occasion of the Antichrist's grand unveiling—the abomination of desolation. Also, the gentiles were prophesied to “tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months” as the two witnesses prophesied against them (Revelation 11:2-3). Therefore, sometime during the final month of the Tribulation, the Israelis will begin to return to the city—unhindered (and unhunted) by the Antichrist. It matters not that the Antichrist has visited Jerusalem and killed the two witnesses here—he's no longer in control of the city. His time is up. He's losing his grip, and he knows it. All he can hope for now is that the accursed Jews *will* return to Jerusalem—in sufficient numbers to allow him to wipe them out there in one shot. His vast army is being assembled up north at Har Megiddo for this very purpose.

As he reviews his troops and chats with his generals, the Antichrist gets the bad news: the two witnesses whom he left dead on the street in Jerusalem have refused to stay that way. His real-time worldwide broadcasts of the corpses of these troublemakers give a whole new meaning to the term “live TV.” If YouTube is still around, the video will instantly go viral. Enoch and Elijah suddenly stand on their feet, wave bye-bye to the astonished onlookers, and ascend into the heavens, just as Yahshua did two thousand years before. The Antichrist is livid. If you can’t trust corpses to stay dead, who *can* you trust? (Of course, the same question could be asked of *him*—but no one does.)

Then, just when he thought things couldn’t get any worse, this happens: **“In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.”** John then finishes his discussion of the sixth trumpet with these words: **“The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”** (Revelation 11:8-14) The first woe, as you’ll recall, was the fifth trumpet judgment, the release of the locust-like demons from the bottomless pit, sent to torment the followers of the Antichrist—those who **“do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.”**

The second woe—the sixth trumpet—is encompassed by the ministry of the two witnesses, a 1,260-day period of plagues upon the earth, plagues prophesied by the witnesses and delivered by the angels of the first six bowl judgments. The second woe is past because the two witnesses are now gone—slain, resurrected, and ascended. But as John says, the world won’t have to wait long for the third woe to commence. Strangely, though, he doesn’t exactly say what it is. The seventh trumpet announces the conclusion of the matter: **“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever!”** (Revelation 11:15) There’s no “woe” in that. The seventh trumpet will become reality when Yahshua assumes the throne of the Millennial kingdom on the ultimate Feast of Tabernacles. The third “woe,” then, is what will happen to the world between the resurrection of the two witnesses and the coronation of the King. It’s only five days (I’ll explain why in a bit), but a whole lot of loose ends are going to be tied up in the interim.

The first piece of business is this: within an hour of the time the two witnesses are made alive again and called to heaven in a cloud, an earthquake—the *big one*—strikes the earth, epicentered near Jerusalem. John reports that some in the city died and the rest glorified Yahweh. Of course, this begs the question: *who* gave glory to God? The Antichrist? Not hardly. He left town for good a few days prior to this—after killing the two witnesses. The survivors of the earthquake who will give glory to God are the very believing Jews who have so recently returned to the city from their sojourn in the wilderness. These reawakened Israelites, if you’ll recall, are sealed by Yahweh: **“At that time your people shall be delivered, every**

one who is found written in the book.” (Daniel 12:1) That means the seven thousand who die in the earthquake (SF4) are unbelievers—either unrepentant Jews or gentile stragglers. Yahweh is taking His town back.

As I said earlier, I believe this earthquake is no ordinary temblor, but a very significant and specific event that’s mentioned several times in scripture. It’s either a prominent feature of the sixth seal, the sixth trumpet, *and* the seventh bowl judgments—the same earthquake mentioned in all three places—or there are an awful lot of major earthquakes occurring with in a few days of each other. For my money, this kind of thing is just too hard to chalk up to coincidence. It seems to be, rather, the raising of the curtain on the final act of this play.

As Yahshua made his “triumphal” entry into Jerusalem, the people lining the streets **“cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of Yahweh! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’”** (Mark 11:9-10) How sad it is then, that a few days later we see him lamenting over the city, saying, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of Yahweh!’”** (Matthew 23:37-39) We all know what happened. Within days, he was rejected, betrayed, and crucified. Jerusalem’s leaders had emphatically concluded, “This is *not* ‘He who comes in the name of Yahweh.’” And for the next two thousand years, the nation of Israel clung desperately to this most fatal of errors, the rejection of their own Messiah.

Ironically, it was this very Son of Man who would tell them what to look for when things got impossibly bleak—the signs preceding His own return in glory: **“There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken....”** By the final days of the Great Tribulation, all of these things will have been literally and precisely fulfilled. Note Yahshua’s emphasis on “perplexity,” something that hasn’t been mentioned much in these prophecies. His signs would be so unusual, so unprecedented, men wouldn’t know what to make of them. Evolutionists and secular-humanist historians have been telling them for years that mankind’s history is a story of steady upward progress, of continuity and steady advancement over millions of years. Nothing like this has ever happened before, so obviously, *it can’t happen*. But consider this: what

would it take for men who have lived through nuclear holocaust to be so frightened their hearts give out? These are going to be *some signs*.

What's next? **"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."** (Luke 21:25-28) Until Israel sees the signs in the heavens and the distress of the earth, it will be unable to fully appreciate that the coming of the "Son of Man" (the title Yahshua used of Himself) represents their ultimate redemption.

Few of these Jews will be all that familiar with the words of Yahshua. But Yahweh had also told them what to expect through His prophet Zechariah—hundreds of years before Yahshua's time. We begin with a promise that the nations the Antichrist gathers for the final showdown will be met by Yahweh Himself—personally. **"Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east...."** The *feet* of Yahweh? Yahweh is Spirit; if He has "feet" they must belong to a manifestation of the godhead who is not only divine, but human as well—the Messiah. Once again we see Yahweh and Yahshua as one being, one entity, one *person*.

Christ's return to the Mount of Olives will be what NASA would call a "hard landing." **"And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south."** (Zechariah 14:3-4) Though Zechariah couldn't have known it, there is a seismic fault running right through the Mount of Olives in roughly an east-west direction from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea. The granddaddy fault in the area, however, is the great north-south rift running all the way from the Toros Mountains in Turkey down the Jordan Valley to the Dead Sea, through the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea, and continuing south through much of eastern Africa. Its northern sector (down to the southern end of the Red Sea) forms the boundary between the African and Arabian tectonic plates—it's a seismic time-bomb. A careful reading of the verse reveals that although the Mount of Olives will be split, presumably along its fault line, the earthquake proper will occur eighteen miles east in the Jordan Valley, where the tectonic plates slip past each other, moving in a north-south direction. (If the quake were epicentered on the smaller Mount of Olives fault, the land movement would be east to west.) The bottom line is that this is no ordinary temblor: it's the Big One.

Earthquakes are a normal part of life on earth. As a matter of fact, without our planet's crust floating around on the mantle like ice sheets on a frozen river—cracks and all—our atmosphere would be very different from what it is. This would be a cold, inhospitable world. But Yahweh has designed this place to sustain life—our life—and earthquakes and volcanoes are part of what makes the

system work. *This* quake, however, is in a category all by itself. Amos explains: **“Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob [that’s Messiah, if I’m not mistaken]: ‘Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall the land [’erets: ground, land, country, world, or earth] not tremble for this, and everyone mourn who dwells in it? All of it shall swell like the River, heave and subside like the River of Egypt.’”** (Amos 8:7-8) In context, the “works” of which the prophet speaks seem like no big deal (in our limited minds). He’s not talking about crucifying the Messiah, murdering the prophets, or anything like that. He’s merely describing the everyday life of people who choose to live without Yahweh—the little scams and underhanded dealings that, while not in blatant violation of the mores of society, nevertheless betray our utter contempt for a holy God. So “the land will tremble for this.”

John also saw this happening—*three times*. The seventh seal, the seventh trumpet judgment and the seventh bowl-o-wrath all describe this dramatic punctuation of the Tribulation’s woes. The trumpet heralds the Hallelujah Chorus: **“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”** Here we see Yahweh and Yahshua distinguished according to their functions; but they’re not two entities: when the heavenly host proclaims that *“He shall reign forever,”* they’re referring to “both” Yahweh and “His Christ”—they are One. **“And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth....”** The elders represent the saved of all ages, as we have seen. Here they respectfully say, “It’s about time, Father Yahweh!” The timing, of course, being His, is perfect. Rewards and punishments alike are about to be dispensed. Environmentalists should be gratified to learn that Yahweh has promised to “destroy those who destroy the earth.”

“Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.” (Revelation 11:15-19) The earthly temple was patterned upon a heavenly prototype (which explains why Yahweh was so explicit in His instructions to Moses). Here that heavenly original is opened, revealing the *real* ark of the covenant, the ultimate symbol of God’s plan for our salvation, as if to say, “Everyone alive has now chosen between salvation and damnation. It is time to finish this.” The earth answers with a series of dramatic affirmations, including the last and greatest earthquake.

As we have come to expect, the seventh bowl judgment reveals even more detail about this terrifying final chain of events. **“Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth....”** Here the great earthquake is quantified: it’s the biggest temblor in the history of man. As we shall see, it has multiple epicenters—the effects are felt worldwide, more or less simultaneously.

Naturally, Yahweh first informs us of how Jerusalem fares. We saw a bit earlier that the earthquake takes place immediately after the two witnesses are brought back to life and taken up to heaven in a cloud—from Jerusalem. There we learned that a tenth of the city was flattened (or perhaps lowered in elevation) and seven thousand men were killed. Zechariah added that the Mount of Olives would be split in two, with a big valley appearing down the middle. Here we learn a bit more: **“Now the great city was divided into three parts....”** The very topography of Jerusalem is undergoing a dramatic change in preparation for Christ’s massive urban renewal project, which we’ll study a few chapters hence.

But let’s stay focused on the moment: **“...and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath....”** Like I said, multiple epicenters. Whatever remnants of civilization that were left standing by the nuclear holocaust of World War III, the volcano-driven tsunamis and asteroid hits of the Trumpet judgments, and the scorched-earth tactics of the Eastern horde of World War IV are now shaken to their foundations by the most devastating earthquake ever to visit the planet. Even in normal times, the edges of every tectonic plate are hot zones, generating thousands of temblors large and small on an ongoing basis. But now the earth’s crust begins to twist and shift in earnest, needing desperately to move aside to make room for God’s glory as He touches down upon the Mount of Olives, but having nowhere to go. The earth itself is seen bowing humbly before its Creator.

And Babylon? The earthquake will take out every remaining symbol of man-made religion: every statue of Buddha, every mosque, every Shinto shrine and Hindu temple, every Chinese dragon image whether of paper or of stone, every church building where the saving grace of Yahweh was strategically ignored, every university where the poisonous myth of atheistic humanism was preached with religious fervor to eager young minds—and every vestige of Antichrist and Satan worship, including his big statue.

If you think I’m exaggerating when I speak of entire tectonic plates shifting and grinding, then *you* figure out what to make of this: **“Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found....”** We’ve got absolutely no frame of reference for what’s being described here. We’re talking about a series of events of Richter-

scale magnitude ten-plus (the theoretical maximum), depending on where you are—all over the world. If not a major reshuffling of the topography of the earth's crust, then what is it? Surviving such a thing will be a matter of God's grace, geography, and dumb luck. Amazingly, some—many—*will* live through it. I get the distinct impression that the damage is actually *lightest* in Israel, getting worse as the “crust tsunami” spreads outward from Olivet.

The seventh bowl game isn't quite over. **“And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.”** (Revelation 16:17-21) Seventy-five pound hailstones on top of the first “*earthquake*” worthy of the name, and all men can do is blaspheme God. There's no winning with these people—I mean, with the two witnesses dead, at least they're finally getting some precipitation! I can almost see Yahweh shaking His head: *They seem to like signs and wonders—they should have loved this. My kindness didn't bring them to repentance—this should have at least gotten their attention. But their minds are made up. They've made their choice.* There will be no repentance. The battle lines are drawn.

Not surprisingly, Revelation isn't the only place where this great quake is described. **“Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let Yahweh be a witness against you, Yahweh from His holy temple. For behold, Yahweh is coming out of His place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth [specifically, the Mount of Olives]. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.”** The prophet is seeing what geologists call seismic liquefaction. **“All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?”** (Micah 1:2-5) “High places” means more than hills and mountains. It is a code-word for false worship, for the worshippers of Ba'al customarily performed their rituals on hilltops. The prophet is pointing out that the sin of Israel is the root cause of the world's apostasy. Their national rejection of Yahweh and His Messiah has led directly, inexorably, to the world's present predicament. Yet He still loves them—not because of what they've done, but because of who He is.

It's Amos's turn. **“Yahweh almighty, [it is] He who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell there mourn. All of it shall swell like the River, and subside like the River of Egypt. He who builds His layers in the sky, and has founded His strata in the earth; Who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the face of the earth—Yahweh is His name.”** (Amos 9:5-6) Gee, and all this time I thought Amos was a simple shepherd. Turns out he had detailed knowledge of seismology, geology, and meteorology, thousands of years ahead of his time. Or could it be he was a

prophet of the Living God? Note that he, too, predicts a worldwide earthquake: “*All of it shall swell and subside.*”

So does Haggai. **“For thus says Yahweh almighty: ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations.’** (Haggai 2:6-7) “All nations,” as far as I can tell, means *all nations*. (“All” is the Hebrew *kol*, meaning all, the whole, everything, totality.) The word “shake” (both instances) is the Hebrew *raash*—to quake, shake, tremble, or sway: the non-linear back-and-forth motion of an object. It is also used of horses and locusts leaping or jumping.

Nahum continues the thought: **“The mountains quake [*raash*] before Him, the hills melt, and the earth heaves [Hebrew *nasa*: literally, “is carried away”] at His presence, yes, the world and all who dwell in it. [There it is again: *all*.] Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.”** Is there no hope, no place to hide? Actually, there is. **“Yahweh is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him. But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place, and darkness will pursue His enemies.”** (Nahum 1:5-8)

A Psalm by the sons of Korah emphasizes this place of shelter even in the darkest times. **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed [Hebrew *muwr*: changed], and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah.”** (Psalm 46:1-3) When the Big One hits, this psalm should be on the lips of every believer as he or she contemplates the events of this momentous day. The psalmist speaks of “shaking” and “swelling,” which is precisely what volcanoes do before they erupt.

A provocative question remains: will the Antichrist’s temple be destroyed in this whopper quake? It’s quite possible, even likely. The fault line through the Mount of Olives runs just south of the Temple Mount, through the Valley of Hinnom. So whether the temple—or even the mount—still stands depends on how much of Malachi’s prophecy has already been fulfilled: **“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And Yahweh, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says Yahweh Almighty. ‘But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderer’s soap.’** (Malachi 3:1-2) “My messenger” was John the Baptist (but the role will also be fulfilled by the future Elijah). Yahshua (who, as we have seen, *is* Yahweh) is described here as “the Messenger of the covenant.” He already came to “His temple” two thousand years ago, but according to Ezekiel, He will build a new temple and enter it via the eastern gate (43:4). There is no scriptural reason the temple has to be standing the moment the King returns. The persistent Jewish

myth that the building of the temple will precipitate the Messiah's coming is groundless and silly.

Is "this temple" mentioned by Malachi Herod's temple, the Tribulation edifice, or the new one Yahshua will build in Jerusalem? Or could it be His physical body? The Haggai passage quoted above goes on to say, **"And they shall come to the Desire of All Nations [that's Messiah] and I will fill this temple with glory,' says almighty Yahweh."** (Haggai 2:7) Yahweh has most definitely "filled the temple" of Yahshua's body with glory. That being said, though, it's clear that a new temple will be built, one the Antichrist's grubby hands have never touched. If I had to guess (and I do, since we aren't told), I'd say the Antichrist's Tribulation Temple will crumble into expensive dust during this earthquake, along with anything else that might still be standing on the Temple Mount. As John said, "Great Babylon will be remembered." It seems to me that God has no use for our pretensions; He's only interested in our love. We shall in a later chapter take a close look at the Millennial temple and the future geography of Israel and Jerusalem, as specified in Ezekiel's prophecy. Ezekiel's vision looks nothing like any temple that has ever been built on Mount Moriah.

For what it's worth, there's one more factor worth mentioning. The Mount of Olives today is intact—it does not have a big valley running east to west through the middle of it, nor has there ever been a multiple-epicenter quake in recorded history in which entire cities all over the earth crumbled and islands and mountains disappeared. This is another nail in the coffin of the preterist argument that says all of these prophecies have been fulfilled in the past. It just isn't so.

Let's return to Zechariah. We weren't quite done there. **"Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus Yahweh my God will come, and all the saints with You."** (Zechariah 14:5) The context, you'll recall, is Yahweh's fight against the nations. The earthquake has formed a trough—a "mountain valley"—where the summit of the Mount of Olives used to be. And the Jews are seen using this valley as an escape route. The question is, what are they fleeing from, the earthquake, or the Antichrist?

There are admittedly a lot of things going on at once here. We're focused now on a single autumn day (October 3, 2033, if my "one-day-is-literally-a-thousand-years view is correct). Those Jews who have so recently returned to Jerusalem after three and a half years of God's protection in the wilderness suddenly find themselves facing an old nemesis with a new army: the Antichrist has assembled his forces and is preparing to move in for the kill. The two witnesses, whom the returning Jews counted as allies (albeit in the same way a cancer patient sees chemotherapy) were killed three and a half days ago. But today, before their very eyes, their corpses have been revived; and more amazing still, they've ascended to

heaven in a cloud, having been commanded by an audible, thunderous voice to “come up.” Then, not more than an hour later, this earthquake-to-end-all-earthquakes has taken place, caused not by normal tectonic forces, but apparently by the very feet of God stepping onto the Mount of Olives.

It will be lost on none of these pious Jews what day this is. It is the tenth day of the month of Tishri—Yom Kippurim, the Day of Atonement. The nation of Israel will at last understand: everything Yahshua of Nazareth said was true; everything He did was done out of love for them. And they will be afflicted in their souls, responding to the truth of their Messiah’s return precisely as the Torah’s definition of this day—the sixth of Yahweh’s seven holy convocations—requires (see Leviticus 16:29-34 and Leviticus 23:26-32). **“They will look on [Yahweh] whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”** (Zechariah 12:10) Those who have discovered the Book of Acts will realize that the prophecy concerning the manner of His return had been fulfilled to the letter: **“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”** (Acts 1:10) The very next verse explains where they were when this happened, where Yahshua would come again: the Mount of Olives.

By this time, the Jews will have come to the realization that one more time, they must dodge the Antichrist. But the despair will have dissipated: they’ll know that this time, all they have to do is get behind their Messiah—literally. They won’t have far to go. As Zack said, **“Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal.”** Just to the east of Olivet is a little village called Bayth Haw-Aytzel. It was mentioned in Micah 1:11 as “Beth Azel,” the “house of joining.” If this is the “Azal” of which Zechariah spoke, Israelis in the Old City won’t have to flee more than a mile or two to reach the shelter of Christ’s protection. In truth, though Zechariah reports their flight (and you can’t blame them for being nervous), they didn’t really have to move at all.

Isaiah puts the moment in perspective: **“The glory of Yahweh shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken....”** “All flesh shall see it” means the news cameras are still rolling. Read it and weep, world. **“O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid. Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’ Behold, Yahweh shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”** (Isaiah 40:5, 9-11) Jews in Jerusalem will see it first, and spread the news to those who have not yet returned: Messiah has come! He will come as a tender shepherd to meet the needs of His own flock, but also with a strong arm to fight against those who would harm them—which at this point in

our story, is *almost everybody*. Notice His short term goal: **“His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.”** We’ll discuss the rewards a bit later; they’re high on His priority list. But first, there is some last-minute business to attend to: His work is cut out for Him.

Every farmer knows that timing is important when it comes to harvesting crops. You don’t bring in your corn before the ears have formed and been given a chance to ripen into something good. Neither do you leave your crop standing in the field until it rots. Rather, the wise farmer gathers his crop as it nears the peak of its perfection—when it’s about as good as its going to get.

In the same way, God will harvest the earth. He’s going to give his “corn” every opportunity to develop into fine, full ears. Some will mature early, and some late. Some, he notes with chagrin (see Matthew 13:30), will turn out in the end to be weeds—good for nothing. Yahweh knows that He can’t let the weeds grow in His field forever, for they will eventually choke out whatever good grain still remains, making the whole field unproductive. Everything will get sorted out at the time of the harvest.

That’s the picture, more or less, that John was shown—an overview of the end of earth’s “growing season.” **“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle....”** This is Yahshua, returning in glory. His crown (Greek *stephanos*, a victor’s wreath) is made of gold, not a perishable laurel bough like the Olympic champions would have received—He has not only won, His victory is permanent and incorruptible. **“And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped....”** The angel isn’t telling God what to do; he’s merely announcing the plan so that John might understand what’s going on. Note that it’s King Yahshua who’s wielding the sickle—the authority is His.

His angels, however, are tasked for the harvest as well. **“Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.’ So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God....”** Though we see the angel swinging a sickle of preparation here, it is clear that the administration of wrath remains God’s prerogative alone.

“And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.” (Revelation 14:14-20) I admit it: I’m having trouble comprehending the extent of the carnage here. My feeble brain can’t seem to count that high. This is worse than any single engagement we’ve seen so far, and we’ve seen a lot. The battle of Magog looks like a skirmish in comparison.

Note first that the “battle” is fought *outside* of the city, i.e., Jerusalem. *Inside* is where the Jews are holed up, surrounded by the Antichrist’s army-to-end-all-armies like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Jerusalem is also where Yahshua has made his earth-shaking entrance, so naturally, Satan thinks he’s got *Him* surrounded, too. The Antichrist’s vast army has by this time (a day or two from the end) deployed over the whole country: 1,600 “furlongs” (Roman *stadia*) is about 180 miles—pretty much the entire length of Israel. John calmly infers that their mangled corpses will pave the nation from one end to the other—squashed like grapes in a winepress, their blood splashing up to three or four feet off the ground—the height of a horse’s bridle. I realize this is awfully squishy stuff. If you don’t like the sight of blood, especially your own, I suggest you don’t go there.

A little later, John saw this whole scene again from a different angle. **“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.”** This is the same “conquering hero” metaphor we saw when we first met the Antichrist, but the first seal judgment revealed a mere illusion. Yahshua is the real thing. **“And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God [cf. John 1:1]. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses....”** Remember, this scene is in heaven. This army is comprised of the saints, raptured or otherwise relieved of their mortal bodies, clothed with imputed righteousness (in reality, the only kind there is). We’ve got white horses, too, which identifies *us* as conquering heroes. But as we shall see, we’ve already done our “conquering,” we’ve run our race. We won’t be asked to fight any more battles on earth. The King has that covered.

“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations.” His “weapon,” quite literally, is the Word of God. All of scripture has been leading up to this conclusion. If the nations haven’t listened *to* it, they will be struck *by* it. **“And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS....”** This is no longer the baby in the manger, no longer the meek and lowly itinerant rabbi teaching His ragtag band of disciples the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the one led as a

lamb to the slaughter. He is no longer in stealth mode; He is now shown to be Who He is—Who He always was: the King of kings, Lord of lords, Ruler of rulers, Master of masters, Leader of leaders, Owner of owners.

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.’ And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.” (Revelation 19:11-19) There is no doubt as to the outcome of this “battle.” The Winner has already invited the birds of the air to His victory celebration. The losers are the main course. If you’ll recall, the Hebrew word for the “birds” that were invited to feast on the dead of the Battle of Magog, *tsippowr*, could be construed to include in its definition the insects, and even bacteria, that help to break down the flesh of the dead. But here the Greek word for birds apparently means just that: *ortheon* comes from the root from which we get “ornithology,” the study of birds. Maybe I’m making too much out of this, but it seems Yahweh is going to want these corpses cleaned up in a hurry this time. We are given no hint of a “clean-up period” like the seven months it took the Israelis to bury the dead after the Battle of Magog (Ezekiel 39:12).

The King is not hunkering down in Jerusalem waiting for the battle to come to him. Isaiah describes the action like a war correspondent. **“Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?—‘I who speak in righteousness [as John reported, “In righteousness He judges and makes war...”], mighty to save....”** It’s Yahshua, whose name means “Yahweh saves.” He’s starting in the badlands of Edom/Jordan (remember, they’ve been wiped out: —Obadiah 18 reports, “No survivor shall remain of the house of Esau”) and He’s working His way north and west. **“Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? ‘I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples [i.e., those still living on the earth] no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury. Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes....”** Is that graphic enough for you? Yahshua is doing this all by Himself. He doesn’t need any help from you, me, or the valiant Jewish warriors who were magnanimously allowed to participate in His victory over Magog.

Why? **“For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold. Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me.”** The phrase “brought salvation” is the Hebrew word *yasha*, a component of the Messiah’s name, Yahshua (“Yahweh is salvation,” or “Yahweh saves”). God is seen *personally*

saving, delivering, and rescuing us—for *His own sake*. **“And My own fury, it sustained Me. I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk in My fury, and brought down their strength to the earth.”** (Isaiah 63:1-6) If you’re someone who still clings to the odd notion that a holy and loving God will never retaliate against those who hate Him, you need to deal with this passage. Yahshua came down off that cross a long time ago. His love was proved by His sacrifice, and His patience was demonstrated by His willingness to let us exercise our free will ever since. But Yahweh is a God of order, and He is on a schedule: He won’t let things remain unresolved forever. Yahshua is not your victim. He’s your God.

It doesn’t matter how many men the Antichrist throws into the fray, or what kind of weapons he uses. It’s no match—the contest isn’t even close. **“Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales. Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.”** (Isaiah 40:15-17) The combined military might of the entire world doesn’t have the mass of navel lint compared to Yahweh’s strength. And this fact makes his restraint over the last six thousand years truly amazing.

Through the prophet Joel, Yahweh dares the nations to come and fight Him. **“Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’”** Invent all the high-tech weapons you want—train till you think you’re ready. Psyche yourselves up, and put together your dream coalition. **“Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around....”**

In case you think the three frog-like demons are flouting the will of God when they persuade the nations to come to this foolhardy war, think again: **“Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O Yahweh. Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations....”** Joel isn’t restricting the conflict to Israel’s neighbors here. The idea is that of being surrounded by enemies, hemmed in, beleaguered from every side. And what’s this about Jehoshaphat? There is nothing to connect King Jehoshaphat with Armageddon or the Plain of Esdraelon. In fact, the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” may not be a real location at all, but a symbolic name (like the “valley of decision” Joel mentions a few verses later): Jehoshaphat means “Yahweh has judged.” On the other hand, when Ammon, Moab, and Mt. Seir (Edom)—collectively, today’s Jordan—attacked Judah during King Jehoshaphat’s reign, Yahweh gave Judah a great victory, centered in a valley they called Berachah (i.e. “blessing”). This valley, south of Bethlehem, is not that far from Jerusalem, Antichrist’s prime objective. So who knows?

Joel continues: **“Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.”** Does any of this sound familiar? **Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Yahweh is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. Yahweh also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem.”** (Joel 3:9-16) Yahweh will *roar*? Both the seventh trumpet and seventh bowl judgments mentioned “noises.” This would qualify nicely as an explanation of what that means. Scary, if you’re not accustomed to hearing His voice.

King David *was* in the habit of listening to the voice of Yahweh, but that’s not to say he wasn’t continually awed by it. **“The voice of Yahweh is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; Yahweh is over many waters. The voice of Yahweh is powerful; the voice of Yahweh is full of majesty. The voice of Yahweh breaks the cedars, yes, Yahweh splinters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of Yahweh divides the flames of fire. The voice of Yahweh shakes the wilderness; Yahweh shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of Yahweh makes the deer give birth, and strips the forests bare; and in His temple everyone says, ‘Glory!’”** (Psalm 29:3-9)

If I didn’t know better, I’d say David had been spending time in the lab doing acoustic weapons research. Yahweh designed the human ear to hear frequencies between about 20 Hz (or “hertz”—1 Hz equals 1 cycle per second) and 20,000 Hz. However, there are also sonic ranges above and below audible sound—called ultrasound and infrasound, respectively—that can affect things in the environment, including us, in surprising ways. Tigers, for example, are apparently able to utter an ultra-low roar (18 Hz) capable of physically stunning their prey—even before they attack. Sperm whales stun large squid using the same method. Human flesh resonates at between 7 and 8 Hz, causing nausea or worse, depending on the decibel level; and our eyeballs vibrate—causing distorted vision—at about 19 Hz. The Nazis experimented with a sonic cannon in the 1940s that could supposedly shatter wooden planks at 200 yards. (They were trying to develop an anti-aircraft weapon but couldn’t make it work.)

I could ramble on, but you get the picture: sound waves have the potential to do things we can only imagine, and although we’re only just beginning to understand their potential, Yahweh (having invented sound) knows precisely what to do with them. The hordes gathered for the Battle of Armageddon are described as being **“killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of [Yahshua].”** (Revelation 19:20) In light of the information David shared above, I wouldn’t be a bit surprised to find that the “winepress of the wrath of God” is literally the “voice of Yahweh,” an incredibly powerful and focused infrasonic event that physically obliterates the allies of Lucifer like a winepress squishes grapes, splashing their blood as high as a horse’s bridle for a distance of 180 miles (see Revelation

14:20). It's possible that the squishy plague described in Zechariah 14:12 refers to this: **"Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths."** *Basso profundo*.

We weren't quite through hearing from Joel. **"The heavens and earth will shake [yeah, we heard that somewhere] but Yahweh will be a shelter for His people and the strength of the children of Israel."** This is a confirmation that the 7,000 who die in Jerusalem during the Big One aren't believing Jews, but that the survivors are. **"So you shall know that I am Yahweh your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens [i.e., those Yahweh considers strangers to Him—people who don't know Him] shall ever pass through her again."** (Joel 3:16-17) In case you haven't noticed, Yahweh has a special place in His heart for Jerusalem. It is His uniquely chosen place upon the earth (which explains why Satan covets it). God directed Abraham to these hills to sacrifice his son Isaac before anything was even there, and His interest in Zion will continue as long as the earth stands. It bears repeating: Yahweh is a Zionist.

It never ceases to amaze me that though we've got almost forty writers of prophecy spread out over 1,500 years, they never contradict each other. Forty writers, one Author. A thousand plots, one story.

God is not making this up as He goes along. It has all been determined from the beginning. Hannah, the mother of Israel's first "titled" prophet, Samuel, declared, **"He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed."** (I Samuel 2:9-10) She said this before Israel even had a king, you understand—she was speaking ultimately of the coming Messiah. I guess Samuel's prophetic gifts ran in the family.

The prophetic plan of God is scattered throughout the Bible. We looked at the beginning of this Psalm earlier in this chapter. The sons of Korah continue their song of praise: **"There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High."** This is a real river, one that doesn't exist yet. We'll revisit it a few chapters hence. **"God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. Yahweh Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah..."** Now we know what time of day Yahshua intends to move against the Antichrist's forces. Again we see God's *voice* as His weapon of choice.

Yahweh is the Creator, but as any contractor can tell you, construction often involves demolition as well. **“Come, behold the works of Yahweh, Who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.”** World War I was called “the war to end all wars.” We all know how erroneous that moniker turned out to be. Yahweh is the only one who can end war, for He is the only one who can change men’s hearts. It is pointless for well-meaning people to try to alter the behavior of others—to make them more peaceable. Peace on earth comes through the Prince of Peace alone: **“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! Yahweh almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah”** (Psalm 46:4-11) At the risk of sticking the spurs to a horse that’s already running at full speed, notice that the “nations” will exalt “the God of Jacob.” Judaism and Christianity have no business being separate “religions.” There is one God. His name is Yahweh. The God of the Jews is the only One there is (which is not to say they know Him yet), and “God with us”—Immanuel—is the title borne by Yahshua, Yahweh’s human manifestation, His Anointed One.

While we’re in the Psalms, let’s look at a couple from David, whom Yahweh often used to speak in the voice of the Messiah, David’s descendent and Savior. **“I have pursued My enemies and overtaken them; neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed. I have wounded them, so that they could not rise; they have fallen under My feet.”** Yes, squashed like grapes, according to John. **“For You have armed Me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under Me those who rose up against Me [virtually the whole world]. You have also given Me the necks of My enemies, so that I destroyed those who hated Me. They cried out, but there was none to save; even to Yahweh, but He did not answer them....”**

Here’s a sobering thought: once you’ve made your final choice to serve Satan, once you’ve received his evil spirit, repentance—even crying out to Yahweh Himself—will not help you. You’re beyond salvation at that point. **“Then I beat them as fine as the dust before the wind; I cast them out like dirt in the streets. You have delivered Me from the strivings of the people; You have made Me the head of the nations; a people I have not known shall serve Me. As soon as they hear of Me they obey Me; the foreigners submit to Me. The foreigners fade away, and come frightened from their hideouts....”** After Armageddon, there will be no question as to Who is in charge. As the news spreads, the terrified survivors of the Tribulation will emerge from their hiding places and pinch themselves to make sure they’re not dreaming—to convince themselves that the nightmare is really over. There are no more thoughts of rebellion. Whether happy about the outcome or not, those alive after Armageddon will know who the King is, and will bow to His rule.

David continues. **“Yahweh lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.”** Then, speaking again of the Messiah, **“It is God who avenges me, and**

subdues the peoples under me; He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Yahweh, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name. Great deliverance He gives to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore.” (Psalm 18:37-50) Here we see the concept of vengeance again, executed by Yahweh against those who have rejected His anointed, Yahshua, the “son” of David.

In a similar vein, David speaks for his nation: **“We will rejoice in Your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners!”** The *name* of our God? David just told us that name. Did you catch it? No, of course not. This is one of the seventy-seven times in the Old Covenant scriptures that the actual name of the Messiah is revealed—though we can’t see it in the English. “Salvation” is the Hebrew *Yashuwah*, phonetically indistinguishable from Yahshua. If you knew him only as “Jesus,” you’d miss the entire point: Yahweh *is* salvation. **“May Yahweh fulfill all your petitions. Now I know that Yahweh saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of Yahweh our God.”** Seeing Yahshua’s great and final victory achieved without any manmade weaponry at all, the Tribulation Jews will finally understand the power of their God over their enemies. **“They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright. Save, O Yahweh! May the King answer us when we call.”** (Psalm 20:5-9)

Patriarchs and prophets alike have foreseen Yahweh’s plan unfolding. Admittedly, Jacob’s view as he blessed his children on his deathbed was so fuzzy he couldn’t have known what he was saying. But Yahweh did. Speaking of Judah—but in reality prophesying of the Messiah who would be his direct descendent—Jacob/Israel said, **“To Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding His donkey to the vine, and His donkey’s colt to the choice vine [clearly a reference to Yahshua’s first-century advent—cf. Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:5], He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes [cf. Isaiah 63:2-3]. His eyes are darker than wine, and His teeth whiter than milk.”** (Genesis 49:11-12)

As the Old Covenant morphed into the New, the story didn’t change. The aging Simeon encountered Mary, Joseph, and their newborn Child in the temple, and he knew he’d found Someone special. **“He [Simeon] took Him [the infant Yahshua] up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.’”** (Luke 2:28-32) Israel, in case you haven’t noticed, hasn’t had much “glory” in the two thousand years since Yahshua walked its streets. But all that is about to change.

We haven't heard from Daniel lately. Does he have anything to say about these portentous times? (Would I be asking the question if he didn't?)

You've got to admit, sometimes it's hard to tell if you're reading from Revelation or from Daniel; the tone (not to mention the content) is so similar. Daniel reports, **"I watched till thrones [plural—they're for the judges, probably John's twenty-four elders] were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him...."** The Prophet is witnessing the Messiah in His glory—the same Yahshua who would walk the earth as a simple Jewish carpenter hundreds of years later, after temporarily laying down the trappings of divinity. The love of a God Who would do that to rescue you and me is truly stunning.

"A thousand thousands [angels, I presume] ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." The normal "couplet" structure of Hebrew poetry suggests that this may refer to the same group of ministering angels, but I can't help but wonder if this second designation speaks instead of the myriads of souls—a hundred million of them—who were slain for their faith by the Antichrist (cf. Revelation 6:9-11—the fifth seal). After all, look at what happens next: **"The court was seated, and the books were opened. I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn [i.e., the Antichrist, if you'll recall the imagery Daniel used] was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame."** (Daniel 7:9-11) It's as if the angels are the bailiffs in Yahshua's court, and there are "ten thousand times ten thousand" witnesses present to plead with God for justice to be done. Not a lawyer in sight.

This "beast," in context, is not the same as John's "beast from the sea" (i.e., the Antichrist), but rather the fourth gentile kingdom, one called "dreadful and terrible," described earlier in this vision. If you'll recall, it is a resurrection of the Roman empire, either in geography or in spirit or both. But yes, the Antichrist leads it. Daniel restates the fact of neo-Rome's demise a few verses later: **"But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his [Antichrist's] dominion, to consume and destroy it forever."** (Daniel 7:26)

Years after Daniel saw this vision, he received another that covered much of the same territory. Here we see a quick synopsis of the Antichrist's career: **"Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes [introduced by John as the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords"—Yahshua]. But he shall be broken without human means."** (Daniel 8:25) No human

army—not even the Israelis—are able to stop him. The Messiah alone is up to the task.

Although Nahum’s prophecy was written in a primary sense to foretell the imminent demise of the wicked city of Nineveh, it spills over to the last days: he’s also talking about the Antichrist. **“Yahweh has given a command concerning you: your name shall be perpetuated no longer. Out of the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the molded image. I will dig your grave, for you are vile. Behold, on the mountains the feet of Him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace.”** (Nahum 1:14-15) What “mountains?” Who “proclaims peace?” Knowingly or not, the prophet is referring to the Messiah, Yahshua, the One who, as we saw above, “makes wars cease to the end of the earth.” When His feet touch the Mount of Olives, the Antichrist and his whole phony scam are as good as dead.

And Israel? Will they ever feel safe again? Yes, Yahweh assures them. **“There shall no longer be a pricking brier or a painful thorn for the house of Israel from among all who are around them, who despise them. Then they shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh. Thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I am Yahweh their God.’”** (Ezekiel 28:24-26)

Nahum wasn’t quite done. **“O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; He is utterly cut off.”** (Nahum 1:15) Yahweh’s not about to take them back to the purely metaphorical Mosaic-Torah economy, you understand, not when the Messiah is present among them. As Jeremiah described it, God’s Covenant—renewed and restored—would now be inscribed on their hearts. But because the whole Law was fulfilled in the life of Yahshua, the seven annual “appointed feasts” of Yahweh will be just as relevant and meaningful after His final coming as they were the day they were instituted—now in a memorial rather than prophetic role. Yahweh wants Israel to continue to celebrate them, sacrifices and all, after He returns. We’ll discuss them at length in a future chapter.

At first glance, these ritual sacrifices might seem like nothing more than the tender and touching provision of a warm and familiar (even if previously misunderstood) “security blanket,” a comforting gesture toward a beloved child who’s just awakened from a terrible nightmare. Indeed, God is going to let Israel hang on to her “blankie” for another thousand years. But they’re much more than that. The feasts of Yahweh rehearse the heart of God’s plan for the redemption of all mankind. They were designed to go on as long as Israel walked the earth, and they’ll be especially meaningful now that they’re finally understood, and now that

“the wicked one” is no longer around to trouble them. However, I’m getting just slightly ahead of my story.

Leave it to John to succinctly wrap up the “battle” of Armageddon. He’s so succinct, in fact, it all seems just a touch anticlimactic. This battle is apparently over before it begins—nobody even gets a shot off. **“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone....”** No Nuremburg-style trials, no lawyers, no hand-wringing over the morality of the death penalty. These two are *so* guilty, as a matter of fact, Yahshua, the supreme Judge, skips the execution and sends ’em straight to hell, in deference to King David’s prayer (**“Let death seize them; Let them go down alive into hell, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.”**—Psalm 55:15). As much as I’d like to go off on a tangent and talk about the “lake of fire burning with brimstone,” I’ll have to defer our exploration of hell—and heaven—for a later time.

Having already invited all His feathered friends to dinner, Yahweh isn’t about to send them home hungry. So—**“And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”** (Revelation 19:20-21) Like I said: anticlimactic. No Battle of the Bulge, No Tet Offensive, no *war*. Just justice, judgment, and instantaneous death.

You may be asking yourself, *If it’s this easy for Yahshua to defeat the forces of evil at the Battle of Armageddon, why doesn’t he do it all the time? Why do we have to go through the agony of fighting our enemies—and sometimes our friends—to see justice done and righteousness prevail?* At the risk of repeating myself (again), the reason is choice, free will. Every one of us has been given the ability—and the responsibility—to choose between right and wrong, between good and bad, between loving our Creator, hating Him, and ignoring Him. I know it seldom seems like such a clear-cut decision, but in the final analysis, it’s black and white: absolute truth or something else.

There’s only one road to God. It’s straight, and it’s narrow—and Christians who’ve been on it for a while know that it can be littered with potholes. (They can usually be avoided, but you have to stay alert and observe Yahweh’s posted speed limits.) When we describe this road to people not traveling on it, we sometimes frighten or confuse them, for it’s easy to lose sight of the destination if you’re worried about the journey. Everyone wants to get to God, of course (even if it’s a god of their own imagination), but these folks either haven’t asked for directions or they’ve accepted bad advice. They have all mistakenly assumed that the road they’re on leads to the same place or someplace just as good.

While the road to God is narrow, it’s also very, very long, and it has lots of onramps. Yahweh designed it that way, because He wants everyone to have every

opportunity to get onto the right road—to get to Him. The road to God is clearly marked, but each driver has to *choose* to go there—to leave the fast, smooth highway he's on. And that can be hard, because we were all *born* on that highway. We're used to it. Truth is, we *like* it.

Complicating matters is that both roads are toll-roads. The difference is that on the world's highway, you pay the toll when you get off, and the cost is kind of steep: death. God's road is no less expensive—in fact, it's much more so—but the toll must be paid before you get on. The toll on God's road is holiness, righteousness, sinlessness—*perfection*. However, since nobody's perfect, He Himself provides the required toll to everyone who wants to come to Him, because that's what *He* wants. And what does perfection cost? The blood of His Messiah, the most precious substance known to man. The price is paid: all we have to do is accept it.

And what do “good works” have to do with it? Nothing at all. You can't pay the toll with your good works, for the simple reason that good works (as far as God is concerned) don't exist until we accept Yahweh's gift, pass through the turnstile, and begin our travels on His road. Only then do our works count for something, but by that time, our eternal destination is already determined.

That's the choice then: get on the narrow road that leads to God, or stay on the broad highway that leads somewhere else. It's black and white, yes or no. There is no middle ground. The reason, therefore, that Armageddon is such an easy “battle” for Yahshua to win is that by the time it's fought, the clock has run out; the last onramp has been passed—all of the people living on the earth have made up their minds. Yahshua is in no danger of abridging anybody's free will by dealing decisively with his enemies at this point. They came prepared to fight Him. They have chosen—poorly.

And the Jews? Yahweh has never given up on this family. **“The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,”** says Yahweh. **‘As for Me,’** says Yahweh, **‘this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,’** says Yahweh, **‘from this time and forevermore.’** (Isaiah 59:20-21) For the rebels, this is the end of the world. But for the redeemed in Israel, this is only the end of the beginning.